

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, 12-22-13 AM NOTES
"BORN TO GIVE US RIGHTEOUSNESS"
2 CORINTHIANS 5:21
The Continuing Christmas Series, "Connecting Bethlehem and Calvary"

Christophony—a pre-incarnate (before becoming flesh) appearance of Christ for a specific purpose

*No condemnation now I dread:
Jesus, and all in Him is mine!
Alive in Him, my living head,
And clothed in **righteousness** divine,
Bold I approach the eternal throne,
And claim the crown, through Christ my own.*
—Charles Wesley

I. The Significance of Righteousness

Righteousness (when applied to man) —conformity to all that God demands

Exodus 20:3 (NKJV) "You shall have no other gods before Me."

Exodus 20:12 (NKJV) "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you."

Exodus 20:13 (NKJV) "You shall not murder."

Exodus 20:15 (NKJV) "You shall not steal."

Exodus 20:16 (NKJV) "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor."

Exodus 20:17 (NKJV) "You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor's."

James 2:10 (NKJV) "For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one *point*, he is guilty of all."

Matthew 5:48 (NKJV) "Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect."

II. The Predicament With Righteousness

Romans 3:10 (NKJV) "As it is written: *'There is none righteous, no, not one.'*"

Isaiah 64:6a (NKJV) "But we are all like an unclean *thing*, and all our righteousnesses *are* like filthy rags..."

Romans 10:1-3 (HCSB) "1 Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God concerning them is for their salvation! 2 I can testify about them that they have zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. 3 Because they disregarded the righteousness from God and attempted to establish their own righteousness, they have not submitted to God's righteousness."

III. The Acquiring of Righteousness

Imputation (*logizomi*) —To thoughtfully calculate or to put on an account

Synonyms for Imputation—account, reckon, credit, consider

Romans 4:6, 8 (NKJV) “⁶ just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works: ⁸ *Blessed is the man to whom the Lord shall not impute sin.*”

A. Adam’s Sin Was Imputed to Us

Romans 5:12 (NKJV) “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned—”

1 Corinthians 15:22 (NKJV) “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.”

B. Our Sin Was Imputed to Christ

Isaiah 53:12b (NKJV) “...He bore the sin of many...”

John 1:29b (NKJV) “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”

Hebrews 9:28a (NKJV) “so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many.”

1 Peter 2:24a (NKJV) “who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree...”

Isaiah 53:5-6 (NKJV) “⁵ But He *was* wounded for our transgressions, *He was* bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace *was* upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. ⁶ All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.”

Isaiah 53:10a (NKJV) “Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He has put *Him* to grief.”

C. Christ’s Righteousness Is Imputed to Those in Union With Him

2 Corinthians 5:21 (NKJV) “For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

1 Corinthians 1:30a (NKJV) “But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness...”

Romans 5:19 (NKJV) “For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man’s obedience many will be made righteous.”

Philippians 3:9 (NASB) “and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from *the* Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which *comes* from God on the basis of faith.”

“Saints are so righteous in Jesus Christ that they are more righteous than Adam was before he fell, for he had but a creature righteousness, and they have the righteousness of the Creator. Adam had a righteousness which he lost, but believers have a righteousness which they can never lose.”
—Charles Spurgeon

Philippians 1:11 (NKJV) “being filled with the fruits of righteousness which *are* by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.”

Ephesians 1:6 (NKJV) “to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved.”

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, 12-22-13 AM
"BORN TO GIVE US RIGHTEOUSNESS"
2 CORINTHIANS 5:21

The Continuing Christmas Series, "Connecting Bethlehem and Calvary"

In 2011 we began a series for a few weeks before Christmas to serve the purpose of enabling us to see the birth of Christ in proper perspective. We continued the same series in 2012 a few weeks before Christmas and we are doing the same thing again this year. Thus far, we have examined seven reasons Jesus was born: "Jesus Was Born to Be the Mediator", "Jesus Was Born to Bring Us to God", "Jesus Was Born to Destroy the Devil", "Jesus Was Born to Show God's Love for Sinners", "Jesus Was Born to Give Life to the Dead", "Jesus was Born to Ransom the Many", and last week we saw that "Jesus Was Born to Solve the Great Dilemma". Today, from the Scriptures we will see that "Jesus Was Born to Give Us Righteousness". It is imperative that we connect Bethlehem (the place of His birth) and Calvary (the place of His death).

[I believe that 2 Corinthians 5:21 is the greatest summary of the Gospel in all of Scripture]

In no way do I want to minimize the wonderful things that Jesus did when He took on human flesh and was born of a virgin in Bethlehem's manger. He revealed God to man; He and He alone kept the law perfectly (in letter and spirit); He taught us so much about a life that pleases the God who created us for Himself; He set an example of ministering to those in need and having compassion on the sheep without a shepherd. However, all of those really important things pale in comparison to the primary purpose for His incarnation. He could have done all those things without becoming a man. There are multiple instances of "The Angel of the Lord" appearing in the Old Testament and then disappearing. He appeared to Jacob, Joshua, Gideon, and others. Most Bible scholars call these appearances a "Christophony" – a pre-incarnate (before becoming flesh) appearance of Christ for a specific purpose. There is one thing that the Angel of the Lord could not do; He could not die as man for man's sin. Sinful man could not be forgiven and counted righteous before God by great teaching or a perfect example. Sinful mankind needed a substitute who could take the wages of sin in our place by pouring out His lifeblood for us.

The primary reason that Jesus Christ became man was to die! That is why when we speak of and celebrate His birth, we must never see His birth as an end in itself; we must connect His birth to the cross and all that He accomplished there. We must connect Bethlehem and Calvary.

One of the least understood and least appreciated accomplishments at Calvary is the fact that Jesus' death made it possible for us to become a partaker of His righteousness. In the 18th century, Charles Wesley wrote one of my favorite hymns, *And Can It Be?* Wesley understood the truth of the righteousness of Christ that must become our righteousness:

No condemnation now I dread;

Jesus, and all in Him is mine!

Alive in Him, my living head,

And clothed in righteousness divine,

Bold I approach the eternal throne,

And claim the crown, through Christ my own.

- Charles Wesley

We often hear of the importance of Jesus' blood and what it accomplished for us, but not so often the importance of His righteousness and how that righteousness affected us. In fact, most Christians would be hard pressed to even explain righteousness as it applies to man.

In one sense, today's message is the completion of last week's message. Last week we looked at the righteousness of God and we saw that in the Greek and Hebrew it is in the same word group (same root) as justice or just. Through the cross of Christ, God's justice, God's righteousness was satisfied. The emphasis today is on the fact that we must be righteous in order to be accepted by God.

I. The Significance of Righteousness

Righteousness, when it is applied to man is a concept that we find rather difficult to define. The word in the New Testament translated “righteous” when it applies to man simply means conformity to all that God demands. This “righteousness” results in right standing before God. In one lexicon, righteous is defined as the character or quality of being right or just. As the word “righteousness” is used in Scripture, the best summary definition is that it is the sum total of the requirements of God. What exactly does righteousness **look like** in every day behavior? The righteousness that God requires is revealed to us in the law of God. That law is summarized in the Ten Commandments. A righteous life is one that never has a rival god take the place of the true God. **Exodus 20:3 (NKJV)** “You shall have no other gods before Me.” The God of Scripture is always to be in first place, always the one that we turn to, always the one that we love supremely, always the one we worship, and always the one we surrender to. A righteous life always honors (literally “treats as weighty”) one’s parents. **Exodus 20:12 (NKJV)** “Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you.” A righteous life never hates another person (which God marks down as murder). **Exodus 20:13 (NKJV)** “You shall not murder.” A righteous life never steals anything – even another’s trust or reputation. **Exodus 20:15 (NKJV)** “You shall not steal.” A righteous life never lies at all. **Exodus 20:16 (NKJV)** “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.” A righteous life never covets what another has. **Exodus 20:17 (NKJV)** “You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that *is* your neighbor's.” Even if someone keeps all of the law but one command, he is a “lawbreaker” **James 2:10 (NKJV)** “For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one *point*, he is guilty of all.” This may sound like hard teaching, but it is what the Bible teaches. God doesn’t determine who is righteous and who is not by how well we compare with others. The law is God’s standard; God’s measuring stick for righteousness to see if we measure up. It is a pass – fail thing. You keep the law perfectly and pass or you break one law one time and you fail. **Matthew 5:48 (NKJV)** “Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.” Do you know what that verse means in the Greek? It means the same thing it means in English – God’s standard for righteousness is perfectly keeping His law with not one failure ever. God is perfectly pure and perfectly holy. Even one sin is cosmic treason against the creator of all things and the Lord of all.

II. The Predicament with Righteousness

The predicament is obvious. A perfectly pure and perfectly holy God requires perfect righteousness to escape His just wrath against sin and to be in right relationship with Him. However, we have to confess what is written in **Romans 3:10 (NKJV)** “As it is written: *‘There is none righteous, no, not one’*”. **To be accepted by a holy God, we must possess a righteousness like His.** Keep that statement in mind! A “man compared to man righteousness” won’t make it. A “more good deeds than bad deeds righteousness” won’t be accepted by God. God gives His evaluation of these “earned righteousness” views in **Isaiah 64:6a (NKJV)** “But we are all like an unclean *thing*, and all our righteousnesses *are* like filthy rags...” Paul shares his deep, deep burden about the fact that the Jews are so lost because they are seeking an “earned by the law righteousness.” **Romans 10:1-3 (HCSB)** “¹ Brothers, my heart’s desire and prayer to God concerning them is for their salvation! ² I can testify about them that they have zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. ³ Because they disregarded the righteousness from God and attempted to establish their own righteousness, they have not submitted to God’s righteousness.”

Here is what we must understand. Because God is holy – perfectly pure and set apart – the righteousness that He requires to be in right relationship with Him and escape His just wrath is **perfect righteousness**. The law of God strips all of us of the false notion that we have any righteousness of our own. We are **all** guilty before God and under the sentence of God’s wrath.

III. The Acquiring of Righteousness

If I had to stop the message with point II, we would be without hope. Ah, but there is a point III! While we have no self earned righteousness and absolutely no hope of getting any, there is good news! There is

the Gospel [which means “good news”]! What we could never earn, God has provided as a gift of His grace. 2 Corinthians 5:21 is the best summary of what God has done for helpless, justly condemned mankind. God the Father made Christ Jesus (God the Son) who had no sin to become sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God through our union with Him.

To understand what God has done to make righteous those who are in Christ, we need to understand a big word called “imputation”. Don’t let this word scare you. It is used in the Greek New Testament numerous times (*logizomi*) though it is translated with different English words such as account, credit, reckon, and consider. It is a word which comes from the world of banking. It means to thoughtfully calculate or to put on an account. This word is used 19 times in the book of Romans! When something is imputed to a person, it is put on that person’s account, either as something that is a great blessing or something that person must be answerable for. Let me give you an example. **Romans 4:6, 8 (NKJV)** “⁶ just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God **imputes** righteousness apart from works”. “⁸ *blessed is the man to whom the Lord shall not **impute** sin.*” In the ESV “imputes” is translated “counts”; in the HCSB and the NASB it is translated “credits”. There are three things you need to know concerning imputation In order to understand how sinners can be righteous before a holy God and escape His wrath for our sin.

A. Adam’s Sin Was Imputed to Us

Romans 5:12 (NKJV) “Therefore, just as through one man [Adam] sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned –” [the context and grammar indicate that all sinned when Adam sinned]. From God’s viewpoint (the only viewpoint that counts) we were “in Adam” when he sinned. That is true because Adam was the head of and the representative of the whole human race. Not only that, genetically we were in Adam. The more we learn about genetics, the more we understand that we were literally in our ancestors, in their genes. You may not think that it is fair that you should be affected by what Adam did. We don’t get a vote. But we see this principle of representation in all of life. We call elected officials our “representatives”. When they make decisions, we must live with the consequences of those decisions. For example, when congress declares war, you are at war whether or not you agree with their decision. This principle is even exemplified in the sports world. On a football team, when the left tackle holds the defensive lineman, there is a penalty assessed against the whole team. Can you picture the quarterback protesting to the referee saying, “Why don’t you just move the left tackle back 10 yards? It’s not fair for the rest of us to have to move back 10 yards”. We inherited the consequences of Adam’s sin as our representative. **1 Corinthians 15:22 (NKJV)** “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.” This imputation of Adam’s sin and it’s consequences to us explains why we were all born with a sin nature or more accurately an “adamic” nature and a spirit that was separated from and dead to God.

B. Our Sin Was Imputed to Christ

As we saw last week, because Jesus Christ was born of a virgin, He did not inherit the consequences of Adam’s sin and the sin nature of Adam. On the cross, all of my sin was imputed to, put on the sinless Christ – every evil deed, word, thought, motive, and every sin of omission. It was as though He had committed those sins. Over and over in Scripture we are told that our sins were put on Christ. **Isaiah 53:12b (NKJV)** “...He bore the sin of many...” **John 1:29 (NKJV)** John the Baptist says “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” **Hebrews 9:28a (NKJV)** “so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many.” **1 Peter 2:24a (NKJV)** “who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree...” On the cross, God considered, counted my sin as belonging to Christ. On the cross, Christ was punished for my sin; Christ bore the just wrath of God for my sin. Don’t ever hear that without being amazed! **Isaiah 53:5-6 (NKJV)** “⁵ But He *was* wounded for our transgressions, *He was* bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace *was* upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. ⁶ All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” **Isaiah 53:10a (NKJV)** “Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He has put *Him* to grief.” The sins of all who would savingly believe were placed on the Lord Jesus Christ.

C. Christ’s Righteousness Is Imputed to Those in Union with Him

2 Corinthians 5:21 (NKJV) “For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God **in Him.**” **1 Corinthians 1:30 (NKJV)** “But of Him you are **in** Christ Jesus, who **became for us** wisdom from God--and **righteousness...**” **Romans 5:19 (NKJV)** “For as by one man's disobedience [Adam] many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience [Jesus Christ] many will be **made righteous.**” The “many” are those who savingly believe and as a result are baptized by the Holy Spirit into union with Christ. Those who savingly believe on Christ are in union with Christ resulting in Christ’s righteousness (called “the righteousness of God” in 2 Corinthians 5:21) being put on their account; it is reckoned to them; it is imputed to all who savingly believe and they now stand before a holy God not as condemned sinners, but as adopted children who are perfectly righteous in Christ’s imputed righteousness. Hallelujah! Don’t give up until you grasp that! Instead of looking to the law (our good works) to make us righteous, we look to Christ to make us righteous by imputing His righteousness to us. Paul explained this righteousness in **Philippians 3:9 (NASB)** “and may be found **in Him** [in union with Him], not having a righteousness of my own derived from *the* Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which *comes* from God on the basis of faith”.

Allow me to give an imperfect illustration of what we have just been looking at. The concept that most people have (even the majority of church members, I fear) is that in Heaven we have a sin account and a righteousness account [balance scales]. Every time we commit a sin, it goes in the sin account, and every time we do a good deed or give to the poor or resist a temptation, there is a deposit in the righteousness account. At death, the accounts are tallied and if we have more in the righteousness account than in the sin account we are accepted by God. If, however we have more in the sin account, we are rejected by God. If we have a lot in our righteousness account (like Mother Teresa or Billy Graham) then we get a really nice mansion in Heaven. That is not what the Bible teaches! Here’s the truth. Our sin account was full and overflowing. We were all “sin billionaires”. Our righteousness account however will be empty. **Romans 3:10 (NKJV)** “*There is none righteous, no, not one*”. God rejects our attempts at self-righteousness since it is only pride. Apart from Christ every person is a sin billionaire and totally bankrupt in righteousness. Here is what happened at salvation: Our sin account is imputed to Christ and on the cross He took the punishment for every sin. Christ then takes His perfect righteousness and deposits it in our empty righteousness account. In reality, in Christ we stand before God, our sin account empty – all imputed to Christ. Our righteousness account is so full that no more can be added. It is perfect righteousness because it is Christ’s righteousness imputed to our account.

Christ was indeed born to give us His righteousness that the demands of the law would be filled and that we could be sons and daughters of God. I love this quote by Charles Spurgeon regarding righteousness: “Saints are so righteous in Jesus Christ that they are more righteous than Adam was before he fell, for he had but a creature righteousness, and they have the righteousness of the Creator. Adam had a righteousness which he lost, but believers have a righteousness which they can never lose.”[Charles Spurgeon, *2200 Spurgeon Quotations*, p178].

What a glorious God we have. What we could not do, He has done for us. Think about it: we were spiritually dead in trespasses and sins and He takes our sins and gives us His life which is eternal life. He takes our condemnation and gives us His righteousness. Hallelujah!

CONCLUSION

Because we in Christ now have Christ’s righteousness, we are enabled to act righteous. **Philippians 1:11 (NKJV)** “being filled with the fruits of righteousness which *are* by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.” Our obedience to God’s law is no longer in our own strength trying to earn acceptance from God. **Ephesians 1:6 (NKJV)** “to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved.” We are accepted in Christ. Now our obedience is empowered by the Spirit of Christ living in us and our motive is love for God and gratitude for what He has given us through His grace.

This is why Jesus was born! He was born to take our sins and die an agonizing death as our substitute so that His righteousness might be imputed to us that we could live a life of obedience to His word and worship Him for all eternity.