

The Kingdom of God and Eternal Life (3)
Righteousness in the Holy Spirit
Sermon by Pastor Sylvia Chan

Recapitulation

Brothers, sisters and friends, welcome to the zoom church service. Last time we saw that the Lord Jesus proclaimed the gospel to the spiritually poor, the spiritual prisoners, the spiritually blind and the spiritually oppressed, and all those who submit to the kingship of God would be set free from sin. Today we continue to study the kingdom of God and eternal life in the Bible.

Introduction

Two thousand years ago the Lord Jesus proclaimed that the kingdom of God has come near, and he preached the gospel of the kingdom. Since then more and more people have submitted to the kingship of God. But some people might say, “Before I submit myself to the kingship of God, I want to know how my life would be like in the kingdom of God; I need to know more about the life under the kingship of God.” This is a fair request. When people want to move to a new place, they would like to find out about that place; the same is true for people who want to submit to the kingship of God, they want to know more about the life in the spiritual kingdom of God.

^{NAU} **Romans 14:17** for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

Here apostle Paul says that living under the kingship of God has nothing to do with eating and drinking, what you eat and drink doesn't make any difference, what you eat and drink doesn't affect your status in the kingdom of God; the most important things are righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. That means if you truly live under the kingship of God, you would have righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit; but on the other hand if you don't live in righteousness, peace and joy, then you are not living under the kingship of God. Please remember if you are not living under the kingship of God now, in the future when the Lord Jesus comes back to establish the kingdom of God on earth, you will not be in the kingdom of God either, you will be thrown out of the kingdom of God. Being thrown out of the kingdom of God is destruction in the lake of fire.

Therefore we have to make sure that we are living under the kingship of God now, that means we have to live in righteousness, peace and joy.

Righteousness

First of all what is righteousness? We need to know what is righteousness according to the Bible, not according to the dictionaries. Let's start with the Old Testament.

Yahweh God is the embodiment of righteousness

^{NAU} **Jeremiah 23:6** “In His days Judah will be saved, And Israel will dwell securely; And this is His name by which He will be called, ‘The LORD our righteousness.’”

This word “LORD,” all capital letters, stands for the name of God “יהוה” (Yahweh). “The LORD our righteousness” means “Yahweh our righteousness”. This phrase “Yahweh our righteousness” tells us that Yahweh God is righteousness, He is the embodiment of righteousness, righteousness is Yahweh's quality.

Righteousness in the Old Testament

But what is righteousness? Let's look at the Old Testament. How does the Old Testament define righteousness?

1. Righteousness is no sin, sinless

^{NAU} **2 Samuel 22:21** “The LORD has rewarded me according to my righteousness; According to the cleanness of my hands He has recompensed me.”

This verse is from one of David's songs; David wrote this song after Yahweh had saved him from his enemies; he said Yahweh had rewarded him according to his righteousness, and had recompensed him according to the cleanness of his hands.

Here “righteousness” is parallel to “cleanness of my hands”; What does “cleanness of my hands” mean? Committing sin usually involves the hands, but not always, for you can slander people and destroy people's reputation with your tongue; but in most cases, you commit sin with your hands, you kill people with your hands, you attack people with your hands, you steal things with your hands; “cleanness of my hands” means that his hands are clean, it means that he did not commit sin.

We have to keep in mind that it is only in a relative sense that David did not commit sin. It means that in that particular incident David did not do wrong, but not in the absolute sense. In the absolute sense everyone has sinned. David in his life has committed sins, his most serious sins were committing adultery with Bathsheba and killing Bathsheba's husband. No human being is sinless,

only the Lord Jesus Christ is absolute sinless. This passage here says in this particular incident David did not sin. It shows that righteousness is parallel to no sin.

2. Righteousness and justice are closely linked together

^{NAU} **Genesis 18:19** “For I have chosen him, so that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice, so that the LORD may bring upon Abraham what He has spoken about him.”

This passage is talking about Abraham. This is Yahweh’s statement concerning Abraham. Yahweh has chosen Abraham so that he (Abraham) may command his descendants to do righteousness and justice, so that Yahweh would grant Abraham what has been promised to him.

This passage shows that righteousness and justice are linked together.

3. Righteousness includes lovingkindness

^{NAU} **Deuteronomy 24:10 – 13** “When you make your neighbor a loan of any sort, you shall not enter his house to take his pledge. ¹¹ “You shall remain outside, and the man to whom you make the loan shall bring the pledge out to you. ¹² “If he is a poor man, you shall not sleep with his pledge. ¹³ “When the sun goes down you shall surely return the pledge to him, that he may sleep in his cloak and bless you; and it will be righteousness for you before the LORD your God.”

This passage is actually one of the commandments in the Old Testament Law. It says when you loan money or something to your neighbor, you can take a pledge from him, but you don’t go into his house to take the pledge, instead you should wait outside and your neighbor would bring the pledge to you. Yahweh God is saying that you should not disrespect or be aggressive toward your neighbor even though he is poor and when he borrows money from you, you should still respect him. If your neighbor is poor, and the pledge is his cloak, he would need his cloak to keep warm when he sleeps at night, the cloak is like a blanket to him; in that case you should not keep his cloak, you should return his cloak to him so that he can sleep in it.

Please notice that verse 13 says this act of kindness will be righteousness for you before God; it shows that righteousness in the Bible includes lovingkindness.

^{NAU} **Jeremiah 9:24** but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD who exercises lovingkindness, justice and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things,” declares the LORD.

Jeremiah says that Yahweh God exercises lovingkindness, justice and righteousness, He delights in these things. This passage shows that lovingkindness, justice and righteousness are linked together, they are all related.

From these 4 passages: 2 Samuel 22:21, Genesis 18:19, Deuteronomy 24:10 – 13 and Jeremiah 9:24 we see that:

1. Yahweh God is the embodiment of righteousness; righteousness is His quality.
2. Righteousness includes sinlessness, justice and lovingkindness.

Yahweh God credited Abraham's faith as righteousness

It is difficult for us to attain any one of these qualities: sinlessness, justice, lovingkindness, but righteousness includes all these three qualities, therefore it is impossible for us human being to attain righteousness by our own effort, unless Yahweh God grants righteousness to us. Would He grant righteousness to us?

^{NIV} **Genesis 15:6 – 7** Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness. ⁷ He also said to him, "I am the LORD, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to take possession of it."

Yahweh God in His lovingkindness credited to Abraham as righteousness when Abraham believed in Him.

There is one very important thing we have to remember, when the Bible says Abraham believed Yahweh, it doesn't mean that he simply believed Yahweh is God; When Abraham believed Yahweh, he obeyed everything Yahweh told him to do, he obeyed Yahweh totally. Most people know the story of Abraham offering up his son Isaac to Yahweh God. But actually Abraham had been obedient to Yahweh's word far before this incident of offering up Isaac.

- In Genesis 15:6 – 7, the passage we just read, says Yahweh brought Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give him this land; this land refers to Canaan, Canaan is the land of Palestine and Israel today. According to the finding of the archaeologists, Ur was already quite advanced at Abraham's time, but Canaan was like a wilderness, it was nothing like Ur; but when Yahweh God called him, Abraham obeyed and went.
- In his old age, Yahweh granted him a son, Isaac. But when Yahweh asked him to offer up Isaac, his only son, he obeyed Yahweh; he put Isaac on the altar and was ready to kill him to offer

him up to Yahweh. It was only at the last minute before he killed Isaac that Yahweh told him to stop.

It is with this kind of faith that Yahweh God credited it to Abraham as righteousness, his faith was counted as his righteousness.

That was in the Old Testament time; but how about us in the New Testament time?

4. When we have faith in Christ, he became wisdom, righteousness, sanctification (holiness) and redemption to us

^{NAU} **1 Corinthians 1:30** But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption,

If you are in Christ Jesus, then Christ becomes to you wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption (sanctification simply means holiness, in the future if the Lord is willing, we will study holiness, but right now we just focus on righteousness); when you are in Christ Jesus, you will have all these qualities: wisdom, righteousness, holiness and redemption.

But how can you be in Christ Jesus?

^{NAU} **Philippians 3:9** 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,

The word “Him” refers to Christ Jesus; When you have faith in Christ Jesus, you are in Christ; Since Christ is righteous, when you are in him, you are also righteous. Yahweh God granted righteousness to you on the basis of your faith in Christ Jesus.

^{NAU} **Romans 3:22** even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction;

Apostle Paul speaks of the righteousness of God for all those who believe in Jesus Christ, there is no distinction. If you believe in Jesus Christ, Yahweh God would grant righteousness to you.

Now we sum up all the points we have just studied. Righteousness is the quality of Yahweh God, He is the embodiment of righteousness. Righteousness includes lovingkindness, justice and

truth. It is impossible for us human beings to attain all these qualities. In the Old Testament time, when Abraham had faith in Yahweh God, God granted righteousness to him based on his faith. In the New Testament time, Christ Jesus offers up himself to save us from sin, if you have faith in Christ Jesus, Yahweh God will also grant righteousness to you based on your faith.

When Abraham had faith in Yahweh, he obeyed Yahweh totally; In the same way when we have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, we have to obey the Lord totally just as Abraham obeyed everything Yahweh told him to do. When we have this kind of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, then our faith will be counted as our righteousness.

Do you have righteousness?

Brothers and sisters, do you have righteousness? This is very important, if you have righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, then you are living under the kingship of God. Conversely, if you don't have righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, then you are not living under the kingship of God. If you are not living under the kingship of God now, when the Lord Jesus comes back to establish the kingdom of God on earth, you will not be in the kingdom of God, you won't have eternal life.

Do you long for righteousness?

Everyone loves eternal life, everyone wants to have eternal life; but not everyone loves righteousness! Brothers, sisters and friends, do you love righteousness? Do you long for the righteousness of God? If you don't love righteousness, then you wouldn't seek righteousness!

Do you know that the prayer of a righteous person has great power?

^{ESV} **James 5:16 – 18** Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.¹⁷ Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. ¹⁸ Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit.

This passage says that the prayer of a righteous person has great power, when Elijah prayed that it might not rain, it didn't rain for three years and six months; then when Elijah prayed for the rain, the heaven gave rain! His prayer works!

^{ESV} **1 Peter 3:12** For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.”

This passage says Yahweh's ears are open to the prayer of the righteous, He listens to their prayers.

My testimony: When I preach the gospel, I like to tell people how God has changed my life, my heart and my character: Before I became a Christian, I didn't like to talk to people, I didn't care about people; but after I became a Christian, I love to share the gospel and my testimony with people. By nature I am not eloquent. A lady from China, she was not a Christian, she said that usually when I talked with people I couldn't express myself properly, I couldn't express clearly what I want to say; but she also noticed that when I preached the word of God, suddenly I was changed completely, I could talk much more clearly and with conviction. That lady saw this happened every time when I spoke the word of God, and because of that, she believed that God is real. But one day someone said to me, "Every time when I hear you say that you have been changed a lot by God, I feel that it is not true, I want to tell you that you did not change at all!" This statement was like a knife cutting right into my heart, it was a big blow to me, it hurt me so much that my whole being was shaken, I lost the conviction in my heart, I felt that I was self-deceiving and also deceiving other people; I almost wanted to quit serving the Lord. At the end it is Yahweh God our Father Himself comforted me; one day while I was doing some other things, I wasn't thinking about this matter, suddenly I received these words going directly into my heart, "You will not lose your reward! I will reward you!" I was very shocked, but at the same time I was overjoyed, My Father in heaven had given me this assurance directly; He Himself assured me that I have righteousness, I don't have to care about the things people say, whatever they say about me doesn't matter to me at all!

You need to have the conviction in your heart that you have righteousness. I don't mean that you need to have the same experience as mine, but you need to have the assurance in your heart that you have righteousness; You need to ask God to give you the assurance just as He has granted it to me.

Conclusion

Now let's sum up everything we have studied today. Yahweh is the embodiment of righteousness. Righteousness in the Bible includes sinlessness, justice, lovingkindness. It is impossible for us human beings to attain righteousness, but Yahweh will grant righteousness to you if you have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, just as in the Old Testament time Yahweh granted righteousness to Abraham when he had faith in Yahweh. Next week we will continue to study the quality of peace.