

Receive God's Righteousness by faith

Whose righteousness do you have?

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Summary: This is one of the most important messages I've ever given. We all know about God's grace and receiving His forgiveness for our sins. But then what? Going forward, even WITH God's Spirit, will we be judged by our righteousness? Even with the Holy Spirit, Paul said HE kept failing (Romans 7). What's the answer? We must be righteous, for the unrighteous won't be in the kingdom of God. But whose righteousness alone is good enough for the kingdom? God offers a gift many believers have not fully received. Experience the joy of His salvation that comes when we truly understand this great gift – while avoiding the two ditches: the ditch of legalism or the ditch of license to disobey Yahweh's ways.

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Hello brothers and sisters in the Messiah. I consider this message one of the most important I've ever given. This is Philip Shields, a believer in the USA, and I have a vital and crucial series of questions for you today:

Will you, and will I, ever be righteous enough to know we will be in the kingdom of the Eternal God? If so, will it be because you finally no longer sin or ever stumble and have become righteous enough to be “qualified” for the kingdom of God?

- Or are we doomed to just do the best we can and hope for the best, and that Yahweh will be merciful in the end?
- Did you know that you can be seen as perfectly righteous in God's eyes? Hang on to those thoughts.

If you were given the option—would you ever dare stack up *your* righteousness – the best you can do -- with God's righteousness, the best Yahweh is and has done? Or wouldn't it be great to have the option to be given God's very own perfect, sinless righteousness as your own righteousness?

Are you confident you'll be in God's Kingdom? Paul himself went from not considering himself to have attained yet (Philippians 3:12) to saying he knew he had fought a good fight, kept the faith and had a crown of righteousness waiting for him (2 Timothy 4:6-8).

Many Sabbath keeping conservative Christians, and Messianics, who put a lot of focus on overcoming, changing, obeying God – may find this message to be an eye opener. Now here's our Savior, Yeshua the Messiah, speaking:

Matthew 5:20

For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.

How are we doing? Does our righteousness right now, exceed the careful law-keeping the Pharisees demonstrated? It has to, or we won't be there – quoting Jesus. But is it our own careful obedience or law-keeping, *even with Yahweh's Holy Spirit*, that will get us into God's kingdom?

We can have a greater righteousness. Many of us aren't experiencing the JOY and peace of His Salvation though because we haven't understood the GIFT I'm speaking of today. If we do learn to ask for, receive and accept this precious gift I'll discuss today, we'll also begin to witness a dramatic transformation of our lives we've never had before.

We know the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom (1 Cor. 6:9). You and I continue to sin and be unrighteous in our flesh, from time to time. How will we ever be seen as righteous enough to inherit the kingdom of God when we all still sin? Even spirit-filled Paul acknowledged his own sinning from time to time in Romans 7:15, 19-20.

So what's the answer?

We all know about God's grace and receiving His forgiveness for our sins when we repent bitterly and see ourselves. I have a sermon on the website – "Repenting of what You Are". *But then what?* Our past sins are blotted out (Rom.3:25), the death penalty is paid; we stand justified before Holy God. *Even future* sins we commit, can and will be forgiven when we repent of them and come to Yeshua, the captain of our salvation, who stands as our Advocate with Father in heaven, who is faithful and just to forgive us of ALL our sins (1 John 1:7; 2:1-2).

OK, we know all that, I think. But then what? The fact is, we still sin too much in the flesh. The fact is, we are – at least in our flesh – way, way too unrighteous for the glory of perfect Elohim our God.

If you had a choice, would you:

- **Like to be as righteous as YOU could be, including with God's Spirit – or as righteous as the Eternal God can be?**
- **Would you have more confidence in your own righteousness, or in God's righteousness?**
- **If you could choose – would you pick your own best performance, or God's own perfect, flawless performance?**

That sounds almost silly, doesn't it, when we put it that way. But yes, we *can* choose to accept a gift that is rarely discussed in some circles: the GIFT of GOD'S righteousness which we can have by faith in Yeshua, in Jesus Christ.

I'm convinced most believers are still struggling in their own failed attempts at righteousness after repentance. We know even with Yahweh's Holy Spirit we still fail. ***So will you and I ever be seen as having righteousness that is every whit as good as the righteousness of the Messiah?***

I submit to you today that not only can we have the righteousness that is every whit as good as the Messiah's, but we must – or we won't even be in the Kingdom of God. But will you have to muster this up by careful Torah obedience, or will you accept what Scripture teaches in many

places, that true righteousness is Yahweh's gift to us, His perfect righteousness? You'll find today that this righteousness is the sole and specific righteousness of the Kingdom – from Abel to the last person called and converted, changed, by Yahweh. Let's hear the Apostle Paul make it so clear. There will be *no* unrighteous ones in God's kingdom, so how will we be there then? Turn to Philippians 3.

Philippians 3:3-11

"For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, **and have no confidence in the flesh**, 4 though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: 5 circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; 6 concerning zeal, persecuting the church; **concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless**. [note that Paul calls all of that as 'having confidence in the flesh', instead of the Spirit]

7 But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. 8 Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish [dung], that I may gain Christ 9 **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**; 10 **that I may know Him** and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, 11 if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead."

(Re-read verse 9). He does go on to say in vs. 12-15, after having first accepted the righteousness which is by faith – that he makes a strong effort to press on, to lay hold of what is being offered to him. He says he's not giving much time regretting or thinking about past failures; rather, he forgets "those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead" (v.13).

So I am not saying we don't have to obey going forward, to strive diligently to stay close to Abba and our Savior. **But just realize whose righteousness counts. It's certainly not mine. Nor yours. Only the perfect righteousness of God Himself by faith, will count.**

I know you've accepted the fact you have been a sinner and needed a Savior- and you accepted Yahweh's forgiveness by grace. But my question today is this: have you accepted not just His grace, but His righteousness? It's a part of His grace that we don't often think about – but I think we need to understand it or we won't have the joy of this incredible gift.

The Contrast between False religions and the One true religion

FALSE religions all around the world focus on how to attain righteousness by things we do, or how they would attain their version of heaven, reincarnation, nirvana, or bliss – and it's all focused on things we each must do to and for our God so we can be righteous. They teach ways *you* make yourself right with their version of God.

Too often that same approach enters into the group of believers in the One True God and in the sacrifice of His son.

- *It is FALSE RELIGION that focuses on what WE must do to be righteous before Yahweh.*
- The true teaching, the TRUE religion of the one true Creator God focuses on what Yahweh did, and is continuing to do, to save His children and make them righteous in His eyes. It's about what HE does – and how we cooperate with His work in us.

Righteousness is, in its simplest terms, being right with our Maker, according to His terms. Having a good standing before Him, according to HIS standards and HIS requirements.

Listen carefully: the ONLY way to be perfectly righteous enough to be in the Kingdom of God is to be exactly like the sinless Son of God, exactly like Yeshua the Messiah, Jesus the Christ. *Otherwise, what level of Unrighteousness would be allowed?*

There is NO unrighteousness in the Kingdom of Heaven. The unrighteous won't be there (1 Cor. 6:9). There will be zero tolerance for sin and unrighteousness in the spirit Kingdom of God. Let that sink in. So where does that leave you and me? Do we have to be perfectly obedient ourselves, all the time, or we won't be there? Then none of us will be there, if that's the case, for "there is none righteous, no not one", Scripture says.

I'm saying today, that required perfect righteousness is being offered to you as a GIFT. A gift is not something you can earn – or it's no longer a gift. We read and heard Paul's words – "I don't want my own righteousness from the Law, but the righteousness *of God* by faith" (Phil 3:9). Now let's read more about this gift in Romans 5:17-19.

Romans 5:17-19

"For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of **grace** and **THE GIFT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS** will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.)

18 Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, **even so through one Man's righteous act the FREE GIFT came to all men**, resulting in justification of life. 19 For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, ***so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous.***"

It's not enough to just have past sins forgiven (Romans 3:25) because we all still sin, don't we? We'd like to be righteous going forward, but even with God's Spirit we keep stumbling. So we need a gift: *the GIFT of God's own righteousness. You can't get more righteous than that!* And yes, the righteousness of God by faith far exceeds any righteousness the meticulous Pharisees ever could muster.

Accept this gift. Don't keep trying to do it on your own efforts. You won't be able to – not perfectly at least... And if you could, it's no longer God's gift but something you did, so you earned it and can boast (Romans 4:2-4). But you won't be able to do it perfectly.

Some people – especially certain nationalities-- just can't accept any gifts from others without doing something back or paying for it. If you have that same attitude with God's righteousness as a gift, it could keep us out of His kingdom. Humble yourself and learn to accept His incredible gift.

I suspect we just don't talk about it as much as we should because some interpret this to be license to sin – since He did it all for us. But no, no, no – Romans chapters 6 and 8 are so clear that because of this great gift we treasure and value so much, we are debtors to show our gratitude (**Rom 8:11-14**), and to have a changed life. In fact, proof of our salvation is our changed, obedient life. Paul, Peter, Jude and John all speak of this, repeatedly. Much more on that, next sermon.

It's this balance that makes some steer completely away from it. It seems people jump into either the Ditch of Legalism or the Ditch of License to sin. It's neither.

We don't earn the gift. It's given to us freely. I think Scripture is also clear, however, that if we dare to spit in Yahweh's face with an "in your face" defiant, sinful attitude once we have received this precious gift, He can revoke it. **Heb. 10:26-31** is so clear about this. Read Heb. 10 if you have any doubt. We can't go back to a life of sin, like dog to its vomit. This is not earning the gift – but it is appreciating the gift. And the life evidencing our appreciation is not our own righteousness, it is the result of being so filled with and by Him and HIS righteousness, that we are being saved, being changed, being made new as a walk a new life with Him.

CAN You Lose the GIFT of your heavenly CITIZENSHIP?

Let me use this analogy: Most of you hearing this are born citizens in America, and some of you are naturalized citizens who were given the gift of US citizenship after a legal application process. Most seeking that citizenship would consider it a great gift. Once you are given this great gift, it is not *easy* to lose the gift of citizenship – but it is possible to!

In like manner, we were originally part of this world, but have been transferred in Christ "to the kingdom of the Son of His love" (Col. 1:13; Eph. 2:4-7), and given the gift of heavenly citizenship, as naturalized citizens of heaven (Phil. 3:20). It's a great gift. We're now "of" that realm, though we still live here.

Can you lose natural born or naturalized citizenship? It's not easy to. You don't have to be perfect to keep it – but you *can* have the gift of citizenship taken away, if for example, you:

- Publicly renounce it, from abroad, and defiantly give it up
- If you join the armed forces of another country and fight against the USA
- If you are convicted of high treason against the USA

These are all "in your face" kind of actions—bold, defiant, aggressively against your citizenship. In the same way, we don't earn our heavenly citizenship, but we must show appreciation for the kingdom, its ways, its laws and its royalty once we're given the gift. We have to let the gift of God change us and clean us up.

THE GIFT of Righteousness vs. our OWN Efforts to Keep the Law

Let's start in Romans chapters 1, 2 and 3. Paul begins with Romans 1:1-5 saying he was called to the "gospel of God....concerning His son Jesus" (v.3), who was a descendant of David through

Mary, and a son of God through the spirit (v 3-4). So Yeshua was both man in the flesh, and Son of God in the spirit.

Romans 1:16 – the gospel is about the power of God, to all who believe. (It’s not about your power to overcome or be so impressive, but about God’s power).

Romans 1:17 ASB

“For in *it* **God’s righteousness** is revealed from faith to faith, just as it is written: The righteous will live by faith.”

Our righteousness is by faith now, not by ourselves or by our own efforts. Young’s literal Translation and others say, “And the righteous one by faith shall live.”

Romans 1:17 CJB

“For in it [the gospel] is revealed **how GOD makes people righteous in his sight**; and from beginning to end it is **through trust** — as the Tanakh (the Old Testament) puts it, ‘But the person who is righteous will live his life by trust’

(Compare with Phil. 1:6 – God starts and ends the whole thing). Rom 1:17 was quoted from **Habakkuk 2:4** – so this concept was there from the beginning in the “Old” Testament also. You can’t be righteous enough yourself; Yahweh makes you righteous.

It’s through faith, trust and belief that we get into this righteousness. No wonder followers of Jesus Christ – or Yeshua the Messiah – should be called **‘BELIEVERS’** (*Acts 5:14, etc.*)

Then in Romans 2 Paul shows that if anyone could perfectly keep Torah, he *would* be considered righteous (see also Deut 6:25). Someone who perfectly does the law would be justified (Rom. 2:13).

But there was a problem: no one could! Romans 3:10-12 says no one *was* perfectly righteous (except Christ) – so therefore no one in fact ends up being justified by the deeds of Torah/law because no one could! That’s Romans 3:20. We can’t rely on our own obedience to be deemed righteous in His eyes. We’ll read Romans 3:20 and more in a minute.

Even Peter said in Acts 15, when the elders came together to discuss whether or not Gentiles would be required to be circumcised “and to keep **the Law of Moses**” (Acts 15:5). That is the context of what we’re about to read. It’s not about the oral added traditions of the Pharisees, which Yeshua condemned, but the Law of Moses and its 613 statutes and laws. Peter gets up and recounts in Acts 15:7-9 the calling and baptism of the Gentile Cornelius, and how God gave them the Spirit before baptism.

Then continuing in Acts 15:9-11: (remember the context is the Law of Moses, v. 5)

“And made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. Now therefore, *why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples, which neither we nor our fathers were able to bear?* But we believe that through the grace of our Master Jesus Christ we shall be saved *in the same manner as they* [i.e., by FAITH].”

The “yoke” Peter speaks of cannot be just the matter of circumcision, for virtually everyone in that room, including Peter, had been circumcised. They certainly were able to do and bear with that. He had to be talking about the Law of Moses, as verse 5 alludes to. Peter explains that salvation, and its righteousness, is by grace and faith primarily and not by our own deeds of Torah. How else could you explain this passage? Also in the succeeding verses, they address much more than circumcision! ***PETER calls it “a yoke” no one could bear. Paul says much the same in 2 Corinthians 3 and 4, and Galatians 3 and 4,*** which we might read next time.

Now back to Romans 3:20-31. The context: in the preceding 10 verses Paul explains to converted, Spirit-led and Spirit-filled believers in Rome, that no one has been deemed righteous and no one could keep the law perfectly enough. *Remember that all what we’re about to read is being said to people who have already repented, been baptized, and received the Ruach HaKodesh, the Holy Spirit. This is crucial.* So let’s pick up in Rom. 3:20 with Paul as he continues (notice how much Paul focuses on GOD’S righteousness, and not our own):

Romans 3:20

“Therefore by the deeds of the law (Torah) no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

21 But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, **22 even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ,** to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; **23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,**

24 being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, **25 whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate HIS righteousness,** because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed,

26 to demonstrate at the present time HIS righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

27 Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith. 28 Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law.

Notice the next part. Are we supposed to try to look like, sound like, dress like, speak like, and be like Jews?

29 Or is He the God of the Jews only? Is He not also the God of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also, 30 since there is one God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith. 31 Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law.”

In a future sermon I’ll discuss the Hebraic Roots movement. It has its benefits and good points, but we’ll see how God has made one body – the body of Christ – those who are being called to His

grace. It doesn't matter if you know Hebrew or not, or dress like and sound like a Jew or not. In fact, there are some warnings about that we'll someday get into.

Remember: this righteousness is considered a part of grace, and is a gift of Yahweh to all who believe it and will accept it by faith. Have you asked for it? Have you accepted it?

There's more. So much more. We're just getting started.

HOW do we REMAIN Righteous – by OUR works, or God's works?

Let me hasten to add, the risen Messiah now lives in us and is changing us, saving us, day by Day.

Romans 5:8-10

8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. 9 Much more then, having now been **justified by His blood**, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. 10 For if when we were enemies we were *reconciled to God through the death* of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall **BE SAVED BY HIS LIFE.**"

This answers the question that comes up: what do we do going forward? His death saves us from *past* sins, from sins "*previously* committed" (**Rom 3:25**). Going forward, He covers us with Himself, HIS righteousness, while our old carnal selves are considered dead. We were crucified with Him, we no longer live, but the life we now live in the flesh, we live by faith in the Son of God. You might recognize that as **Galatians 2:20**, but do you know what the next verse says?

Galatians 2:20

I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live *in the flesh* I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

Why did Paul say "in the flesh" he had to live by faith? Because he makes it real clear in Romans 7, that in his flesh "*dwells no good thing*" (Rom 7:18) and that he kept doing what He did not really want to do, even though he had God's Holy Spirit. He kept failing.

But Paul teaches that God sees our "fleshly side" as dead. He sees us now "in the spirit", not "in the flesh". Though we are made of flesh still, God says in **Romans 8:9**, "***But you are not in the flesh but in the spirit***, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you....".

Col. 3:3 says something similar: "*For YOU died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.*"

But we still have a fleshly side, the carnal nature that we should be crucifying and nailing down – and that is why we have to live by faith in the Son of God, who did it perfectly and gifts that perfect righteousness to us. *Too many are trying to "be righteous" by their own Torah obedience – but find they still fail and sin all too often.*

I'll speak much more about why we sin still, even with the Holy Spirit, in the next sermon.

Back to Gal. 2:20 and being crucified with Christ.

Do you have any idea what the next verse, Gal. 2: 21, says? Many groups who preach your “own works” seldom quote this verse.

Galatians 2:21

I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law (Torah), then Christ died in vain."

I for one do not want my Master's crucifixion and death to be in vain for me.

Are we getting it? Righteousness cannot come through the Torah obedience or the law, because we fail too often to keep it. In the flesh we can't. *In order to stand before God as perfect, complete and without flaw – is not going to come from trying to keep the 613 points of Torah.* Nobody can keep it perfectly, and if we rely on that for righteousness and perfection, we are doomed – and Paul makes that very, very clear in **Galatians 3 and 4** as well. Read those chapters yourself, slowly. We must rely on the perfect obedience *of our MASTER, the MESSIAH*, gifted to us. I'll explain more how that happens in a while.

This is so important, that I want to hit it again: what is that that makes you and me righteous enough for Yahweh to say you and I are righteous?

Let's read a few scriptures so it's clearly the righteousness of God by faith that is the righteousness we need – and then we'll really delve into that.

Romans 9:30-10:3

30 What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even **the righteousness of faith**; 31 but Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness.

32 ***Why? Because they did not seek it (righteousness) by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law***

[They sought righteousness primarily by Torah obedience, by what they could do, rather than what God had done and was offering to them. Our righteousness is our works. God's righteousness is about HIS works and working in us]

Now continue in ROM. 10:1-4

Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved. 2 For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. 3 ***For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God.***" (which was a GIFT!)

Wow, can we be guilty of the same thing?

Righteousness by Faith was from the beginning

Some are teaching that this righteousness of God by faith is mentioned only after the gospels, and never in the Old Testament. That is simply not true, as we will see shortly. Paul clearly says this gift of God's righteousness was witnessed to by the law and prophets (**Romans 3:21-22**).

- **ABRAHAM** is credited with righteousness by faith (Gen. 15:6) by Moses, by Paul (Romans 4:1-4, 22), James and others.

- **NOAH** is described in Heb 11:7 as being an heir of the righteousness that is by faith.
- **David** often spoke of the righteousness of God as the one he wanted. More on all that in the next sermon.
- Jesus Himself taught – “Seek you first the kingdom of God and **HIS** righteousness”.

I want to hasten to add right now that you will not hear me talking about license to sin, or throwing out the 10 commandments, or not having to obey God now since we have this gift of His righteousness. You will hear me explain that our obedience is not what will earn us the kingdom of God, but when we receive this righteousness of God, **it is ACTIVE in us, and Yeshua the Messiah WILL live His life more and more perfectly in us “until Christ is formed in you” (Gal. 4:19).** I just want to be sure you realize this righteousness of God is such a great gift we don’t hear nearly enough about. But it will, it should, transform us over time until our life and our actions look ever more like that of the Son of God.

Going Forward – HOW Being Witnesses of His Resurrection -Lets His Righteousness Live in us

I’m going to transition a bit for a few minutes to how we can have the Eternal’s righteousness **going forward**, after our *past* sins have been erased and forgiven. I’ll also dwell much more on this aspect in the next sermon: how we live going forward, even with the weaknesses of our flesh.

- Going forward, is our righteousness going to be based on *our* perfect – or even “better”-- obedience to the Torah, to the “Old Testament” scriptures or to any scriptures, or is it going to be based on faith in Him and HIS perfect righteous life?

This is a most important question and deserves an answer. Remember, if righteousness is based on any level of our imperfect keeping of Torah, then there would be some level of unrighteousness being tolerated in the spirit Kingdom of God. That simply cannot be. So how does this work, going forward?

I believe it has to do a lot with the fact we have been ***called to be witnesses*** of His resurrection. How can that be, since that happened almost 2000 years ago? We’ll also discuss what that’s got to do with His righteousness by faith. You’ll soon see that it has everything to do with it.

Yes, Master is walking the earth again, but this time not in one human body, but in and through thousands of believers, who are members of His body. I don’t think we are witnessing to others how the risen Christ is transforming us, because we aren’t seeing enough of that transformation. Why? Because we don’t quite believe He lives again in us, this time. *If we really believed that, the evidence of that faith would be there.* Since we don’t talk enough about the gift of His righteousness, and haven’t understood it or seen it – we haven’t been great witnesses frankly. *I sure preach to myself on that point.* Going forward you and I have to be much, much stronger witnesses of what the risen Messiah can do and is doing in the lives of mere mortals.

Believe first, and then we’ll see what we believe. “Blessed are they who believe without having first seen” – our King said to Thomas in **John 20:29.** *Believe* perfection resides in you via the perfect life of the Messiah who resides in you by His Spirit – and in time I am convinced our lives will evidence that faith more and more.

We see things in our hearts first before they become literal realities. But we do have to see it in our minds and hearts first – believing in our hearts first, unto righteousness, and then the risen Messiah will shine brighter and brighter in us as He transforms us. That’s a powerful testimony to His resurrection, besides openly confessing Him with our mouths (Romans 10:9-10).

This is a form of righteousness apart from Christian, Messianic or Judaist liturgy, “sacred prayers”, chants or rituals that are endlessly repeated. And every religious “box” we try to put God in seems to have its own version of these. Our Savior warned against the uselessness of these “vain repetitions”, and people “thinking they’ll be heard” because of them (Matthew 6:7-8). I’ve witnessed this same submission to chants, pre-set liturgy and ritual in the Roman Catholic Church, in Messianic groups and Christian Sabbath keepers.

The true God wants to be worshiped in spirit and in truth – not in predictable liturgies. Where is the leading of the Holy Spirit in that? How are we letting God’s spirit flow when we do the same thing in a predictable sequence week in and week out?

HOW are we to be WITNESSES of His resurrection? Our new lives in the process of radical transformation should witness to the risen Christ bringing life to our mortal bodies. His resurrection should be clearly seen in our transformed lives. Our new walk should be proclaiming the risen Son of God – by our actions as well as our words. His righteousness should be more and more evident in our lives.

And don’t forget, though it’s really a different topic: we are SAVED by GRACE – but we will be REWARDED by our good works (Rev. 20:13; Matt. 16:27). But never mix up the two. Salvation is a free gift, by grace. Rewards are based on what we do with that grace and power offered to us.

We are being spiritually created to be exactly like Him, in HIS image, which will be completed at the resurrection. At that time, we will be just like Christ to the degree that Christ was just like His Father. We’re told in **Romans 8:29** we are being “conformed to the image of His Son...”—and that conforming comes to fully pass in the resurrection. In the “resurrection chapter” of 1 Cor. 15, we read in verse 49

1 Cor. 15:49

“And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly”. That’s when this corruption shall put on incorruption (v. 53).

Believe it, submit to it, ask for it and then gratefully receive this gift – and then we will see it.

The Savior lives in us and is forming Himself in us – if we believe, submit to it and accept it – so that it says in **1 John 3:2-3**

“Beloved, now are we the children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope purifies himself, even as He is pure.”

Are we hearing it? We are being offered Yahweh’s own perfect righteousness as a *gift*. As we accept it, Yahweh comes to live in us and cleanse His temple once more (our bodies, this time).

Over time, we start proving and demonstrating His Son has risen from the dead. How? It should be more and more obvious as our lives are being radically transformed to be an exact replica of His life over time. That transformation is to be finished in the resurrection.

That is why I say the proof of our salvation going on is the ongoing visible transformation of our lives into something no one's ever seen in us before – the life of the Messiah being lived in us.

Ephesians 2:8-10

8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is *the gift* of God, 9 *not of works, lest anyone should boast.* 10 **For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works**, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

We can't go on living our old life of sin – while claiming to be children of God (1 John 2:3-6). We all still *stumble* from time to time (1 John 1:7; 2:1-2). **Our flesh is weak** and we still sin – but sin should not be our *way of life*. Those who *practice* sin are not of God (1 John 3:7, 10). It's that simple. *If Christ is risen in our lives, our lives are changing. They HAVE to be.* We're being transformed into a better, loving husband or a wonderfully responsive wife. We are growing in love and joy. We are looking more and more like Him in every aspect of our lives, in every thought, in every feeling – more and more so over time.

This is also why Heb. 4:10 says that when we come into His rest, we cease doing our own works – just as God ceased working on the Sabbath. My point is our salvation and rest is not about our works. It's about what HE did and *continues to do* in us.

Father and Son come reside in us by the Holy Spirit, making us holy—and we more and more do what God does: keep His word. Obey. Put off the old way and follow Yahweh more and more.

John 14:23

“Jesus answered and said to him, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and WE will come to him and make Our home with him.””

By the Spirit, the Father and Son live in us and we live in Yeshua the Messiah – who is in God our Father. That is how we are able to be transferred, or conveyed, to the very right hand of God the Father and be seated in heavenly thrones (Eph. 2:5-6) – through being in the body of Messiah! The “old you” died, and the life Father now sees is Messiah's life, considered as *our* own life now as well, since we are part of his 100% perfectly holy body.

When we sinned, we died spiritually. That very day. That is why Adam was told in the day he sinned, he would die. He did – spiritually, though his flesh lived another 930 years. The only way a dead body can be brought back to life is by a resurrection. So over and over New Testament scripture teaches we were considered resurrected with Jesus in HIS resurrection, since we are part of His body (Eph. 2:5-6; Phil. 3:9-11).

Paul wanted to release the *power* of His resurrection in him – see Phil. 3:9-11. **RELEASE** that power, believe – look to HIM, not to ritual and old chants and liturgies! Let the old self die, live in the power of the resurrected Christ in you, and be witnesses of that new life!! Praise the Eternal! Praise Yeshua, our risen King and captain of our salvation!

Colossians 3:2-4

Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. 3 For you died, and ***your life is hidden with Christ in God***. 4 When Christ (Messiah) who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

Ephesians 2:4-10

But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when *we were dead in trespasses*, ***made us alive together with Christ*** (by grace you have been saved),
6 and *raised us up together*, and made us *sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus*,
7 that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.
8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast. 10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus *for good works*, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

1 John 4:12-16 Yes, you must be “IN GOD” – and not just God in us!

“No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us. 13 By this we know that **we abide in Him**, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. 14 And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world. 15 Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, ***God abides in him, and he in God***. 16 And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love **abides in God**, and God in him.”

This is what makes us holy. Without holiness we will not see God. **Only Yahweh is truly holy (Rev. 15:4)** and only HE can make us holy. That is why we are called “*hagios*” in Greek, holy ones, translated “saints”. Yes, even very imperfect Corinthian believers were called saints. Not because they were doing so well in the flesh – but because their Savior is holy, is “hagios”.

We can't make ourselves holy or righteous. HE is holy. Nor can we create our new self. HE is the Creator of all things. Nor can we be our own Savior or save ourselves. HE alone is Savior. So why do we try to do it ourselves? HE has to do it in us and we submit to it and cooperate with it.

We become the temple of Yahweh's Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19). Yeshua comes into our bodies by His Spirit, sees the temple of Yahweh (our bodies, our lives) need cleansing, and He goes about cleaning God's House just like He did on earth 2000 years ago. Let him. Invite Him to.

Open the doors wide and let Him purify your life and mine with His blood, with the washing of water by the word, until **HE** can present you and me without spot or wrinkle, but as a perfect bride of the Lamb. Eph 5:26-27 says HE sanctifies and cleanses us, and HE presents us to Himself a glorious church without spot or wrinkle. HE has the spot remover. HE makes us perfect. Jude 24 says HE is the one who will present us faultless before Him.

How will you and I ever be faultless? By our perfect obedience?

No, by our King's perfect obedience – which is what Father sees over us and by which we will be judged—IF, a great big if, IF we believe in Him and accept HIS righteousness as a gift and let Him transform us.

Brothers and sisters, accept this, and believe by faith. Or keep trying to do it yourself, and stay in the depression of failure the rest of your days, because you and I will never be righteous enough by our own works of righteousness, “or Christ died in vain” (Gal. 2:21)

HOW can we possibly ever be seen with GOD’S own righteousness? How does it happen?

ROMANS 4 raises the ante. He brings up more and more about “IMPUTED” or credited righteousness. This is how we are given this. Some of you like to pay your own way, stand on your own two feet, and be beholden to no one. Beware when it comes to your righteousness.

Romans 4:1-6

What then can we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, has found? 2 If Abraham was justified by works, then he has something to brag about—but not before God. 3 For what does the Scripture say? ‘Abraham *believed* God, and it *was credited* to him for righteousness’ (Gen 15:1).

4 Now to the one who works, pay is not considered as a gift, but as something owed.

5 But to the one who does not work, but believes on Him who *declares* righteous the *ungodly*, his FAITH is credited (imputed) for righteousness.

6 Likewise, David also speaks of the blessing of the man **to whom God credits (or imputes) righteousness *apart from works...***”

IF we believe, God is willing to impart, impute or credit us with *His* righteousness. Wow! How can it get any better than that? We have to believe it, ask for it, seek it, and accept it.

If you want to work out your own salvation yourself, then you have earned your own salvation yourself and you can brag, you can look to yourself, and you are owed no Grace. But, we failed, *and we keep failing* – so we either have to accept His righteousness as a gift, or not be in the kingdom because we failed, and keep failing, on our own.

What about Philippians 2:12, you ask? That does say we are to “work out” our own salvation with fear and trembling. We must, going forward, obey. We must. I teach that too. I’m just focusing today on where our *faith* is – in our obedience or the Master’s obedience? But WHY is it that I seldom hear the next verse read, verse 13, in church groups that like to have something to do in terms of their righteousness? Phil 2:12 is only half the sentence!

Philippians 2:12-13

Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;

13 for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.

Yahweh is the one who works out our salvation in us, and we work with God, we stay abiding in Him, we pray and seek Him constantly – and HE will *finish* what HE has started in us (**Phil. 1:6**). He gets the glory for starting it, doing it in us and finishing it in us.

Now, was God's own imputed righteousness good only for Abraham?

Romans 4:23-25

Now it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him, 24 but **also for us. It shall be imputed [credited] to us who believe in Him** who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, 25 who was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification.

Imagine being CREDITED with God's righteousness every time Yahweh looks at us! Just let that SINK IN... and believe it. Don't lose out on this.

Now ROMANS 5. Be sure to read the whole chapter slowly yourself. I'm picking out the verses that have to do with this topic – the free imputed/credited gift of God's righteousness.

Romans 5:1-2—we can now have peace and even rejoice, and get rid of guilt, and feelings of condemnation (also Rom 8:1) because we have been justified by faith.

Romans 5:12 – by one man Adam, sin and death entered the world, because in Adam we all sinned (since he is the father of us all; we were all, in a sense in Adam). And then we read earlier in Romans 5:17-19 that in a similar way, by one man's obedience (Yeshua's, the Christ), many are made righteous (v. 19).

Romans 5:17-19 ASB

17 Since by the one man's (Adam's) trespass, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive the **overflow of grace and the GIFT OF** reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.

18 So then, as through one trespass there is condemnation for everyone, so also through one righteous act there is life-giving justification for everyone. 19 For just as through one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, **so also through the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.**

If I ever asked you to list the gifts of God, would you have EVER, till now, included "I love God's GIFT of Righteousness he has given me"? Love it, accept it. Cherish it.

So what is happening? I call it The Big SWAP.

THE BIG SWAP

2 Cor. 5:17 says we are a new creation in Christ. We're something that has never been before. You have been begotten into the Family of God.

You can't beget yourself. You can't create the new you any more than you had anything to do with your earthly begettal. You're not the Creator of the new you. Abba is. Dear Yahweh is – in Christ, is how this is happening.

Father is now offering us an incredible bargain, a great gift. He is willing to CANCEL the sin debts we have written up and take that upon Himself. But that leaves you without debt – but still

penniless spiritually. So he makes a swap: “Give me your sins, and I will give you my righteousness – if you believe”, as we have been reading all along. Let’s read it loud and clear:

2 Corinthians 5:21

“21 For He made Him who knew no sin **to be sin for us**, that **we might become the righteousness of God in Him**.”

1 Corinthians 1:29-31

“... that no flesh should glory in His presence. 30 But of Him ***you are in Christ Jesus***, who **became FOR US wisdom from God** — **and righteousness** and sanctification and redemption — 31 that, as it is written, “He who glories, let him glory in the Lord.”

Romans 8:2-5

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. 3 For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, **God did** by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, 4 **that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.**

Next time I will speak much more about walking with Messiah, letting Him do His works in us.

Our Savior in heaven is saying,

- “**Give me your sins, and I will give you my PERFECT righteousness**, but you do have to believe in me and have faith in me. 2 Cor. 5:21. ***Impute your sins on to me***, and I will pay the penalty for you at Golgotha – ***and I will impute and credit my righteousness to you***. [WHAT A DEAL, WHAT A SWAP!] 1 Cor. 1:30-31; 2 Cor. 5:21. Then I want to come alongside you, inside you by my Spirit, and LIVE on the earth once more – this time through YOU! MY righteousness covers you. You can’t get any better than that.

Then Yahweh, our Abba, and the Almighty God our very own Father in the Highest adds:

- “**You become mine, I become yours**, your God, and you become my people”. Yahweh has always wanted children, a family, and His own people. That’s what it’s all about. And we need the righteousness of the Messiah covering us to get there. His law is written *in our hearts* now, “and I will be their God, and they shall be my people” (Heb. 8:10).
- “Though you died due to your sins, when you accept my Son and His righteousness, I will also give life to your mortal bodies” through His Spirit dwelling in you (Rom. 8:11). Father says to us: You will no longer be the life I see, you will no longer live, but my Son lives in you, and the life you now live will be by His faith and faith in Him – Gal. 2:20.
- Father continues: “Over time, you will look more and more like my Son, in His image, until you are exactly just like Him in the resurrection (1 John 3:2-3; 1 Cor. 15:53). My Son is being formed in you (Gal. 4:19)...if you let Him, if you believe, if you will accept it. I see Him, when I look at you – because I imputed His perfect righteousness on to *you*, in my *grace*. Abide in Him, and you will bear the fruits of righteousness by my Son in you.”

- Dear Abba concludes: “You will be my witnesses on the earth, and your King will witness about you before Me in heaven – defending you against the Adversary Satan, who accuses you night and day (1 John 2:1-2; Matt.10:32). But be of good cheer, you’re in me now, and I have your back! If you will be silent and listen, you will hear me speak to you in thoughts and strong feelings. I will guide you and lead you by My Spirit which I will put in you.
- Abba ends: “And if you hang with my Son, stay attached to Him, seek Him and ME, your dear Abba with your WHOLE heart – you will bear much fruit. You will be like a tree planted by rivers of waters, which bears fruit in its season. Go; spread the Word – for I am with you always. I will never, ever, absolutely never ever leave you nor forsake you. But don’t forsake me either. Seek me, and you will find me. I want to be found of you.”

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We need to be claiming more of the victory folks. We need to be experiencing more joy and peace, if we really understand this now.

There’s more to say, but we’re out of time. We’ll continue this next time.

NEXT TIME I’ll get into:

- So WHY DO WE STILL SIN? We’ll carefully study parts of Romans 7 and 8 – and you can be familiarizing yourself with those chapters ahead of time.
- Is ALL sin forgiven, or just PAST sins?
- How do we make sure we bear fruit and become more and more like our Savior?
- If God starts and finishes our salvation, what is it we have to do? What is the hardest part, the hard work – if any – that we have to do?
- If righteousness is gifted to us, where DO we have to strive, and be diligent?

I hope you will accept your Lord and Master – Yeshua the Messiah – as your king and your righteousness, by faith. I hope you will accept His GIFT. Open wide your doors and let it pour in. Let it rain down from heaven.

Until next time, this is Philip Shields, your brother in the Messiah.

Remember you can download these on to your Ipod or iPhone or MP3 player – or even make a cd of it and hear it in your car.

Be sure to tune in for the next couple messages to wrap this exciting topic up! Praise Yahweh, praise Yeshua our mighty King.

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