

Study 0031

Scripture Text: Romans 3:19-31

In our last study, we saw the implications of Jesus being our propitiation, remitting our sins, and making our justification possible. Indeed, when we see what God has done for mankind, it is a wonder that even those of us who now know these things can live as we now live—without gratitude to God and, in rebellion to His word!

We shall continue from where we stopped in our last study and go on to look at righteousness.

Righteousness

Righteousness is living right according to God's standard. It is however, more than that, for only a person who is righteous, who can live right. It is therefore, that state in which a person is, which enables him to live right before God. There are therefore two sides to righteousness: the first, is that a person is morally upright before God as per his state of being (that is, without having done anything whatsoever); and the second, is living in a manner that is morally upright in spite of the daily challenges that we face as we live in this world. A holy God can only have relationship with holy men (**1 Peter 1:15-16; Amos 3:3**). To ensure that this can happen, God made Jesus to become sin so that He could die for sin, and take it away from man. By the remission of sin, not only do we receive forgiveness, but relationship with God is restored because man is now made righteous—and that because of what Jesus did on the cross at Calvary (**2 Corinthians 5:18-19, 21**)!

Righteousness and justification may seem like the same thing, but they are not, because justification is the process that leads to righteousness; that is, righteousness is the result of justification. Thus, having been declared not guilty and acquitted (justification), the next step is to declare the person righteous (righteousness).

No man can be righteous except God declares him to be so. Many people try to be good enough so that they can be acceptable to God, either by doing 'good deeds', or by trying to fulfil the Law (**Romans 10:3; 9:31-32; Galatians 5:2-4; 3:10-11**). Unfortunately, for such people, they never are able to attain to the standard of moral uprightness set by God; neither are they able to be in right standing before God. This is because, all have sinned (**Romans 3:20**); only the person who perfectly obeys God is righteous; and there is none! Some read the bible and try to live by it, but fail, because the Law shows how weak we are, when it comes to keeping God's command. Hence, our efforts at living right by following the Law is considered a sin. In fact, the reason why the Law was given was to let man see that it is impossible to fulfil its requirement unless we get help from God. That help has come in the form of Jesus Christ, who took away sin from our lives, and destroyed sin's influence over our lives. The death of Jesus was the fulfilment of the righteous requirement of the Law against sin, which states that if a man sins, he shall die (**Ezekiel 18:4, 20**). Since Jesus had taken the sins of the world upon Himself and died on the cross as a result, there is no sin that should be charged against anyone whatsoever. Thus, in fulfilling the righteous requirements of the Law, Jesus became the righteousness of God (God's standard for living); and, through Him, all men are made right with God!

As earlier stated, righteousness is like a coin, with two faces or sides: (a) the righteousness that is credited to man by reason of his trust in Jesus' sacrifice for sins; and, (b) the righteousness that is the result of our living by the leading of the Holy Spirit. The credited

righteousness is a gift from God to man, which comes as a result of what Jesus did on the cross in dying for our sins, and therefore removing every condemnation of sin from our lives. All we need to do to have righteousness credited to us, is to believe God (**Genesis 15:6; Romans 4:3-6, 22-24; James 2:23**), Who says that if we trust Christ's atonement for our sins we shall be saved. Believing God's word, and thus trusting Jesus' death for our righteousness, implies that I am not trying to be good before God by doing something to win God's favour! Jesus' death cancels out our sins, and credits us with righteousness! Once righteousness has been credited to a person, the next step is for him to begin to live righteously (**Matthew 12:33-34; Romans 8:5-8**). And this is possible because when Jesus died on the cross, He disarmed every influence and power of sin over man (**Colossians 2:14-15**); thus, we are now able to follow the leading of God through the Holy Spirit and thus maintain our right standing with God on a daily basis (**Romans 8:9, 14-15; Galatians 5:16, 18**). In other words, our every obedience to God is an act of righteousness, and keeps us in right standing with God (**Romans 4:10-11**). Adam blew it when he disobeyed God in the Garden of Eden; otherwise, he would have been declared righteous had he kept God's command, and all men would have been righteous by his deed (**Genesis 3:1-6; Romans 5:12-19**). By allowing ourselves to be led by the Holy Spirit, everything that the Law requires is fulfilled without our having to follow the Law. We are therefore, not subject to the Law (**Romans 8:9-14**), but to the Spirit of God, and thus always in right standing with God (**Galatians 5:19-22**).

No human effort is required in attaining to God's righteousness; otherwise it would be self-righteousness, which is unacceptable to God (**Isaiah 64:6; 57:12**)! Therefore, as we trust God absolutely, we are righteous in Him, through Him, and by Him (**Philippians 3:9; Romans 8:1-4**).

Righteousness is received by faith in the Son of God (**Galatians 2:20-21**), and not by the effort of man. This implies that although we were sinners, we became saints the moment we believed in Jesus' atoning sacrifice for our sins. Furthermore, there is nothing that we can do to earn God's favour; for indeed, the favour of God is unmerited, which is the true meaning of grace (**Titus 3:3-7**). Thus, we receive God's favour, not because we are from a particular tribe, or because our parents did anything special, or because we were born in a particular period; but because it pleased God to favour us! There is nothing like horoscope, good luck charm, academic prowess, family connections, and so on (**Ecclesiastes 9:11; Psalm 33:16-19**). God looked down upon us and decided to show us mercy (**Romans 9:15-24**). Therefore, we should be thankful at all times to God for His mercy and favour in making us His sons and declaring us righteous! And because we have been declared righteous by God, we have access into eternity (**Matthew 5:20; Romans 6:19**); we have been given the Holy Spirit (**Galatians 4:6**); we have life, peace, and joy (**Romans 8:6, 10; 14:17**); all the character and traits of Christ are worked into us (**Romans 5:1-5; Galatians 5:22-23**); there is prosperity (**Proverbs 11:28**); our prayers are heard (**James 5:16**); and much more. Indeed, the blessings mentioned in Scripture are bestowed on the righteous only, not sinners (**Proverbs 10:2, 30; 13:6; 14:34**)!

EXERCISE

Answer true or false to the statements below:

1. There are two sides to righteousness: the one credited to us, and the one we work for.
2. Righteousness is credited on a person when he believes in the creed of his church.
3. Righteousness is moral uprightness before God.
4. If we are to walk with a holy God, we must of necessity be righteous.
5. Righteousness must be attained by observing the Law.
6. Whenever we follow the Holy Spirit's leading, we are living righteously.
7. Faith is a very key aspect of righteousness.
8. Self-righteousness is another form of righteousness which God credits to a man.
9. Our study reveals the need for continuous thanksgiving towards God from men.
10. If Adam had obeyed God in the Garden of Eden, all men would have been righteous.
11. There can be no righteousness of God without Jesus' death on the cross.
12. Justification is the process that leads to righteousness.
13. Having been declared not guilty and acquitted by God, the next thing is that we are declared righteous.
14. To live righteously, we inform the Holy Spirit about our plans and convince Him to approve it.
15. The fruit of righteousness is life and peace.
16. The fruit of righteousness is eternal life.
17. The fruit of righteousness is the nature of Christ in a person's life.
18. The fruit of righteousness is answered prayers.
19. The fruit of righteousness is prosperity.
20. The fruit of righteousness is the fruit of the Spirit.