

God's Righteousness is Better than We Could ever Dream

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Philippians 3:7-14

The Problem of Sin is worse than we thought. (Quick Recap)

- We have been deceived by Sin, believing that sin will not cause our death
- We are helpless to help ourselves, we can't fix the problem
- Our only hope is to cry out to God.

The Problem of Sin is worse than we thought, but God's righteousness is better than we could ever dream.

Do you ever dream about what your life would look like if you had God's righteousness flowing in every part of who you are?

- Clean before God
- No wrong against man to be sorry for
- Relationships that are deep & rich
- Living life without regret
- Showing love to people that we love in the best possible ways
- Seeing the people that we love flourish, as God's righteousness flows through us
- Doing right things for right reasons
- Having a pure, free and open relationship with God, that grows day by day

The Good News is that God's righteousness is far better than I could ever dream.

- It's an overwhelming goodness, and purity
- It's the deepest love there is
- It's beyond my words to describe, in part because I don't even have all of the facts and information.
- It's too wonderful

Paul desperately wanted to know God's righteousness working throughout his life. He wanted to grow day by day. In Philippians 3:7-14, we see what the Holy Spirit gave Paul to write about not just knowing about God's righteousness, but living and experiencing it as well.

Philippians 3:7 (HCSB)

⁷ But everything that was a gain to me, I have considered to be a loss because of Christ.

Why Count it all as Loss?

Do we have any accountants here today? Because this is accounting language that Paul is using

-profit and loss, what is the balance, it's the difference between the two sides, and hopefully your difference ends up on the side of profit.

It seems that Paul is doing some destructive accounting here.

- He takes all of the good things that he has ever done, and moves them to the losses side.
- At the end of the day, his entire life's work is all in the loss side, and the only item in the profit side is Christ.

Why would he count everything that he had ever done in the loss category?

- The answer will come in vs 8. There is an incredible value in knowing Christ Jesus.
- Nothing else matters to Paul.

Put on your accounting hat and sum up your life? What is loss and what is gain? Can you see the value on Christ that Paul could see? (handout)

- If we are describing our dream of righteousness, how do the things that we have done measure up? (goodness, peace, joy, rich relationships, etc.)
- My efforts certainly don't add up to that dream. The best that I can do leaves me exhausted and unsatisfied. I think that it's the same for Paul, maybe it's the same for you.

Philippians 3:8–9 (HCSB)

⁸ More than that, I also consider everything to be a loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. Because of Him I have suffered the loss of all things and consider them filth, so that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own from the law, but one that is through faith in Christ —the righteousness from God based on faith.

Contrast: Our Righteousness vs. God's Righteousness

There is a huge difference between me trying to do something right, and God doing something right. Our righteousness and God's righteousness are not even comparable.

God's Righteousness ¹

- It is an aspect of his character, and our sin limits our knowledge of Him.
- the righteousness of God is related to the holiness of God as seen in the Old Testament law and ethical teachings of Jesus
- The law is not God's righteousness, but an expression of it. We see things like holiness, love, integrity and perfection in this expression.

What is Our Righteousness like? How does it compare to God's

¹ James Montgomery Boice, *Philippians: An Expositional Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000).

Ex: Our church youth group from time to time will play games that require currency, like “The Game of Life.”

- The first time that we played the game one of the youth designed a currency for us.
- We call it “Shafer Bucks” because we have Pastor Shafer’s picture on the currency.
- But what if I took a stack of that money and went over to the store and tried to buy something with it?
- They won’t accept that kind of currency.

Our righteousness is like Shafer Bucks. No matter how much of it we acquire, it doesn’t get us anything.

Isaiah 64:6 (HCSB)

⁶ All of us have become like something unclean, and all our righteous acts are like a polluted garment; all of us wither like a leaf, and our iniquities carry us away like the wind.

Our righteousness, all of the good that we try to do are like a polluted garment, READ, unwearable because of contamination.

- They say that the first step to beating a problem is admitting that there is a problem. When it comes to righteousness, we are the problem.
- And anything that we do can’t fix it. That’s why Paul counts all of his accomplishments as loss.
- The harder he tries to be righteous, the more elusive it becomes

Righteousness is a gift from God, given to those who are adopted into his family through Jesus Christ.

2 Corinthians 5:21 (HCSB)

²¹ He made the One who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

- The problem of sin is one that we can’t fix, our righteousness will always fall short.
- But Jesus came to earth and lived out God’s righteousness with his every thought, word and action.
- Jesus was without sin, but willingly sacrificed his life in the place of sinners.
- In that way, God made Jesus, the one without sin, to become sin for us
- It’s a plan that results in us becoming the righteousness of God in Jesus
- Jesus rose from the dead, and is alive.
- If you will submit your life to his rule, his Kingship over you, then his righteousness is given freely to you through your faith in Jesus.

God’s righteousness is the reality for all Christians, but many of us don’t live in light of that reality.

Philippians 3:10–11 (HCSB)

¹⁰ My goal is to know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, ¹¹ assuming that I will somehow reach the resurrection from among the dead.

Do you know about Christ? Or do you know Christ?

Paul says that his goal is to know Jesus, to know the power of His resurrection, and to know the fellowship of his sufferings.

The word know has several different English meanings.

1. To have learned by serious study, (I know what's going on)
2. Head knowledge, (knowledge puffs up, but love builds up). This is when you think that you know something, but really, you don't know what you are talking about.
3. The knowledge that comes from firsthand experience.

It's the knowledge that comes from experience that Paul is talking about. He wants to not just know about Jesus, he wants to know Jesus by experience.

See, Taste, and then Know that God is good.

When it comes to knowing things, there is a difference to knowing about them, and to knowing them by experience.

ex: Chocolate, what's better, to know about Chocolate or to experience and know chocolate

Psalms 34:8 (HCSB)

⁸ Taste and see that the Lord is good. How happy is the man who takes refuge in Him!

If I do a really good job of describing something wonderful to you, it should make you want to experience it for yourself. If we have all of this knowledge of God, it should make us want to experience Him for ourselves.

Do you know about Jesus, or do you know Jesus?

- You've heard all the stories, (I know that one), but do you know the son of God?
- Paul expresses his desiring to know Christ in two different ways;
 - Knowing the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings.

Do you know about resurrection power, or do you know resurrection power?

To know Christ is to know his power. You can't experience Christ, without experiencing his power as well.

- Paul knew the details of Jesus resurrection from the dead, but he wants more than a head knowledge, or the kind of knowledge that puffs him up.
- You know about the details of Jesus' resurrection, the Holy Spirit raised him to life on the third day, maybe that knowledge has even puffed you up a bit.
- Don't you want to know that resurrection power in your life?

Ephesians 1:18–19 (HCSB)

¹⁸ I pray that the perception of your mind may be enlightened so you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the glorious riches of His inheritance among the saints, ¹⁹ and what is the immeasurable greatness of His power to us who believe, according to the working of His vast strength.

Colossians 1:11–12 (HCSB)

¹¹ May you be strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for all endurance and patience, with joy ¹² giving thanks to the Father, who has enabled you to share in the saints' inheritance in the light.

Why did Paul want to know this power? Why did he include it in his prayers for churches?

- Part of it was to help him do God's work. We need God's power to be effective!
 - The people that I reach out to in love will be served better with God's power than with mine.
- But it was also for himself to be conformed into the likeness of Christ.

How do we become formed into Christ's image? How does God's power factor into that?

- Just as Jesus was dead in the grave because of our sins, we are dead because of sin as well.
- Just as God's resurrection power was necessary in full to restore Jesus to full and complete life, so is it necessary to bring us to a full and complete life.
- This is God's righteousness being formed in us, it's part of the journey, it is completely reliant on God's power.

What is the role of suffering in the righteousness of God?

Paul says, "My goal is to know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings,"

- That goal seems a little counter-intuitive
 - I don't think that it's easy to see the benefit in suffering, what jumps to mind is the pain.

In Acts 5:41, when the Church was being persecuted through arrests, death sentences and political scrutiny, the attitude was to embrace suffering.

- They rejoiced that they were counted worthy to be dishonored on behalf of the Name of Jesus.²

It's a theme that is taught on over 50 times in the New Testament Epistles.
(*I did a search and found 52 verses*)

Suffering is coming, and has come. It's not if, it's when. And when Suffering does come, how will we respond?

I believe that Paul's desire here is that he can respond to suffering the way that Jesus responded to suffering.

- offered forgiveness to his enemies
- prayed for his enemies
- trusted his Father

This sort of an attitude will change how we interact with others and with God.

- In our sufferings, we know KNOW God's righteousness, and his righteousness can be on display in us.

2 Corinthians 12:9–10 (HCSB)

⁹ But He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Therefore, I will most gladly boast all the more about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may reside in me. ¹⁰ So I take pleasure in weaknesses, insults, catastrophes, persecutions, and in pressures, because of Christ. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

This is all part of the path to that dream of God's righteousness for us.

- It's the part that breaks us down, and makes it so that we have to rely on God or we will just fall apart.

Matthew 5:10 (HCSB)

¹⁰ Those who are persecuted for righteousness are blessed, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs.

Paul doesn't stop at saying that he wants to share in the fellowship of suffering, he continues to say that he wants to be "conformed to His death, assuming that I will somehow reach the resurrection from among the dead."

Don't wait until you die to live the life of the Resurrection from among the Dead.

Paul is using a Greek play on words that we miss in the English translation Greeks.

² Acts 5:41 (HCSB) Then they went out from the presence of the Sanhedrin, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to be dishonored on behalf of the Name.

- In Greek, the word resurrection means to “place” or to “stand up”
- In the Greek mind, living people were those who were standing up, while dead people were those who were lying down.
- Paul is saying that he wants to live the life of one who is standing up, (resurrected) amongst the people who are lying down (dead)³
- “Assuming that I will somehow reach the resurrection from among the dead.”
- The picture that Paul is painting is one where he is standing up in the full righteousness and life of God in the middle of a crowd of people who are lying down, dead in their sins.

We can live that sort of the Resurrection Life among the spiritually dead in our world.

- When we know God’s righteousness, when this dream is alive in us, we should stand up and stand out in this world
- There will be a very supernatural power and quality to our life that points people to our God who is the source of this power and this quality.
- The power of the Resurrection of Jesus is for you now, as well as for eternity.

What is the Role of Discipleship in all of this?

This dream of God’s knowing Jesus, knowing his righteousness, sharing in his suffering and knowing his resurrection power might seem to you like a good idea, but not at all attainable.

The dream seems like something that we just can’t reach on our own.

- I’m ok with that, I’m not going to beat myself up because this dream is outside of my power, and ability to create.
- That doesn’t stop me from wanting, and longing, and hoping for this righteousness.

Jesus didn’t leave his disciples a rule book and tell them to sort out their lives and shape up, and then they could be a part of his journey.

- He walked along side of them
- He taught, he forgave, he loved, he was a friend, he prayed
- Their lives were transformed, and in turn, with the power of the Holy Spirit, they:
- Taught, forgave, loved, were friends to and prayed for those who were knew to the faith.

Those discipling relationships are still vital today. This whole Christian life is too big, and too hard for any of us to do on our own.

- We need God’s power
- We need God’s Church
- We need God’s word

³ James Montgomery Boice, *Philippians: An Expository Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000).

Remember the chocolate bar, I bet that some you wanted a taste. Its the same with knowing God, when you know him and his righteousness, don't be surprised if the people around you want to know him too.

God' Righteousness is Better than we could have dreamed, the process is not as easy as you would have liked, God is with us every step of the way, and its his power that is at work in our lives.

- Paul knew that he hadn't reached the dream yet, but he was going to make every effort to take hold of it, because he had been taken hold of by Jesus.

Philippians 3:12–14 (HCSB)

¹² Not that I have already reached the goal or am already fully mature, but I make every effort to take hold of it because I also have been taken hold of by Christ Jesus. ¹³

Brothers, I do not consider myself to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and reaching forward to what is ahead, ¹⁴ I pursue as my goal the prize promised by God's heavenly call in Christ Jesus.