

### Am I righteous? – Yes as long as you're in Christ Jesus

What does it mean to be righteous? A dictionary definition of Righteousness is, *"to be right, equitable, innocent, holy, in right standing, or justified."* To the Christian, righteousness is further described as, "to be able to stand before a Holy God without a sense of inferiority or condemnation."

### How does a person obtain 'right standing' with God the Father?

This is a question that is often asked by many and the Bible has a clear answer for us:

The righteousness of God, or in other words, being in 'right standing' with God is revealed through His word (Rom 3:20-31). God **has made us righteous** through Jesus, and only through Him. Romans 3:22-24 says, *"Even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference (vs. 23), for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, (vs. 24) being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."*

Jesus lived a perfect life as a man (2 Cor 5:17-21; 1 Tim 2:5; Phil 2:5-11) and took the sins of the world upon Himself (John 1:24; 1 Pet 1:19). All have sinned and the wages of sin is death (Rom 6:22-23). But because of the love of God, Jesus became sin for us who knew no sin (2 Cor 5:21) and paid for our sins with his own blood. We could never pay for our sins or work hard enough to become holy or righteous. When you put your faith in Jesus and what He did for you, your faith in Him is accounted for righteousness. Romans 4:5 says: *"But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, **his faith is accounted for righteousness.**"* Romans 4: 9 says: *"faith was accounted to Abraham for righteousness."*

To be in right standing with our Heavenly Father, we must put our faith in Jesus, and His full redemptive work at the cross. Jesus paid for our salvation with His precious blood (Heb 9: 12-14; 1 Pet 1: 18-19) and through faith in Him, we no longer walk as sinners separated from God (Eph 2:13-14; 2 Cor 5:21).

### Am I a sinner saved by grace?

You cannot find that statement in the Bible.

The truth is you **were** a sinner, but if you have been born again (John 3:3) your identity has been changed! You're no longer a sinner that is 'saved by grace'; you are a **new creation** in Christ (2 Cor 5:17-21). The word *sinner* implies that someone lives a lifestyle of sin and is still a slave to it. This person is not repentant of their lifestyle of sin, nor free from it. Romans 6:20, 22 says: *"For when you **were** slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness, but now having been **set free from sin** and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness."*

**Note: I did not say we would never sin again or make mistakes.** When we do sin and miss the mark, we ask God to forgive us and repent of the sin we committed (1 John 1:9; 1 John 2: 1, 2). Even though a person is saved by God's Grace (Eph 2:8-9) and God calls you righteous and holy, that person does not have the right to live in sin and violate God's word. The word is clear when it comes to sin and not living a lifestyle of sin. Jesus told the people to repent and turn from sin (Mt 4:17; John 5:14) as it's harmful.

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Your position or identity in Christ is now righteous and holy, but only 'in Christ'. 2 Corinthians 5:17-21 says this about the believer in Christ, "*Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a **new creation**; old things have passed away, behold, all things have become new.*" Verse 21 says: "*for He made Him who knew no sin, to be sin for us, **that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.***" You are a new creation in Christ; He paid for your sins and lived a holy and perfect life for you and me, because we couldn't.

No longer does God see you as a sinner, but righteous and holy in Christ. Eph 4: 24 says, "*and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.*"

### Identity of righteousness: our righteousness or God's?

There is a dangerous and erroneous doctrine that teaches good deeds, long prayers or penance, are required in order for us to make it to Heaven.

Though doing good deeds, giving, and praying are all things Christians should do, that will not result in a person becoming a saint and qualifying them for Heaven. Phil 3:9 says, "*and be found in Him, not having **my own righteousness**, which is from the law, **but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith.***" God knows that we could never be good enough or work hard enough to become righteous and holy, that is why Jesus came. He lived a perfect, holy and righteous life, died for us and then gave us the gift of righteousness. You cannot work for grace (Rom 4: 4-5; Eph 2:8-9) or salvation; it is a gift from the Father. In God's amazing grace He gave us the gift of righteousness and we are made right with the Father when we accept this gift through faith in Christ. Romans 5:17 says, "*For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.*"

When you focus on Jesus' perfect life and God's grace and mercy, you focus on His holiness and righteousness. At this point we stop focusing on our unrighteousness and how we've missed it and made mistakes in life. The enemy wants you to focus on yourself and not Christ **in you** (Col 1:27). When we do this we fall into the trap of guilt and condemnation, "*but there is **no condemnation** to those who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit*" (Rom 8:1). Jesus has made us kings and saints and has qualified us to become such. He did it all for us as our King of kings (1 Pet 2:9; Rev 1:6; Col 1:12; Eph 2:19).

Only in Him (Christ) do we have redemption and forgiveness of sins (Eph 1:7; Phil 3:9; Psalm 103:3;12,-13). God does not want us to try to become *self-righteous* and approach him with our own works and good deeds. Paul discussed this in Romans chapter 7 regarding works and attempting to fulfill the Law of Moses. In fact, the law was a standard used to show us just how unrighteous we are apart from Jesus.

### How does God see me?

Mankind was created perfect and holy in the image of God (Gen 1:26).

God saw that everything He created was good (Gen 1:31). When sin entered and mankind fell, mankind was no longer in right standing with God, and therefore was in need of a savior. Because of God's love for mankind He sent Jesus to save the world from sin (1 John 2:1-2; John 1:29; 3:16) and redeem us back into right standing

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with God the Father (Eph 1:7). God is Holy and just and sin is not acceptable in His sight. He said, "*the wages of sin is death*", "*and all have sinned*" (Rom 3:23; 6:23). God also said, there is not one person righteous in and of himself apart from Christ (Rom 3:10). When we put our faith in Jesus, His righteousness becomes our righteousness. God is a Spirit and sees our spirit, soul and body (John 4:24; 1 Thess 23). When a person believes in Jesus and puts their faith in Him as their Lord and Savior, they become "born again" (John 3:3), and a "a new creation" (2 Cor 5:17-21). At this point, God sees them "in Christ," and not the old person they used to be (Rom 6:1-23; Col 2:12-13; 2 Cor 5:17-21).

The Bible says, "You died" spiritually, and are made alive in Christ (Col 3:3; Eph 4:24; Cor 1:27-28). Christ lives in you and through you, and you are in Christ (Gal 2:20; Gal 3:26-28; Gal 4: 7,19; 2 Cor 5:17-21). We are spiritually different and are changed through the power of the Holy Spirit. We still choose to do right and live right before God and mankind, though all our righteous acts could never make us right with the Father by ourselves. Even though God is pleased with the right things we do, our faith in Jesus is what truly pleases Him and makes us righteous in His sight. Jesus freed us from sin and unrighteousness (Rom 3:22-27). Remember, this was a gift from God because of His grace and mercy (Rom 5:17)!

**God sees you as righteous** and calls you a justified and righteous person *only in Jesus*. To agree with God and confess that you are a righteous person in Christ is one of the most humble statements to declare. It takes true humility to repent, turn to Christ and admit you need Jesus and His righteousness. He lived a perfect and holy life for you and me. It is pride that will reject His gift of righteousness and not receive it (Jas 4:6; 1 Pet 5:5-6). Let's commit to seek His kingdom first and His righteousness and the knowledge of our righteousness in Him (Mt 6:33; Eph 6:14; 2 Cor 6:7)!