

## **EARNED OR INHERITED**

I'd like to share a few thoughts about what seems to be a very misunderstood concept in the Church today. Righteousness.

Many of us have been taught over the generations that if you pray long enough, give generously enough, repent deeply enough and live holy enough you might some day become righteous.

We've been taught that righteousness is something that you achieve. We've been told, "you may have been forgiven, but you are not righteous yet, but if you work hard enough, fix all your flaws, stop sinning, clean up your past, and walk perfectly maybe you'll get there." We've been taught that our righteousness it's based on our personal performance of Bible teachings.

Let's look at the scriptures to help us understand more clearly.

1 Corinthians 1.30 explains that;  
by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption...

According to this scripture, God put us in Christ by His own doing, and Christ has become our righteousness.

2 Corinthians 5.21 also states that;  
He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

It appears that Jesus took our sin, so that we could be righteous in Him.

Our righteousness is completely undeserved, freely given to us, and permanent because of our oneness with Christ, that He created for us.

Romans 5.17 explains that;  
For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.

This statement of reality from God makes it pretty clear that righteousness is not earned, it's a gift from God.

It's not the reward of righteousness. Not the promotion to righteousness after you've passed enough spiritual tests. It's the gift of righteousness, that we can receive by faith in His supernatural work.

Because of this gift we can live in God's presence and be totally accepted, totally loved, and completely clean. Not because of anything that we have done, but because of everything Jesus has done for us.

And although for many generations people have been trying to achieve righteousness by their sincere natural efforts, they seem to have forgotten that Jesus said; "It's the spirit who gives life, you're flesh profits absolutely nothing". John 6.63

Now many will protest, "but I keep sinning, doesn't that mean that I'm not righteous?" No. Our righteousness is not based on our personal performance. It's based on Christ's perfect performance and His perfect sacrificial offering of Himself for us.

Sin damages our relationships, and clouds our perception of who we really are in Christ. So we repent and He forgives us and receives us back into fellowship. But God's gift of righteousness, that Christ paid in full for us remains. When we mess up, Satan makes us feel like our entire standing with God is ruined.

That's what the prodigal son incorrectly assumed in Luke 15. When the prodigal returned home he told his father, "I've sinned against you and I'm not worthy to be your son. Please make me one of your hired servants."

His father wouldn't even listen to his, "I'm not worthy" speech. He told the servants "quickly get a ring, get some sandals, and the best robe and put them on him." The father's oldest son accused him of being unjust for lavishly receiving his rebellious younger brother.

The father made it quite clear, that "everything I have is yours." He was explaining to them that you are both sons of mine because of me, not because of your good performance or his poor performance.

Sin clouds our perception of who we are in Christ, but it doesn't destroy our position as His son or daughter. But as I shared from 2 Corinthians 5.21 when Christ was made sin for us, we "became" righteous in Him. Not just forgiven. Not just improved, but righteous in Him.

It doesn't say that we will become righteous some day if we really work at it. It says that we are righteous now. Not when we clean up our act, not when we become spiritually mature, or when we overcome some of our flesh's weaknesses. Now, in Christ.

It's not a goal to chase. It's an identity to receive, as a gift. This new identity delivers us from the constant sense of unworthiness due to a lack of understanding of our righteousness in Christ.

God put us in Christ and crucified us with Him, buried us with Him and raised us with Him to walk in the newness of His life. Not to try to improve the the old sinful one that we inherited from Adam and Eve. That's Romans 6.4

Christ's perfect sacrifice set us free from our old identity as a sinful son of Adam, into the reality of a re-created son of God. As a member of His family in complete right standing and oneness with God with all the rights and privileges that it provides. John 17.22

Natural man has accepted the idea that, "if I live very holy I can be blessed." The reality for a Christian is, I am already blessed and re-created in Christ and He said because He's holy, I can be holy and righteous also.

When we accept by faith our new identity, that Christ has become our righteousness, things change. We quit praying those timid, wishing and hoping kind of prayers. We quit praying like beggars, and start praying as a sons in perfect union with our Father.

Our prayers become effective because, "the prayer of a "righteous" man is powerful and effective. James 5.16 NIV

Many Christians sincerely love God and do their very best to serve Him in every way possible, but they constantly struggle with a nagging sense of unworthiness.

The scriptures declare that "you will know the truth, and the truth will set us free."  
John 8.32

I've known many Christians, myself included, who knew the teachings of Jesus, but we're still bound by this relentless sense of condemnation and unworthiness.

Jesus said that His Holy Spirit would lead us into all truth. John 16.13

He also said that, "I am the way, I am the truth, and I am the life. John 14.6

The Holy Spirit was sent to give us the revelation of our being in Christ, and that we have been completely re-created, old things are passed away and all things have been made new. 2 Corinthians 5.17

What I believe that God is saying to me today, is to reject the perception of my senses about myself and allow the Holy Spirit to renew my mind and give me the true revelation of who I am in Christ. To surrender my old identity and allow Him to make God's Word, the reality of my life.

Everything that we receive as a Christian is by inheritance.

We've been re-created in Christ and redeemed into God's family, as His children, as His heirs, and joint heirs with Christ. Romans 8.15

Jesus told us, that, "everything that the Father has is Mine and I've sent the Holy Spirit to give it to you." John 16.15 That includes His righteousness.

God bless you.

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