

“The Righteousness of Christ”
Philippians 3:7-9; 2 Corinthians 5:21
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Key Points:

1. Series Introduction: Imagine a bookshelf with books representing all the activities and roles of your life: work, housework, school, bills, exercise, Bible reading, prayer, evangelism, fellowship, etc. Over time, it can start to feel like more than you can manage. You add another book and one falls down. Then you sin and feel totally discouraged and guilty and wonder, “What does God think of me? Does He love me? Is He pleased with me? I don’t feel like I’m even a Christian.”

What’s the solution? It’s not to try harder. It’s not advice on how to reorder our books. We need truth about what Jesus has done for us. We need to hear the good news again. We need bookends of gospel truth to hold us up! On one side we need truth about how God views us in Christ—the righteousness of Christ. On the other side we need truth about how God empowers us to obey—the power of the Holy Spirit.

2. **For our sake, Jesus perfectly obeyed God’s law. (2 Cor. 5:21)**

- a. “Righteousness” means to do what is right in God’s eyes and to perfectly obey God’s law.
- b. At every point that we have disobeyed, lied, stolen, been immoral, worshipped false gods, coveted, etc., we have failed to perfectly love the Lord with our entire being and always love others as ourselves.
- c. However, Jesus was sinless. He obeyed God’s law completely and perfectly.
 - i. 1 Peter 2:22 “He committed *no sin*, neither was deceit found in his mouth.”
 - ii. 1 John 3:5 “You know that he appeared to take away sins, and in him there is *no sin*.”
 - iii. Hebrews 4:15 “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet *without sin*.”

3. **For our sake Jesus bore the penalty of our sin.**

- a. “For our sake, he made him to be sin who knew no sin...”
- b. When a law is broken, someone has to be punished. Justice has to be served. That’s true in our human judicial system. How much more is it true of the perfect

Judge of all the world? When God's law is broken, the price of disobedience must be paid in full.

- c. On the cross, God the Father treated the sinless Son as if he were a sinner and He punished him in the place of lawbreakers. All our sins were transferred to Jesus as He hung and died on the cross. This is called penal substitution. Jesus received the penalty for our sin as our substitute.
 - i. 1 Pet. 2:24 "He *himself bore our sins in his body* on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness."
 - ii. Is. 53:6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the *LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.*"

4. **For our sake, God credits Jesus' righteousness to us.**

- a. Through the cross, we are not only forgiven our sins, but God credits all of Christ's righteousness to us. God identifies Jesus with our sin and punishes him in our place. And then he identifies us with Christ's perfect obedience and treats us as if we had perfectly obeyed his law.
- b. John Stott writes: "...when we are united to Christ a mysterious exchange takes place: he took our curse, so that we may receive his blessing; he became sin with our sin, so that we may become righteous with his righteousness." – *The Cross of Christ*, page 148.
- c. This is the doctrine of justification. Justification is the act of God declaring us justified or righteous in his sight. When we believe in Jesus Christ, when we put our faith in him, the Lord views us if we had never sinned and as if we had perfectly obeyed God's laws.
- d. The righteousness of Christ is the first bookend. Without this in place we are unsure of our standing before God. Without the truth of Christ's righteousness, we will constantly evaluate our performance and swing between self-righteousness and despair.

Fellowship Starters

1. Have you ever said, "I just can't do it all" or "I feel like I'm doing nothing well" or "I don't even feel like I'm a Christian"? What do these statements reveal about what you are leaning on?
2. What does the Bible mean by "righteous"? What is God's standard for the level of righteousness He requires of us? Is it attainable?
3. What difference will it make to live moment-by-moment in the good of having our sin transferred to Christ and Christ's righteousness credited to us? What's the effect when we forget these truths?

4. Josh invited us to complete the statement, "I'm OK because _____ (I read my Bible everyday; I'm a good parent; I attend this church; I'm respected; I have a good job, etc.) What does your answer reveal about the bookends of your life?"