

## Salvation—Justification (4<sup>th</sup>)

(Our study for today continues with the subject of justification. In this study we continue discussing the righteousness of God which is the ground of justification.)

In our last podcast we began discussing the righteousness of God which is the ground of justification. We gave some quotes that verified the righteousness that Christ worked out as being this righteousness. We ended by saying that we plan to provide other scriptural passages to support this truth. However, before doing this, I would like to discuss something that occasionally causes confusion. The Scriptures sometimes identify someone as being a “just man” or as being “perfect and upright,” and one that fears God, and eschews evil. In other words, I would like to direct our attention briefly concerning the difference between the inherent righteousness that resides in God, the imputed righteousness of Christ, and that righteousness that identifies an individual as being righteous, just, perfect or upright. It should be obvious that the eternal righteousness that resides in God is different from the imputed righteousness of Christ and the righteousness associated with a person that designates him as being just or righteous before men.

Clearly, that righteousness that dwells eternally in God is of such a nature that it is found only in God. Like all of the attributes of God, it is found only in Him and cannot be in any other in like manner. The quote from John Gill as given in the previous podcast properly described it as “the essential righteousness of God, the rectitude of his nature, his righteousness in fulfilling his promises, and his punitive justices.” Not only does this righteousness dwell in God, He alone is righteous. Men and angels, good and bad ascribe righteousness to God: Jeremiah (Jeremiah 12:1); angels (Revelation 16:5); even Pharaoh when Egypt was under the judgment of God declared that God is righteous (Exodus 9:27).

As previously mentioned, the Scriptures speaks of some people as being just but this does not mean that they have inherit righteousness that establishes them as being just or declared justified because of their own merits. Genesis 6:9 says that “Noah was a just man *and* perfect in his generations, *and* Noah walked with God.” Matthew 1:9 declares, “Then Joseph her husband, being a just *man*, and not willing to make her a publick example, was minded to put her away privily.” Luke 2:25 said of Simeon that he was “*was* just and devout.” Acts 10:22 testifies, “Cornelius the centurion, a just man, and one that feareth God, and of good report among all the nation of the Jews . . .” Job 1:1 writes, “There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name *was* Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil.” Even God told Satan that Job was “a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil.” (See also Job 1:8; 2:3.) These verses do not teach that such people are accepted as being justified before God and without sin. Ecclesiastes 7:20 says, “For *there is* not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not.” Job also testified, “I know *it is* so of a truth: but how should man be just with God?” We know that the Bible does not contradict itself and the just, perfect, upright, and devout descriptions of these men is not the same as that just state imputed to those for whom Christ died. Such righteousness neither is inherent righteousness as with God nor is it imputed righteousness of Christ that justifies a sinner before God, but it may be designated comparative righteousness. In other words, in comparing such people to other human beings, they are morally upright and just in their daily lives. While it is no doubt true that such men like Job, Noah, Joseph, Simeon, and Cornelius were and are just before God in the imputed righteousness of Christ, the context bears out that the passages referred to above regarding these men is speaking of comparative righteous; that is, in comparison to men in general they were just men and portray a life of righteousness in their daily lifestyle. Therefore, we must not confuse inherent righteousness (which is alone in God), comparative righteousness (which is manifested in the general lifestyle of an individual), or imputed righteousness (which that righteousness worked out by Christ in His person and work and charged to the account of the redeemed). Quoting from the previous

podcast, Charles Hodge was correct in that the *righteousness of God* whereby we are justified “is not our own,” but it is “the perfect righteousness of Christ which completely meets and answers all the demands of” the law.

Now we direct our attention to other scriptural passages that clearly declare that justification depends “on an underlying righteousness as its basis” and that righteousness is designated as “the righteousness of God.”

Though we quoted II Corinthians 5:21 in the previous podcast, I would like to present it again because of its clarity and conciseness: “For he hath made him *to be* sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” It must be noted that the redeemed are “made the righteousness of God” in Christ being made sin for them. This is no New Testament doctrine; it was promise in the Old Testament. Also, allow me to add that this righteousness is not imputed to us by faith, but we obtain faith by or because of the righteousness of God. Note II Peter 1:1, “Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.” The inspired Word of God plainly says “precious faith” is “obtained” “through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.” We plan to say more about faith and its connection to justification in future studies, but it must be kept in mind that faith is not the cause of justification but the evidence of it. Likewise, the righteousness of God imputed to one produces faith and faith does not produce the righteousness of God. Yes, faith receives it into the conscience and heart of a child of grace, but that underlying righteousness is legally imputed or charged to the account of the sheep prior to faith. Nevertheless, notice the following passages ascribing the righteousness of God to the redeemed.

Notice the words of Jeremiah 23:5-6, “Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this *is* his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.” It is obvious that the righteous Branch and King that is raised up unto David is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. Even the Pharisees understood this because when Jesus asked them who Christ was, they said that He was the Son of David, Matthew 22:41-42. Equally, the New Testament opens saying, “The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham,” Matthew 1:1. Therefore, we see that Jesus Christ is our righteousness. Regarding the passage in Jeremiah, listen to the comments of John Gill:

**“and this *is* his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS;** because he is the author of righteousness to his people, and is only so; no creature could be the author of it; unrighteous man cannot be the author of righteousness; and the righteousness of an angel is of no advantage to man; and indeed neither of the other divine Persons is the Lord our righteousness; for though they are both Jehovah, the Father and the Spirit, yet not our righteousness: the Father appointed and sent Christ to work it out; he approved and accepted of it, when wrought out; and imputes it to his people; but is not the author of it: so the Spirit convinces of the need of it; reveals it, and brings it near; works faith to receive it; and applies it, and pronounces a person justified by it; but is not the author of it; that the Son of God only is; who is become so by his obedience to the law, and by bearing the penalty of it; and who, having been delivered for our offences, rose again for our justification: and this righteousness, which he has wrought out to the satisfaction of law and justice, becomes “ours”; it being signed for us, and wrought out for us, by a free gift of it is given to us; ours through the imputation of it to us by the Father, and in virtue of our union to Christ, and interest in him; and through the application of it to us by the Spirit of God; who puts it upon us, and clothes us with it, and enables us to lay hold upon it, and claim interest in it; and which may be meant by Christ being “called our righteousness”; for the meaning is, not that he should commonly go by this name; but

only that he should be that unto us which it signifies; and that we should by faith, even every true Israelite, every believer, call him our righteousness; say that we have righteousness in him make mention of that continually, and express our desires to be found alone in it; for so the words may be rendered, “and this is the name whereby he shall call him, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS”; and a sweet name to a sensible sinner it is; to one that has felt the guilt of sin in his conscience; seen his need of a righteousness, and the worth of it. That the Messiah is here meant is acknowledged by the Jews, ancient and modern.”

Isaiah 45:24-25 testifies to this same truth. It says, “Surely, shall *one* say, in the LORD have I righteousness and strength: *even* to him shall *men* come; and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed. In the LORD shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory.” Clearly this passage tells us that our righteousness is in the Lord and that it is in the Lord that we are justified. Again, allow me to impose on your patience by giving some comments on this passage by Gill.

**Surely, shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength,** That is, one and everyone of these that shall be brought to submit to Christ, and to confess him, shall declare it as their faith, that in Christ alone is their “righteousness or righteousnesses”; that they have a full and complete righteousness in him, and which serves for many; consisting of the holiness of his nature, the obedience of his life, and his sufferings of death; by which the law is honoured, justice satisfied, God is well pleased, and they are acquainted and discharged; and which is pure, perfect, and everlasting, is given them of grace, and entitles them to eternal life; and this they have in Christ as their covenant head and representative, and which they come to have by being in him: it is not inherent in them, but is in Christ, by whom it is wrought out, and becomes theirs by the imputation of it to them, and which they receive by faith; and this is an act of faith concerning it here expressed, and which declares the certainty of it, and of interest in it, and excludes all other: for it may be rendered, “only in the Lord”, etc.; and seems to be spoken with great joy, in an exulting way, and what may be said at all times; for this righteousness is always in Christ ...”

**In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified,**• All the spiritual Israel of God, whether Jews or Gentiles; all the spiritual seed and offspring of Christ, to whom he stands in the relation of the, everlasting Father and federal Head; these being given to him, and being in him, are justified in him from all things; and these, all and everyone, shall be brought to see their need of his righteousness, and look to him for it, and receive it from him by faith; and be manifestatively justified in their own consciences, as they will be openly at the bar of God, before angels and men, hereafter.

... **and shall glory;** in Christ, as the Lord their righteousness; not in themselves, in their own righteousness, holiness, wisdom, and strength, but in this, that Christ is made to them wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, I Corinthians 1:30.

Please forgive me for extending this podcast a little longer than normal, but the comments by Gill are so edifying and honoring to the Lord that I thought it good to do so. The Lord willing we will look at other passages regarding the righteousness of God imputed to the account of the people of God in our next podcast. However, our time is up for today. Farewell.