

YHWH TSIDKENU
THE LORD
OUR
RIGHTEOUSNESS

THINK ON THESE THINGS

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THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS

God has provided a special righteousness for His glory, the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the salvation of His people. It gives the gospel its power, sanctifies believers and promotes our peace, joy, worship and spiritual life. Every Christian should therefore take time, and seek the ministry of the Holy Spirit, to become well informed about it, and then count on it moment by moment.

There are many people who are genuine Christians, but they still think that they will have to wait until they die to find out whether they will be admitted to heaven. As a consequence, they miss out on the peace, joy, hope, and the abundant spiritual life which they could have, through knowing the fullness and completeness of God's provision for us in Christ. So be encouraged to make a careful investigation of the righteousness which God has provided for the salvation and blessing of His people.

The word righteousness has meaning only within the context of the Christian faith. In the original languages of the Bible the same word can mean both righteousness or justice, and the rendering given is a matter of context and translator's discretion. We can best get the meaning from context in a number of passages. It is also helpful to distinguish the following uses of the word:

1. God's own divine attribute of righteousness.
2. Righteousness in man.
3. The gift of righteousness or “imputed righteousness”
4. Practical righteousness or “imparted righteousness” in the true believer.

1. God's Own Righteousness

This is an essential glorious, perfection in God and belongs to Him alone. We speak of it as the divine attribute of righteousness, and understand it to refer to His absolute moral perfection and goodness in all His actions, relationships and judgements.

God is the supreme being and source of everything. We should therefore never think of Him as being subject to any absolute moral or ethical standards outside Himself. God Himself is the standard, and whatever He pleases to do is right and good. If it were otherwise He would not be the supreme being.

Further it is not for us His creatures, to attempt to define an attribute of God; rather the righteousness of God is shown through all that He does. It is made known through His word the Bible, the moral law, the salvation of sinners and all His actions in relation to His creatures. Consider the following passages :

"Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" *Genesis 18:25*

"O Lord, righteousness belongs to You." *Daniel 9:7*

"The works of the LORD are great, studied by all who have pleasure in them. His work is honourable and glorious, and His righteousness endures forever." *Psalms 111:2,3*

"The LORD our God is righteous in all His works ..." *Daniel 9:14*

"The heavens declare His righteousness, and all the peoples see His glory." *Psalms 97:6*

"The LORD is righteous in all His ways, gracious in all His works." *Psalms 145:17*

"...the LORD shall endure forever; He has prepared His throne for judgement. He shall judge the world in righteousness, and He shall administer judgement for the peoples in uprightness." *Psalms 9:7,8*

"Righteous are You, O LORD, and upright are Your judgements. Your testimonies, which you have commanded, are righteous and very faithful." *Psalms 119:137,138*

God's righteousness is described as:

Very high.

"Your righteousness, O God, is very high, You have done great things; O God, who is like You?" *Psalm 71:19*

Abundant.

"According to Your name O God, so is Your praise to the ends of the earth; Your right hand is full of righteousness." *Psalm 48:10*

Beyond estimation.

"My mouth shall tell of Your righteousness and Your salvation all the day, for I do not know their limits." *Psalm 71:15*

Everlasting.

"Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and Your law is truth." *Psalm 119:142*

The foundation of His throne.

"Righteousness and justice are the foundation of His throne." *Psalm 97:2* (Note the connection between righteousness and justice.)

Absolutely accurate

Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: *Isaiah 28:16*

God does not reckon or impute His own righteousness to man. It is a glorious perfection in God alone. *Isaiah 42:8*

2. Righteousness in the Natural Man

This is much easier for us to understand because the Bible describes it in terms of God's standards and what He requires of us. It involves obedience and conformity to His law as expressed in the ten commandments and explained in the teaching of Jesus.

"Then it will be righteousness for us, if we are careful to observe all these commandments before the LORD our God, as He has commanded us." *Deuteronomy 6:25*

"Listen to Me, you who know righteousness, you people in whose heart is the law." *Isaiah 51:7*

The moral law is very broad and covers all possible moral situations.
Psalm 119:95

There is both reward and penalty associated with God's law.

Reward

"You shall therefore keep my statutes, and my judgements: which if a man do, he shall live in them: I *am* the LORD." *Lev 18:5*

"A certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He said to him, What is written in your law ? How do you read it ? And he answering said, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself. And he said to him, You have answered correctly. Do this and you will live." *Luke 10:28*

The reward for a perfect righteousness is eternal life.

Penalty

"But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die." *Gen 2:17*

"Cursed *is* every one who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." *Lev 18:5*

"For the wages of sin is death." *Rom 6:23*

The penalty for breaking God's law is death.

All Have Broken the Law

"God looks down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there are any who understand, who seek God. Every one of them has turned aside; they have together become corrupt; there is none who does good, no, not one." *Psalms 53:2,3*

"But we are all like an unclean thing; and our righteousness's are like filthy rags." *Isaiah 64:6*

God's standard is perfection, and all of us fall short of this.

"For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all." *James 2:10*

"All who rely on observing the law are under its curse, for it is written 'Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the book of the law to do them.'" *Galatians 3:10 (c.f. Deut 27:26)*

"For we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin." *Romans 3:19,20*

"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." *Romans 3:23*

Righteousness in the natural man is at best imperfect and therefore unacceptable to God.

Righteousness is impossible to attain by law keeping, there is a problem due to our fallen human nature.

"Because the carnal mind *is* enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God." *Romans 8:7,8*

"Now we know that what ever things the law says, it says to those who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds

of the law no flesh shall be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ to all and upon all those who believe: for there is no difference ..." *Romans 3:19-22*

The, purpose of the law is not to enable us to become righteous by doing the things required by the law, but rather to show us what sin is and convict us of it.

"Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin." *Rom 3:20*

We cannot find acceptance with God by any righteousness of our own. At the same time we should recognise that the law is God's standard of righteousness for all mankind.

Whosoever commits sin transgresses also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law. *1 John 3:4*

3. The Gift of Righteousness

God has provided a special righteousness for the salvation of His people. It is to be distinguished from any righteousness which is due to our own obedience to God's law, or merit of any kind. It is also to be distinguished from God's own divine attribute of righteousness since it is something He has "created."

"...and let the skies pour down righteousness ... I, the LORD have created it." *Is 45:8*

"It pleased the LORD for the sake of His righteousness to make His law great and glorious." *Is 42:21*

It is impossible for us to overestimate the value which God puts on His law. God upheld and made His law glorious when His eternal Son took human nature upon Himself and fulfilled it on behalf of His people.

The obedience of the Son of God honoured the law in a way impossible for any mere created being. By His life of total obedience to God, and His death on the cross Jesus accomplished a perfect righteousness which fully upholds God's holy law and God's justice in forgiving ungodly sinners.

Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, that I will raise to David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgement and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this *is* his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. *Jeremiah 23:6*

Jesus is "YHWH TSIDKENU"
which means "THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS"

The righteousness which Christ accomplished is called the gift of righteousness in Romans 5:17 It is through this righteousness that God is both a just God and a Saviour of His people.

"...*there is* no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour; *there is none* beside me." *Isaiah 45:21*

His judgement is always strictly accurate.

"Justice and judgement will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place." *Isaiah 28:14*

He is both "just and the justifier of the one who believes in Jesus."
Romans 3:26

God fully upholds his law in the salvation of sinners, through Christ's righteousness.

"Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not: indeed we establish the law." *Romans 3:31*

Our own obedience to the law could not give us a righteousness which fully meets the requirements of God's law and thus bring eternal life. There was no defect in the law. It always was and still is holy and just and good. The problem is in the flesh, that is the sinful nature.

"For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, ... " *Romans 8:3,4*

(or, that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us. NIV)

The only way that the righteous requirements of the law could be fully met in us, is through Christ's perfect righteousness imputed to us. God "imputes" this righteousness to us when we believe.

This is exemplified in the case of Abraham:

"For what does the Scripture say? Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness." *Romans 4:3*

" ... and therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness. Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead." *Romans 4:22,23*

Impute

The above passages describe what God does as judge to put into effect, the salvation which Christ accomplished for us. The word impute

has a special meaning in regard to the gospel.

It is used concerning the transfer of both sin and righteousness from one person to another, a process usually unknown in human systems of justice. The word used in the original languages of the Bible is variously translated as, reckon, impute, credit, account, laid, become, made. eg.

"And he believed in the LORD; and he accounted it to him for righteousness." *Gen 15:6*

"The Lord laid on Him the iniquity of us all." *Is 53:6*

"God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." *2 Cor 5:21*

This means that God transferred our sin to Christ, so that it became truly and judicially His sin with all its horror, guilt and the penalty of eternal death.

See also Romans 4:3,8,9,10,23,24 Galatians 3:6 James 2:23

God credits or imputes Christ's righteousness to those who believe so that it becomes truly and judicially their righteousness. This brings complete deliverance from the guilt and penalty of sin, a right standing before God, and the reward of eternal life, which we could never earn for ourselves.

Jesus taught this great truth in the parable of the wedding garment
Matt 22:1-14:

And Jesus answered and spoke to them again by parables and said: "The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son, and sent out his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding; and they were not willing to come."

"Again, he sent out other servants, saying, 'Tell those who are invited, "See, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and fatted cattle are killed, and all things are ready. Come to the wedding.'" But they made light of it and went their ways, one to his own farm, another to his business. And the rest seized his servants, treated them spitefully, and killed them. But when the king heard about it, he was furious. And he sent out his armies, destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. Therefore go into the highways, and as many as you find, invite to the wedding.' So those servants went out into the

highways and gathered together all whom they found, both bad and good. And the wedding hall was filled with guests. But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment. So he said to him, 'Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?' And he was speechless. Then the king said to the servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' For many are called, but few are chosen."

Verse 9 The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who made a marriage for his son.

Verse 10 All were invited- both good and bad - no restrictions.

Verse 11 Those invited were made fit for the king's presence by putting on a wedding garment which he provided.

One man presumed to come into the king's presence without it. When challenged he was speechless (c.f. Rom 3:19)

Verse 13 He was cast into outer darkness (c.f. Rev 20:15)

The wedding garment represents the gift of righteousness which is God's provision for us to stand in His presence. It is also described as a "robe of righteousness" in *Isaiah 61:10* and "the righteousness which is from God by faith." *Phillipians 3:9*

Our responsibility is to put it on by faith.

By faith alone

"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 just shall live by faith." *Romans 1:17*

But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ to all and upon all those who believe: for there is no difference: *Romans 3:21,22*

There were many in Israel who tried to obtain a right standing before God by their own legalistic and ritualistic obedience to the law, but they

did not obtain acceptance on such a basis...

"but Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness. Why? Because they did not seek it by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law." *Romans 9:31,32*

It is by grace and removes all ground for boasting in self.

For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt. But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness. *Romans 4:2-5*

"...not by works, so that no-one can boast." *Ephesians 2:10*

By works in this context we understand, first of all, doing the things required by the law or good works. However, in the light of other passages, this understanding needs to be broadened to mean any performance, action or religious ritual on our part by which we think we might gain merit in God's sight.

Then they said to Him, "What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?" Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent." *John 6:28,29*

It is a gift by grace Rom 5:15; Rom 4:16

"And if by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were [*works*], grace would no longer be grace." *Romans 11:6*

It is totally independent of any kind of obedience, performance, ritual, baptism, church going, merit, virtue or good on our part, and is bestowed by means of faith alone.

Faith credited for righteousness

This expression 'credited' or 'accounted for righteousness' occurs quite a number of times in the Bible, and should be carefully considered. The first occurrence is in Gen 15:6

"Abraham believed the LORD, and He credited it to him as righteousness." For we say that faith was accounted to Abraham for righteousness *Romans 4:9*

See also Gal 3:6 and James 2:23

“And being not weak in faith, he did not consider his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sara's womb: He did not stagger at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness. Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead.”
Romans 4:19-24

In this respect he is described as the father of all who believe.

"Therefore it is of faith that it might be according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all." *Romans 4:16*

The kind of faith which Abraham had is presented as the great example for believers of all time.

While Abraham's faith was very virtuous and pleased God, it should be noticed that God did not accept Abraham's faith itself instead of righteousness, for if this were possible, it would not have been necessary for Christ to die. But Abraham, like all mankind, had sinned and come short of the glory of God. The only way he or anyone else, could be accounted as righteous, is through the finished work of Christ. When Abraham believed, God imputed to him the righteousness which Christ was yet to accomplish.

God requires of us both repentance and faith.

There is joy in heaven when each sinner repents, faith certainly pleases God, and God rewards faith, Luke 15:7,10; Heb 11:6. However, it is not to be supposed that we can offer our faith to God, as something of ourselves and the reason why He should save us. This is so because our repentance and faith are also God's gift to us due to his grace alone. Grace is the free and totally unmerited favour of God.

For to you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake; *Phil 1:29*

Acts 11:18; 5:31 Eph 6:25; 1 Tim 1:14

All that we have is from God, and we are never to glory as if we had not received it. 1 Cor 4:7; John 3:27

Our faith should not be seen as a meritorious condition of salvation but rather as the instrument or means by which God bestows the gift of righteousness upon us. For example if I travel to work by car, the car is the means of getting there, but it certainly is not the motive or cause of doing so. Similarly faith is the means but not the cause of our salvation.

If we think of faith as a condition or meritorious cause of our salvation, we are getting into a subtle form of salvation by works. Eph 2:8,9

At the same time it is entirely our responsibility to repent and believe the gospel.

Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel." *Mark 1:14,15*

We receive the gift of righteousness simply by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead;"
Rom 4:23,24

Effects of the Gift of Righteousness

Peace with God, joy and hope.

It gives the joy and peace of forgiveness and a restored relationship with God.

"Even as David also describes the blessedness of the man, to whom God imputes righteousness without works, Saying, Blessed *are* they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed *is* the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin."
Rom 4:6-8

Praise

The gift of righteousness received by faith into our hearts draws out our praise worship and thanksgiving.

"... to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified." Isaiah 61:3

"I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks *himself* with ornaments, and as a bride adorns *herself* with her jewels. For as the earth brings forth her bud, and as the garden causes the things that are sown in it to spring forth; so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations." Isaiah 61:10,11

Gives power to the gospel

This truth has a very essential place in the good news. The gospel is the power of God to salvation because in it this righteousness is revealed

"... for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one who believes; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, ..." Rom 1:16,17.

Assurance of salvation

It is an everlasting righteousness which can never change or lose its saving power and glory. Daniel 9:24. Christ has obtained eternal redemption for us through the righteousness which He accomplished on our behalf. Heb 9:12

The breastplate of righteousness

Christ's righteousness is described in Eph 6:14, as a breastplate which we are to put on by faith to protect and guard our hearts.

When we fall

There are times when we stumble and fall into sin, and the true child

of God will always be miserable when this happens. We become discouraged, the accuser torments us and we begin to wallow in despair. But this is not God's purpose for us. In his grace He has fully provided for us to confess our sins, be cleansed and restored to fellowship with Him. 1 John 1:9

At such times we need to "put on" the breastplate of Christ's righteousness, by faith. Our forgiveness, acceptance and restoration to fellowship with God has nothing to do with our failures, successes or performance of any kind. It remains perfect and complete because it is founded upon the finished work of Christ alone. We need to be always "found in him" in our thoughts, not having our own righteousness but that which is of God by faith. See Phil 3:8-15

When we feel good

There may be other times when we feel that we have done something good, perhaps in the area of Christian service. We take our eyes off the Lord, begin to rejoice in our own performance etc. The tempter stirs up our pride and we go off on an ego trip. The disciples had this kind of problem when they returned from one of their missions. They said,

"Lord even the demons are subject to us in your name." But Jesus warned them of the danger of pride, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven ... nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the demons are subject to you, but rather rejoice that your names are written in heaven." *Luke 10:17-20*

God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble." *James 4:6*

Again we need to remember that our acceptance with God depends only on Christ's righteousness and not on anything good that we may do.

In either of the above situations, we need to be wearing the breastplate of Christ's righteousness to guard our hearts from either despair or pride. It protects us and should be "put on" constantly by faith. Eph 6:14 Phil 3:9

*"The arm of flesh will fail you,
You dare not trust your own."*

A better righteousness

When the prodigal son returned, the father commanded the servants to "bring out the best robe and put it upon him." *Luke 15:22*

The "best robe" here, represents the righteousness which Christ accomplished. It is far better than anything we could have had by our own efforts, even if we had never sinned.

This can be seen by comparing it with Adam's original righteousness before the fall. The most obvious difference is that Adam's righteousness was not permanent and could not provide eternal life for either himself or his descendants. Christ's righteousness is everlasting and provides eternal security for all those who are in him. *Daniel 9:24*

Another difference is that if Adam had continued without sin there is a sense in which he would be able to rightly glory in his own achievement. Christ's righteousness provides no possible ground for glorying in self.

But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God--and righteousness and sanctification and redemption--that, as it is written, "He who glories, let him glory in the LORD." *1 Cor 1:30,31*

The gift of righteousness gives us acceptance with God not for our own sake but for Christ's sake. It is "to the praise of the glory of his grace, by which he has made us accepted in the Beloved." *Eph 1:6*

"And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them." *John 17:26*

How much better is it to be accepted for Christ's sake than for our own? It is a far better acceptance than we could have had if we had never sinned. Those who love the truth of salvation by grace will rejoice in these things.

4. Practical Righteousness in the Believer

The practical righteousness which is produced in the believer by the Holy Spirit after conversion, is often called “imparted righteousness” to distinguish it clearly from the “imputed righteousness” which alone is the basis of justification.

If we think of practical righteousness as in any way contributing to our justification, we are getting into a false doctrine of salvation by works.

Practical righteousness always “accompanies salvation.” Heb 6:9 and results from sanctification. This is a continuous process in the life of the true believer, and will not be entirely completed in this life. It will have a glorious completion in the life to come.

...“Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify it and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.” *Eph 5:25-27*

A righteousness which sanctifies

It is one of the sanctifying truths of the gospel. John 17:17 God uses the gift of righteousness which he rains down from heaven, to cause practical righteousness and praise to spring forth.

I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, My soul shall be joyful in my God; For He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness, As a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments, And as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. For as the earth brings forth its bud, As the garden causes the things that are sown in it to spring forth, So the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations. *Isaiah 61:10,11*

"Rain down, you heavens, from above, And let the skies pour down righteousness; Let the earth open, let them bring forth salvation, And let righteousness spring up together. I, the LORD, have created it. *Isaiah 45:8*

“...those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.” *Romans 5:17*

Grace reigns over us through Christ’s righteousness.

“That as sin has reigned to death, even so might grace reign through righteousness to eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.” *Romans 5:21*

The truth of the gift of righteousness, in the heart, has a powerful sanctifying effect on the believer.

In Philippians chapter 3, the apostle Paul describes the discipline to which he submitted his mind and heart as he pressed forward to the goal of finally being conformed to the image of Christ. He completely discarded all his former religious attainments and his own righteousness through legalistic conformity to the law. His constant aim was,

“... that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness which comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ - the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith in Christ.” *Philippians 3:8,9*

Be found in Him - always

There is no suggestion here, of being found outside of Christ as far as his salvation is concerned. We are however to guard against the ever present danger of being found outside of Christ in our thinking and confidence. In this area, we need to continually be putting on the breastplate of Christ's righteousness and counting upon it moment by moment. This is the righteousness which sanctifies us, as well as being the ground of our salvation.

Those who receive this gift also practice righteousness, while those who do not do so have never received it.

“Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. He who does what is right is righteous. He who does what is sinful is of the devil” *1 John 3:7,8*

“For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.” *James 2:26*

See also James 2:23-24

God loves this kind of righteousness in man.

"For the LORD is righteous, He loves righteousness; His countenance beholds the upright." *Psalm 11:7*

He blesses the righteous

"For You, O LORD, will bless the righteous; with favour You will surround him as with shield." *Psalm 5:12*

Such righteousness is a result of being saved and in no way a meritorious cause of our salvation. It is to be carefully distinguished from any kind of self-righteousness.

"For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God has appointed beforehand that we should walk in them." *Ephesians 2:8-10*

The crown of righteousness

"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren." *Romans 8:29*

God's eternal purposes are centred in His Son, Col 1:15-18. God's ultimate purpose for his people is to transform them into the image of His Son, for His eternal praise and glory. This is the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus, Phil 3:14. Our Lord Jesus Christ is God's righteous servant, Isaiah 53:11, and His righteousness is perfect.

"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that , when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And everyone that has this hope in him purifies himself, even as he is pure." 1 John 3:2,3

"Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord the righteous judge shall give to me at that day; and not to me only but to all those also who love his appearing." *2 Tim 4:8*

This was Paul's hope, and it will be the ultimate joy of all true believers. They will also rejoice that it is all to the praise of the glory of

His grace and like the four and twenty elders of Rev. 4:10, they will delight to lay down their crowns at His feet.

Justification by Faith

In the case of human judges in the Old Testament, they were to justify the righteous and condemn the wicked.

If there is a controversy between men, and they come to judgment, that the judges may judge them; then they shall justify the righteous, and condemn the wicked. *Deuteronomy 25:1*

God required accurate judgment

"He who justifies the wicked, and he who condemns the just, both of them alike are an abomination to the LORD." *Proverbs 17:15*

In regard to the gospel, justification is a verdict pronounced by God as judge, and it is the opposite to condemnation. God's judgment is always strictly accurate.

"Righteousness and justice are the foundation of His throne." *Psalms 97:2*

Judgement also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: *Isaiah 28:16*

See also Rom 2:2; Ps 89:14

He will by no means clear the guilty. *Exodus 34:7*

How then can God in perfect truth and strict justice declare one who is an ungodly sinner to be righteous? How can He be both just and the justifier of him who believes in Jesus?

To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him who believes in Jesus. *Romans 3:26*

The answer to this apparent paradox is that when the sinner believes in Jesus, God imputes to him or her the perfect righteousness which Christ has accomplished. This fully meets the righteous requirements of God's law, Rom 8:3,4. God then declares the believing sinner to be righteous Rom 3:24.

Justification is the verdict by God as judge, that the believing sinner is righteous.

Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. *Rom 8:33*

Justification does not take place within us. It takes place before the

throne of God and is one of the "things which are above," Col 3:1. It is to be carefully distinguished from both the new birth and sanctification which take place here and within us.

Believers have this great blessing now.

We do not have to wait for the next life to find out whether God will accept us or not. For the true believer, God has already given His verdict which can never be altered or recalled. It is by authority of God on His eternal throne.

“Authority that flows from His throne unto His own”

Much more then, having been now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. *Rom 5:9*

Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. *Rom 5:1,2*

Every one who is now justified will certainly be glorified.

Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. *Rom 8:33*

Justification is:

Promised in the O.T.

He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. *Is 53:11*

Through faith

And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses *Acts 13:38,39*

Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. *Rom 3:28*

Wherefore the law was our tutor to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. *Gal 3:24*

Not by works

Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. *Rom 3:20*;

Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified *Gal 2:16*;

But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith *Gal 3:11*

On the ground of the finished work of Christ alone, Freely by His grace

Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: *Rom 3:24*

By His blood

Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. *Rom 5:9*

Through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification. *Rom 4:25*

And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; you are yet in your sins. *1 Cor 15:17*

The like figure whereunto even baptism also now saves us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ: *1 Peter 3:21*

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God

And such were some of you: but you are washed, but you are sanctified, but you are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. *1 Cor 6:11*

The basis of peace with God

Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through

our Lord Jesus Christ *Rom 5:1*

The source of joy

Even as David also describes the blessedness of the man, to whom God imputes righteousness without works, Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. 8 Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin. *Rom 4:6-8*

Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. *Ps 32:1*

Summary

The righteousness which Christ accomplished on our behalf by his obedience and suffering, is a free gift by God's grace to all who believe in His Son.

It is the only basis of our justification and acceptance with God

In this respect, it is important to distinguish it from "imparted righteousness" which is the practical righteousness produced in the believer after being justified.

It was predicted by the prophets and revealed in the gospel. Isaiah 56:1 Rom 1:17 3:21

It is:

- The righteousness of faith Rom 4:13, 9:30, 10:6
- The righteousness of God by faith Rom 3:32, Phil 3:9
- Imputed to believers Rom 4:24 2 Cor 5:21 Gal 3:6
- The righteousness of God without law. Rom 3:21 Gal 2:21
- A free gift Rom 5:17
- A robe of righteousness Isaiah 61:10
- Everlasting righteousness Dan 9:24 Isaiah 51:6 Heb 10:13

Application

Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ in order to receive the gift of righteousness and the eternal life which it brings.

Put on the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.

Take time and care to understand it and have it in the heart.

Put on the breastplate of righteousness.

THEIR RIGHTEOUSNESS IS FROM ME SAYS THE LORD *Isaiah 54:17*

JEHOVAH TSIDKENU

*I once was a stranger to grace and to God;
I knew not my danger, I felt not my load;
though friends spoke with rapture of Christ on the tree
JEHOVAH TSIDKENU was nothing to me.*

*I oft read with pleasure, to sooth or engage,
Isaiah's wild measure, or John's simple page
but e'en when they pictured the blood sprinkled tree,
JEHOVAH TSIDKENU seemed nothing to me.*

*When free grace awoke me, by light from on high,
then legal fears shook me; I trembled to die;
no refuge nor safety in self could I see,
JEHOVAH TSIDKENU my Saviour must be.*

*My terrors all vanished before that sweet name;
my guilty fears banished, with boldness I came,
to drink at the fountain, life giving, and free
JEHOVAH TSIDKENU is all things to me !*

*E'en treading the valley, the shadow of death,
this watchword shall rally my faltering breath;
and when from life's conflict my God sets me free,
JEHOVAH TSIDKENU my triumph shall be !*

Robert Murray M^c Cheyne 1813 – 1843

4THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS

*Jesus, the LORD, our righteousness!
our beauty Thou, our glorious dress;
before the throne, when thus arrayed,
with joy shall we lift up the head.*

*Bold shall we stand in that great day,
for who ought to our charge shall lay,
since by Thy blood absolved we are
from sin and guilt, from shame and fear.*

*Thus, Abraham, the friend of God,
thus all the saints redeemed with blood,
Saviour of sinners, Thee proclaim,
and all their boast is in Thy name.*

*This spotless robe the same appears,
when ruined nature sinks in years;
no age can change its glorious hue,
the robe of Christ is ever new.*

*Till we behold Thee on the throne
we boast in Thee, in Thee alone,
our beauty this, our glorious dress,
Jesus the LORD, our righteousness*

Nicolaus L. Zinzendorf 1700 – 1760