

Exhortation II. Psalm 34:15-22

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[0:00] The eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous, and His ears toward their cry.! That's a beautiful promise.! God is portrayed here in human terms. He sees the righteous. He hears their cry.

! Their cries for help. But hold on! What happens when I get to that word righteous? What happens when you get to the word righteous in the Psalms? If I want the promises that are listed here to apply to me, I have to reckon with that word, don't I?

So, do I assume that it's talking about me? Do I say it's talking about some kind of relative righteousness or innocence in life, generally? That I'm good to people, usually, and that I obey God's commands when I can?

Or is it deeper than that? Do I attach a vague notion of Christ's righteousness to myself and keep moving? Personally, when I get to the word righteous in the Psalms, I stumble.

I have to figure out how it is that I'm going to keep moving forward. I do want the eyes of the Lord to be towards me. I want His ears to be, to hear my cry.

[1:13] And this word righteous is going to shape the way we read the rest of the Psalms, so we can't skip over it. We can't assume that it's talking about us. Why can't we assume that?

Well, what happens when we assume something? We won't say that. It might go on the recording. The stakes are too high for us to make assumptions about righteousness.

What are the stakes? Well, we see them in verse 16. Even though the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and His ears are open to their cry, verse 16 tells us the face of the Lord is against those who do evil to cut off the memory of them from the earth.

Those are the stakes. All of a sudden, we're at an ultimate judgment. We're not bringing our complaints and our earthly sorrows to God and being assured that He sees how good we are, that we're receiving some encouragement for trying to be good.

No. Now it's an infinite divide, the righteous or the evil. You're either one or the other. In this scenario, we're bringing ourselves before God.

[2:22] We're putting our whole lives on display before God as our judge. We're looking for a declaration one way or the other. If we're found innocent, we'll be acquitted.

If we're found guilty, eternally condemned. That is, if we're found not to be righteous, we are blotted out from the face of the earth.

We are swept up in the flood of God's justice against all who live contrary to His will. Those are the stakes. So here's my question.

Is it possible to think you're doing God's will, but actually to be opposing Him? Is that possible? Peter did it. Okay. Where in Scripture do we find examples of that or explicit statements to that effect? Anything? Saul.

[3:27] Okay. Good. Where you think you're doing God's will, but you're actually opposing Him. You're talking about Saul converted the Apostle Paul. Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?

Well, his answer would be, because I'm zealous for the Lord. But he had it all wrong, didn't he? We're also told that on the last day, some will come saying, Lord, Lord, did I not prophesy in your name?

Didn't I do miracles in your name? He says, I never knew you. So we can't just say, well, I've done this, I've done that, and assume that it's righteousness.

It's not people declaring their own righteousness for themselves. It's not us declaring that even our motives for what we're doing are pure in order for them to be pure.

It's the one being righteous is being called righteous by God. A righteous person is the one who is called that by God. So what happens if we assume that we're righteous before God?

[4:30] We've left too much room for self-deception, for us to deceive ourselves about our actual state. We need certainty about this before we're going to go any further in the song, and certainly before we go any further in life.

It's black and white. It's wickedness or righteousness. We need to know for sure whether we're righteous. Only that certainty will carry us both now and into the, through the final judgment.

Old Testament righteousness is, first of all, a declaration. It's a declaration by God that a person coming to him is innocent in a matter, in a case, a judicial case.

Coming to God against his opponent, God says you're innocent. That's one kind of righteousness.

It's also a disposition of the person toward God's gracious rule, recognizing that God is ruler overall and submitting him or herself to God's gracious rule as an orientation of life.

It's also a lifestyle of right relationships, both toward God and toward other human beings. In every sphere of life, seeing yourself in community with other people who are also God's people or made in the image of God and doing everything for their benefit and for the benefit of that community.

[5:56] But something happens in the Old Testament. Something breaks through where we see that righteousness ultimately is moral perfection.

It's perfection of a heart, a mind, soul, and body in relation to God's perfect will and his character.

So basic virtue gives way to standing before God with the law as a whole, the standard of judgment.

And then the law itself standing in condemnation of each one of us who finally realize that what we ultimately do and what we want is to honor ourselves.

To get a leg up on somebody else, not to honor and love them. And that's the standard. That law is

the standard. First of all, we could define the law as any revelation of God's character or will.

Anything that points us to being in any way responsible to God is a law. But then there's the law as a whole, the culmination of God's revealed will to us that we're responsible to.

[7:05] Not general obedience in every way that you can think of, but in every way he commands. Perfect obedience to the will of God is the only way to escape judgment.

Righteousness is perfect conformity to the will of God. No wonder Paul quotes the Psalms to declare none is righteous.

No, not one. What are we to do? This legal dispute between mankind and God is always present.

The law has become a tapestry, a whole thing where if you pull one thread out of the tapestry, the whole thing comes apart.

If you offend in one area, you offend in all areas. We have entered the world as covenant breakers, breakers of the law, and that law standing over us already to condemn us.

There's a principle of sin and death at work in us as soon as we're born. Well, that doesn't seem very fair, does it? That we've inherited a nature that is prone to sin and then we also give in to that nature willfully, sinning against God's law.

[8:21] We'll get back to that in a minute. But the standard, even though the standard is the law by which he will judge us, the ultimate standard is God's own character himself.

It's not just that he sets the standard. It's not that he's just the best example of a standard that we work toward where we must be like him. We must not just live God's way.

We must live his life. We must live God's life to be righteous. How can he expect that? Especially knowing that we're sinners.

We were already behind the eight ball before we're, as soon as we're conceived. Who is God to demand that? God is righteousness itself.

Unswerving, uncompromising covenant faithfulness is his character. By the way, that's what it means, that God is love. Do we have kind of an image that God being love is tolerance?

[9:23] Him patting us on the head for everything that we do or everything we try to do or at least convincing ourselves that our motivations are pure. Out of love, out of love, God calls us into submission to his perfect will.

Out of love, he gave us the law. How does that work? He didn't give it to us in the hope that we would get it right. Or he'd pat us on the back when we do and he'll shuffle it under the rug when we don't.

No, he gave us the law out of love so that we would see that we're not what we should be. It's a gracious God that will show us that. That will keep allowing us to bump up against ourselves.

Keep bumping up against his will. It's a gracious God that will refuse to pretend everything is fine. Only for you to find out that you're going to hell when it's too late.

Could you imagine? Never being told. Never having God's character and his will revealed to you so that you couldn't bump up against it and find out that you need more. So say you do come to the realization that you're not righteous.

[10 : 35] Say you do acknowledge that you can't obey God perfectly. Well then, how can you live the very life of God? If that's what's expected, how can that happen?

If only there were some principle of unity. Some principle of union whereby everyday men and women, regular sinners like you and me, could participate in God's own nature.

Can you imagine? We need forgiveness. We need forgiveness. We need to be cleansed of our righteousness. But is there any other deeper principle?

We need to be clothed in the righteousness of Christ. But not as though there's no possibility of having the desire or the will or the power to perform or possess righteousness of our own.

We do need to be declared righteous by the mouth of God. I need all those things. You need all those things. But I also need a righteousness that is so part of me that it characterizes me.

[11 : 42] That it takes over who I am. That it becomes native to me as a person. I do need righteousness to be proclaimed over me.

But I need it to be proclaimed over me in the same way that God proclaimed the beginning of the world. So that there is a fiat, a let there be of life planted in me.

If only there were some principle of unity that would allow me to participate in God's own righteousness. Such that it came out of me.

Natively. Spontaneously. Such that it came out of me. As though I possessed the mind of God. To enact the will of God. If somehow we could be so closely identified with him.

That even though we remain creatures. Even though we could never become God. We could have his thoughts and his words and his deeds. Welling up in us.

[12 : 46] Being lived out of us. Bringing new life to us and to the world. If somehow we could have the shadow of the law cast aside. And set us free from our constant awareness of our inability.

If there were some principle of life that would well up in us toward love. That would also give us the full assurance of our righteousness before the judge of the world.

How wonderful would that be? Well that principle of union. Begins with the incarnation of God the Son. Being fully God.

One nature with God. One in will and one in mind. He took on human nature. Why? Why did he do that? He didn't come in the form of an angel.

He didn't come in the form of a dog. Or a plant. Why did he take on human nature? It's to lift our nature.

[13 : 53] Into his own life. To lift us out of where we had fallen. And give us his life. He came to heal your nature. Of its corruption and lawlessness.

In the incarnation. Jesus took humanity to himself. Not merely as a representative. To pass on the judicial effects of his right standing before God.

What do I mean by that? Yes he did perform the law before God. And he stands righteous before God. And he passes that on to us. But he doesn't just pass on the legal acquittal.

But he took our nature. To endow our nature. Again. With that principle of union. That we need with God.

To live God's life. He took on flesh. He took a body. To take our nature. And to heal it. With properties.

[14 : 52] That belong to him. Physical corruption. And eternal life. He took a human body. That's not the only body that he took.

What other body did he take? He did. He took on our nature. And we are mounted up in him. As that one person.

And that's. He took on a mystical body. He took on the church. As his mystical body. He is the head. Of which we are the members. To offer us righteousness.

Both judicial. And experiential. Through the spirit. The indwelling of the spirit of God. Means that we have. The mind of God.

Christ dwelling in me. Whereby I. Not only have the mind of Christ. But the desire. And the power. To perform the will of the father. The spirit.

[15 : 51] Acting through the organ. Of my life. The spirit. The spirit is the principle of union. Whereby Christ. Lives through his church.

And each one of us. Individually. Making. In reality. His righteousness. Ours. So how do we get that?

How do we get it? We are endowed with the spirit of God. When through that fiat. That let there be. Of the gospel. Produces in us. A faith. That responds.

To Jesus. As the only son of God. And he is born in us. That imperishable seed. Of the word of God. Is planted. Deep within us.

He puts. Our lives. In him. As we put our lives. In him. The ark of safety. To bring us through the waters of judgment.

[16 : 47] And we are baptized into his death. Whereby we put to death the flesh. And are raised to new life. With him. In that moment. We are given the spirit. At the moment you put your life.

In his hands. You are truly found to be in him. And he in you. God has shown his absolute righteousness. His judgment. His justice.

His salvation. In the atoning sacrifice of Christ. Those who think they are already righteous. And those who know they are not.

All are called to enter into the life of Christ. Through repentance. And to gain his real life of righteousness. There it is. That perfect union.

Given through Jesus. A free gift. Appropriated by faith. Not through our own seeking. Our own acting. Our own doing. Our own wisdom.

[17 : 43] Our own sense of justice. But by union with him. What is the result. Of this union. With Christ.

Through the spirit. What happens. What does it look like. Well. The legal demands of the law. Are nailed to the cross. No longer to.

Wag their bony finger. At me. Or you. Why? Is it because you don't have to obey. God's commands anymore? No. It's because the spirit of Christ.

Is working in you. A love. For God. Do you ever sense that? A love for God. That you know. Doesn't belong to you. Naturally. A love for other people.

That you know. Doesn't belong to you. Naturally. But could only be produced in you. By the spirit of God. That love of God. And that love of neighbor.

[18 : 38] Produced by the spirit. Outruns. The law. It gets to the finish line. And it keeps running. It says. This is as far as the law. Could get. But I can.

Keep going. In the power of the Holy Spirit. The very life of God. Is in you to. Desire. To do his will. Christ died.

To remit your sins. To take them away. To forgive them. But he was raised. To life. For your. What's the word there? He was raised to life. For your. Justification.

Your. Righteousness. He was raised to life. For your. Righteousness. So that. You could be. Born of God.

You can be. What you were not. Jesus says. Without me. You can do nothing. Well. We can't even live and breathe.

[19 : 35] Without Jesus. Who himself. Holds the cosmos together. In whom we live. And move. And have our being. Much less. Could we bear fruit. Of the spirit. We need him.

We need the union. That he gives us. What fruit. In particular. Fulfills all the righteous. Demands of the law. Who said it? Love. Love.

That's right. Love is the expression. Of God's righteousness. That we. Experience for ourselves. In that salvation. And that we can.

Progressively. Increasingly. Experience. Out of ourselves. As our union. With him. Grows deeper. And what's the wonderful thing there?

Have we earned it? Not possible. We need a new nature. We can't earn the spirit of God. But the spirit of God. Can give us a new nature. Whereby we can love.

[20 : 32] Out of gratitude. For the father. Have I forgotten Psalm 34? Remember I asked the question. How are we going to read this Psalm?

How are we going to get past this question. Of righteousness? How are we going to get. Over the hump of that word? Well. It's also the question. How do I read any of the Psalms?

How do I read the Bible? As a Christian? How do I read the Old Testament? That's hard. Here's how. I read it. According to my union.

With Christ. I read the Psalm. With Christ. I read the Psalm. In Christ. I look over his shoulder.

While he reads the Psalms. As the incarnate Lord. Of the universe. I read it as him. I read it. Through his eyes. I read it through the principle.

[21 : 30] Of union with him. I read the Psalm. As about him. First. He's the blessed man. He's the wise man.

He's the righteous man. Me. I'm in him. So then I read it. In union with him. His mind.

Then. Is awakened. In me. I'm. Reading. Reciting. The words. That my Lord Jesus.

Spoke. He spoke. Them first. To David. Through the. His spirit. He spoke. Them as the incarnate Lord. Then he speaks.

Them again. Through me. His prayer. Is articulated. Through me. His song. Becomes. My song. His vindication. His righteousness. Mine. So now.

[22 : 27] We come back. To the Psalm. Verse 15. The eyes of the Lord. Are toward the righteous. And his ears. Are toward. His cry. God. Will hear. His case.

Will he not? When Jesus. Stands before. God the Father. Will God the Father. Refuse to hear his case? No. He will look upon. His anointed. And God will recognize. His innocence.

He will recognize. His blamelessness. Out of. His own righteousness. That overflows. To this.

Beloved son. God will. Vindicate. The cause of Christ.

Who though he suffers. Is not abandoned. By God. To the will. Of the evildoer. Who keeps finding. In God. A solace. And a rock. To hide in. And God.

Likewise. Will vindicate. The cause. Of all. Who are found. To be. In Christ. Not because of our. Political affiliation. Not because of the righteousness.

[23 : 23] Of our. Own personal deeds. God will vindicate. The cause of all. Who are found. To be in Christ. They are in the. Sphere. Of all of God's. Loving activity. By being. In Christ.

They're so. Intimately joined. To him. As to be his own body. So when. Christ. Jesus. Cries out.

He cries. For you too. And when the believer cries. When you cry out. For God. For God's will.

To be done on earth. As it is in heaven. God hears the voice. Of his. Son. Calling out. In the voice. Of his. Son. And daughter. I hope that's an encouragement.

Not to be anxious. About the future. Or what might. What it might mean. But to bring. All of it. To the heavenly throne. Where all. Outcomes. Are decided. Verse 16.

[24 : 20] The face of the Lord. Is against those. Who do evil. To cut off the memory. Of them from the earth. All who have opposed. His gracious rule. The kingdom established. By his son.

All who reject. The will. And the purposes of God. Set forth in Christ. All who spurn. God's gaze. His love. All. Given in Christ. All who set themselves up.

Against godly authority. Even those who claim. To be Christians. But live outside. Of submission. To him. They will not see. They will not be seen.

There will be no trace of them. In the new heavens. In the new earth. Only that which is. Right. In right relationship. To Jesus. Will survive. Verse 17.

When the righteous cry. For help. The Lord hears. And delivers. Them. Out of all their troubles. Verse 18 continues.

[25 : 15] The Lord is near. To the broken hearted. Saves the crushed. In spirit. Then Jesus went to them. Jesus went with them. To a place called Gethsemane.

He said to his disciples. Sit here. While I go over there. And pray. And taking with him. Peter and the two sons of Zebedee. He began to be sorrowful. Sorrowful. And very troubled. Then he said to them.

My soul is very sorrowful. Even to death. Remain here. And watch with me. And going a little farther. He fell on his face. And prayed. My father. If it be possible.

Let this cup. What? Pass from me. Nevertheless. Not. My will. But. Your will.

Did God the father. Deliver Jesus. By taking him. Out of his circumstances. Saying never mind. You don't have to suffer. You don't have to die. No. That was the temptation.

[26 : 11] Of Satan. Was Jesus. Praying in the garden. For himself only. Or for all those. Who would be united. To him. For you.

And me. Isn't this. Why we walk the way. Of the cross. During Lent. It's not only to watch. Jesus perfectly perform. His father's will. For us. But also to recall.

That sacred union. We have with him. As we navigate. Our current suffering. In the hope of glory. That comes on Easter day. Many are the afflictions.

