

# Righteous in Christ

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[0:00] And throughout the chapter Paul is emphasizing us towards unity and togetherness and also to move forward in our own faith.

! And he reminds us at the end to be renewed in the spirit of your minds and to be on the new self created after the likeness of God and through righteousness and holiness.

And that word righteousness is what I really want to focus on this evening. Perhaps it's best summed up for us in 2 Corinthians 5 and verse 21 where we have that great transaction.

For our sake he made, that's God made him, made Christ to be sin who knew no sin so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

I read the portion in John 17 at the beginning for a purpose. I believe it undergirds what I'd like to share with you tonight.

[1:06] And what it emphasizes is the love and mercy, compassion and security that all of us who are in Christ are blessed with.

We are safe and we are protected and guarded and kept by our Lord because we are precious. We're precious in God's sight.

And we are a gift from the Father to the Son. As we read there in verse 6 of John 17, Jesus Christ is praying for us continually and interceding for us every moment of our lives.

I'm praying for them, we're told in verse 9 of that chapter. I'm not praying for the world, but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours. And we're also told that Jesus is glorified in us, in all his beloved people.

We're told in verse 10, All mine are yours and yours are mine, and I am glorified in them. And that's quite a lot to begin, even that short three verses that I read there.

[2:31] It's a lot for us to begin. And perhaps we don't think of these things enough. Especially when we consider the sin that's always about us.

The sins that we commit, and yes, the sin that we just cannot shake off while we're in this life. And for a short while this evening, I'd like us to consider something that is deeply biblical, and I believe incredibly liberating for all of us, and it's this.

And we're not sinners trying to become righteous. We are the righteousness of God in Christ.

And this is a key concept of our faith. And I believe we really need to focus on that much more.

Because until that settles properly into our hearts, peace in our daily struggles will always feel just out of reach.

We are made righteous in God's eyes, not through our own works, because that's impossible. We just cannot do that. But it's through faith in Jesus Christ.

[3:49] So from that we understand that it's relation-based. It's because of a relationship with Jesus Christ. And it couldn't be any other way.

And it's very true that many believers continue to call themselves sinners. And that's primarily because they are honest about their struggles.

And now that's not a bad thing, because we certainly don't want to minimize grace or pretend that we never fail. So that's totally understandable.

But the problem here is not humility. The problem is identity. When we repeatedly name ourselves by what Jesus has already dealt with, we actually quietly place ourselves back under a burden that he carried for us.

We're much too prone to be looking inwards instead of looking upwards. And I believe it's true as islanders, for a lot of people on this island, we have a tendency to look upon the negative instead of resting in and enjoying the positive aspects of our lives.

[5:16] Let me give you a couple of examples. Perhaps one of them you'll know very well. The weather. And is it not true that whenever we may be enjoying a good spell of weather, we might say to someone something like, isn't this just a glorious spell of weather?

It's so warm, and we've been getting the sun for so long now. And yet, so often, the answer comes from people, ah, yes, but I'm sure the rain isn't far away.

That's very true, isn't it? It tends to be the way we look at things. And even when it comes to our faith, we're not exempt from these negative aspects. I've often been in conversation with other Christians and perhaps said something like, isn't it just amazing that here we are, the two of us, and the two of us are saved now.

And too often I get the reply, I hope I am. Well, I don't understand that. I hope I am.

And I don't believe it's God honouring either. But yet, at the end of the day, that's us, isn't it? That's just the way we are. Perhaps not just here in Lewis, but certainly a West Coast thing anyway.

[6:43] But I'd like to focus on this word righteous. And as I briefly looked at 2 Corinthians 5, we're told he was made sin so that we might be made righteous.

He was condemned so that we might be justified. And his death was in place of our spiritual death. And this means that just as God imputed our sin, just as the Father imputed our sin and guilt to Christ, He made Him to be sin, so the Father also imputes the righteousness of Christ to all who believe in Him.

Not only does the believer receive a right standing before God on the basis of his or her faith in Jesus, but Paul tells us that in Christ, the believer actually shares in the righteousness that characterises God himself.

God regards or counts believers as forgiven and God declares and treats them as forgiven. because God the Father has imputed, or perhaps another word is attributed, God has attributed the believer's sin to Christ.

And because God the Father likewise imputes Christ's righteousness to the believer. God the Father has not been able to do for the believer. with that, and with that thinking, I tend to think that we take the first part of that verse and keep it in our minds that, and of course it's not wrong, because Jesus was made to be sin for us, but also the fact that, that we are now made righteous in the sight of God is so important and perhaps something that we don't think of as often as perhaps we ought to.

[9:10] Every believer is a reflection of God's own image in Christ. and that is, that's the express image of his person.

God sees a reflection of himself in every believer in Christ and through Christ. And we need to really grasp hold of that.

And that is that every time God looks at us individually as believers, he sees a reflection of himself in us in Christ.

And we have a special place in the heart of God. This is a perfect God-given righteousness. And it is that and that alone that enables every believer to go into the presence of a holy God because we are made righteous, our sins are forgiven, we are made righteous in Christ and we are now enabled to go into the presence of a holy God.

And so we need to be very clear and Paul writes plainly, you know, scripture doesn't define believers by what they once were.

[10:40] And notice the exchange that goes on here, this great transaction, Jesus did not merely forgive sin, he became sin for us.

And we did not merely get a clean slate as it were because of that. we also became righteous, we were made righteous immediately in the sight of God.

And this is not poetic language, this is covenant truth. Because yes, you and I, we still stumble, we stumble in the flesh and yet growth is ongoing.

But it's not about our failures in this life. we're always going to fall in some way in our lives as Christians. We're always going to stumble.

But it's about repenting of that sin which we are now led to do as believers, led by the Spirit to do.

It's about repenting and it's about picking ourselves up again and it's about looking to Jesus and it's like shaking the dust off us looking to the empty cross now, looking to our resurrected Lord and

moving on.

[12:05] Because we have to keep going on this walk or this race as Scripture often puts us to run this race. I mentioned the word identity and this is what it's all about being a child of God and a reflection of God's image and the righteousness of Christ.

Our identity is not built on our washed moments but it's built on Christ's finished work. And in 1 Corinthians chapter 6 and verse 11 that tells us you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus.

But notice that is all past tense. you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified.

Something that has already been done for us.

And living with the mindset of I'm just a sinner that can very easily trap us in cycles of shame and in cycles of fear and self-focus particularly because what that does is it very subtly teaches us to look inwards instead of upwards.

But the gospel calls us to a different posture and Colossians chapter 2 and verse 10 reminds us of these words and you have been filled in him.

[13:47] We're not lacking righteousness. We're not missing something essential. We are filled in Christ. So much to think about with these words.

this truth is not meant to produce pride in us. It produces rest. And when we truly understand that we are righteous in Christ then our obedience it stops being driven by fear and it really does start flowing from love.

And we start living from the security of it because we know that we are safe in Christ. The word tells us so.

And just as John reminds us in his epistle in 1 John chapter 4 and verse 13 he says by this we know that we abide in him and he in us because he has given us of his spirit.

God's own spirit dwelling within us and leading and guiding us each step of our way in this world.

And God's presence in us is certainly not based on our performance it's based on his promise.

[15:20] And that's a promise that can never ever be broken. And it's just as Calumura spoke of last Sunday in his sermon that we have been given an inexpressible gift from God himself.

a gift that is full of joy that joy that we're told that in and of itself is inexpressible and full of glory.

And just as with the gift of God's love that is now shed abroad in our hearts and we now also experience the peace of God that our scripture says passes all understanding and yet it is so deep within us and so foundational with regard to our faith in Christ.

Progress happens when our perspective with regard to our faith shifts from I'm constantly falling short and I'm sure so many of us are guilty in saying that and I'm no different but it needs to shift to I am learning to live out who I already am in Christ and we learn that as we grow and grace through what the Thessalonians call the sanctification process because growth does not come from shame it comes from truth and the truth is that Jesus did not save sinners and just leave them that way he made every one of us sons and daughters clothed in his righteousness so when we fall we don't say this proves

I am a sinner we see this does not align with who I am in Christ and that is a huge difference in these words one keeps us stuck exactly where we are and the other invites continued transformation in our lives we read there in Ephesians chapter 4 in verse 24 it tells us put on the new self created after the likeness of God and through righteousness and holiness and we're not creating something new we are putting on we're not sinners sorry we are putting on what already belongs to us it's been gifted to us and this is our truth that really ought to bring peace to our hearts tonight and we need to understand this that

[18:32] God is not disappointed in us he's not surprised by your weakness he's not withholding love until we get it right that's not the way God is for us until we start getting everything together but the way God sees us as righteous and accepted and secure we're not sinners trying to reach God but we are the righteousness of God and Christ learning to walk in grace or by grace day by day and surely that for ourselves ought to be a great comfort a great encouragement to our souls that our Lord is with us every single step walking with us in our walk day by day

I read something quite recently and it's it's the words of a song that has been feeling right and I just want to just read a very small part of it for you it says do you know what God did for me he broke my chains and set me free he pulled my heart from misery mercy found me right there on my knees he washed my sins in Calvary's stream gave me life where death had been he took my shame he took my fear and now I stand redeemed and clean it's about us adopting a really positive attitude about our Christianity and about our faith and to remember especially our identity which is in Christ Jesus we are seen as being perfect righteous and holy in Christ we make mistakes here but he is with us every step of the way building us up slowly but surely as we go on in this life we may not see it we may not have that awareness of it but he is building us up and he is making us more Christ like as we go on in our lives until that day when we will be taken home to be with God and we will fully realise then and experience this perfect righteousness in every aspect of our being throughout the endless ages of eternity eternity until that day let's keep looking upwards rather than inwards let's pray father we just thank you tonight for all the blessings that we receive from you we thank you for we thank you for the preciousness of this life that we have in Christ we thank you father for everything you do for us day day by day because we know that we're not we're not a servant of even the least of your mercies and yet we just cannot but gasp in awe and wonder at your love and your mercy and your long suffering towards us help us truly to focus on your word and help us truly to focus on this great gift of righteousness that you have bestowed upon each one of your own people it's hard for us to understand that we are seen as being perfectly pure and holy in your sight but we acknowledge with thankfulness Christ's finished work at Calvary for his death and for his resurrection and for his ascension Lord and we we pray to be kept every single day keep us Lord day by day until our Lord surely comes again we ask these things in Jesus name and for his sake Amen