

Compatible
with God

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Righteousness

More than we know happened at the Cross

“May we not deceive ourselves, imagining that sinning is inevitable for a Christian, I think no thought hurts our Lord more than this.”

~Watchman Nee

Righteousness

*More than we know
happened at the Cross*

Within this chapter we will discover the role of righteousness and the what it provides in the life of the christian.

Righteousness is Gods complete and perfect nature. Dictionaries define the word righteousness as “characterized by uprightness or morality or the quality or state of being just or rightful.” God’s nature is a *unchanging* state of righteousness. He is pure, good and right. He is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness and self-control. His nature never leaves from this abode and thus God never makes a decision outside of His nature, that is perfect righteousness.

This righteousness is not only Gods nature but what the finished work of Jesus *provides* for the believer. The Old Testament *points* towards righteousness and the New Testament *provides* it. Romans 3:21-24 (NIV) reads,

“But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify (Old testament). *This righteousness is given through faith* in Jesus Christ to all who believe (New testament). There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.” (parenthesis and *italics* inserted mine)

I want to propose that *more happened at the cross than we realize*. By the death and resurrection of Jesus those who express faith in Christ are forgiven and imparted/given **“righteousness.”** This righteousness is not just a positional theology but the very nature of God revealed and given freely (to be experienced) to the christian.

Why Righteousness?

God jealously loves for people. He knows what mankind's potential is when in right relationship with Himself. He created mankind to be the recipient of His likeness, love, presence and favor resulting in people who can interact with Him *face to face*. **God desires relationship that is in line and kindred to His own likeness, holiness and righteousness. Our created potential as humans is to be friends with God. God interacts face to face with people who share His likeness and righteousness.** When Adam and Eve fell, sin interrupted their relationship with God. Adam and Eve discontinued to have within themselves the potential for right(eous) relationship with God. Adam and Eve exchanged their blameless and pure and righteous nature (a nature compatible of relationship with God) for one of self, producing sin and evil intent. Through Jesus, the Gospel provides what is needed to redeem mankind to a restored face to face relationship with God. *The Gospel provides righteousness.* By the death and resurrection of Jesus we by repentance, faith and baptism receive what we need for restored relationship with God: a new birth. This birth is characterized by righteousness that ends the dominion of the old nature and reveals the freedom of the new.

When *any* person becomes a christian and expresses faith in Christ they become recipients of Gods righteousness. The believer becomes at the moment of their conversion a new creation and "share(s) His divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4 NLT). The old Adamic fallen and sinful nature (received from Adam at the fall) is instantly eradicated. It is

replaced by God's very **own righteousness** and restores intimate communion and friendship with God *himself*.

"God made him who had no sin to be sin[a] for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. (2 Corinthians 5:21 NIV)

The born again christian is no longer held sway or under bondage by the old nature/man/flesh. Romans 6:6-14 (NIV) says,

"For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin because anyone who has died has been set free from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God.

In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness. For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace." (*italics mine*).

Through the death and resurrection of Jesus the christian is *wholly* freed into

God's righteous nature. Jesus died our death and frees us to live His resurrection. The Christian learns again to walk unashamed in a compatible relationship with God. God's righteousness becomes a permanent and abiding nature within the Christian resulting and leading the Christian into the sanctification provided by Jesus (read Romans 6:17-19). This is why Jesus said in John 16:10 the Holy Spirit would convict "concerning righteousness because I (Jesus) would go to the Father..." The Holy Spirit is actively convicting the Christian towards the righteousness they now possess because of faith. When a Christian sins and experiences conviction it is a sign that the gospel has penetrated their heart and produced a *new creation* who is un-compatible with sin and now compatible with God--a "slave of righteousness." (Romans 6:18). This is why we as Christians experience extreme discomfort when tempted to or committing sin. This discomfort proves sin is in-compatible with their new nature.

Mark Greenwood, the National Training Director of YFC Australia says this,

"Righteousness is not a 'doing' word; it is a 'being' word. When Jesus said in Matthew 6:33, "Seek first the kingdom and His righteousness", He was expressing that without discovering and becoming righteous by faith in Christ there is no point pursuing anything else in life. The Kingdom can never be a healthy pursuit apart from the revelation of righteousness."

No Longer Sinners...

The Christian is no longer a "sinner saved by grace" but the recipient of a whole new nature. The Christian is now a heir, co-laborer, a royal priest hood! Just as Abraham was by faith credited with righteousness so the Christian is also credited righteousness by faith.

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!" (2 Cor 5:17 NIV)

Not Sinners saved by Grace

The following picture helps explain what has and hasn't happened at the cross of Calvary:



Most Christians believe that they are "sinners saved by grace." Jesus made a way for us to become "new creations" capable of restored relationship with God.

Consider these verses in light of what these images and chapter present:

"This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all." 1 John 1:5 NASB

"for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light" Ephesians 5:8 NASB

“for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness;” 1 Thessalonians 5:5 NASB

“For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son,” Colossians 1:13 NASB

“For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.” Hebrews 10:14 NASB

“If you cannot be free from sin until death, then Jesus is not your Saviour, death is.”

Georgian Banov

Clearly seen from these verses is the reality that the christian has moved from death, darkness and sin into life, light and sainthood. Mark Greenwood (YFC Australia) in his book, *Saints by Nature* says,

“Righteousness is why he calls us sons and not servants. It is the reason the New Testament epistles refer to us as Saints (over 60 times). It is the reason Holy Spirit has pleasure and compatibility in occupying us, and it is precisely what Jesus came to restore us to. Righteousness is what causes us to live from ‘affection based obedience’ through open communion with Father God and what he has delivered us into. Unless we understand righteousness we will only produce ‘works based obedience’ because of misunderstanding who we are.”

I must with great joy, conclude we have become *righteous!* We have been reconciled and redeemed into compatible relationship with God. Jesus provided this reconciliation through His body and blood so you may stand blameless before God. We again, share His likeness and in doing so interact with God face to face. We are saints and in becoming saints, **we can and must act like saints!**

Why Can I Still Sin?!

Can a Christian still sin?! Can you and I still sin?! Absolutely! Just as Adam was capable of sin before he possessed a fallen nature so is the Christian capable of sin when/if deceived by sin and the enemy. The difference today for the Christian is found in 1 John 2:1-2 (NASB),

“My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you *may not sin*. And *if* anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous...” (italics mine).

We have a righteous High Priest with the Father who acts as an advocate on our behalf “if we sin.” This precious truth should propel us into sobriety in our relation to God and sin. *We must be careful not to allow our potential to sin become a means to sin.* Jesus paid a high price for you to become a righteous heir and not the product of a fallen life inherited by Adam. We are the product of what Jesus has done not our own fallen lives.

Lets Define Sin

Again, Mark Greenwood (YFC Australia) writes in his book *Saints by Nature*,

“As we have learned, we are New Creations now, with no part ‘dark’, or ‘sin’ in our nature. We are wholly Saints by nature now. Sin still can be an issue though. Now that we know sin is not inside of us and dictating our lives and ruling us in our nature, we need to look at how sin finds influence and how we can preempt it.

Vines bible dictionary has a list of verses that make sin a personality, an independent power: “a governing principle or power, e.g. Rom 6:6, “(the body) of sin”. Here “sin” is spoken of as an organized power, acting through the members of the body, though the seat of “sin” is in the will (the body is the organic instrument); in the next clause, and in other passages, as follows, **this governing principle is personified**, e.g., Rom. 5:21; 6:12, 14, 17; 7:11, 14, 17, 20,

23, 25; 8:2; 1 Cor. 15:56; Heb. 3:13; 11:25; 12:4; Jas. 1:15 (2nd part)”

(Speaking on behalf of a born again Christian) Sin is an active force seeking to trap and lie to the believer. Sin’s voice is remarkably like that of the enemy, Satan. Comparably, Satan provoked Adam and Eve to sin by *deceiving* them to grasp by their own hands what God had already provided, God-like-ness. In the same way, sin speaks to deceive us, convincing us that it’s desires are our own (lust, malice, immorality, slander, idolatry, wrath). Sin seeks to persuade you as a *new creation* that these evil virtues are *yours* and therefore you are un-compatible and un-fit for relationship with God.

Listening to the deceptive nature of sin convinces us we lack what God has provided and deceives us into striving and work based obedience. Follow me here, as soon as the believer looks inwardly and is convinced by sin of their lack before God, insecurity and fear are born. Insecurity and fear are the clothes of our old nature and great motivators for self reliance, self defense and self preservation...all of which are anti-Christ and thereby anti-love. Freedom from the deceptive and governing power of sin is found in receiving by faith the finished work of Christ on your behalf.

Desire for sin is deceitful not defining. Sin and the Devil are actively working to convince the Christian that a desire for sin is their *true identity*. They want you to think that in-appropriate thoughts, dreams, motives belong to you and thereby act accordingly! Sin wants you to view yourself as a half sinner, half

saint hybrid, *never fully free*. Identifying and owning these thoughts and motives (thinking they are yours) establishes the lie that sin is your potential and legacy not the finished work of Jesus. Paul exclusively taught and warned us not to live this way when he wrote,

“Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. **For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace.**” (Romans 6:12-14 NASB)

Paul emphatically wrote to the Colossians to “put on the new self,” (3:10) and the church in Ephesus, “put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.” (4:24). Our new identity and thereby nature is in God-like-ness. It is not fitting for a us to live in union with sin when we who received Christ can “put on the new self” which is in the very nature and likeness of God!

Let's be clear. Are Christians tempted by sin and have the potential to sin? Do they live in a world where sin still exists? YES! Are they slaves to sin and held sway to its power like the many who walk “according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience?” (Ephesians 2:2) NO! They by faith, the gift of righteousness and grace are discovering who and what's their's in Christ. They begin to perceive the value

of their life before God and stop selling cheaply to sin's deceptive desires.

Grace and Freedom

The truth is you have been set free into the glory of God! Perfectly reconciled and redeemed. As a born again believer you have been **empowered by grace** to live free from the dominion and power of sin. Grace is the operational power of God to empower the believer to supernaturally live as God intended. Simply, Grace is the power of God to live like Jesus. Faith gives way to righteousness (Romans 10:10) and “grace would reign through righteousness...” (Romans 5:21). Think about it this way: there is a car in a garage hidden behind the garage door. Faith opens the garage door and unveils the car. The car is a gift and is named righteousness as it provides the the ability to drive. Grace is the unlimited and un-diminishing fuel cell that propels the car forward from the garage to travel and explore. Grace empowers us to live and explore all that we have become in Christ who gifted us His righteousness.

We died with Christ

We as christians has been, “crucified with Christ” says Galatians 2:20, 5:24 and Romans 6:6. When we are baptized we effectually die with Christ. Jesus effectually died our death so that we *now* can live for Him! I believe this to be truth that demands a godly result in our lives. It is *not* a an empty theological doctrine but *truth that sets us free*. The moment we understand ourselves as dead to the old man and alive in Christ to God we can begin to produce a fruit that is worthy of the Gospel of the Kingdom. We are

instructed to consider ourselves “dead to sin” (Romans 6:12) and “dead to immorality, impurity...” (Colossians 3:5). we died and now Jesus lives through us. God has conformed us to the image of His own son (Romans 8:29). In baptism we are united with Him in the likeness of His death so we would be like Him *in the likeness of His resurrection* (Romans 6:1-7). **We died a very real death in baptism.** I believe the words of Romans 6:1-7 explain a wonderful union with Christ established by faith. These words are not symbolic of a new life **but reveal this new life.** This new life is “in the likeness of God, has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth” (Ephesians 4:24 NASB). We died a very real death in baptism and in Christ receive a life that is compatible with God’s own likeness!

A High Opinion

Plainly said, if the gospel fails to produce a holiness and righteousness in man that is not in line with God’s own nature, it has failed. This view of the finished work holds a high opinion of the work and sovereignty of God. This high opinion does not depend on man’s ability to produce righteousness due to time, prayer, fasting or obedience but simply faith. Jesus said in John 6:29 “this is work of God, that you believe in the one He has sent” John 6:29.

Righteousness and sanctification are not growing virtues in the believer but the gift of God in Christ provided *for* the believer so that they may enter again intimate fellowship and communion with God Himself.

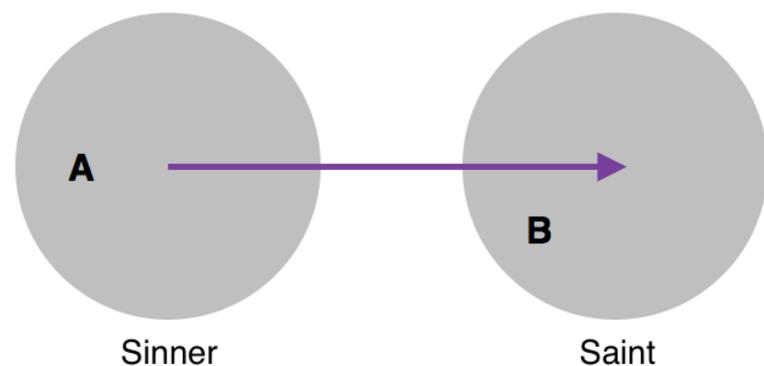
“by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God,

and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, so that, just as it is written, “Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord.”” (1 Cor 30-31).

The body and blood of Jesus provides a way for us to be right with God called forgiveness. His finished work also provides the way to have compatible communion with God (righteousness). We have *become* partakers of this righteousness and sanctification and are “growing in every way more and more like Christ” (Ephesians 4:15 NLT) discovering that we are indeed “children of the light” (Ephesians 5:8).

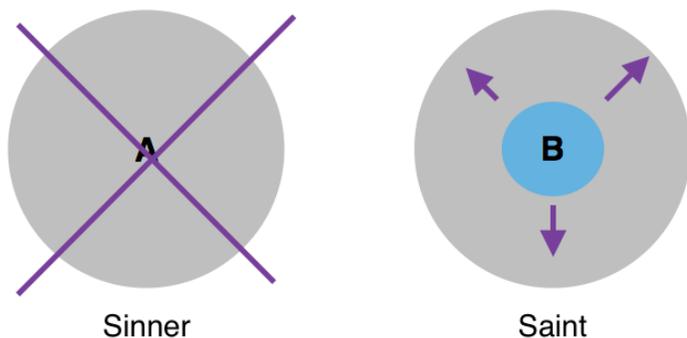
The following pictures (figure 1.) is what a lot of Christians (*and myself at one point*) believe. The second (figure 2.) better illustrates what has happened in light of the finished work of Jesus.

figure 1.



The line represents the believer by time and obedience moving towards Sainthood

figure 2.



The blue circle represents the believer who by responding to the truth and finished work of the cross explores by grace what they have become in Christ.

We are not moving from darkness (sin) towards light (righteousness and sainthood) in a continual movement proportionally to obedience and time. Jesus by the cross and His resurrection has placed us *perfectly* over the line into God's divine nature.

It is paramount that we see ourselves in light of the truth God declares about us! If we don't receive this truth we can end up living with a problematic and dualistic mindset of both a sinner and a saint.

Two Minds?

Problems can occur a Christian lives with a dualistic mindset that says sin is still alive inside a Christian.

For one, the idea that sin still has dominion inside a Christian can promote a mindset that even as Christians, "*sin is just waiting to happen.*" I wonder how many of us have allowed sin to dominate us because we simply believe that sin is all we are capable of. We believe our potential is to sin, and therefore we do.

Secondly, the idea of indwelling sin can promote shame and guilt. The

presence of guilt and shame in a believer hands the devil a loaded gun for his assault. It also has the potential to deceive the Christian, tricking them to think they are "far or separate from God." This can lead to all kinds of negative behavior, unrest and anxiety. There is a reason we are to put on the armor of God, which consequently is the perfect and complete work of Jesus.

By living with a dualistic mindset around a co-saint/sinner nature we actually do an injustice to what Jesus paid for and *enable* sin. Instead of throwing off the old nature, we make it tea and serve it cookies. We have constructed whole ministries, inner healing, spiritual formation and even preached sermons normalizing the presence of sin in a Christian's life. We have reaped the fruit of sin-filled, confused, assaulted and passive Christianity.

"Sinners" in James Letter

The *only* time believers are called "sinners" in the new testament *after the resurrection of Jesus* is found in James 4:8 when James writes, "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. *Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.*" Taking this verse and its chapter alone we see that James is addressing the *double minded*, those who are living in a dual identity of both friend of Christ and friendship with the world. He is addressing "fence sitters" who are now wholly committed to either Jesus or the world.

The Kingdom is not a two minded Kingdom and you are not a two natured,

two minded Christian. You are a body and blood bought believer. The born again experience is the beginning of a whole new life with the potential to *live* and *look like* God. Righteousness is the red carpet to intimacy with God.

In Conclusion...

This changes everything! God has completed an amazing work. By the cross of Jesus, God has set the stage for His nature, presence, power and wisdom to be manifested by His church **with brilliant and stunning clarity**. The cross of calvary actually provides a way for mankind to enter back into their created potential and have unhindered relationship with God. The born again experience is only the first chapter of the potential of those who stand in right relationship with God.

Verses:

“as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us”. Psalm 103:12 (ESV)

“I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.” Galatians 2:20 (ESV)

“We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died has been set free from sin.” Romans 6:6 (ESV)

“For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God”. Colossians 3:3 (ESV) “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away;

“behold, the new has come”. 2 Corinthians 5:17 (ESV)

“assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness

of God in true righteousness and holiness.” Ephesians 4:21-24 (ESV)

“But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you”. Matthew 6:33 (NKJV)

“For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him”. 2 Corinthians 5:21

“...that they may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified”. Isaiah 61:3 (NKJV)

“And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin”. 1 John 3:5 (NKJV)

“For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified”. Hebrews 10:14 (KJV)

“The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world”. John 1:29 (NKJV)

“...and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith”. Philippians 3:9 (NKJV)

“As for me, I shall behold your face in righteousness; when I awake, I shall be satisfied with your likeness”. Psalm 17:15 (ESV)

“...To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen”. Revelation 1:5-6 (ESV)

“But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction”. Romans 3:21-22 (ESV)

“Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ”. Romans 5:1 (NKJV)

“And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness”. Romans 6:18 (NKJV)

“But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption”. 1 Corinthians 1:30 (NKJV)

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”. 1 John 1:9 (NKJV)

“I have blotted out your transgressions like a cloud and your sins like mist; return to me, for I have redeemed you”. Isaiah 44:22 (NKJV)

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith”. Romans 1:16-17 (NKJV)