



# **GRACE-LOVE-TRUTH COURSE.**

## **LESSON 5A: RIGHTEOUSNESS IS A GIFT OF GRACE**

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## **PART 5A: RIGHTEOUSNESS IS A GIFT OF GRACE**

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### INTRODUCTION AND TESTAMONY

Grace is like the highway which the prophet Isaiah describes (Isa.35:8-10)(Isa.40:3-4). It's a place where the road has been made straight, the valleys have been raised up and the mountains made low by the hand of the Lord. Living in the grace of Jesus is a blessed "higher-way" of God's favour. For many years I had heard about grace, I had even taught on grace, but I was not actually living in God's grace. I wanted to, but I just couldn't seem to get there, I could not accept the promises of God's grace for myself, I couldn't believe I was worthy enough or had worked enough for God to



deserve to live in His grace. If I was honest my Christian walk felt like I was pushing an old car along a badly maintained dirt road while in the distance I could see a highway with

others zooming along. I wanted to get onto that highway of grace but didn't know how to. One day after crying out to the Lord in prayer I heard the Holy Spirit clearly say to me "The entry ramp to the highway of grace is called righteousness. Garry you are self-righteous and you don't understand the righteousness of the Lord." Wow, you can imagine that this was quite a shock to me. Through prayer and Bible reading I started to seek a revelation from the Holy Spirit as to what righteousness actually was and how it could lead me to living in God's grace. I soon found the need to repent of my old understanding as I came to see that righteousness was not something I did or earned but that it was a gift from God, my loving Abba Father, imputed to me by Jesus, my Lord and Saviour. Suddenly I found myself on the highway of grace and living in Jesus' presence and blessings.

Without us taking on the righteousness of Christ there is no grace! The two are in a sense an expression of each other, they are intrinsically one of the same thing.

As Eugene Peterson, author of The Message, said: *"Discipleship is a process of paying more and more attention to God's righteousness and less and less attention to our own."*

## PART 5. LESSON 1. WHAT IS RIGHTEOUSNESS?

## 1. GETTING RIGHT WITH GOD

Since the fall and mankind's expulsion from the garden of Eden, the key issue is how do we get back a right relationship with God? So many of people can't receive God's love and blessings because they don't feel, or believe they are worthy. They feel "unright" with God and unqualified to have a intimate relationship with God, their Abba Father. Understanding our righteousness in Christ is a key to appropriating and living in the blessings and love that Abba has given us through Jesus. The issue of righteousness is crucial to every single person. It determines our today and our future! Without being right with God (righteous), on God's terms, we cannot receive immortality, grace, blessings, nor His enabling. The purpose of this part of the course is to firmly establish us in an understanding of true, God dependant, righteousness, which comes by the grace of Jesus Christ.

### 1.2 TWO PATHS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

*Isa 64:6 All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags (actual meaning is menstrual cloths).*

A shockingly strong scripture. What is it about?

There are basically two paths open to anyone seeking righteousness. One of them is true and one of them is false! One of them God loves and one of them God hates.



The first and right path is: God dependent righteousness. Righteousness through grace and faith in Jesus, given as a free gift from a loving and forgiving God.

The second and ungodly path: Self-righteousness: Righteousness through self-effort, good works and the keeping of religious laws (This is what Isaiah was referring to in the above scripture).

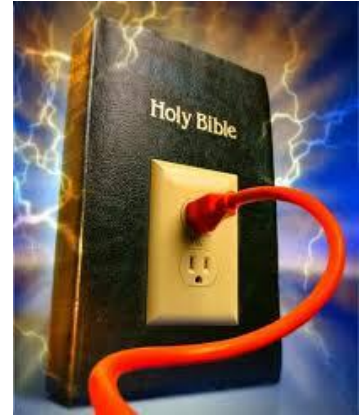
Christianity is founded on the first form of righteousness while all other religions rely on the second. Therefore we will be looking at both of these in more detail so that we can receive a deeper revelation of the first and repent of the second.

## 2. THE SCRIPTURES ARE ABOUT GRACE AND RIGHTEOUSNESS THROUGH CHRIST

*2Ti 3:16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.*

*Heb 5:13 (KJV) For every one that uses milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe.*

As stated in previous parts, it is important that we have a Biblical foundation and Holy Spirit revelation for what we believe. To do this we must use the Scriptures in a correct way. The Scriptures should always bring life and blessing to a believer that leads to a deeper understanding of what it means to be truly righteousness through Christ. The Bible warns us that when scriptures are used incorrectly they can manipulate, control, condemn, bring fear and death. (2Co.3:6-9). The Scriptures are powerful, Jesus used scripture to counter the attacks of Satan and the Pharisees. The word of God recorded in the scriptures is a mighty spiritual weapon, one which we should all be skilful in using. Satan recognized this truth and used the scriptures in his attack against Jesus (Mat.4:1-10). Both Satan and Jesus' enemies, the Pharisees, use scripture for their own purposes and agendas, and they still do today! Therefore it is essential that we understand how to correctly use the scriptures and recognize when they are being misused by false teachers and prophets. The purpose of scriptural teaching should always be to bring us to maturity in Christ (Eph.4:11-14). The Scriptures teach that Christian maturity is about understanding and righteousness (Heb.5:13). The Scriptures reinforce true, God dependant, righteousness. As New Covenant believers we should reject any use of scriptures that undermines our identity as righteous and beloved children of God. When used correctly, scripture will always point to Jesus and God's gift of grace or alternately, expose self righteousness. Grace and true righteousness can come only through faith in Jesus Christ and therefore the centrality of Christ throughout the scriptures has to be recognized and sought out at all times. Grace and righteousness are all about Jesus. He is our ultimate goal!



## **2.1 THE FLOW OF RIGHTEOUSNESS RIGHT THROUGHOUT THE SCRIPTURES**

From the time of mankind's fall, recounted in Genesis 3, God's starts to reveal His plan to restore mankind's right standing with Him. God's call to true righteousness, through His Saviour and His New Covenant, is the key theme of all Scripture. Before we look at righteousness in more detail here is a brief thread showing the Scriptural emphasis on righteousness:-

### **2.1.1 WHAT DID THE RISEN JESUS REVEAL TO PAUL?**

*Rom 1:17 In the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last.*

*Rom 14:17 For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking (rules and regulations), but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.*

*Rom 3:20 Therefore no one will be declared righteous in His sight by observing the law (of Moses); rather, through the law we become conscious of sin. But now righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ.*

*Rom 10:3 Israel did not know the righteousness that comes from God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness (by religious law keeping). Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.*

### **2.1.2 WHAT DID JESUS SAY WHILE HERE ON EARTH?**

*Mat 5:6 blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.*

*Mat 5:20 For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.*

*Mat 6:33 But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.*

### **2.1.3 WHAT DOES THE HOLY SPIRIT SAY IN THE OLD TESTAMENT?**

*Gen 15:6 Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.*

*Psa 7:17 I will give thanks to the LORD because of his righteousness.*

*Isa.51:1 "Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness and who seek the LORD: Look to the rock from which you were cut and to the quarry from which you were hewn look to Abraham, your father, and to Sarah, who gave you birth.*

*Isa 61:3 They will be called Oaks of Righteousness, a planting of the LORD for the display of his splendour.*

*Isa 61:10 God has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness.*

*Jer. 23:6 Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, "The Lord our Righteousness".*

## **2.2 THE LETTERS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT**

Many erroneously believe that the Christian life must be first and foremost be founded on the four gospels. The



reasoning being that these were the actual teachings of Jesus himself – thus "red letter" Bibles. This reasoning denies the validity of the Word later revealed by the same Jesus to the Apostles. This over emphasis on the gospels at the expense of the epistles (letters) can lead to confusion and an under valuing of the later letters written by the Apostles under the anointing of the Holy Spirit. In fact these New Testament letters are a continuation and fulfilment of the gospels. They add to the progressive revelation of the full gospel of Jesus Christ, His New Covenant, His Kingdom, His righteousness and His grace. They are the very means by which the Holy Spirit interprets and clarifies the gospels. The Apostle Paul makes it clear that he received his teachings by direct revelation from the risen, glorified, Jesus (Gal.1:12). The teachings of letters such as Romans and Galatians, clarify and reveal foundational Christian truths which are only hinted at in the gospels e.g. the righteousness of Christ, justification by faith, grace, sonship, Christ in us, Abba, etc. It would be extremely difficult to derive these key foundational Christian doctrines from just the gospels. In fact if one was only to study the gospels one could well end up concluding that salvation is primarily by good works and law keeping! Consequently, an over emphasis on the four gospels can lead to legalism unless balanced by the grace revealed in the epistles that clarify the gospels and bring the full revelation of the grace and the freedom that is ours in Christ. It is therefore important that we distinguish between the purpose of the gospels and the purpose of the epistles and read the gospels in the context of Jesus later teaching given through the letters of the Apostles - the Epistles.

### **2.3 THE KEY ISSUE IN THE GOSPELS**

There are obviously many truths and themes in the gospels. E.g. Jesus, the way, truth and life, the revelation of God as a Father, the need to be born again, the coming of the Holy Spirit. etc.

However, there are two key and primary interrelated themes that have often been understated and sidelined by gospel teachers. They are;

- 1) True righteousness.
- 2) The Kingdom of God.

When reading the gospels these important intertwined themes need to be emphasized if we are to correctly interpret and apply the gospel's teachings today. Throughout the gospels Jesus sought to rectify Israel's (Mt.15:24) misconceptions concerning these key spiritual truths and started pointing to a new way and a new understanding of righteousness and the kingdom which He could only fully



revealed at a later time after certain events had taken place. It is the issue of "true and Godly righteousness?" that this part of the course will address.

### **3. RIGHTEOUSNESS IS THE KEY TO THE GOSPEL OF GRACE**

#### **3.1 SPIRITUAL MATURITY**

*Heb 5:12-13 In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness.*

The Scriptures define spiritual immaturity as a lack of understanding of true righteousness. That's a big surprise to most people. Surprisingly many Bible teachers battle to give a sound New Covenant definition of righteousness. The majority of teachers define righteousness as the right things we do rather than the right standing we have been given "in Christ" (Ro.3:21-22). This is because so many of us have mixed law and grace and still have an works mentality and an Old Testament based theology. The concept of being spiritually mature is important for the kingdom of God and for discipleship as only spiritual "adults" can reproduce i.e. make disciples for the kingdom. Thus we have even more reason to look at this subject carefully as I'm sure we all want to be mature in Christ.



### 3.2 WHAT IS TRUE, GOD DEPENDANT, RIGHTEOUSNESS?

## 3. GRACE - UNEARNED RIGHTEOUSNESS

### THE GRACE OF A NEW COVENANT

True Righteousness is only by faith in Jesus Christ

**Rom 3:21 -24 But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.**

- Jesus pointed to real righteousness that is by faith in Him.
- Jesus alone makes us "Right with God" – nothing else can!
- God hates any form of "self" Righteousness.
- He only condemned the self righteous religious leaders, not sinners.
- Jesus pointed to a New Covenant that was about to come.
- He proclaimed a spiritual kingdom that is inside Believers (The heart).
- Jesus enacted Grace – by miracles and forgiveness.
- He shows Grace to the humble, contrite & sinful.
- He forgave all sinners.
- He blesses those who turned to Him.
- He revealed the Father & proclaimed us children of God.
- He imparted His righteousness.

The work and purpose of the cross is to impute Christ's righteousness to the children of God.

Without true, God dependant, righteousness there is no salvation and there can be no intimate relationship with Abba, Father. True righteousness is :

- i. Jesus' righteousness.
- ii. A dependence on God.
- iii. A gift from God.
- iv. Imputed to us by Jesus.
- v. Our right standing with God by grace.
- vi. A right and loving relationship with God through Christ.
- vii. The condition of man that is acceptable to God.
- viii. A state approval by God.
- ix. An inner spiritual state of holiness.
- x. Justification through the cross - sinless in God's eyes.
- xi. A state where our sins are no longer recorded or remembered.
- xii. Freedom from God's condemnation and judgement.

Many think that righteousness is based on what we do, but actually the New Testament Scriptures reveal that true righteousness is dependent on God and based on faith in his goodness expressed in Jesus Christ. It is this faith and true righteousness that leads to right doing and living. It is not right doing, or works, that produces righteousness as righteousness is a root not a fruit.

Righteousness practiced by Jews and all other religions is an external self-righteousness based on good works and the keeping of religious laws. This form of righteousness never made Israel or anyone else right with God (Ro.3:10). It always falls short of true Godly righteousness (Mt.5:20). Religious self-righteousness is in fact totally foreign and opposed to true, God dependant, righteousness. The gospels reveal that Israel and her leaders had become proud, boastful and self-righteous; dependent on self-effort and a legalistic religious system for their righteousness, instead of depending on God. Jesus came to show the way back to true righteousness which Abraham had foresaw and received by faith (Gen.15:6).

Martin Luther has this to say, *"At last meditating day and night, by the mercy of God, I began to understand that the righteousness of God is that through which the righteous live by a gift of God, namely by faith. Here I felt as if I were entirely born again and had entered paradise itself through the gates that had been flung open."*

Watchman Nee said, *"The Bible does not say that we have put on the righteous garment of Christ. It only says that we have put on Christ." Galatians 3:27 says that we have put on Christ. Today we have not put on the righteousness of Christ, but Christ Himself. The righteousness of Christ is something that is in Christ Himself, and it is history. Today Christians come to God through putting on Christ. Christ Himself has become our righteousness, and we can come to God at any time because Christ lives forever."*



### 3.3 JUSTIFICATION

Act 13:38 *"Therefore, my brothers, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. Through him everyone who believes is justified from everything you could not be justified from by the law of Moses."*

God has declared us totally righteous, all debt due because of sin was totally paid by Jesus death (Ro.4:25). The amazing thing is that this scripture then goes on to teach that Jesus was then raised from the dead for our justification, it is emphasising



that if any sin debt was outstanding then Jesus could not have been raised as justice would not have been complete. It is finished, justification for all sin is complete, we are not guilty nor condemned any longer.

A righteous person is one that is justified. i.e. just as if they had, and never will have, sinned. God's justice has been served upon us and we have now been found not guilty. The words righteousness and justification are often interchanged as they are very similar in meaning. The connection is that through Jesus' grace we have been redeemed and justified and this makes us righteous. We are now in right standing with God because it is just as if we never sinned. Jesus paid the price for our sin, he redeemed us from the sentence of death and died in our place. Justice has been served and we are justified.

The Greek word justify is *dikaioō* which Thayer defines as to render righteous or such he ought to be, to show, exhibit, evince, one to be righteous, such as he is and wishes himself to be considered; to declare, pronounce, one to be just, righteous, or such as he ought to be. Strong defines justified as to render (that is, show or regard as) just or innocent, free, be righteous.

Here are some other scriptures on justification.

*Isa 53:11 After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities.*

*Rom 4:5 However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness.*

*Rom 4:25 He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.*

*Rom 5:1 Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.*

*1Co 6:11 And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.*

### **3.4 WE CAN REST IN THE WORK OF THE CROSS**

*(Rom 4:5) However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness.*

Godly living and good works come out of the inner condition of the heart (Mt.15:18). This right heart condition



is founded on a revelation of grace (Rom.4:16) and that we are the righteousness of Christ (2Co.2:21). A state of righteousness comes about, not because of what we do, but because of who we are; a part of Christ. Jesus is in us, we are dead, He is alive (Gal 2:20). Our sins are no longer taken into account (Rom 4:8). Our righteousness is Jesus' righteousness. Our life is now Jesus' life. We have glorious freedom from condemnation (Rom 8:1-16). The cross has done all we need to make us right with God. It is from this position that agape love, Gods good works and right living is manifest in our lives. The cross has imputed the righteousness of Christ to us and we can now rest from our own "good" works and striving to make ourselves right with God.

This is how the great Evangelical preacher David Martyn Lloyd -Jones put it "The man who has faith is the man who is no longer looking at himself and no longer looking to himself. He no longer looks at anything he once was. He does not look at what he is now. He does not even look at what he hopes to be as the result of his own efforts. He looks entirely to the Lord Jesus Christ and His finished work, and rests on that alone. He has ceased to say, "Ah yes, I used to commit terrible sins but I have done this and that." He stops saying that. If he goes on saying that, he has not got faith. Faith speaks in an entirely different manner and makes a man say, "Yes I have sinned grievously, I have lived a life of sin, yet I know that I am a child of God because I am not resting on any righteousness of my own; my righteousness is in Jesus Christ and God has put that to my account."

*(Gal. 2:20)(MSG) Christ's life showed me how, and enabled me to do it. I identified myself completely with him. Indeed, I have been crucified with Christ. My ego is no longer central. It is no longer important that I appear righteous before you or have your good opinion, and I am no longer driven to impress God. Christ lives in me. The life you see me living is not "mine," but it is lived by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*

#### **4. SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS**

*Rom 10:3 Since the Jews did not know the righteousness that comes from God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness.*

Some times reading the gospels without reference to the grace teaching of the epistles (letters of the Apostles) we can be led to think that righteousness is by works. Therefore it is important that we correctly understand the gospels, the context of Jesus' gospel teachings and what His end purpose was. Jesus



preached to Jews. All His disciples and the large majority of His listeners were Jews. They were living under the religious laws of Moses. They were waiting for the Messiah (Christ) to re-establish Israel's kingdom. (Mt.15:24) Jesus boldly proclaimed *"I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel!"* Jesus' first concern was dealing with God's chosen people Israel, who had been chosen to take the good news of God to the world. However the Jews had totally missed God's message and Spirit. (Gen 15:6). Through Abraham Israel had been given the message of a good and loving God. Abraham was the father of the Jewish nation and all those who live by faith. Abraham also had a revelation of true righteousness that came through faith. But Israel rejected righteousness by faith and instead sought a religious self-righteousness based on their goodness and self-effort. Thus God gave them the Law to expose their sinful self-righteousness. (Jer. 23:11) (Rom. 11:26) They in fact had become Godless, proud and boastful, they did not want an intimate relationship with a loving God, they chose by their actions and hardness of heart to seek righteousness through law keeping, they rejected the faith of Abraham. God gave Israel the Law and His conditional blessing based on them keeping every single one of the 613 laws of the Law. Read Deut 28 and you will see the impossibility and horror of this Law system. Sadly Israel honestly thought they were good enough to do it but they failed, over and over again.

It was into this context that Jesus came and this was the very issue He addressed through the gospels. He came to reveal to Israel that the righteousness they thought they had attained through the Law actually fell completely short of God's holy standard.....what a shock this was to them! The Jews knew that the gentiles were Godless and unrighteous but never suspected they were too!

The simple truth is that both Jews and Gentiles alike are under sin (Rom.3:9) *"There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one."*

#### **4.1 WHEN GOOD WORKS GO BAD**

*Mat 19:17 "Why do you ask me about what is good?" Jesus replied. "There is only One who is good. If you want to enter life, keep the commandments."*

The issue for most religious people is that they think they can do enough good works to qualify themselves for eternal life and blessing. They honestly think they can keep all God's commandments all the time, as the Law demands (Deut.28:15). Most religious people simply don't realise that their good works are just as sinful as their bad works. Wow, now there's a shocker for you! Let me explain.

Firstly, just to clarify; God loves it when we do the good works He prepared for us to bless others (Eph2:10). But God hates good works when we use them to try to get right with Him or to get something from Him (Eph2:9). Why? Because it denies that his grace is sufficient. Those who do good works to get right with God are self-righteousness and are just as sinful as those who do evil. Doing good and avoiding bad to be righteous with God, is sin. Both things are rooted in pride, self effort, unbelief and a denial that we need to be saved. Both reject God's gift of grace and true righteousness through Jesus. Our good works rooted in self-righteousness need to be repented of. The Pharisees were a perfect example of those who were trying to use good works to be righteous and they were the only people Jesus condemned. Jesus called the Pharisees "sons of the devil" (Joh8:44), because they followed Satan's lie of righteousness through good works.

Job was a man who also trusted in his good works (Job32:) and look where that got him. Sadly and painfully Job learnt the hard way. Abraham on the other hand was a man who simply believe God (Gen15:6) and received God's free gift of righteousness. In a sense Abraham took the easy path, trusting in God, and he was blessed in everything he did. We will be looking at the contrasting lives of Abraham and Job in the coming teachings.

#### **4.2 SELF RIGHTEOUSNESS BREEDS ANGER AND JUDGMENTALISM!**

*Act 7:53 you who have received the law that was put into effect through angels but have not obeyed it." When they heard this, they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him.*

Watch out, when self righteousness is expose, people can get really angry and judgmental. They can even become murderous like Cain, who is a type of self-righteous person. The self-righteous Pharisees wanted to kill, Jesus, Paul and anyone else preaching the righteousness of Christ apart from the Law of Moses. Anger rises because the self effort of Law keeping is shown to be in vain and pride in self is exposed.

Angry people are often legalistic and judgmental. Moses, who represents the Law, ended up angry and bitter because Israel couldn't make the grade and couldn't obey God. Ironically within the first few minutes of meeting God Moses did the same thing he judged Israel for, he totally doubted everything God said and commanded him to do (Ex.3&4). The Law produces angry, judgmental and self-righteous people who oppose grace. The other fruits of self righteousness are; control, inability to delegate, anxiety, perfectionism, lack of trust etc.





#### 4.3 JESUS EXPOSED THE SIN OF SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS

*Mt.5:28 I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart....If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.*

Jesus taught and acted with the specific purpose of challenging the legalistic unbelieving hearts of the Jews, including his own Jewish disciples. Many of Jesus' disciples followed Jesus as a Rabbi and some as Israel's Messiah, they claimed to believe His message but in fact many disciples totally misunderstood and eventually many turned away from Him (John 6:66) because His teachings confronted head on the issue of the Jewish Kingdom, Jewish pride and the legalistic, self righteousness taught by



the Jewish religious leaders. He condemned the religious system and its leaders outright. We find Jesus condemning the religious Pharisees in the strongest possible terms (Mat.23:1-33) and yet He showed mercy and grace to those struggling with sin (Jn.8:11).

Strangely Jesus did not go about exposing the hypocrisy of religious legalism as we would expect. He in fact would use law to destroy the Law; to those practicing and preaching law and righteousness through works Jesus preached a form of super law (Mat 5:28) - pluck your eye out, cut your arm off if they cause you to sin, even being angry with someone is murder. Yes, this may seem like simple hyperbole but to the Pharisees who regularly stoned people to death for their sins this was something very real. Jesus did this to expose the hypocrisy and shortcomings of their law keeping and the righteousness they thought they had earned.

In his earthly ministry Jesus often preached law and conditional salvation. There are numerous examples in the gospels of Jesus laying down conditions for the Jews to receive salvation (Matt.5:20, 6:14, 7:21, 10:33, 18:35, 19:21, 25:46. etc.) this was Jesus attempt to drive the Jews and their Law preachers to a place where they would eventually understand that they just could not do it by themselves - they needed God's grace. Jesus was revealing that it was the Jew's pride and self-righteousness that was a problem and this sin was a key issue for God.

For example Jesus preached (Mat 5:48) "*Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect*". See what I mean, who can do such a thing? Likewise in the story of the Rich Ruler (Mark 10:17-27) the self-righteous rich man missed the point . When the disciples heard this story, they were greatly

astonished and asked, *“Who then can be saved?”* Jesus looked at them and said, *“With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”* Jesus was implying grace.

#### 4.4 SCRIPTURAL EXERCISE.

Read the story of the Rich Ruler (Mk.10:17) and reflect on what it is teaching about self-righteousness and grace.

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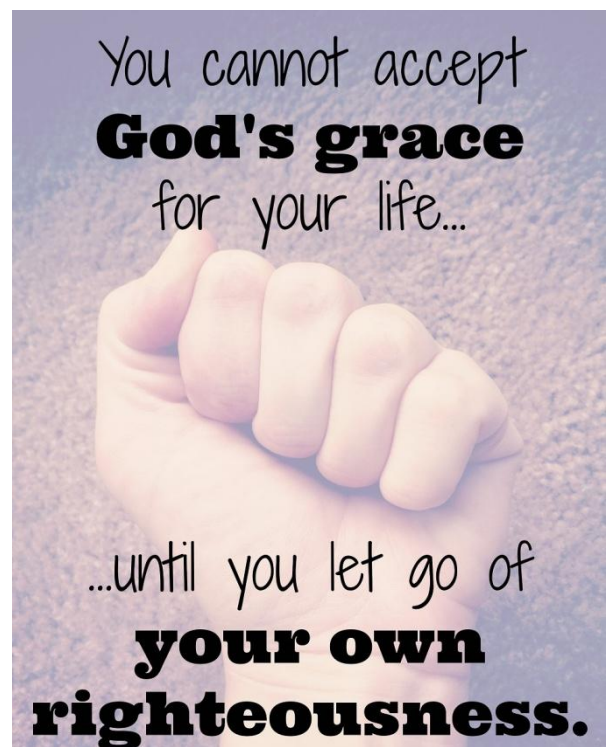
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#### 4.5 REPENT OF THE SIN OF SELF RIGHTEOUSNESS

*(Mt.4:17) Repent for the Kingdom of heaven is near.*

Repentance and righteousness are two keys to God's Kingdom! Jesus' gospel teachings were a call to both the Jews, His own Jewish disciples and ultimately to all mankind, to repent. The teachings of the gospels are not just a call to sinners, they are a call to the Jews and by extension to all religious people to repent from a self-centred, self-righteousness and legalism. They are a call to turn back to a complete dependence on God. The repentance Jesus was looking for was not repentance from moral sin but repentance from the foundational sin of unbelief which Jesus knew was the root of all moral sin. God hates all sin but there is a primary, foundational sin in which all moral sin is rooted, the sin of pride; mankind's independence,

self righteousness and unbelief in a good and loving God. At its core all moral sin is a manifestation of man's unbelief and pride! Unbelief and self-righteousness are the sins which Holy Spirit exposes





*(John 16:8): When the Holy Spirit comes, He will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me.*

The Pharisees and the average Jew of Jesus' time generally lead morally up right lives because of the strict imposition in society of the laws of Moses. But this was exactly the problem, they had become self-righteous, moralistic and judgmental of others. They trusted in their own goodness and in their own efforts of law keeping instead of in God. This is a position that is most offensive to God. This is the great sin of fallen mankind, superbly manifest in the Jewish religious society of Jesus' day.

## **5. THE BOOK OF ROMANS: THE LETTER OF RIGHTEOUSNESS**

*Rom 1:16-17 I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith."*

Paul's letter addressed to the early believers living in Rome is probably the most important book in the Bible. It sums up the very essence of the whole gospel message; righteousness is God's gift that is appropriated by faith in Christ and this righteousness results in God's adoption of us as His children. We are beloved children of grace who are forgiven, blessed, righteous and victorious.

If you have time it is good to meditate on the key scriptures on righteousness that are found throughout Romans. Because of the importance of the book of Romans we will look at the whole book in another course.



## **6. THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND RIGHTEOUSNESS**

*Rom. 5:17 For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.*

The reign and rule of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ comes about by grace founded on Christ's gift of righteousness. We are called to reign with Christ. To reign, is to have authority and control over ones events and circumstances. Kings reign over their kingdoms. All things are submitted to them. Jesus is our King and we are His representatives here on earth (2Co.5:20). When we understand that we are

perfectly righteous with God it gives us confidence and authority to act on His behalf to advance His Kingdom. When we are firmly established in righteousness we cannot be overcome by the enemy. As the above scripture indicates, we are called to reign over our lives through the righteousness of Christ.

## 6.1 GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS AND RESURRECTION POWER

*Php 3:9-10 ...be found in Christ, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. I want to know Christ, yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death...*

There is a link between our revelation, understanding and acceptance of the righteousness of Christ and moving in resurrection power and life. We are called to move in the power of the gospel (1Cor 2:4) and the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8) that comes through the grace of Jesus Christ. Legalism and self-righteousness leads to a form of carnal intellectualism that quenches and grieves the Holy Spirit (1Co.2:14). Accepting the complete, full work of the cross and the righteousness that comes there from is the grace leads to freedom and power of the Spirit.

## 6.2 GOD'S KINGDOM

*(Act 1:6) "Lord are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?"*

Jesus teaching and preaching was the good news about the kingdom (Mt.4:23). The Jews and even Jesus' own disciples, thought that the Messiah/ Christ had come to establish a physical kingdom for Israel. They wanted to see Israel glorified among the nations of the earth just like in King David's time (Jn.12:13). The Jews thought the new "King of Israel" had come but they turned on Jesus very quickly when they discovered that this was not his plan! Even after Jesus' resurrection, the disciple still did not understand Jesus' teachings on the Kingdom (Acts 1:8). It's significant that Jesus' reply was to point them to the coming Holy Spirit, for the Kingdom is Spirit! They did not understand that the Kingdom of God is a spiritual inner kingdom based on Jesus' righteousness (Lk.17:21). The Jews and even Jesus' own disciples mistakenly sought a kingdom and a righteousness that was physical and



external (Rom.9:31-10:5) rather than internal. Jesus proclaimed a direct link between the Kingdom of God (Mt.6:33), righteousness, and blessings.

### 6.3 THE KINGDOM AND RIGHTEOUSNESS - THE MISSING KEY



*Rom 14:17 For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.*

The link between The Kingdom and God's righteousness can be seen in the above scripture. The majority of present day teachings on the Kingdom of God say very little about righteousness. The Kingdom of God and righteousness are inextricably intertwined. Without a solid grounding in God's righteousness we cannot fully take hold of the truths of the Kingdom nor will we see the kingdom reign and rule of Jesus manifesting in an ongoing way in our lives. Therefore we need to look carefully at the issue of our righteousness and understand the difference between our own self generated righteousness and Christ dependant righteousness that pleases God and qualifies us to move in the power of the kingdom.

### 6.4 JESUS AND THE VICTORY OF THE CROSS

*Col. 2:13-15 He forgave us all our sins having cancelled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.*

*Rom. 10:4 Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.*

These are key scriptures in spiritual warfare. In the past the Law gave Satan legal spiritual rights to attack God's people. This was because the Law was based on self-righteousness through



self effort, works or a legalistic fear based sacrificial system that always fell short and therefore offered no protection.

We see the weakness and the terrible result of self-righteousness and self-justification in the life of Job ( Job 40:8). At that time, Job, which by the way means "hated" was the most righteous man on earth, but it was self-righteousness based on his own efforts and doings. Job was motivated by fear and his righteousness was not based on faith. (we will look more at Job and Abraham in the end section). God allows Satan to test any righteousness that is not based on faith in His Saviour (Job1:8). Satan will always test self righteousness, because even he knows it is always insufficient as it does not depend on God's goodness but on self effort.

In contrast to Job, Abraham had a righteousness from God that was by faith and consequently he was always protected and blessed. The good news is that the Righteousness from God through faith in Christ cannot be overcome by Satan. Through the cross we are perfectly and permanently righteous through God's gift - Satan no longer has any right to attack us! On the cross Jesus cancelled the Law that gave Satan rights to attack and afflict believers. If we see these truths and believe them, then Satan and his allies fear, sickness and death, lose their power .

## **6.5 SATAN'S SCHEME IS TO UNDERMINE OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS**

*1Co. 1:30 It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.*

We are called to take our stand against Satan's schemes (Eph6:11). His scheme from the beginning has always been to sow doubt about God's promises and undermine our relationship with God (Gen. 3:1). He does this by speaking lies that sound true. Satan's scheme is to try to convince us that he has rights into our lives because our lives are sinful not right in some way. He undermines our righteousness and tries to get us to believe that our right standing with God is based on our actions instead of on faith. Satan always tries to undermine our identity as God's Children who are blessed and right with God. He tries to convince us that we are sinners who are unworthy and deserve punishment. Focusing on the work of the cross and who we are in Christ is the best form of warfare against Satan.

## **6.6 RIGHTEOUSNESS IS OUR WEAPON**

*2Co. 6:7 In truthful speech and in the power of God; with weapons of righteousness in the right hand and in the left.*

Our righteousness in Christ is our weapon against Satan. Our response to Satan when he attacks or accuses us is simply to point to Jesus Christ and that we are righteous through Him alone. This totally disarms Satan. Satan can only afflict your life if you allow him to convince you that you are not righteous and therefore deserve to be punished or attacked. When under attack always point to your worthiness and righteousness in Christ - speak it out loud, use this truth as a weapon and see victory.

For your own clarification write down some reflections on the questions. Are you righteous? If so why? \_\_\_\_\_

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