

Some Notes On

Righteousness and The Nature of Sin

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the righteousness of God in Him,”
2 Cor.5:21.

by

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This booklet has been written to look
at mankind's problem, which causes him
to be separated from God, and tries
to understand the amazing gift
His answer brings.

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The Nature of Sin - Mankind’s Real Problem

When we consider what it is that is mankind’s real problem, before being ‘born again’ and becoming a Christian, we can think that it is his wrong ‘doings’, his ‘sinning’, that causes him to be **separated from God!** If it were, it would only take ‘good works’ to bring about a reconciliation.

Mankind’s real problem, however, goes right back to Adam because through one man [Adam’s] **sin** entered the world, and **death** through sin spread to **all** men, (Rom.5:12). Although sin was not imputed before the law, nevertheless **death** reigned, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of Adam’s offence, (v.14). Through Adam’s disobedience many were made sinners and through one transgression there resulted condemnation to **all** men, (v.19 &18), and **sin** reigned in **death**, (v.21).

We can see, therefore, that although **all** have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, (Rom.3:23), and there is **none** righteous, **not even one**, (Rom.3:10), mankind actually also has a ‘death problem’, for “**in Adam all die**,” (1Cor.15:22). This ‘death’, of course, speaks of ‘spiritual death’.

‘Spiritual death’ does not mean we cease to ‘be’, only that we are separated from God, and we each enter this world suffering from this relationship problem. It is our ‘wrong being’ which **then** results in our ‘wrong doing’. It is a problem which already exists when we are born. It was **not** a problem which came upon us with our ‘wrong doings’, or ‘sins’. We inherit it!

What is the Answer?

Most Religions try to remove the consequence of ‘sins’ in an endeavour to deal with that which separates man from God. The Bible alone deals with the heredity of ‘sin and death’. The Bible reveals that Jesus Christ took upon Himself, not just our fleshly sins, but the very ‘heredity of sin’ itself, which no man can do anything about himself. God made His own Son to **be** SIN that He might make the sinner a saint. **Jesus died to give us new life**, and so became the **ONLY** answer to mankind’s problem.

Paul explains that we were **all** “**DEAD** in our trespasses and sins, in which we formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too **all** formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were **by nature** children of wrath, **even as the rest**,” (Eph.2:1-3). We were **all** separate from Christ, “having no hope and without God in the world,” (Eph.2:12).

The Beginning of Mankind’s Sin and Subsequent Death

We can read of the beginning of mankind’s problem in the book of Genesis where we read of ‘**death’s**’ beginning. God warned Adam, “From the tree of the knowledge of good and

evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it, you shall surely **die**,” (Gen.2:17). Adam did not die physically on the day he disobeyed God. It was going to take several hundred years for his body to die, but he did die spiritually, and on that day **he was separated from God**.

So, **all** mankind is born in this same state of ‘spiritual death’, and inherit the same spiritual condition which causes them to be separated from God, and as a result, the very “**nature of sin**” described in this story of ‘mankind’s beginning’, the spirit of disobedience, of ‘I know best’, the desire to be independent from God, has been passed on to us all.

Spiritual Death Means Separation of Man from God

It is important to realise that ‘spiritual death’, which is the opposite to ‘spiritual life’, does not denote ‘non-existence’ but ‘conscious existence in separation from God’. Likewise, ‘spiritual life’ is ‘conscious existence in communion with God’. As already stated, **spiritual death does not mean we cease to be, only that we are separated from God**.

The Good News

The gospel is the good news that God had an answer to mankind’s problem through His Son dying upon the cross. God even refers to this answer in the book of Genesis where God told Satan that there would be enmity between his seed and the seed of the woman, (Gen.3:15). This ‘seed of the woman’ speaks of Jesus, for God goes on to say, “He [Jesus] shall crush you on the head,” foretelling of Jesus victory over Satan, and “You shall bruise Him on the heel,” speaking of Jesus death on the cross, (v.15).

So it is in Jesus, through His own blood, that He obtained eternal redemption for us, (Heb.9:12). **Jesus paid the price to buy us back**.

Redemption Which Leads to New Life

As explained by Paul to the Church at Corinth, **Christ Jesus has become to us redemption**, (1 Cor.1:30). **Jesus paid the price** so that we need no longer be separated from God. It is through this redemption which is in Christ Jesus that the price is paid, in order that we might be justified, made righteous, (Rom.3:24). Jesus not only paid the price so that which separates us from God could be cancelled, the certificate of debt consisting of decree’s against us and which was hostile to us, (Col.2:14), but **ALSO** so we could receive **new life** and be born again, and so become the righteousness of God in Christ. It is because Jesus paid the price - redeemed us, that those who believe in ‘Him who raised Jesus from the dead’ can be made righteous. Jesus was delivered up because of our transgressions and was raised for our justification - to make us righteous, (Rom.4:24&25).

Jesus was not only raised for our justification [righteousness] but also to give us **new life**, that we might be ‘born again’, for we are “born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,” (1 Pet.1:3). This **life**, like justification, is imparted to us through faith, for “the just shall **live** by faith,” (Rom.1:17). The gospel is the power of God for salvation to everyone who **believes**, for in it the **righteousness** of God is revealed from **faith** to **faith**, (Rom.1:16&17).

Many realise that by the death of Jesus, while we were enemies, we were reconciled, but we also need to realise that we receive the fullness of His salvation **by His life**, (Rom.5:10): “For if while we were still enemies we were reconciled to God through the

death of His Son, much more having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.” It is understanding this twofold reality which enables us to reign in life.

Crucified and Raised with Christ

Few Christians consider themselves able to say, along with Paul, “I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live but Christ lives in me,” (Gal.2:20). It is of vital importance that we identify ourselves with all that Jesus has accomplished for us. We must identify ourselves with Jesus death for we have been [past tense] crucified with Christ, since we have been baptised into His death, (Rom.6:2&6). Likewise, just as Jesus was raised from the dead, through the glory of the Father, we too have been [past tense] raised together with Him so we might walk in newness of life, (Rom.6:4 and Eph.2:6). “Our old self was [past tense] crucified with Christ that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we should no longer be slaves of sin,” (Rom.6:6). So, we need to consider ourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus, **because we are**, (Rom.6:6-11). “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus because the law of the Spirit of **life** in Christ Jesus has set us free from the law of **sin** and **death**,” (Rom.8:1&2), yet few know it, or walk in the reality of this most amazing substitutionary sacrifice that Jesus has won for us all.

Because the Spirit of God is now in us, our spirit is **alive** because of **righteousness**, and the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead, who dwells in us, will also give **life** to our mortal bodies whilst we await eagerly for our future adoption, the redemption of our body itself, (Rom.8:9-11&23).

Because Jesus has been made sin for us, we can enter into union with God because of what Jesus, our Lord, has accomplished on the cross. A man cannot redeem himself. Only Jesus could do this. It is absolutely finished and complete but how it applies to each of us is a question of our individual action, our walk of faith. Understanding righteousness is essential if we are to walk the walk of faith.

Trying to Understand Righteousness

Most Christian’s seem to have only a vague understanding of what ‘righteousness’, or ‘being righteous’, means. If asked, many would suggest it is to do with ‘good works’ rather than our ‘right standing’ with God. Few would dare to confess they were righteous! They have no clear understanding that they are, in fact, righteous. As we seek to walk with Jesus as our King it is imperative for us to understand God’s righteousness. So let us try and build up an understanding of just what this most amazing ‘gift’ actually is.

In Greek, the word ‘righteous’ and ‘just’ are exactly the same. In English we may be unclear as to what the word ‘righteous’ means, realising its theological use, whilst the word ‘just’, although meaning exactly the same, is often used in a much broader way.

In Greek the word ‘DIAKAIÔSIS’ means ‘justification’, or ‘being made righteous’, and the word ‘DIAKAIÔÏ’ is the verb ‘to justify’, or ‘to declare righteous’. ‘DIAKAIOS’ is the Greek adjective meaning ‘just’, or ‘righteous’, and ‘DIAKAIOSUNÇ’ means ‘righteousness’, the ‘quality of being just’.

Jesus told us to “Seek **first** His [God the Father’s] Kingdom and His [the Father’s] **righteousness**,” (Matt.6:33), to ensure God’s provision. The writer to the Hebrews tells us that “Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the **word of right-**

eousness... therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity,” (Heb.5:13 & 6:1).

If our being able to understand **righteousness** is so important for us to grow spiritually we need to ensure we gain this understanding. It is in fact essential if we are to “reign in life through Jesus Christ,” for Paul tells us that those “who receive the abundance of grace **and of the gift of righteousness** will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ, (Rom.5:17).

What does Righteousness Mean?

Among many wonderful things we receive as ‘new creations’ is **righteousness**. This gives us **‘the ability to stand in the Fathers presence without a sense of guilt, condemnation, or inferiority’**, because we are ‘not guilty’. We are ‘under no condemnation’, and are no longer unworthy, for we have been made righteous. We are not ‘sinners’ but ‘saints’. We have become the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus. Because of this we “can come boldly before the throne of grace” at any time, (Heb.4:16). Because of our righteousness in Christ, fellowship with our heavenly Father becomes a reality. When we realise our righteous position we lose our consciousness of sin which continually creates a sense of unworthiness, weakness, or lack of ability. Satan becomes wary of us because we know we are the righteousness of God in Christ.

Paul exhorts us to “awake to righteousness and stop sinning; for some have no knowledge of God,” (1Cor.15:34). Many Christians are only too conscious of their sins and weaknesses. They feel unworthy and even feel a need to grovel before God, continually asking for forgiveness, but never walking in newness of life. The reason for this is that most Christians ONLY concentrate upon our ‘reconciliation through the cross’, which provides the means by which God is able to forgive our sins. What Jesus did on the cross is, however, only PART of what Jesus accomplished for us. IN ADDITION to reconciling us through His blood, by dying on the cross, He was ALSO **‘raised for our justification [righteousness],’** (Rom.4:25).

The Power of His Resurrection

The Church, the Body of Christ, has been robbed of much of its understanding of what Jesus obtained for us through His resurrection. Satan seems quite content for us to continually concentrate on what Jesus did for us on the cross, tremendous though that was, as long as we do not additionally appropriate what Jesus ALSO accomplished on the day He was raised from the dead!

“When we were **dead**, [that is spiritually dead, separated from God], in our sins, we were made **alive** together with Christ and were raised with Him, and He seated us with Him in heavenly places, in Christ Jesus,” (Eph.2:5&6). This ‘quickening’, or ‘being made alive’, is also described as ‘being born again’. We were **‘born again... through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,’** (1Pet.1:3). “We were reconciled through Jesus death, [i.e. the cross], but saved through His life, [i.e.. His resurrection],” (Rom.5:10). **BOTH** aspects of what Jesus accomplished between the crucifixion and the resurrection are desperately important. **The Christian Religion, which is not true Christianity, stops at the cross.** As true believers, we need to have “the eyes of our hearts enlightened so we may know what are the riches of His [Gods] inheritance in the saints [us], and what is the surpassing greatness of His power towards us who believe... which our Father brought about in Christ, **when He raised Jesus from the dead**, and seated Him at His right hand in heavenly

places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named... and put all things under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the Church, which is His body,” (Eph.1:18-23).

It was because “Jesus humbled Himself to the point of death on the cross that God highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him a Name which is above every name, that at the Name of Jesus every knee should bow,” (Phil.2:8-10). The writer to the Hebrews tells us that Jesus “inherited a more excellent Name” because God said, “Thou art My Son, today I have begotten Thee,” (Heb.1:4&5). That ‘day’ was **the day of Jesus resurrection**, according to Paul, who states, “He raised up Jesus, as it is also written in the second Psalm, ‘Thou art My Son, today I have begotten Thee,’” (Acts 13:33 and Ps.2:7). **Jesus was begotten on the day He was raised from the dead!** Paul tells us Jesus “was declared the Son of God with power **by the resurrection from the dead**,” (Rom.1:4). This was the ‘day’ when Jesus was highly exalted and had the Name which is above every other name bestowed upon Him, (Phil.2:9 and Heb.1:4&5). The ‘day’ “**He was RAISED for our justification**” [righteousness], (Rom.4:25).

God Demonstrates that He is Righteous

Paul explains that we are justified, [made righteous], by grace, as a GIFT, through the price Jesus paid through His death on the cross, called a “propitiation, [appeasement], through His blood,” (Rom.3:24&25). Paul states that Jesus’ death enabled God to “demonstrate HIS righteousness,” so that “HE might be just, [righteous], and the justifier, [the one who makes righteous], of the one who has faith in Jesus,” (v.26). But this ‘gift’ still has to be appropriated by faith.

Justification by Faith

Paul explains “that a man is justified, [made righteous], BY FAITH, (v.28). Habakkuk prophesied that the “Righteous shall live by faith,” (Hab.2:4). This is not only speaking of the fact we live our lives - future - by faith, but we received life itself by faith. Our righteousness and our new life in Christ are entwined together. “The gospel is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes... for in it the **righteousness of God** is revealed from faith to faith, as it is written, ‘but the righteous will live by faith,’” (Rom.1:16&17).

It is through the “righteousness of FAITH” that Abraham was told, “All the nations shall be blessed in you,” (Gal.3:8 & Rom.4:13). Abraham **believed** God and so his **faith** was “reckoned to him as righteousness,” but not for Abraham only, “but also for US who believe **in him who raised Jesus from the dead**,” (Rom.4:23&24). When we “confessed Jesus as Lord with our mouth, and believed in our heart that **God raised Him from the dead**” we were saved, for “with the heart man believes, **resulting in RIGHTEOUSNESS**, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation,” (Rom.10:9&10).

Sin No Longer Reigns - Grace Now Reigns

Paul explains that through Adam sin entered into the world, and **death** through sin, resulting in condemnation to all men, but through the one act of righteousness there resulted “**righteousness of life**” to all men. By one mans [Adams] disobedience the many were made sinners; through one man’s [Jesus’] obedience, many will be [are and have been], made righteous, [just], (Rom.5:19). Sin reigned in death but grace reigns through righteousness so that those who receive the abundance of grace and the GIFT of **righteous-**

ness will REIGN in life through Jesus Christ, (Rom.5:17&21). “**Christ Jesus has become to us righteousness,**” (1Cor.1:30). **WE ARE RIGHTEOUS!** Why is it, therefore, that we may not ‘feel’ it?

The Conflict Within

The reason we so often do not ‘feel’ righteous is because we have our minds set on the things of the flesh and not the Spirit, (Rom.8:5&6). We need to realise that we ARE “**new creations**”: “If any man is in Christ he is a new creation,” (2Cor.5:17). The New Covenant that we have become partakers of has resulted in God giving us a new heart and putting a new spirit within us, having removed our heart of stone from our flesh, and giving us a heart of flesh. Furthermore, God has put His Spirit WITHIN us! (Ez.36:26&27). When we were “born again”, quickened, our ‘spirit man’, once dead and separated from God, was made alive. We are brought back into relationship with God and are now able to fellowship with Him in spirit.

Paul speaks of his ‘inner man’ as being the real ‘him’. Paul says that his ‘outer man’ is decaying, (2Cor.4:16). He goes on to say that when he, his inner man, [his spirit], is absent from his body, he, [the real ‘him’], will be home with the Lord, (2Cor.5:8). He says that “if any man is in Christ he is a new creation, [creature], the old things passed away; behold new things have come,” (v17), and goes on to explain that God has “made Him, who knew no sin, [Jesus], to be sin on our behalf, **that we might become the righteousness of God in Him,**” (v.21).

The Kingdom of God is Righteousness

So, if we do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit, there is no longer any condemnation for us. Because Christ is IN us, though our body is dead because of sin, **our spirit is alive because of righteousness**, (Rom.8:1-10). This enables us to begin to step into the wonderful reality of the Kingdom of God NOW, for, “**THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS ... RIGHTEOUSNESS**... and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit,” (Rom.14:17). So we can see that it was because Christ was raised from the dead that we can walk in newness of life, (Rom.6:4). Because we are united with Jesus in His death, having been crucified with Christ - so that it is no longer we who live, but Christ who lives in us, (Gal.2:20) - we can be united with Him in the likeness of His resurrection, (Rom.6:5). Since we have died with Christ, we believe we shall also live with Him, (v.8). So, we are to consider ourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus, BECAUSE WE ARE (Rom.6:11). We are to present ourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and our members as instruments of righteousness, (v.13), our obedience resulting in righteousness being worked out, (v.16). Being obedient from the heart we become slaves of righteousness, (v.17&18). Having been joined to Christ, who was raised from the dead, that we might bear fruit for God, (Rom.7:4), we are able to serve in newness of the Spirit, (v.6). **We have been made righteous that we might walk in righteousness!** Sin is no longer master over us, either to prevent our fellowship with our heavenly Father, or to rule in our members. **THIS IS VICTORY!**

Reigning in Life

The benefit of our ‘right standing’, which God provided for us at our new birth, also needs to be ongoing. To ensure we walk in this victory we also need to understand that if we sin

we can confess our sins, for then God is faithful and just, [righteous], to forgive our sins and to cleanse us from **all unrighteousness**, (1John1:9). Cleansed from ALL unrighteousness we benefit from being righteous once again. So, we are able to walk in the light, as He Himself is in the light, (1John1:7). Satan is thus defeated in our lives and we can walk in all that we are in Christ, by His gift of righteousness. This is how we reign in life.

In this place of righteousness our prayers are effective because “the effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much,” James tells us, (Jam.5:16). Being righteous is NOT something we attain to, or grow into, for we cannot grow in righteousness. **We are never more righteous than the first day we believed.** We, who are in Christ, are righteous, and as we understand this we can walk as a conqueror over circumstances, acting as a son of God should act in the Father’s presence, or in any crisis that should arise. We need no longer be slaves of men, circumstances, disease, sin or any kind of Satanic tyranny.

Conclusion

Paul counted all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus, his Lord, in order to gain Christ, so that he might be found in Him, not having a righteousness of his own, but that which is through faith in Christ, **the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith**, that he might know Him and **THE POWER OF HIS RESURRECTION**... in order that he also might attain to the resurrection from the dead, (Phil.3:8-11).

We begin to see why Jesus said, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled,” (Matt.5:6).

May we thank God and Praise Him that He has made us righteous, set our minds on the Spirit and walk in the marvellous victory which is ours in Christ Jesus.