

“HOLINESS AND PRACTICAL RIGHTEOUSNESS”

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I. Brief Review

- A. God is holy. Totally other; set apart from His creation; morally pure and perfect.
- B. Man is sinful.
- C. The solution: the imputed righteousness of Christ.
- D. New life: implanted righteousness, accompanying regeneration.
- E. Life first, then faith.
- F. John 5:25. “Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.”
- G. Gold, or snow-covered dung? (Luther.)
- H. Because of Christ in us, the final outcome is victorious.
- I. 1 Corinthians 1:7b-9 “. . . as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.”
- J. Philippians 1:6. “And I am sure of this: that He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion in the day of Jesus Christ.”

II. Identifiable or Practical Righteousness

A. Dead faith: false profession.

Matthew 7:21-23. “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and cast out demons in Your name, and do many mighty works in Your name? And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you. Depart from Me, you workers of lawlessness.’”

James 1:26. “So as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead.”

1 John 2:4. “Whoever says, ‘I know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in Him.”

B. Living, saving faith.

1. Westminster Confession of Faith ch. 14, Sec. 2.

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Faith, thus receiving and resting upon Christ and His righteousness, is the alone instrument of justification, yet is it not alone in the person justified, but is ever accompanied with all other saving graces, and is no dead faith, but works by love.

Galatians 5:5-6. “For through the Spirit, by faith, we eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness. For in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith, working through love.”

2. Practical righteousness is the result of the working of the Holy Spirit within us, and we actively pursue it. (holy schizophrenia.)

1 Corinthians 15:10. “But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain, but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with(or in) me.”

Philippians 2:12-13. “Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.”

Ephesians 2:10. “For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”

C. Evidence: What does practical righteousness look like?

1. Repentance; hatred of sin.

2. A gift of God; an evangelical grace.

Matthew 4:17. “From that time, Jesus began to preach, and to say, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.’”

Westminster Confession of Faith Ch. 15, Sec. 2.

By that, a sinner, out of the sight and sense, not only of the danger, but also of the filthiness and odiousness (stench) of his sins, as contrary to the holy nature and righteous law of God, and upon the apprehension of His mercy in Christ, to such as are penitent, so grieves for and hates his sins, as to turn from them all to God, and purposing and endeavoring to walk with Him in all the ways of His commandments.

3. Love for God’s word.

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1 Peter 2:1-3. “Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy and all evil speaking, as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious.”

2 Timothy 3:16-17. “All Scripture is breathed out by God, and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.”

4. Private prayer.

Psalm 42:1-2. “As the deer pants for the water brooks, so pants my soul for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?”

5. Love for the brethren, the body of Christ, the church.

John 13:34. “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love one for another.”

Includes worship, sacraments, fellowship.

6. Love for neighbors, unbelievers, enemies, resulting in a desire to share Christ.

III. Concluding Remarks.

A. God is pleased with, and graciously rewards, our righteous service.

Hebrews 13:16. “But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.”

“.. He,” (God the Father,) “looking upon them in His Son, is pleased to accept and to reward that which is sincere, although accompanied with many weaknesses and imperfections.” (adapted from Westminster Confession of Faith chap. 18, Sec. 6.)

Matthew 10:39-42. “Whoever receives you receives Me, and whoever receives Me receives Him who sent Me. The one who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet’s reward, and the one who receives a righteous person because he is a righteous person will receive a righteous person’s reward. And whoever gives one of these little ones even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple, truly I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward.”

B. We are not to be lazy or sluggish, but to abound in the work of the Lord.

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Hebrews 6:11-12. “And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.”

1 Corinthians 15:58. “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.”