

RIGHTEOUSNESS
(Overcoming Life Essay)
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Sin is that which separates an individual from God. Jesus came to bridge this separation by taking our sins and giving us His "righteousness", or right standing with God. We become righteous by having faith in the power of the blood of Jesus Christ to wash away our sins. There is nothing we can do to earn our righteousness; it is only through faith that we are put right with God. When we accept the atonement of Jesus' blood to make us righteous, we become a new creature with old things passing away and new things coming to pass. As a new creature, we need to clean out our old ways of thinking and update them with pure and lovely thoughts. With God's spirit in us, we can take on the nature of God by conforming to the image of His Son. The prevailing nature of God is that of love; therefore, love should be our prevailing nature. Jesus Christ shed his blood to put us right with God so that we could fulfill our purpose for living.

The Righteousness of God

THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD is appropriated in a person's life by having faith in the Lord Jesus, who shed His pure blood for us as a sacrifice for our sins. With the condition that we confess our sins, the blood of Jesus cleanses us from our sins and unrighteousness. At this point God will cleanse us from all unrighteousness, and then we can stand before God righteous and holy. In Gal. 3:10 we are told that a curse will come upon those who do not "abide by all things written in the book of the law." Because no man has ever abided by all of the law, no one has been justified in God's sight by the law. Because we have transgressed the covenant, there is no amount of good works that can make us righteous before God. In other words, we cannot earn our righteousness by doing good works, but we can obtain righteousness by faith in Christ's redemptive work. With God's righteousness in us, we have become a new creature and lay aside the old sinful self. Because we have been justified by Christ's death, sin is no longer master over us, and we can walk by the Spirit.

Righteousness that is by Faith

RIGHTEOUSNESS comes BY FAITH. People can become righteous and pure in God's sight before they go to heaven. On earth we can live a victorious life and "do all things through Christ who strengthens us." We do not have to wait till we get to heaven for Christ's redemptive work to take effect. We have to realize that by faith in Christ's death and resurrection, we are considered righteous, whether we feel like it or not. "Until man is righteous and knows it, Satan reigns over him, and sin and disease are his masters. But the instant he knows that he is the righteousness of God in Christ and knows what that righteousness means, Satan is defeated. The supreme need of the Church at this hour is to know what we are Christ, how the Father looks upon us, and what He considers us to be." Before we come to know "God", we are children of wrath by nature, but God has "delivered us from the domain of darkness and translated us into the Kingdom of His beloved Son," by faith in Christ's blood. 2 Cor. 5:21 says, "Christ was without sin, but for our sake God made him share our sin in order that we might share the righteousness of God in Him."

Jesus came to take away our sins and to replace them with His righteousness. This is a gift from God. There is nothing we can do to deserve it. It is God's grace. We are made free from sin and become servants to God. By faith, we can be free from condemnation and guilt as we stand before God; otherwise our "sin consciousness robs us of fellowship with the Father." I remember teaching a convicting message at a Bible study, and afterwards one of the students came to me and shared what he got out of the message. He claimed that it motivated him to "start going to church again." Being ignorant of the scriptures, he did not realize that Jesus will make us righteous if we only trust in Him and allow this supernatural experience take place in us by faith. Instead, he tried to quiet his conscience by doing a good "work", but God has said that no man will be justified before Him by obeying the law. If we seek to be justified by our own efforts, we are actually nullifying the grace (or undeserved gift) of God. It would show that Jesus died needlessly since He is not the only way to get to heaven. We must realize that we are in Christ's righteousness by faith and to live with this in mind so that we can enter into a deeper fellowship with the Father.

New Creation Reality

With God's righteousness in our inner most being, we are REALLY A NEW CREATION. Our old nature of doubt, grief, and defeat, are put aside and we take on a nature that has faith, joy, and victory. "We are no longer governed by the old Adamic nature, but we are born by the Spirit of God; we are a new creature; we have not the nature of our old father Satan, but we have the nature of God our father, made possible through the sacrifice of Jesus." Because we have the nature of God, we are capable of doing "good" things, but often we "react to certain things after the manner of the old life and sin against God." This is because we have not been renewed in the Spirit of our mind. The righteous spirit is entrapped by the unrenewed mind. Our minds' need to be "updated" with new godly knowledge in order to live totally pleasing to God. Our minds are renewed by the washing of the water of the Word of God. We then become a spiritual man whose mind is controlled by the spirit. As born again believers we have a sincere desire to please God, but we need to know how to please Him. We gain knowledge and wisdom of ways to please God by studying the Bible and fellowshiping with Him. By having knowledge and wisdom of God's ways, we can recognize "lofty thoughts raised up above the knowledge of God and take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ." As we become doers of the Word and not just hearers, then we will be "walking in a manner worthy of the Lord."

Taking on the Nature of God

After receiving God's Spirit and righteousness, we enter a journey of TAKING ON THE NATURE OF GOD--love. Rom. 8:29 says that our purpose in life is to conform to the image of Christ. God's nature is that of love. Similarly, Christ's nature is one of love. God loved us even while we were sinners. He sent His Son on the earth to endure the pain and suffering and to die on the cross so that we could be restored to a right relationship with Himself. In the same way, we are exhorted to love one another and lay our lives down for our friends. By obeying God's commandments, we will prove that God's love abides in us. However, it is not possible to truly love another person in our own strength, but we must depend on God to give us that overflowing love for others and help us exercise and develop that love as we would a muscle. "As we yield to love, selfishness stops reigning." We can exhibit love practically by seeking our neighbor's good and pleasing him for his own good. We are exhorted to love even our enemies and to pray for them and

care for them. We are to love the sinner, but hate the sin. When we give our love to those that don't seem to appreciate it and don't seem to be getting any closer to God, we must realize that love never fails. As we walk in the way of love we are showing the world that we truly have a good relationship with the Father and that we are abiding in Him and Him in us.