

Lesson Six – The Breastplate of Righteousness

Day One – Righteousness
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So you've decided to press on! You're determined to reach the goal! You are resolved to run the race and to make the journey to the land of your calling.

You should now confidently be saying,

Numbers 13:30

We should by all means go up and take possession of [the land], for we shall surely overcome it.

You're a Caleb, you're a Ruth, you're a Rebekah—right? Good! Let's go on!

It's okay if you feel inadequate or unworthy of your "heavenly calling." Honestly, what you *feel* is immaterial. Our emotions vacillate and change daily. That is not the point. The point is that GOD is more than adequate and He is more than worthy and it is by His blood and by His cleansing and by His power that you will go on and take possession of the land. You *can* overcome because He *has* overcome. He has said, "Take it!" You just need to make the choice to let Him take you there. Now, don't stand in His way or let that old man of flesh pull you in the other direction. The victory is yours!

Let's read again our passage from the Book of Ephesians—

Ephesians 6:10-17

¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might. ¹¹ Put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. ¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of this wickedness in the heavenly places. ¹³ Therefore, take up the full armor of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. ¹⁴ Stand firm therefore, having girded your

loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness,¹⁵ and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace;¹⁶ in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming missiles of the evil one.¹⁷ And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

My prayer is that by now you understand the spiritual struggle and why it is happening. I pray that you are now somewhat aware of the prevalent deception regarding God's truth of the coming kingdom and Satan's systematic and targeted attacks concerning your involvement in it. It is, as the verse states, a struggle against heavenly forces; forces of darkness that do not want Christians to understand that they have the ability to take their positions from them. Satan and his angels have done everything in their power to prevent as many saints as possible from realizing their heavenly inheritance. And, unfortunately, his tactics have worked for the most part. But you can rejoice because God's Spirit is opening up the truth to you, and I pray that you are determined to take hold of it, no matter what! You have put on the belt of truth and are now ready for the breastplate of righteousness.

Let's personalize the following verse, words spoken by Jesus Himself—

Matthew 13:11, 16-17

¹¹ [Jesus speaking] **“To you [me] it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of the heavens, but to them it has not been granted.¹⁶ But blessed are your [my] eyes, because they see; and your [my] ears, because they hear.¹⁷ For truly I [He] say[s] to you [me], that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you [I] see, and did not see it; and to hear what you [I] hear, and did not hear it.”**

AMEN!

Day One – Righteousness

Begin your study time in prayer. This week's lesson will be a bit longer than the others, so plan to spend some extra time over the next few days on God's Word. Part of the process of our study is to *unlearn* some things that may have been misunderstood in the past, so be patient and pray for continued understanding.

Let's explore the word *righteousness*. Righteousness is one of those biblical words that seem to have a bit of confusion surrounding it. It is used almost 300 times in the Bible; it's used more times than the word 'salvation' and more times than the word 'love.' Isn't that interesting?

The Greek word for "righteousness" is *dikaiosis* (1343), which literally means "to conform to what is right, or that which is just." The root word *dike* means a "manner or tendency." The noun *dike* carries with it the thought of judgment; it expresses the idea of an expected behavior or conformity, according to an imposed standard, with a prescribed punishment for nonconformity. (You may need to read that last sentence a few times to make sure you understand it!)

The noun *dike* is only used four times in the New Testament. It is also translated "judgment," "vengeance" (twice), and "punishment" (*cf.* Acts 25:15; Acts 28:4; Jude 1:7; and II Thess. 1:9).

The Hebrew word for "righteousness" is *tsedhaqah* (06666), which is actually a legal term that describes relationships, whereas the parties involved must be faithful to the expectations of one another. This word implies rightness, justice, and fairness.

There's another word in Scripture that is used in a similar manner as righteousness, and that word is "justification." The Greek word is *dikaiosis* (1347), which means *the act* that establishes a right or just person as such. It is the *act of*, and not the character of, justice.

The Greek word for the verb “justify” is *dikaioo* (1344), which means to either bring out the fact that a person is righteous or, if he is not righteous, to make him so. This word does not necessarily refer to *how* he is made just. It has the same root word *dike*, as above.

The noun “justification” is not found in the Old Testament, but the verb “justify” is. The Hebrew word is *tsadheq*, which means to make right or just. In the Septuagint the Greek word *dikaioo* (1344) is used, as above.

We can thus see that the words “righteousness” and “justification” are similar and connected, but they are not interchangeable. The words “just” and “righteous” however, *are* interchangeable. It’s okay if this still seems a bit hazy; in time, you’ll be able to clearly see how Scripture uses these words.

So now let’s look at the words from God’s perspective, which really is the only perspective that matters. His justice is perfect (Ps. 19:7) and His way is absolutely righteous and absolute perfection (Ps. 18:30). Anything short of perfection God does not accept; He only accepts that which is holy, for He is holy. Therefore, man must conform to God’s idea of *right*. If man does not, God will not accept him. That is where the judgment comes in: acceptance and denial by God, based on His standards. Does that make sense?

We also know that man can IN NO WAY do *anything* solely by his own hand or on his own terms that would earn him the righteousness and justification needed in God’s sights. God, and only God, is capable of producing holiness and perfect righteousness. So, where does that leave us? Mankind needs justification and righteousness; there is no other way to get to God. And we can’t do it on our own. Anything short of God’s perfect righteousness would place man in judgment by God and man would suffer loss.

So our questions may be: Is justification a one-time deal? Is righteousness a once-and-for-all deal? If so, then what happens to the Christians’ continual sin, which we all do? Are we always seen as righteous before God if we are saved? If so, then does that mean that all the “unrighteous” ones mentioned in Scripture must be the unsaved? Since Christ is righteous and the Christian is part of His body, how can they be righteous and unrighteous at the same time? I hope you ask yourself these types of questions, because God wants us to KNOW the answers! Our running this race according to the rules depends on us knowing the answers!

Where does man’s righteousness begin? As stated before, it must begin with God.

Man, in his unredeemed state, is totally and completely separated from God. He is naked, without any covering whatsoever. Adam was created in God’s likeness, but fell due to sin. Since that time *all* people that have been born and that will be born are born in *Adam’s* likeness (Gen. 5:3), save One—the One born to a virgin.

Unredeemed man today needs a covering in order to stand in the presence of God. And, as happened with Adam and Eve, God is the only One who can make the covering and *cover* man.

Genesis 3:21

And the Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them.

Man can do *nothing* in this process, except of course *let* God do the work. This is man’s *initial* justification.

Do you remember the events surrounding the first Passover? Refresh your memory by reading Exodus 12, if necessary. And now we see—

I Corinthians 5:7b

For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed.

Christ is our Passover Lamb. His blood has been shed and we appropriate it by believing in Him as the Sacrifice.

Acts 16:30-31

³⁰ ...and after he [the jailer] brought them out, he said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” ³¹ And they said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved, you and your household.”

I Corinthians 15:3-4

³ For I [Paul] delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures...

In the same way the nation of Israel was saved out of bondage in Egypt by the Passover lambs, we are saved out of bondage to sin by the blood of THE Passover Lamb. Once the blood is appropriated, God passes over us as He sees the blood, signifying that a death has taken place. And, in judgment, a death *has* taken place. Our first birth, our natural birth, is passed over. God accepts Jesus’ death in substitution for our death. Our past sins up to this point—all of them—are forgotten. *They are remembered no more!* We become a new creature to God—

II Corinthians 5:17-18

¹⁷ Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.

And—

Ephesians 2:4-5,8-9

⁴ But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)...

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; ⁹ not as a result of works, that no one should boast.

Is there anything we can *do* to gain this salvation, other than *believe*?

This free gift of salvation affects our *spirit*, which is just *one part* of our three-part being. The redemption of our soul and our body is dealt with subsequent to this.

It is imperative that we understand how Scripture presents the differences between our *initial* justification (a one-time deal, a salvation we presently possess) based on *Christ’s* righteousness, and our *future* salvation that depends on our being justified by our present acts of faithful obedience to God’s Word (this is our on-going works of righteousness throughout our present life). Today we’ll deal with the former; we’ll study the latter later this week.

Let’s look at a portion of Scripture from Paul, from the letter he wrote to the Church in Rome:

Romans 5:8-9

⁸ But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹ Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.

According to v. 9, by what have we been justified?

From what you've learned so far, is this justification in relation to eternity, or the kingdom age?

What does this justification demonstrate toward us (v. 8)?

More in the same chapter—

Romans 5:14-16, 18

¹⁴ Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come. ¹⁵ But the free gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of the one the many died, much more did the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many. ¹⁶ And the gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned; for on the one hand the judgment arose from one transgression resulting in condemnation but on the other hand the free gift arose from many transgressions resulting in justification. ¹⁸ So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men.

Who is the “one who sinned” in v. 16?

What was his sin?

What is the “judgment” that “arose from one transgression” that resulted “in condemnation”? (cf. Gen. 2:17; 3:16-19)

Then, *on the other hand* we have the free gift. What did it arise from (v. 16)?

What did the free gift result in (v. 16)?

According to v. 18, through *one act* of righteousness, justification of life came to all men (all men who believe). This is the free gift. Do you see how *man's* works can't enter the picture at all in relation to the free gift? Our spiritual birth is an act of the Spirit, completely separate from man's works. We can't *earn* it! And since we can't earn it and we do nothing to get it, WE CAN DO NOTHING TO LOSE IT!

Let's settle this issue for ourselves, for the last time. WE CANNOT LOSE THE FREE GIFT. WE CANNOT GIVE IT BACK. WE CANNOT *UNSAVE* OURSELVES IN RELATION TO LIFE FOR ETERNITY. Judgment, in relation to eternal security, has taken place the moment that one puts faith in the shed blood of God's Perfect Provision. *It is impossible to undo that which God has done.*

Thus, *justification by faith* is based entirely upon Christ's righteous, justifying act — His finished work at Calvary. And it is this justification, us being made righteous through Christ through faith, that places us in the family of God and gives us life for eternity.

When we are spiritually born, *by grace through* faith, God places on us *Christ's* righteousness. This then puts us in the position to run in the race and to be led by the Spirit to the land of our calling.

Now let me ask you a question. Do you think that it would be *this* righteousness that the breastplate is referring to? Remember that the armor is for the maturing Christian already in possession of the Word of God, who has determined to run the race set before them. What do you think?

If this is not the righteousness that is being referred to in the breastplate of righteousness, then *what* righteousness is Paul referencing? Well, if we are to put on the breastplate of righteousness, then it would definitely have something to do with what we do.

Let's stop right here for the day. Spend some time thinking on the Scriptures we studied, and ask God to solidify them for you.

See you tomorrow.

Day Two —Born out of Water and Spirit

Pray first!

Yesterday we covered the idea of initial justification. Justification is the act of *being made righteous*, righteous in the sense of being clothed with God's standard. We also know this to be an act of being *born again*, and this happens by faith/belief in God's Provision of a Sacrificial Death—Jesus the Christ, God Himself. Through faith, we receive the free gift and we are saved by God's grace, based on Christ's one righteous act. God sees us as "righteous" through Christ's righteousness.

Now, once this initial justification has occurred, we are able to make choices on how we live in this life. We can choose to live by the Spirit, or we can choose to live by the flesh. We have *the freedom* to choose.

Now what?

John 3: 5

⁵ Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit [Lit., born out of water and Spirit], he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

Jesus says that one must be born *out of water* and born *out of Spirit* in order to enter the kingdom of God. We can understand "born out of water" as referencing water baptism. This is best seen through the type of the first generation of Israel. We've already looked at Israel's redemption the night of the first Passover, now let's study about their passage through the Red Sea.

Please read Exodus chapters 14 and 15 from your Bible now.

Israel was saved from the bonds of slavery in Egypt through the death of a substitutionary first-born lamb. Then God led the entire nation, by Moses, to the Red Sea, where He parted the water to allow them all to pass through. All safely made it through. The Egyptians who followed them, however, did not make it

safely through and all were swallowed up by the waters, “not even one of them remained” (Ex. 14:28). Thus, the water became a place of burial. The nation of Israel found themselves on the other side, with the Spirit of God leading them to their Promised Land.

I Corinthians 10:1-2

¹ For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; ² and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea;

What was the result of the fathers passing through the sea?

The nation of Israel’s baptism was *subsequent* to their redemption out of bondage; Israel’s redemption out of bondage was in *no way* dependent upon their baptism. Can you see that?

Let’s see how baptism is presented in the New Testament—

Luke 3:3

And he [John the Baptist] came into all the district around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins;

Remember, the people of the nation of Israel, to whom Christ came preaching the kingdom of heaven, were a *saved* people. The message that Jesus and John brought was one that could only be understood by a people with the capacity for spiritual understanding, for Jesus spoke spiritual words. Therefore, the water baptism that John preached and practiced was not for spiritual birth; rather, it was for “repentance for the forgiveness of sins.” One important thing to note is that repentance (literally “changing one’s mind”) in the spiritual sense can only be done by a saved person because it involves a *choice* of direction. A spiritually *dead* person is unable to make any spiritual choice except initial saving faith.

Baptism, initially, was only for Israel—

Acts 13:24

...after John had proclaimed before His coming a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel.

John even told them what needed to be done in accordance with being baptized—

Luke 3:8-9

⁸ “Therefore bring forth fruits in keeping with repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham for our father,’ for I say to you that God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. ⁹ And also the axe is already laid at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.”

What was the nation of Israel told to “bring forth”?

Why?

According to v. 9, what happens to the tree that does not bear fruit?

As we know, Israel, as a whole, rejected the message, first by killing John the Baptist, then by killing the King Himself. Remember what Jesus said about their rejection of His message—

Matthew 21:43

“Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you, and be given to a nation producing the fruit of it.”

Who will the kingdom of God be given to?

So we see that producing fruit is directly related to baptism, and directly related to inheriting the kingdom.

Paul writes this about baptism—

Romans 6:4

Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

Romans 7:4

Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, that you might be joined to Another, to Him who was raised from the dead that we might bear fruit to God.

What does baptism represent? (Rom. 6:4)

In order to be buried, one must be dead. Who died in our stead?

And He died in order that we too, as Christ, might what?

Walking implies an action of some sort, doesn't it? How are we to walk? Paul writes—

Romans 6:11-13

¹¹ Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. ¹² Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey its lusts. ¹³ and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.

According to v. 11, what are we to consider ourselves?

And because of this, what are we *not* to do (v. 13)?

What does v. 13 say we *need* to do?

Do you see the choice? We can let sin reign in our bodies and obey its lusts, essentially making our body an instrument of unrighteousness, or we can consider ourselves *dead* to sin (symbolically keep our old man of flesh in the water, the place of burial) and be alive in Christ, essentially making our body an instrument of righteousness. Isn't that what the Scriptures say?

Our old man (the man of flesh associated with our first, and natural, birth) must stay dead. But have you noticed that the old man of flesh doesn't stay down for too long? He keeps popping back up to lead in the way of flesh, doesn't he? But what is at stake if we do not reckon him dead—over and over and over again—and we let sin reign? Let's see what Jesus said about it—

John 12:24-26

²⁴ “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains by itself alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. ²⁵ He who loves his life [soul] loses it; and he who hates his life [soul] in this world shall keep it to life eternal [age-lasting]. ²⁶ If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there shall My servant also be; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him.

Rewrite vv. 24 and 25, applying what you've learned about baptism.

We've already studied that the flesh and the Spirit cannot both be served at the same time. If we let that old man (the flesh) lead us, we commit *unrighteous* acts, which is unfruitful. We need to let the Spirit lead us in newness of life, as seen in life beyond baptism, which produces fruit—*righteous acts*.

Let's continue looking at the first generation of Israel. After they went through the place of burial, the Red Sea, they came out on the other side to be led to the land of their calling, the Promised Land.

Exodus 13:21-22

²¹ And the Lord was going before them in a pillar of cloud by day to lead them on the way, and in a pillar of fire by night to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night. ²² he did not take away the pillar of cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people.

Israel was being led in a *specific* direction for a *specific* purpose. Who led the nation of Israel to the land?

And for us, today—

John 16:13

“But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come.

Who leads the Christian?

Read these few verses printed below and underline any mention of the Spirit.

Ephesians 5:17-18

¹⁷ So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. ¹⁸ And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit.

1 Thessalonians 5:19

...and do not quench the Spirit.

1 Corinthians 3:16

Do you not know that you are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?

Galatians 5:25

If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.

Romans 8:13-14

¹³ for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live. ¹⁴ For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God.

Write down what we are being told in regards to the Spirit.

A burial and resurrection must take place in the life of a Christian; that is why God commands His children to be baptized. The act of baptism is symbolic. Our old man must stay in the place of death and the new man must walk in newness of life; we must follow the Spirit and allow Him to fill us and lead us throughout our journey. There is no other way to get to the land of our calling.

Let's stop there for today. We've covered much in the past two days. See you tomorrow!

Day Three – Right Living

Now that you know about initial justification, based on the work of Another, let's move on to justification by work—*our* works. And just to be clear, the former must come first. Only after initial justification has occurred can a person be in a position to be justified by works.

What do you think, does it matter what we do and how? Is there maybe a list of good deeds we can follow? If we just do everything on it, that's it, we're in the kingdom?! Or maybe just learn enough and know enough and based on our amazing ability to recall and connect Scripture the Lord will give us a place on His throne?

Think again.

Yes, we have to *do* something. And that something *MUST be done in faith*. Period. We must *believe* what God has said (which means *knowing* what God has said) and then DO IT. There is no other way. We've discussed this before—

Hebrews 11:6

And without faith (4102) it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe (4100) that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.

Is there any other way to please God, other than through faith/belief?

According to this verse, what two things must a person believe when he comes to God?

There is a passage from Habakkuk that is quoted three times in the New Testament—

Habakkuk 2:4

Behold, as for the proud one, his soul is not right within him; but the righteous will live by his faith.

We already looked at one instance in Galatians where this verse is quoted; let's now look at the other two—

Hebrews 10:38

But My righteous one shall live by faith; and if he shrinks back, My soul has no pleasure in him.

Romans 1:17

For in it [the gospel Paul preached] the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “But the righteous man shall live by faith.”

Who is the “righteous” one referring to?

How will the righteous one live?

The Apostle John talks about practicing righteousness versus practicing sin—

I John 3:4-7

⁴ Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness. ⁵ And you know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin. ⁶ No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him. ⁷ Little children, let no one deceive you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous;

What is sin (v. 4)?

Is there sin in Christ?

If you are abiding in Christ, can you sin (v. 6)?

What is the one who practices righteousness called (v. 7)?

So we can see a direct connection between *living* by faith and *practicing* righteousness. They are the same thought.

Now think about what John wrote in his epistle. All Christians sin (I John 1:8). Does that mean that when a Christian sins, he isn't "abiding in Christ"? What do the Scriptures say? *If a Christian is sinning, he is not abiding in Christ* (I John 3:6). If a Christian is practicing righteousness (which means not sinning) he is considered righteous, just as Jesus is righteous. Isn't that what it says?

This is obviously speaking of things that occur *after* initial justification!

As we know, all Christians sin—

I John 1:8, 10

⁸ If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

¹⁰ If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.

And God has given us a provision for our sin—

I John 1:9

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

What does this verse call sin?

What are Christians to do about it?

John, the author of three epistles and the Gospel of John, tells us what Jesus said about "abiding in Him"—

John 15:1-11

¹ "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. ² Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it, that it may bear more fruit. ³ You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. ⁴ Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in Me. ⁵ I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing. ⁶ If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch, and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. ⁷ If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you. ⁸ By this is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be ["you shall be"] My disciples. ⁹ Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. ¹⁰ If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love. ¹¹ These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.

Who does v. 4 tell us to abide in?

What does v. 9 tell us to abide in?

How are we to do that (v. 10)?

If we abide in Him, what will we produce (v. 5)?

If we do not abide in Him, can we produce fruit?

What happens if we don't abide in Him (v. 6)?

Whom does the bearing of fruit glorify (v. 8)?

What does the bearing of fruit make us (v. 8)?

Why are we to do all of these things (v. 11)?

Do you remember what Jesus' joy was? (Read Heb. 12:2 if needed)

Read John 15:4-5 again. Not only must we abide in Christ, He must also abide *in us*. Read the following verses and keep this in mind (we just studied some of these verses yesterday)—

Ephesians 5:17-18

¹⁷ So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. ¹⁸ And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit.

Colossians 3:16a

Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you...

I Corinthians 3:16

Do you not know that you are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?

Galatians 5:25

If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.

Romans 8:13-14

¹³ for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live. ¹⁴ For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God.

What is the Word of God telling us here? Write it out.

Abiding in Jesus means keeping His commandments. Jesus abiding in us means that we are following Christ's words—the Word of God, the Spirit of God. We abide in Christ by following the Spirit, and not the flesh.

And obviously, keeping His commandments means *doing* something. It's about practicing righteousness; it's about faithful obedience; it's about works! That is our fruit.

Yes, **works**! The word *works* almost seems like a bad word nowadays, doesn't it? But the Scriptures talk about works, so we must talk about works. (In case you haven't noticed, that's what we've already been talking about, we just haven't used the word *works* very much.)

James says it well in his epistle, an epistle that talks about “the salvation of the soul” (James 1:21)—

James 2:14-26

¹⁴ What use is it [Lit., what does it profit], my brethren, if a man says he has faith, but he has works? Can that faith save him? ¹⁵ If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, ¹⁶ and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and be filled,” and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that [Lit., what does it profit]? ¹⁷ Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself. ¹⁸ But someone may well say, “You have faith, and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works.” ¹⁹ You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. ²⁰ But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless [Lit. dead]? ²¹ Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? ²² You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected; ²³ and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, “And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness,” and he was called the friend of God. ²⁴ You see that a man is justified by works, and not by faith alone. ²⁵ And in the same way was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works, when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? ²⁶ For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.

We've already studied that faith by itself is considered righteousness (*cf.* Rom. 4; Gal. 3), but what James is talking about here is the faith that we need to possess in order to *save our souls*. That faith must be accompanied by something. What is it?

James goes on to call “foolish” the person who doesn't see that works needs to accompany faith (again with respect to the salvation of our soul [1:21], not in respect to our spiritual birth). What does James say about “faith without works” (vv. 17, 20, and 26)?

Can a person's *soul* be saved by faith alone? No. That faith is considered dead. To find out what is meant by "dead," let's look at the comparison James uses in vv. 15-17. Having faith without works is like telling someone to be warm and filled when they are cold and hungry. *It is of no use to them—it is of no profit.* In this same way, faith is of *no profit* without works.

Any thoughts?

We will pick right up from here tomorrow and take a closer look at *how* and *why* faith (the faith necessary to save the soul) is useless without works. Please remember that we are dealing with issues that have no impact whatsoever on the righteousness that you presently possess—the free gift of eternal life. The breastplate of righteousness is one part of our defensive armor, armor that each Christian needs in order to stand firm against the enemy. It is our protection and it is the armor *of God*. He provides it. We just need to use it.

Pray for continued understanding of these things.

See you tomorrow.

Day Four – Righteous Acts

Pray before you begin today.

Yesterday we studied about our faith being useless if it isn't accompanied by works, specifically referencing the salvation of our soul *only*. Our acts of righteousness, our works, are done by faithful obedience to God's Word as we walk in the Spirit. In essence, it is the Spirit that we allow to work in us that produces the acts of righteousness which brings our faith to its goal. We need to believe this to be so, and act accordingly.

The good news is that we don't have to run around busily trying to work for the Lord. He has already taken care of that for us—

Ephesians 2:8-10

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; ⁹ not as a result of works, that no one should boast. ¹⁰ For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

According to v. 10, what are we?

What have we been created for (v. 10)?

Who prepared our good works?

When?

What are we supposed to do with them?

There's a beautiful picture in the book of Ruth about walking in the good works that God has prepared beforehand. See if you can make the connection—

Ruth 2:8, 11-12, 15-17

⁸ Then Boaz said to Ruth, "Listen carefully, my daughter. Do not go to glean in another field; furthermore, do not go on from this one, but stay here with my maids.

¹¹ And Boaz answered and said to her, "All that you have done for your mother-in-law after the death of your husband has been fully reported to me, and how you left your father and your mother and the land of your birth, and came to a people that you did not previously know. ¹² May the Lord reward your work, and your wages be full from the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to seek refuge."

¹⁵ When she rose to glean, Boaz commanded his servants, saying, "Let her glean even among the sheaves, and do not insult her. ¹⁶ And also you shall purposely pull out for her some grain from the bundles and leave it that she may glean, and do not rebuke her." ¹⁷ So she gleaned in the field until evening. Then she beat out what she had gleaned, and it was about an ephah of barley.

Write out what this passage tells us about our works.

Do you recall what happens to Ruth at the end of her journey? *She got married.*

Do you recall what happens to Rebekah at the end of her journey? *She got married.*

And what is at the end of our journey if we complete it successfully? *We become part of the bride of Christ.*

Read these verses from the Book of James again—

James 2:21-22

²¹ Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? ²² You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected;

What happened to Abraham's faith because of his work of offering up his son?

That word "perfected" is the Greek word *teleioo* (5048). It means "to complete" or "to finish." It (in various forms) is found in many of the verses we've been studying throughout this Study:

James 1:2-4

² Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, ³ knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. ⁴ And let endurance have its perfect (teleios) result, that you may perfect (teleios) and complete, lacking in nothing.

Hebrews 2:10

For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect (teleioo) the author of their salvation through sufferings.

Hebrews 6:1

Therefore, leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press onto maturity (teleiotes), not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God...

Hebrews 12:2

...fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter (teleiotes) of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Ephesians 4:13

...until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature (teleios) man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.

There are many Scriptures that could have been used here, but I wanted to use the verses that we've already studied in past lessons in order to help you tie these thoughts together. Now there's one more verse to look at—

I Peter 1:9

...receiving the end of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

Using your Appendix, look up the definition for the word, "end."

end (5056) -

What does Peter say is the end of our faith?

Now write out what this verse means.

This next verse will tie this breastplate of righteousness together—

Revelation 19:7-9

⁷ Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready. ⁸ And it was given to her to clothe herself in

fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.⁹ And he said to me, “Write, ‘Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.’” And he said to me, “These are the true words of God.”

What is our wedding garment made of?

Why do we need a wedding garment?

What will happen to the one who shows up without a wedding garment? Jesus Himself told us—

Matthew 22:1-14

¹ And Jesus answered and spoke to them again in parables, saying, ² “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king, who gave a wedding feast for his son. ³ And he sent out his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding feast, and they were unwilling to come. ⁴ Again he sent out other slaves saying, ‘Tell those who have been invited, “Behold, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and my fattened livestock are all butchered and everything is ready; come to the wedding feast.”’ ⁵ But they paid no attention and went their way, one to his own farm, another to this business, ⁶ and the rest seized his slaves and mistreated them and killed them. ⁷ But the king was enraged and sent his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and set their city on fire. ⁸ Then he said to his slaves, ‘The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. ⁹ Go therefore to the main highways, and as many as you find there, invite to the wedding feast.’ ¹⁰ And those slaves went out into the streets, and gathered together all they found, both evil and good; and the wedding hall was filled with dinner guests. ¹¹ But when the king came in to look over the dinner guests, he saw there a man not dressed in wedding clothes, ¹² and he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you come in here without wedding clothes?’ And he was speechless. ¹³ Then the king said to the servants, ‘Bind him hand and foot, and cast him into the outer darkness; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ ¹⁴ For many are called, but few are chosen.”

This parable is connected to the other parables we studied in Lesson Two. The topic is the same—the offer of the kingdom of the heavens.

In this parable, whom does the king represent?

Whom does the son represent?

Whom do those who had been invited to the wedding feast in v.3 represent?

Did they come?

Whom did the king invite instead?

Whom do the dinner guests represent?

Whom does the man *without* wedding clothes represent?

What are the wedding clothes (Rev. 19:7-9)?

What happens to the man without a wedding garment?

From what you have learned so far, what does v. 14 mean?

How important is it *for you* to be making your wedding garment right now?

Let's end today with an encouraging passage from Paul. Make this personal as you read it—

I Timothy 6:11-12a

¹¹ But flee from these things, you man of God; and *pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness.* ¹² Fight the good fight of faith...

Setting our minds on these things *pleases* God! We should want what He wants. We should see things the way that He sees things. We have everything we need in order to do so. How gracious is He?!

See you tomorrow.

Day Five – Judgment and Encouragement

Pray. Pray. Pray!

Judgment for a Christian's eternal security is already passed, and because of that, each Christian currently possesses a salvation—a new birth of their spirit that gives them everlasting life.

However, there is yet a future judgment for Christians. This future judgment pertains to the salvation of the soul and is based entirely on works—*our* works. These works must be done in faithful obedience to what God has said. *Faith* concerning future things, and *obedient works* emanating out of *that faith* are what get counted to us as righteousness, over and over and over again. These righteous acts make up our wedding garment.

Have you noticed how the word *works* makes many Christians cringe? Many think that it sounds heretical to say that a Christian is saved by his/her works. Many think it heretical to hear that individual judgment in the last day will be based on works. Why do you think that is?

The enemy has done a thorough job of perverting all thoughts surrounding works, presumably because he knows that it is our *faithful works* that are judged at the judgment seat of Christ and it is our *faithful works* that determine whether we rule and reign with Christ—a position that our enemy currently holds and is not willing to let go of. Do not be deceived! Understand what *God* has to say about works, not what *man* has to say about works.

Let's see how Jesus deals with individual judgment—

The judgment seat of Christ takes place in the heavens at the end of this age. All Christians will appear before Jesus. He will judge each one of us in relation to entering or *not* entering into His kingdom.

II Corinthians 5:10

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

What will each Christian be recompensed for at the judgment seat of Christ?

The Book of Revelation gives us much information concerning that future day. The seven Churches pictured in Revelation represent the complete Church in His presence on that day. *That means that these words are of utmost importance to us today; they serve as warnings to us.*

Revelation 2:1-5

¹ To the angel of the church of Ephesus write: The One who holds the seven stars in His right hand, the One who walks among the seven golden lampstands, says this: ² I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance, and that you cannot endure evil men, and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not and you found them to be false; ³ and you have perseverance and have endured for My name's sake, and have not grown weary. ⁴ But I have this against you, that you have left your first love. ⁵ Remember therefore from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you, and will remove your lampstand out of its place—unless you repent.

How does v. 2 begin?

What does Jesus commend the Church of Ephesus for?

What does He have against them?

What does He tell them to do about it (v. 5)?

What will Jesus do to them if they don't?

To the second Church mentioned, Jesus says this—

Revelation 2:8-10

⁸ And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: The first and the last, who was dead, and has come to life, says this: ⁹ I know your works, and tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich), and the blasphemy by those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. ¹⁰ Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.

How does v. 9 begin?

What does Jesus commend the Church in Smyrna for?

Does He have anything against them?

What does He tell them to do??

Explicitly, what do they receive if they do it?

Implicitly, what *don't* they get if they *don't* do it?

To the third, fourth, and fifth Churches in His presence on that day, Jesus says much of the same things. He knows their deeds and He commends them for some, and chastises them for others. With each description, He gives them a direct commandment to “Repent.” Read Revelation 2:12-3:4 for the details.

Now we’ll go on to the sixth Church—

Revelation 3:7-11

⁷ And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: He who is holy, who is true, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, who shuts and no one opens, says this: ⁸ I know your deeds. Behold, I have put before you an open door which no one can shut, because you have a little power, and have kept My word, and have not denied My name. ⁹ Behold, I will cause those of the synagogue of Satan, who say that they are Jews, and are not, but lie—behold, I will make them to come and bow down at your feet, and to know that I have loved you. ¹⁰ Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell upon the earth. ¹¹ I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, in order that no one take your crown.

How does v. 8 begin?

What does Jesus commend this Church on?

Does He have anything against them?

What does He tell them to do?

Why?

The seventh, and final Church in His presence on that judgment day—

Revelation 3:14-20

¹⁴ And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God, says this: ¹⁵ I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I would that you were cold or hot. ¹⁶ So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth. ¹⁷ Because you say, “I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing,” and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked. ¹⁸ I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire, that you may become rich, and white garments, that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes, that you may see. ¹⁹ Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; be zealous therefore, and repent. ²⁰ Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will dine with him, and he with Me.

How does v. 15 begin?

Does Jesus commend the Church in Laodicea for anything?

What does Jesus call them in v. 16?

What will He do to them (v. 16)?

What does Jesus say that they say?

What don't they know?

What does He advise them to do?

What does it mean that the Laodicean Church is naked? What should they use to clothe themselves? What does Revelation 19:8 say that that is?

Write down any thoughts you may have after reading this, and how you feel that God is speaking to you personally.

Encouragement

Would you like to be encouraged? Let's list what Jesus says to the Churches regarding changing their behavior. God saw fit to record these things so that we can read them and learn from them. We have opportunity *right now* to change. In that coming day, as we each stand before our Lord and Judge, we will *not* have an opportunity. It will be too late then!

(Thank you Lord for preserving these words!)

I'll summarize them, in order—

Remember from where you've fallen.
Repent.
Do the deeds you did at first.
Repent.
Overcome.
Be faithful until death.
Overcome.
Repent.
Overcome.
What you have, hold fast until He comes.
Overcome.
Wake up.
Strengthen the things that remain, which were about to die.
Remember what you have received and heard, and keep it.
Repent.
Overcome.
Hold fast what you have.
Overcome.
Keep His deeds until the end.
Buy from Him gold refined by fire.
Buy from Him white garments to clothe yourself (*righteous acts*).
Buy from Him eye salve to see.
Be zealous.
Repent.
Open the door that He's knocking on.

Overcome.

Do any of these apply to you? What should you do about it?

Now we'll read *the promises* He makes to those who do these things—

I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God.
You will not be hurt by the second death.
I will give some of the hidden manna.
I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone.
I will give him the morning star.
I will give him authority over the nations.
You will rule them with a rod of iron.
You will be clothed in white raiment.
I will not erase your name from the book of life.
I will confess your name before My Father and before His angels.
I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God.
You will not leave the temple of My God.
I will write upon him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, and My new name.
I will grant to you to sit down with Me on My throne.

Are you encouraged?!

See you next week!