

Righteousness: Set Free from Sin's Power

Key Verses:

Romans 8:2-3 — And because you belong to him, the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you from the power of sin that leads to death. The law of Moses was unable to save us because of the weakness of our sinful nature. So God did what the law could not do. He sent his own Son in a body like the bodies we sinners have. And in that body God declared an end to sin's control over us by giving his Son as a sacrifice for our sins. (NLT)

John 8:36 — So if the Son sets you free, you are truly free.

Galatians 5:1 — So Christ has truly set us free. Now make sure that you stay free, and don't get tied up again in slavery to the law.

This issue was a major turning point in my life. It is a key issue that every Believer must understand.

Would you like to be totally free from sin, bondages, guilt? Jesus made a way. He didn't just forgive your sins. He set you free from their power.

1 Corinthians 15:56-57 — For sin is the sting that results in death, and the law gives sin its power. But thank God! He gives us victory over sin and death through our Lord Jesus Christ.

We Are Guilty

What is righteousness? Righteousness is being right with and acceptable to God. It's also called "justification." It is required to see God or to be in His presence. Since God is holy, no sin or unrighteousness can enter into His presence. It's not a matter of prudishness on God's part like a little girl who doesn't want to touch a fishing worm. It's just a fact. It's simply impossible for sin to mix with a holy God.

What is righteousness?

1 John 3:4 — Everyone who sins is breaking God's law, for all sin is contrary to the law of God.

The problem is that we are guilty of sin, and, therefore, are unrighteous. Our sin prevents our entrance into God's presence. When a person commits any sin, he or she becomes a law breaker. Break just one of God's laws and you are guilty.

James 2:10 — For the person who keeps all of the laws except one is as guilty as a person who has broken all of God's laws.

Romans 3:23 — For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard.

It doesn't matter if it was a "little" sin or a "big" sin. You cannot take even the tiniest possible bit of sin to where God is. So there is a big problem. We want to be with God (at least some people do), but we are guilty of sin and cannot come near Him.

The Law Can't Fix Us

Unfortunately, doing good or right stuff doesn't get rid of sin that has been committed. For example, if a rich man gets mad at his bookkeeper and kills him, then he is a murderer. It doesn't matter if he has built hospitals and homeless shelters. It doesn't matter if he discovers a cure for cancer. No matter how many people he helps, it cannot erase the fact that he is a murderer. In the same way, it doesn't matter how many good or godly things you do. You cannot erase your sin guilt by doing good things. Even if you could keep the Law of God perfectly for the rest of your life, that cannot remove the sin that you have already committed. Every one of us has sinned and fallen short of God's expectations.

Romans 3:20 — For no one can ever be made right with God by doing what the law commands. The law simply shows us how sinful we are.

 **Can man be righteous with God by keeping the Law?** yes no

Romans 3:23 — for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

Galatians 2:21 — I do not treat the grace of God as meaningless. For if keeping the law could make us right with God, then there was no need for Christ to die.

It seems that no matter how hard we try, we still mess up. We want to do good, but somehow, we can't seem to maintain goodness for more than a few minutes—maybe a few hours if you are really strong willed. There's this constant battle inside between the desire to do things God's way and to do things our way. It gets pretty miserable at times, and many Christians seem to just give up. They lower their standards to a less stressful level and muddle through life. They're not satisfied, but they don't have much hope of ever being better. We console ourselves saying things like, "I really tried." Or "God understands my heart." But it doesn't produce much hope, joy, or freedom. Don't settle for less than what God gave you!

Romans 7:9-10 — At one time I lived without understanding the law. But when I learned the command not to covet, for instance, the power of sin came to life, and I died. So I discovered that the law's commands, which were supposed to bring life, brought spiritual death instead.

There's good news, and there's bad news. First the bad news. The mighty apostle Paul, the one who wrote a good portion of the New Testament, struggled with the same thing!

Romans 7:14-24 — So the trouble is not with the law, for it is spiritual and good. The trouble is with me, for I am all too human, a slave to sin. I don't really understand myself, for I want to do what is right, but I don't do it. Instead, I do what I hate. But if I know that what I am doing is wrong, this shows that I agree that the law is good. So I am not the one doing wrong; it is sin living in me that does it. And I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. I want to do what is right, but I can't. I want to do what is good, but I don't. I don't want to do what is wrong, but I do it anyway. But if I do what I don't want to do, I am not really the one doing wrong; it is sin living in me that does it. I have discovered this principle of life—that when I want to do what is right, I inevitably do what is wrong. I love God's law with all my heart. But there is another power within me that is at war with my mind. This power makes me a slave to the sin that is still within me. Oh, what a

miserable person I am! Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin and death?

Oh, no! I just thought the struggle was hopeless before. If Paul couldn't live good enough, how could I ever hope to make it? Thanks a lot for the discouragement!

Just Dying to Get Free

Hold on! Remember, I said there was good news and bad news. The good news is that Paul found deliverance from the treadmill and frustration. He didn't find it in being good, he found it in the substitutionary work of Jesus on the cross.

Romans 7:24-25 — Oh, what a miserable person I am! Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin and death? Thank God! The answer is in Jesus Christ our Lord.

The Law is not the problem. We are! We need to be fixed, but the Law cannot fix us. Remember what Paul said?

Romans 7:14 — So the trouble is not with the law, for it is spiritual and good. The trouble is with me, for I am all too human, a slave to sin.

There's only one way to get out from under the judgment of the Law and slavery to sin—we have to die! Whoa! That's a pretty radical solution for the sin problem. Yes, and it's the only solution.

Suppose you are driving along and die from a heart attack. As your car coast to a stop, it comes to rest in a no parking zone. When the policeman comes up, he drags you out of the car, puts handcuffs on you, reads you your rights, and takes you off to jail. The next day, they take your body into court and charge you with parking in a no parking zone. "How do you plead?" When you don't answer, they add a contempt of court charge. By the time it is all said and done, you are sentenced to twenty years in prison. Pretty silly, huh? Dead men don't get parking tickets! When you die, you are no longer judged by the law. In a similar way, the Law of God has jurisdiction over a person only while he is alive.

That's what happens to us when we accept Jesus' payment for our sin. We spiritually die on the cross with Jesus.

Colossians 3:3 — For you died to this life, and your real life is hidden with Christ in God.

Romans 6:6 — We know that our old sinful selves were crucified with Christ so that sin might lose its power in our lives. We are no longer slaves to sin.

Romans 7:1-4 — Now, dear brothers and sisters—you who are familiar with the law—don't you know that the law applies only while a person is living? For example, when a woman marries, the law binds her to her husband as long as he is alive. But if he dies, the laws of marriage no longer apply to her. So while her husband is alive, she would be committing adultery if she married another man. But if her husband dies, she is free from that law and does not commit adultery when she remarries. So, my dear brothers and sisters, this is the point: You died to the power of the law when you died with Christ. And now you are united with the one who was raised from the dead. As a result, we can produce a harvest of good deeds for God.

No Longer Under the Law

The Law of God was never intended to make a person right with God. It cannot make a person right with God because doing right and godly things cannot erase the bad things you have done in the past.

Romans 6:14 — Sin is no longer your master, for you no longer live under the requirements of the law. Instead, you live under the freedom of God's grace.

When you die with Jesus (at salvation), you are no longer judged by the Law.

Romans 7:6 — But now we have been released from the law, for we died to it and are no longer captive to its power. Now we can serve God, not in the old way of obeying the letter of the law, but in the new way of living in the Spirit.

Romans 8:2-4 — And because you belong to him, the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you from the power of sin that leads to death. The law of Moses was unable to save us because of the weakness of our sinful nature. So God did what the law could not do. He sent his own Son in a body like the bodies we sinners have. And in that body God declared an end to sin's control over us by giving his Son as a sacrifice for our sins. He did this so that the just requirement of the law would be fully satisfied for us, who no longer follow our sinful nature but instead follow the Spirit.

Jesus completely solved the sin problem for us.

Galatians 3:23-25 — Before the way of faith in Christ was available to us, we were placed under guard by the law. We were kept in protective custody, so to speak, until the way of faith was revealed. Let me put it another way. The law was our guardian until Christ came; it protected us until we could be made right with God through faith. And now that the way of faith has come, we no longer need the law as our guardian.

The Law was our tutor (guardian) to lead us to salvation by faith. Once that salvation comes, we no longer under control of that tutor—the Law.

Galatians 5:18 — But when you are directed by the Spirit, you are not under obligation to the law of Moses.

 **If you are saved, are you under the Law?** **yes** **no**

We are no longer judged by the Law. But the Law still teaches us about the character, nature, and will of God. It still declares His righteous standard. So knowing the Law is still very important to us. But it is no longer the source of our righteousness with God, and it no longer condemns us.

Adoption and Inheritance

In life, you want to be sure to get everything you earn. Just let someone try to short your paycheck and you're going to be all over it! We also earn things in the spirit realm.

Romans 6:23 — For the wages of sin is death....

This is one case where you don't want to demand that you get what you deserve.

We've learned so far that you cannot do enough good works to earn your way to God's Kingdom. So how are you going to get there? There's only one way—you have to inherit it.

When God saves you, He adopts you into His family. As a family member, you enter God's Kingdom because it is your inheritance. An inheritance is something you receive not because you earned it, but because of who you are related to.

Galatians 4:4-7 — But when the right time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman, subject to the law. God sent him to buy freedom for us who were slaves to the law, so that he could adopt us as his very own children. And because we are his children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, prompting us to call out, "Abba, Father." Now you are no longer a slave but God's own child. And since you are his child, God has made you his heir.

At the end of this meeting, some of you will go pick up your kids in the nursery or children's building. Which ones do you take home? The ones that belong to you. There's going to be trouble if you try to take kids that don't belong to you. That's similar to how it is with God. When the end of this age comes, God will pick up His kids and go home. He's not going to pick up someone else's kids, just His own.

Suppose you were a teacher in the children's department. At the end of the night, a man came up to get his two sons, Billy and Bobby. Unfortunately, you had to inform him that Billy had been harassing other kids, stealing money, and fighting. While running away from the teacher, he tripped and broke his arm. So the man asked, "What about Bobby?" Fortunately, Bobby was a model student. He even went out of his way to help the other kids.

Next, the man asked about another boy in the group, "What's his name? Has he been good tonight?" "That's Jimmy. Yes, he is a very good child." "Great!" the man exclaims. "I will take my son, Bobby, and this boy, James. You can keep Billy."

What would you do? Probably call the police! Yet this is what we think God is going to do at the end of the age—take the good and healthy ones with Him and leave the bad, broken ones behind.

When Jesus comes at the end of time, He is going to take all God's kids—good or bad, healthy or broken—to live with Him for eternity. He is not going to take anyone else's kids. So the most important thing each person needs to do in this life is to be sure that he or she is adopted into God's family before it is too late.

Salvation is all about relationship. We live with God for eternity because that is our inheritance as His adopted children.

Romans 8:14-17 — For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. So you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you received God's Spirit when he adopted you as his own children. Now we call him, "Abba, Father." For his Spirit joins with our spirit to affirm that we are God's children. And since we are his children, we are his heirs. In fact, together with Christ we are heirs of God's glory.

The Law Was Never Plan A

God was too smart to ever think we could be righteous by keeping the Law. So the Law was never His plan for our relationship with Him. Our relationship with God is based strictly on the promise that He gave more than 400 years before He gave the Law.

Galatians 3:17-21 — This is what I am trying to say: The agreement God made with Abraham could not be canceled 430 years later when God gave the law to Moses. God would be breaking his promise. For if the inheritance could be received by keeping the law, then it would not be the result of accepting God's promise. But God graciously gave it to Abraham as a promise. Why, then, was the law given? It was given alongside the promise to show people their sins. But the law was designed to last only until the coming of the child who was promised. God gave his law through angels to Moses, who was the mediator between God and the people. Now a mediator is helpful if more than one party must reach an agreement. But God, who is one, did not use a mediator when he gave his promise to Abraham. Is there a conflict, then, between God's law and God's promises? Absolutely not! If the law could give us new life, we could be made right with God by obeying it.

The Law was never God's plan for us to be righteous. From all eternity He determined that we would be made right with Him through the sacrifice of Jesus.

Ephesians 3:11-12 — This was his eternal plan, which he carried out through Christ Jesus our Lord. Because of Christ and our faith in him, we can now come boldly and confidently into God's presence.

But what about the sacrifices, laws, and rituals that God gave through Moses?

Hebrews 10:1-20 — The old system under the law of Moses was only a shadow, a dim preview of the good things to come, not the good things themselves. The sacrifices under that system were repeated again and again, year after year, but they were never able to provide perfect cleansing for those who came to worship. If they could have provided perfect cleansing, the sacrifices would have stopped, for the worshipers would have been purified once for all time, and their feelings of guilt would have disappeared. But instead, those sacrifices actually reminded them of their sins year after year. For it is not possible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. He cancels the first covenant in order to put the second into effect. For God's will was for us to be made holy by the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all time. Under the old covenant, the priest stands and ministers before the altar day after day, offering the same sacrifices again and again, which can never take away sins. But our High Priest offered himself to God as a single sacrifice for sins, good for all time. Then he sat down in the place of honor at God's right hand. There he waits until his enemies are humbled and made a footstool under his feet. For by that one offering he forever made perfect those who are being made holy. And the Holy Spirit also testifies that this is so. For he says, "This is the new covenant I will make with my people on that day, says the Lord: I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds." Then he says, "I will never again remember their sins and lawless deeds." And when sins have been forgiven, there is no need to offer any more sacrifices. And so, dear brothers and sisters, we can boldly enter heaven's Most Holy Place because of the blood of Jesus. By his death, Jesus opened a new and life-giving way through the curtain into the Most Holy Place.

Romans 5:11 — So now we can rejoice in our wonderful new relationship with God because our Lord Jesus Christ has made us friends of God.

Now, as friends and children of God, we can boldly come into His presence because Jesus made a way for us.

Okay to Sin?

Since I am no longer under the Law, is it okay to go ahead and sin?

Romans 6:14-15 — Sin is no longer your master, for you no longer live under the requirements of the law. Instead, you live under the freedom of God's grace. Well then, since God's grace has set us free from the law, does that mean we can go on sinning? Of course not!

Romans 3:31 — Well then, if we emphasize faith, does this mean that we can forget about the law? Of course not! In fact, only when we have faith do we truly fulfill the law.

Supposed the government repealed all the laws against illegal drugs including heroin. So now, it is legal to use all the heroin you want. However, you will soon become addicted if you do. You will find that you have become a slave. That's what happens when we give ourselves to sin—even though we are not under the law.

Romans 6:16-19 — Don't you realize that you become the slave of whatever you choose to obey? You can be a slave to sin, which leads to death, or you can choose to obey God, which leads to righteous living. Thank God! Once you were slaves of sin, but now you wholeheartedly obey this teaching we have given you. Now you are free from your slavery to sin, and you have become slaves to righteous living. Because of the weakness of your human nature, I am using the illustration of slavery to help you understand all this. Previously, you let yourselves be slaves to impurity and lawlessness, which led ever deeper into sin. Now you must give yourselves to be slaves to righteous living so that you will become holy.

When you serve sin, you become a slave to sin. Not all sin is as obviously damaging as our illustration of heroin. Often, it does its work quietly until, like a cancerous tumor, its destructive power grows to the point of destroying lives. Also, **all** sin is contrary to the nature, character, and goals of God. (See the lesson on *The Lordship of Jesus Christ*.)

It is dangerous to allow sin in your life even when you are not under the Law.

1 Corinthians 6:12 — You say, "I am allowed to do anything"—but not everything is good for you. And even though "I am allowed to do anything," I must not become a slave to anything.

Your actions produce consequences that don't just affect you. Depending on your actions, you bring glory to God or shame, causing people to turn away from Him and His Truth. Your actions reflect good or bad on God.

Matthew 5:16 — In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father.

Romans 2:23-24 — You are so proud of knowing the law, but you dishonor God by breaking it. No wonder the Scriptures say, "The Gentiles blaspheme the name of God because of you."

You can also cause others to suffer from following your example.

Romans 14:12-21 — Yes, each of us will give a personal account to God. So let's stop condemning each other. Decide instead to live in such a way that you will not cause another believer to stumble and fall. I know and am convinced on the authority of the Lord Jesus that no food, in and of itself, is wrong to eat. But if someone believes it is wrong, then for that person it is wrong. And if another believer is distressed by what you eat, you are not acting in love if you eat it. Don't let your eating ruin someone for whom Christ died. Then you will not be criticized for doing something you believe is good. For the Kingdom of God is not a matter of what we eat or drink, but of living a life of goodness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. If you serve Christ with this attitude, you will please God, and others will approve of you, too. So then, let us aim for harmony in the church and try to build each other up. Don't tear apart the work of God over what you eat. Remember, all foods are acceptable, but it is wrong to eat something if it makes another person stumble. It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything else if it might cause another believer to stumble.

 **Since we are no longer under the Law, is it okay to do whatever we want? Why?**

There is another important reason to do what is right. Even though we are no longer under the Law, that doesn't mean that we are without law.

The Law of Love

When born again (salvation), you died to the old Law. But with your new life in Jesus comes a new law, the law of love. (Also called the royal law and the law of Christ.)

James 2:8 — Yes indeed, it is good when you obey the royal law as found in the Scriptures: "Love your neighbor as yourself."

Galatians 6:2 — Share each other's burdens, and in this way obey the law of Christ.

Matthew 22:36-40 — "Teacher, which is the most important commandment in the law of Moses?" Jesus replied, " 'You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. A second is equally important: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments."

When we love others, we automatically fulfill the law of God.

Romans 13:9-10 — For the commandments say, "You must not commit adultery. You must not murder. You must not steal. You must not covet." These—and other such commandments—are summed up in this one commandment: "Love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no wrong to others, so love fulfills the requirements of God's law.

That means we will act in ways that are consistent with God's nature, character, and goals when we love God and others.

Galatians 5:13-14 — For you have been called to live in freedom, my brothers and sisters. But don't use your freedom to satisfy your sinful nature. Instead, use your freedom to serve one another in love. For the whole law can be summed up in this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself."

So live in the freedom from the Law that Jesus provided, but don't use your freedom as an opportunity to just do what feels good or to do what you want. You have been set free from sin—not free to sin.

Do I Still Need to Repent?

Christianity, similar to marriage, is all about the relationship. Jesus' main goal in dying for you was not to save you from hell. It was to bring you back into relationship with God. And that relationship begins the moment you are born again into His family. If all you want from Christianity is a "get out of hell free" card, then you have missed the whole point of Christianity. No wonder you feel miserable and unfulfilled!

As in a marriage, we sometimes do things that hurt our relationship. As a result we may feel distant, but we are still legally married. At those times, we need to ask forgiveness and restore our relationship. In a similar manner, we still need to ask for forgiveness and turn from sin as a Christian to restore the interactive relationship part of our adoption—even though we are no longer under the Law.

There are three things that need to happen in repentance.

- Change the way you think – turning upward
- Turn away from sin – turning from
- Choose to follow Jesus – turning toward

These three things need to work together. That way they support and strengthen each other. For example, as you choose to follow Jesus more, it also helps change your thinking towards God's ways. If you only do two out of three requirements, you won't be successful.

True repentance results in a changed life!

There is a repentance that leads to salvation, but we also need to repent as necessary when we get off track as Christians. That last repentance does not save us, but it does get us back in step with the Lord, restoring the relationship.

No Condemnation

As Christians, we are no longer condemned by failure to obey the Law of God.

Galatians 2:16 — Yet we know that a person is made right with God by faith in Jesus Christ, not by obeying the law. And we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we might be made right with God because of our faith in Christ, not because we have obeyed the law. For no one will ever be made right with God by obeying the law."

Romans 5:1 — Therefore, since we have been made right in God's sight by faith, we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us.

Romans 8:1 — So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus.

We can truly walk in freedom from the condemnation and bondage that sin brought into our lives.

Righteousness is ours—not because we keep the law of God, but because we have put our faith in Jesus.

Conclusion

There is a lot of information in the Bible on righteousness, particularly in Romans chapters 3-8 and the entire Book of Galatians. We suggest that you read those passages. Also, there is a three-CD set called *Head Braking Grace* available in the Café that includes additional discussion about righteousness and how it works in a Believer's life.

Next week, Stacy Collins will be teaching on *Spirit, Soul, and Body*. Stacy does a great job, and that teaching will be helpful in better understanding some of the material covered in this lesson on righteousness.

Righteousness is being right with and acceptable to God.; no; no; no, sin will enslave you, your sin has consequences, it will bring shame on the Father and cause people to blaspheme His Name, and it can hurt other people.