

The Two Righteousnesses

by Zac Poonen

Zac Poonen's sermon emphasizes the critical distinction between legalistic righteousness and the righteousness of God, urging believers to pursue humility and genuine faith in their spiritual journey.

Duration: 58:48

Scripture: Matthew 23:25, Philippians 3:8, Hebrews 8:10

Topics: "Righteousness By Faith", "Holy Spirit"

Description

This sermon delves into the contrast between the righteousness of the law pursued by the Pharisees and the righteousness of God through faith in Christ. It emphasizes the importance of humility, peace, and joy as marks of true righteousness, urging listeners to seek the righteousness that comes from God and is produced by the Holy Spirit. The speaker highlights the need to let go of self-righteousness, comparing it to filthy rags, and to embrace the righteousness that is written in the heart and mind by God.

Transcript

There is a burden on my heart this morning to talk about the two types of righteousness that the New Testament speaks about. In the Old Testament there was only one type of righteousness, the righteousness of the law under the Old Covenant and if there was one person who pursued that with all his heart it was Paul and he never attained salvation. Pursuing the righteousness of the law, studying the scriptures, he was convinced that Jesus was a blasphemer, heretic, false prophet, deceiver and that every person who followed Jesus should be persecuted, imprisoned or killed.

You see, you see the danger of legalism. We have often spoken about legalism here, but there is nothing so blind, that makes you so blind as legalistic righteousness. If you don't understand that, we will never take legalism seriously.

Remember, legalists who studied the Bible killed Jesus Christ and today there are Christian legalists who are destroying themselves and who are dishonoring Christ without knowing it. The Pharisees didn't know that they were killing the Son of God and you could be dishonoring Christ in a thousand ways without even knowing it if you don't understand the difference between legalistic righteousness and the righteousness of God. It's so very, very important because I see so many people even in CFC and our churches who have heard the truth so many years but I can see in their life it's not the righteousness of God.

I hope I'm wrong, but I have a fear that I'm right. In many, many people, many elders, many of our churches, they don't see that their righteousness is so legalistic and I have to discharge my responsibility as a servant of God to make it clear. I cannot make you pursue the righteousness of God, but I can show you the way.

Even Jesus could not make people accept the righteousness of God. He preached and worked and labored so hard and his word was confirmed with multitudes of miracles. In spite of that, people wouldn't accept it.

There's something in man that prefers legalistic righteousness. Remember that. There's something in you, there's something in me that would much rather have a legalistic righteousness than the righteousness of God.

If I see that, then I will fear it and I'll fight it. I'll tell you it is more dangerous than lusting with your eyes, more dangerous than anger, more dangerous than murder. Murder is repent and go to heaven.

Jesus never told the thief on the cross, the murderer on the cross. He never spoke a word of condemnation as far as I can see in the Gospels to people who had fallen into the sin of adultery and murder. He hated it, he spoke against it, but he never spoke against murderers and adulterers because they had gone astray, but boy, the way he spoke against those Pharisees who pursued legalistic righteousness, Pharisees who had never killed anybody, Pharisees who had probably never committed physical adultery and who were coming to all the meetings, who knew the Bible better than anybody else.

He damned them to hell. Is it possible? Just humble yourself for a moment and ask yourself, is it possible that all the holiness you have is of the Lord? If the devil can't lead a person into sin, that's what he tries first. First of all, he tries to keep people from ever getting saved, but if they get anywhere near salvation and receive Jesus Christ and believe in Jesus Christ as their Savior, the first thing he tries to do is lead them to some type of sin or worldliness, but those things are not so dangerous because they're so obvious.

And he doesn't succeed there because he says, these guys can't be fooled with worldliness, these guys can't be fooled with sin, because they're careful about that. They're not like those other Christians who are worldly and sinful, they don't bother. They believe once saved, always saved, doesn't matter how they live.

These folks here are not like that. Then he will seek to lead you into trap number two, which is legalism. Again you miss the path.

I'll tell you something, the humble will never miss the way. Impossible. You've heard me speak many times of the three secrets of the Christian life.

Number one, humility. Number two, humility. Number three, humility.

If you've got it, you've got it, because God gives grace to the humble. You say, why does God allow people to go into legalistic righteousness? Because God opposes the proud. I'll tell you, every person who goes to hell will go there not because of his sin, but because of his pride.

If you can get rid of your pride, you'll never enter the gates of hell. I can guarantee that. It's only pride that is the big gulf that no one can pass that Abraham spoke about to the rich man.

There's a gulf, he said, between you and us, and the rich man was in hell. Nobody can pass it. It's pride.

See, I'll show you two verses, Isaiah 64 and verse 6, both will speak about our righteousness. Isaiah 64 and verse 6, it says, all of us have become like one who is unclean. Now, Isaiah was probably the holiest man in Israel and the holiest man on earth at that time, and he said, we, all of us, all of us, no one's excluded, have become unclean.

All our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment, a filthy garment. The Hebrew word there is for a menstrual cloth. Righteousness, filthy, stinking, that you never want to touch again.

The Holy Spirit uses such a word to describe human righteousness. Human, not human sin, legalistic righteousness is like that filthy cloth that you never want to use again. I want to ask all of you, do you really believe that your goodness, your righteousness is like that filthy, dirty rag which you never want to touch again or see again? I don't think so.

I don't think it is like that with most Christians. If it were, they would be the humblest people on the face of the earth. They would never look down on another Christian.

They would never despise people in their own church or in any other church, and they would never, you know, gossip and backbite and criticize against others, criticize others and compare themselves with others and compare their children with other children, all the other wretched things that so-called born-again believers do. What does this prove to me? They don't believe their righteousness is like that filthy, dirty cloth you want to throw away. They think, yeah, it's dirty here and there, it's a little bit, but I can use it again.

They haven't seen what the Bible says. That's one type of righteousness. Now you say the other righteousness is the righteousness of Christ, which Christ puts upon us.

It's true. When we are born again, we're really born again, the Bible says that righteousness of Christ is imputed, not imparted. That takes time.

Imputed means put to our account. It's like you put a million rupees, perhaps, in the account of a newly born baby. He suddenly becomes a millionaire, but he didn't earn it.

Here's another person who earned a million rupees and put it there. There's a lot of difference between the two. That's the difference between imputed and imparted.

Well, not exactly, in the sense, not that we earn it, but we pay a price to partake of God's righteousness. If we didn't have to pay a price, then everybody would have it. All of us would be like Christ right now.

Why is it we are not all like Christ? Why is it that all of us are not in the likeness of Christ to the same degree? Because there's a certain price to be paid. God doesn't force us. The price is not something we pay in order to earn, not something like we earn, but a giving up of our self-life.

Okay, here's the other righteousness mentioned. We saw Isaiah 64.6. The other righteousness mentioned is where at the end of the Bible in Revelation 19 and verse, Revelation chapter 19, where it speaks about the marriage of the Lamb. When Christ comes back in glory, there's going to be a wedding.

Jesus is called a bridegroom. He's not getting married to every human being that is ever created. No.

I'm sorry to say that, but that's what the Bible says, and I believe the Bible. I don't despise God's word. I don't have that type of human compassion, which is supposed to be superior to God's compassion.

I'll tell you this, God loves human beings far more than you or I ever will. And God who said, there's God who loved the world so much that he gave his own son to die for the world, which you and I would never do. So let's not talk about love.

This God is the one who said that he who does not believe in Christ will be damned. That's not me. Don't quote me.

That's God. I believe his word. And I leave judgment to God.

I'm not here to judge who's going to go to heaven, who's going to hell, because that's not my job. When I go to court, I'm a witness, not a judge, not a prosecutor, not a defense lawyer, but a witness. We are called on earth to be witnesses.

God is the judge. The devil is the accuser. Let him do his job.

Jesus is the advocate. We're witnesses. So we're not here to judge anybody.

I'm not here to judge a single soul on the face of the earth. None of you, no non-Christian, Hindu, Muslim, they're all friends of mine. I'm not here to judge who goes where, but I believe what Jesus said.

I am the way he said, the truth and the light. No one comes to the father but by me. That I believe with all my heart for one reason, because I believe Jesus speaks the truth.

That's all. And also because I know that my mind is faulty. And I could be wrong in a thousand and one areas, but Jesus is never wrong.

So though it sounds a bit humanly speaking, the lack of compassion, I believe Jesus. And I believe in the final day when heaven and earth has passed away, we will discover that Jesus was right. And we were all wrong if we had a different view from him.

So Revelation 19 verse 7, it says, let us rejoice and be glad. Give glory to him for the marriage of the lamb has come. And his bride has made herself ready.

Now there is an impartation where God imparts his righteousness, but he imparts it to those who respond. You know, the Bible says salvation is by grace through faith. And as you've often heard me say, grace is a simple definition of grace, is God reaching out from heaven and saying, here you are, folks.

Every spiritual blessing in heavenly places, have it. And what is faith? Faith is just reaching up and saying, thank you, Lord, for that. But I have to do the reaching out.

If I don't do the reaching out, I don't get it. So my work is simple. This is faith.

But everything I get from God, I have to get by faith. But I can't get what God doesn't offer. God doesn't offer Mercedes Benz cars to all of us.

He doesn't say, here it is. That's the stupidity of today's prosperity gospel. It's like little children asking their father to buy them an elephant, or buy them a real aircraft.

Well, little children can ask for all types of stupid things. Their father doesn't mind. But if they think they're going to get it, they've got another guest coming.

No. Because the father knows what's good for them. We can ask God for anything under the sun, if we are little children.

But Paul said, when I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child. But I've grown up, I put away childish things. 25-year-old children don't ask their father for elephants and real aircraft.

It's all a question of whether you're grown up. Just shows what a lot of babies there are in Christendom today. So we can take only what God offers.

And I'll tell you what God's offered, Ephesians 1, 3. Every blessing of the Holy Spirit in the heavenly places, that's ours. That's for sure. Every single thing promised in the New Testament, you can have.

Sin shall not have dominion over you? Sure, have it. Rejoice in the Lord always. You can have it all the time.

Walk as Jesus walked, you can have it. Be anxious for nothing, you can have it. Everything that's promised in the New Testament, but by faith.

If you don't take it, you say, no, it's not possible, or with my temperament, it's not possible. It will not be possible for you. Not because of your temperament, but because you don't believe God.

You believe that the giants of Canaan, your temperament, are stronger than Almighty God. Well, if you insult God like that, you deserve nothing. I say such a person deserves to be defeated all his life, all her life, for insulting God by saying, my sin is stronger than you.

My temperament is stronger than you. When you insult God like that, do you expect Him to give you His power? Never, not in a million years. Stop insulting God like those Israelites at the borders of Canaan who said, these giants are, we're like grasshoppers before these giants, and Joshua and Caleb said, these giants are like grasshoppers before our God.

That's it. When you see a sin in your life, if you are defeated today, I'll tell you the reason. It's because you have glorified that sin and made it so big, bigger than your teeny-weeny God that you worship.

When you change your understanding and stop focusing your microscope on that little ant and make it look like some huge insect or a huge animal and say, Lord, this is a teeny-weeny thing. Almighty God, what's there you can't deal with? You know, that's how Jesus lived. He lived by faith.

He lived in dependence on his Father. He was tempted just like us. He was worse than us.

It was much more difficult for Jesus to overcome sin than for you and me. I don't know whether you realize that. I'll tell you why.

See, I'll give you an example. A person who's lived in a slum, even if he comes to a little better type of house in some gully, he thinks that's great. It's easy for me to live here.

But think of someone who's lived in some very wealthy Western country, perhaps perfect surroundings, and comes and lives in that same house. He thinks it's horrible. It's so difficult for him to live there.

How is it so easy for the person from the slum to live there, and how is it this person who's brought up in such hygienic circumstances finds it difficult to live there? That's the difference between Jesus and us fighting temptation. We grew up in a slum. Jesus grew up without the smell of sin.

It was such a battle for him on this earth. Every moment. Every moment was a battle.

He was crying out loud, with loud crying and tears, because sin was all around. It's exactly the picture I get is of a person who's brought up in the perfect hygienic circumstances. I remember a brother from the West who told me he had never seen a cockroach in his life.

Can you believe that? I know brothers who've never seen a lizard. Never in their whole life seen a lizard. And when they lived in a room in India where there were lizards, they were scared whether they come bite them or they spent the whole night trying to kill the lizards.

We live so comfortably with so many lizards running around the house. It's like that, you know. You can live with sin, running around the house all over, and somebody else, he just can't stay, go to sleep at night because of the possibility of sin.

Fighting, fighting, fighting. That's just an illustration. What I just want to say is that Jesus found it much more difficult and he never sinned.

So there's no more, when I saw that Jesus was tempted like me and overcame sin the way I could, he took away every single excuse I made for sin in my life. You know, we're all experts at making sin, excuses for our sin. Oh, I was under pressure in the work today and so I lost my temper.

I tell you in a hundred years, you'll never get victory over sin because you're blaming something else instead of blaming your selfish, corrupt, Adamic nature. Oh, that person provoked me, that's why I lost my temper. Oh, this temptation was so great.

What to do, brother? The women around me are dressed so badly. Blame them, you'll be defeated all your life with lust. He's got nothing to do with the way women, you could send Jesus to the most ill-dressed women on earth, there wouldn't be a smell of lust in him because he battled it.

That's the difference. As long as we make excuses, blame our wife, blame our husband, blame the way women dress and blame the materialism in society and blame the pressures in the office and a wicked boss and a wicked neighbor and everything else, as long as you blame a single soul on the earth, I can guarantee in a hundred years, you'll never get victory over sin, even if you listen to these messages every day. But the day you stop blaming others and say, Lord, it's all got to do with the lust in my flesh, there's hope for you, really, you'll be starting on a new path.

So we have to do something. The bride has made herself ready, verse 7. So whose responsibility is that? To be ready for the bride? Does the bridegroom come and dress up the bride in any place in the world? I've never heard of it. I mean, he may, if she's a poor beggar like we are, he may give her money to buy a dress, he may give her money to buy all the decorations needed, everything else, but he's not going to come and dress her up.

That's the picture of Jesus, the bridegroom. He's going to give us everything necessary for this dress, but the bride has to make herself ready. This is New Testament.

Some people think that's legalism, that we've got to do anything. And it was given to her. This is the balance.

She makes herself ready, but everything she got was given, because what is a poor beggar of a bride like we have? Nothing. It's all given. But when it's given, I've got to dress up.

I can't say, Lord, dress me. The bride made herself ready, it was given to her. All the beauty of the balance of Scripture.

You read, you've heard me say this now recently, learn to read the Scripture slowly, dear brothers and sisters. You miss so much. When you rush through, rush through, you want to rush through a chapter in a day, take one verse a day and see a difference it'll make in your life.

You know, you know the Bible much better at the end of this year. If you meditate and go slowly, the doctors say, chew your food, don't just gulp everything down. I mean, if we were supposed to gulp everything down, God wouldn't have given us any teeth.

He didn't give us teeth just to make us look nice. It's to chew our food, and the doctors say you live longer if you chew your food, just by the way. The same with the Bible.

You'll get a lot more out of it if you chew on what you take in. You read a verse and say, hey, I've got to make myself ready. And you think about that, and then you go to the next one and say, hey, it's all given.

So what my rich bridegroom gives me a beggar of a woman, I've got to dress myself up with it. I don't have to pay a cent, but I have to make myself ready. It is given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean.

And listen to this, the fine linen is not the righteousness of Christ, it's the righteous acts of the saints. You know what you're going to be dressed with on the wedding day? I'll tell you. Every stitch in that garment is made by you, completely donated by your bridegroom, but you had to stitch it.

God's not going to have one lazy person in heaven, I'll tell you that, you can be sure of that. There are no lazy people in heaven, the lazy people are all in hell. And the people who think, well, Jesus will do everything for me, I've just got to sit back and go to sleep, because I said those magic words, Lord Jesus, come into my heart, you're fooling yourself.

The righteous acts of the saints, every stitch is your response, and God told you to do so. So, here's the righteousness, which is filthy rags, Isaiah 64, 6. And here is another righteousness, also of the saints. That is our righteousness, this is our righteousness.

Now if I were comparing our righteousness with the righteousness of Christ, oh, you all agree with me, right? Our righteousness is like filthy rags, and the righteousness of Christ is like beautiful linen. That I agree. That's what's imputed to us.

Otherwise, I couldn't stand before God, when I'm converted, the moment I'm converted. My sins are forgiven if I've really repented, but that's not enough, because even though my past is forgiven, I've still got a corrupt nature. How can I stand before holy God with that, when even the seraphs have to cover their faces and cover their feet when they fly before God and say, holy, holy, holy.

I mean, even Isaiah, the holiest man said, oh God, I'm so unclean when I compare my holiness with the holiness of heaven. We think we're pretty holy because we compare our holiness with the other filthy people on the earth. It's like some person in a slum saying, my house is a little cleaner than yours.

That's the type of stupidity that a lot of Christians have. But when Isaiah saw the glory of God, he said, oh God, I'm so filthy, I'm unclean. That's exactly how any person will feel when he sees the glory of God in the scriptures.

And so, the righteousness of Christ is absolutely perfect, and so that's put upon me like a dress, like in that story of the wedding feast of the king's son, where one person came without the dress and got thrown out. No, we need the dress, otherwise we can't stand before God. That covers our corruption, so that we can come before God right from day one.

But, from that moment onwards, God wants to impart, impart what he's imputed, impart to us the righteous, the very same righteousness that Jesus had. And actually, the righteousness of the law was really that, the righteousness of God. The Pharisees misunderstood it.

And it says here that this, finally, the bride are those people who responded to this call from God, day after day after day. And the day they stand before the Lord, they are clothed with fine linen, which they stitched themselves. Have you ever heard this? You think I'm preaching legalism? I'm 100% against legalism.

You think I'm preaching a salvation by works? No, I'm talking about a faith without works is dead. You've got to be careful. There's a righteousness of works, which is old covenant.

Nobody gets saved that way. There's a righteousness of faith with works, which brings salvation. There's a righteousness of faith without works.

That's what James was talking about. And James compares it in James chapter 2 to verse 26. He says, just as the body without breath is dead, so also faith without works is dead.

Do you know what? Now, read the Bible slowly. Slowly, slowly, slowly. Okay? Just that one verse.

Think about it. Body without breath equals faith without works. So, faith is being compared to what? The body.

Right. Absolutely right. That means 10 fingers, 10 toes, 2 eyes.

All our doctrines are right. We believe in salvation by faith. We believe in repentance.

We believe in water baptism. We believe in baptism in the Holy Spirit. We believe in... We got every single bone, every single member of the body.

Everything is there. What's missing? Breath. What is works compared to? Breath.

Read it again, just in case you didn't... Is this Old Testament? James is not writing an Old Testament book. It's a New Testament book. What a fantastic work the devil has done by giving Christians a one-sided gospel and brainwashing them so much that they won't even change their mind when they read Scripture.

You know, I've sent so many people like this. The devil so brainwashed them for 20, 30 years that when they read this, they try to twist it. They've got already a mold.

They say, no, no, no, this can't be like this. And they pour this into their mold. And they live deceived all their life.

Be open to consider the possibility that you could have been wrong for the last 50 years or 20 years in what you believe. Accept Scripture. Let God be true.

Every man a liar. As the body without breath is dead, so faith without works is dead. So I say there's a righteousness of the law, which the Pharisees had, which damned them to hell.

And there's a righteousness of faith without works. It all looks nice. I mean, sometimes when a man is sleeping, you don't know if the person is dead or alive.

I mean, sometimes I've seen dead people go to a funeral, and I think the guy is sleeping. He isn't. He's dead.

And I've seen other people sleeping, and I think they're dead. They're not. They've got breath.

It's like that. It's very difficult to say. Is this guy sleeping or he's dead? Breath.

That's the test. Is the guy breathing? So we say, is this faith real faith of God or not the faith of God? Is there works? Do you agree with me or not? Or rather, do you agree with James or not? Or rather, do you agree with the Holy Spirit or not? That's all I'm asking. You don't have to agree with me.

As the body without breath, here's a body without breath. That's a dead man. Here's another fellow who looks just like him, sleeping under a blanket perhaps.

Looks the same, but he's got breath. Two Christians sitting next to each other. Look at their life.

They look the same. All the same doctrines, going to the same church. One's got breath.

The other doesn't have breath. What is breath? Not just works. The works of faith.

Works that are the result of faith. There is an obedience, and there is an obedience of faith. That's what I want to come to.

It's so important to understand this. Because I believe that the great conflict throughout 2,000 years of Christianity has been on the understanding of grace. I know there's a lot of controversy about the gifts of the Holy Spirit today.

But I'll tell you that's also important so that we don't get deceived by all the tricks that Christian magicians do nowadays from the platform and over television. But I'm not talking about that now. I'm talking about grace.

The misunderstanding of grace is very serious. There is a false grace and a true grace. And it's not something new.

Peter says in 1 Peter 5, this is the true grace of God. He had to use the word true grace even in the first century. So it's the great conflict through the ages.

And I believe especially as we come to the end of time it's going to be grace and law. Like I said, there's law, there's false grace and true grace. Works of the law, the works of faith, I mean righteousness of faith,

righteousness of the law, righteousness of faith without works, and righteousness of faith with works.

And we've got to make sure that we are in the right category. So, let me turn to this verse. I was telling you about 1 Peter 5 in case you don't know where that is.

It says in 1 Peter 5, and verse 12, I've written to you briefly exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Which means even in the first century there was a false grace. There was a false grace of God way back in the first century.

So it's not something new. But I want to explain a little more about that. Let's turn to Romans in chapter 14, and verse 17.

The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. Now there are a number of things there. There's righteousness.

How do you know it's new covenant righteousness? How do you know it's the righteousness of God? It's got joy, it's got peace, and it's through the Holy Spirit. Then I know it's the righteousness of God. When I see people who claim to be justified by faith and who've got the righteousness of Christ and they're so long-faced and gloomy and sour and bitter, I say, no thank you.

I don't want that. I don't care what standard of holiness you proclaim. I don't want it.

I want to be a million miles away from that. The righteousness of God is full of joy. I don't mean we go around smiling all day.

You've got to understand the difference between smiling and joy. Have you seen these, some Christian meetings where they try to work everybody up with their emotions? The leader up there will say, come on, smile everybody. Smile.

What would you think of a man you saw always smiling down the road like this? Would you want to be like that? I don't want to be like that. You definitely know he's off his head. The Bible never says smile always, just by the way.

The Bible says rejoice always, and there's a world of difference between rejoicing and smiling. I'll tell you that. If some loved one, if your child of yours just died yesterday, you're not going to be smiling today.

But you can rejoice, even though there's sorrow. You can rejoice always in the midst of sorrow, in the midst of pain. You can be suffering with intense pain of cancer and rejoice.

You can't be smiling. So don't be fooled by this type of false Christianity which tells you to smile. These are all people who imitate Western Christianity and just pick up those gimmicks.

If you turn around to your neighbor and say, I love you. Where is Jesus? Can you imagine Jesus standing in the midst of a mixed congregation? So turn around to the person next to you and say, I love you. These are all gimmicks, and there are Indian people imitating that because we are blind imitators, unfortunately.

You don't know what it is to hear God. You see something that's good, check it in the Bible. Did Jesus do it? Did the apostles do it? Then don't do it.

Though it sounds nice, it looks nice. It's all psychology. It's all psychology.

And if you don't understand the difference between psychology and the Bible, you'll really go astray in these days. If Jesus did it, the apostles did it, they taught it, it's right. Otherwise I don't care which Tom, Dick and Harry in the world does it.

I don't care which great spiritual leader, so-called spiritual leader does it. The Bible is the word of God. That's our standard.

Jesus is our example. There was no greater preacher than him. Preach like him and follow the way he sought to move people.

So he never told people to smile. Never once. You don't even read once that Jesus smiled.

I'm sure he did. But that wasn't important for him. We don't say that you shouldn't smile because it never says Jesus had a bath.

What do you get from that? No. I'm sure Jesus smiled. I'm sure Jesus had a bath.

I'm sure Jesus lived a regular life. But that was not the Christianity he preached. But he did speak about joy.

Joy is something deep within which is always there. You don't have any complaining in your heart against anybody. A person who's got joy in his heart is not even complaining if he's got pain in his body.

I told you once about it when I was very, very young. The doctor made a mistake. When I was single, on a little operation that he did on me and I had this acute pain down my hand and I thought, boy, I've got to live with this for the rest of my life.

And I really wrote a strong letter to that doctor saying, you guys are so careless. And the Lord said, forgive him. Apologize.

I said, okay. Even if I have to live with this pain down my arm, nerve pain is pretty bad. For the rest of my life, I'll forgive this man.

I wrote an apology. I said, I'm sorry. In a moment of weakness, I wrote that letter accusing you.

But it may not have been your fault. It may have been something else. Please forgive me.

You know what happened? I was healed. Never had a problem from that day till today. Many of your sicknesses are because you haven't forgiven somebody or because you accused somebody when you don't even know the reason.

You know the number of times in my life I have accused someone of something, small or big, and later on discovered he was not guilty. Boy! I've hung my head in shame so many times that I said, Lord, I never want to do that again. That could be another reason.

It could be somebody else's fault. It looks like it's like that, but I don't want to judge by what I see in my years here, even if it brings me financial loss. Okay.

It may not have been that person's fault. I don't know. The final day will reveal everything.

Meanwhile, let me love and let me rejoice. Let me never lose my joy and let me love. People are created to love.

Love them. So joy must be there always and peace. That's another thing, you know.

The real righteousness of Christ is something that brings peace in our heart. If you find there's always an unrest and you can't sleep at night because your mind is worried, shall I tell you what you need? The righteousness of God. And for that you have to humble yourself with humility.

God gives tremendous grace to humble people. There's some area of pride in you which you need to get rid of. It's like I'm telling you as a doctor.

There is a brother, sister, this is my diagnosis after looking at the scan, there's some area of pride in you. It's like cancer. We got to get rid of it.

You say, no, no, no, I'm okay. Okay, then go your way and live as you like. Live your sleepless nights and live with your arthritis and pains and this and aches and this, that and the other.

Okay, go ahead. And your constant migraines. You can live that way if you want.

I don't want to live like that. I don't want to live like that one single day of my life. I remember the days when I lived with migraine and asthma and all types of things.

I said, Lord, I don't want to go back to those days ever. I want to live in rest, in God, in peace. And peace means you're forgiven everybody in the world.

You're forgiven all those who wronged you and hated you and cheated you and took advantage of you and et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. And you're in peace with, I mean, as far as in you, you live in peace with difficult neighbors, unreasonable bosses, difficult husbands, difficult wives. As far as you're concerned, you live in peace.

You will not answer back in the same tone in which your wife or husband speaks to you. Let them speak. They haven't got victory, perhaps.

Or they're serving the devil, I don't know. But we're not to respond in the way other people speak to us. A gentle answer turns away a rock.

And people turned around to Jesus and said, You're casting out demons because you're the prince of devils. He said, this is Matthew 12. Have you spoken a word against an ordinary man? You're forgiven.

I said, Lord, help me to walk as you walked. The Son of God walked on earth as an ordinary man. And that's what the Lord's been speaking to me.

Till the end of your life, recognize you're an ordinary man. Live like that. My advice to you, let people say what they like.

I'll prove to you why it doesn't affect us. Let me ask you, if 500 people came to you and said, You're an angel. Will you believe it? I mean, your parents and your husband and wife know what you are.

So if 500 people came and told you, You're a devil. Is that true? Why should you believe the one person, not the other? No, it's we are what we are. And other people calling us names doesn't make the slightest

difference.

Do you know that they call Jesus a false prophet, a deceiver, because he was not teaching what they thought Moses in the Bible taught. When Paul went around, they called him a deceiver, a false prophet. They say he's not preaching the Bible.

I've faced that for the last 35 years. He's not preaching the Bible. He's a false prophet.

I'm just in a good tradition of Jesus and Paul and the prophets of the ages. It doesn't bother me. I love them.

I meet some of them and I greet them as if they gave me an award or something. Dear brothers and sisters, you have a bitterness against somebody, you'll make yourself sick. Keep your heart at peace with everyone in the world.

And as much as it lies in you, live peaceably with your family members, with your relatives. I'm not saying, therefore, you should go visiting them. Many people misunderstand this.

You know, we've got this. We try to be more spiritual than Jesus. This is the stupidity of many Christians.

Forgive somebody means go visit them regularly. Why do they say that? That's trying to be more spiritual than Jesus. People have asked me this.

When I say, brother, have you forgiven someone? The next question is, yeah, I've forgiven, but does it mean I have to visit them? I never said anything about visiting them. The Bible doesn't say go and visit your enemies. It says love your enemies.

Why do you add to the Bible? Some people, the best way to keep peace with them is by not visiting them. You know that? I've discovered that through the years. But forgive them, love them, and keep a distance.

It's true. Some people, it's the other way around. We can maintain peace by visiting them, going and visiting them, and setting a matter right.

But with some others, it's different. You have to decide which it is. The people are different, and the Bible recognizes it, and the Bible is very realistic, not unrealistic, like people who take a letter of Scripture and try to follow that and get into all types of bondage.

Jesus is our example. He loved the Pharisees, but he never went visiting their houses and said, oh, I hope you fellows are not misunderstanding me. No.

He loved them and left them alone. That's my advice to you. Troublesome people, love them and leave them alone, just like Jesus did.

He said that in Matthew chapter 15, I think it's verse 13. Leave them alone, he said, those Pharisees. He told his disciples that.

So living at peace with other people does not mean that we have to have fellowship with them. Peace is different from fellowship. It's very important to understand that.

The righteousness of God brings fellowship with others who are wanting to walk the same way, but it brings peace, as far as I'm concerned, in my heart with everybody. Even though others are not at peace

with me, that's their business. I can't be responsible for somebody else's health.

I can be responsible for my health. Peace is a matter of health. How can I be responsible for your peace or your health? I can be responsible for mine.

So fellowship is different. You know, it's like I use this example sometimes. You need two people to have a fight, right? Like you need two hands to clap and make a noise.

But when one person wants to fight, whether it's your neighbor or your wife or husband or boss, and the other refuses to fight, how do you make a noise? Try it. You can't. So the way to peace at home is that one person, at least the husband or the wife, must be willing to die.

Don't say, oh brother, there's no peace at my home because my wife is like this. No. There's no peace at home because you're like that.

When your wife moves, you also move. That's the basis of the clash. Why not die? Or the other way around.

Brother, no peace because my husband is like this. No, no, no, it's you. Die and there will be peace.

But if both cooperate, then there's fellowship. This is peace, husband or wife. This is fellowship.

Peace is second best. Fellowship is the best. If you can't have fellowship, seek for peace.

In your home and with people in the church, I don't have fellowship with every person who calls himself a believer. As far as I'm concerned, I'm at peace. People who come to fight with me, they find there's nobody to fight back.

No. Even over doctrine. So, righteousness, peace and joy, and it is in the Holy Spirit.

That means this is not in my ability. If I try to grit my teeth, say, come on, I've taken a New Year resolution or February 1st resolution or whatever it is. It doesn't last long.

It's in the power of the Holy Spirit. The reason why God allows all our resolutions to fail is exactly the same reason why he allowed the disciples to fail when they try to catch fish. When are you going to discover that New Year resolutions don't work? When are you going to discover that February 1st resolutions don't work either? That day you will seek for the power of God.

The power of the Holy Spirit. I tried New Year resolutions. I tell you, they don't work.

They work for, what, two or three days. You grit your teeth, maybe seven days. Not much longer.

You do yoga, maybe one month. But the power of the Holy Spirit keeps you going for year after year. It's not human determination.

You know, some people have a stronger mind than others. And they are able to control themselves. I remember hearing a godly lady.

Well, I mean, a lady who grew up in, not a godly lady, but a lady who grew up in a Christian cult. Well, a Christian group, let's say, that taught them to control their emotions. Somebody saw her in a very provocative situation, completely self-controlled, and said to her sister, Boy, you were really calm when

that guy was yelling at you.

She said you didn't see the boiling within. But she was honest. That is yoga.

That's Buddhism. It is second best. I don't say it's bad.

I think it's good. It's second best. And you can't get the best.

Second best is the other alternative. But the best is the righteousness of Christ. But there's no boiling within.

It's not just calmness on the outside. There's a calmness on the inside. So, it's through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Only the Holy Spirit can produce that. Discipline and yoga can't produce that. That's all for the external.

So, that brings me to Matthew chapter 23. See, the big difference between the righteousness of the law, the filthy rags, and the bridal garment, is here, Matthew 23, verse 25. You scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, you clean the outside of the cup, but inside you're full of robbery and self-indulgence.

First clean the inside of the cup, then the outside will automatically be clean. You don't have to worry about the outside, you know, when you clean up the inside. You know, when you really overcome the area of the lust of the eyes, you don't have to worry about the command, which says don't commit adultery.

You'll never commit it, ever. You deal with the inside, the outside is automatically taken care of. You deal with anger, murder is automatically taken care of.

So, Jesus said deal with the inside. And the big difference, now we can discover which righteousness we have. Let's answer this question honestly, before God.

Are you more interested in the approval of your fellow believers, or the approval of God, over your life? Do you do things to give people a good impression, when it's not really true in your inner life? These are serious questions. And the answer to that determines whether you've got a legalistic righteousness, or the righteousness of God. The Pharisees were so eager to have a righteousness that appeared good before men.

It lacked humility. It lacked peace. It lacked joy.

They were always upset and irritated. And they were hypocrites. It says your self-indulgence, verse 25.

They were centered in themselves. They wanted honor for their righteousness. If you want honor for your righteousness, chances are, your righteousness is from yourself.

Now, not necessarily, because sometimes God himself may have done a work in you. It may be the righteousness of God, but you take the credit for it. Which you shouldn't.

Then you're a thief. To take the glory which God deserves to yourself, is no different from putting your hand into somebody's wallet when he's not looking and taking his money. None of us would do that.

Putting a hand into somebody else's wallet and take his money. But to take the glory of God, and to take the credit for yourself, boy, it's serious. I mean, if I take the credit to myself for my preaching ability, I'd be

stealing from God.

Or, if anything God has done in me, if God's given me victory in some area, and I look down on someone who doesn't have victory in that area, I'm taking credit to myself. Hey, you didn't do it. It's as foolish as saying, why can't the others preach like me? Why can't the others have victory like me? No, Jesus keeps us from falling.

True righteousness is always marked by deep, deep humility. Those who know God more, fear him more, reverence him more, and are humbler than others. It's a mark of genuine righteousness, makes a man deeply humble, because he lives in the presence of God.

God has done something in him. That's one way you can determine. For example, if you compare your children with others' children, and say, well, my children are all so good, and others are not so good, or my children are not doing so well in school, and others are not doing so well in school.

You're on dangerous ground, brother and sister. Very dangerous ground. You're comparing because you think you have done it.

Even if your children are wholehearted, fall on your face before God and say, Lord, you did that, it's not me. He's got nothing to do with me. He's got to do with God's tremendous mercy and grace.

That's a mark of righteousness of God. You may be the most saintliest man on earth, and you'll be the humblest man on earth. You'll never treat another person as below you.

I've seen people who look down on others, even in the church, the way they talk to some young people, as if those young people are inferior to them. I hear it. And I say, I hope this person will one day discover the righteousness of God before it's too late.

It's not at all difficult to speak in a humble way, even to younger people, if you've got the righteousness of God. You'll never despise a soul again in your life. You'll never consider anybody inferior.

You will not consider a dumb, stupid person inferior. You will not look down on a Hindu or a Muslim or a person of any religion or anyone. You will not look down on a person who's got quirks of character or a person who's lame or a person who stumbles or speaks or people who've got some particular accent or whatever it is.

You will not despise anyone if you've got the humility of God, which brings the righteousness of God. In conclusion, Philippians 3. This is very important, because Paul was one who pursued this other righteousness for years. He says, Philippians 3, verse 6, As far as the righteousness, which is in the law is concerned, I get a hundred percent.

Or whatever is the first nine commandments, whatever they could keep from the external. I was blameless. To the best of my knowledge, I did it right.

But, I throw it away, verse 8, last part, as rubbish. Imagine living that holy life for 30 years and saying it's all rubbish. Just like that cloth I told you about.

You throw it away, never want to have it. Paul saw one day, he never saw it for 30 years. One day his eyes were open.

I hope all of your eyes will be open. He said, Boy, this is filthy rag. And he says, No, I don't want to be found with that.

I want to be found in Christ not having that filthy rag anymore. A righteousness of my own, derived from the law. I've dumped it all in the trash.

So that I can have the righteousness which comes through faith in Christ. The righteousness which comes from God. Where it's produced by the Holy Spirit, produced in humble dependence on Him.

Say, Lord, I can't make it. I want you to make me humble. I want you to make me an overcomer.

I want you to work in me. The promise of the new covenant is, I will write my law in your heart. Hebrews 8, verse 11.

Go and read it. I will write my law in your hearts. First time for you.

And I will write it in your mind. Say, Lord, write it. Here's my mind.

Here's my law. Here's my heart. He won't write it unless you give it to him.

Give your mind and your heart to Jesus. Say, Lord, write your law there. Take time, but write it, write it, write it.

Till I have a righteousness that doesn't make me proud. A righteousness that delivers me from grumbling and complaining. Luke 16, I think 13 or 14 says, The Pharisees were lovers of money.

You know, I've discovered one thing. That those who have human righteousness are pretty stingy when it comes to money. They're not generous to God.

They're not generous to people. They're always calculating, calculating, calculating. And they're giving to God and they're giving to others.

And I've seen people like that who imagine they're fantastically holy, who even make up, there's a calculating spirit about them. If God were calculating, none of us would be saved. Do you know what divine nature is? Divine nature is so generous.

He overflows in his giving and that's how we are to be. So, I speak for myself. I have judged myself.

The Bible says the righteous are those who judge themselves. 1 Peter 4, 17. I do it regularly every day, even today.

I live like that because I want the righteousness of God in my life. In every area. I don't want a smell of my own righteousness anywhere.

It's rubbish, it's garbage. We've thrown away our own righteousness so that we can have the righteousness of Christ. And if you didn't understand everything that I said today, I urge you, go to God.

He'll explain it to you. The Holy Spirit will show you. Make it real in your life.

This is a promise. God loves you so much that he gave you his son without your asking him. How much more he will work in your life through the Holy Spirit.

That which he gave his son for. We must have faith. God will definitely work in me through the Holy Spirit.

Trust it. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we pray that these truths which many of us may have understood in our heads will sink into our lives and become real so that we will become genuine Christians in a world full of hypocrisy and Christendom.

Give us grace, Lord. We're not here to compare ourselves with anyone. But we want to live before your face and be pleasing to you.

Deliver us from all the deception of Satan. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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