

Jehovah Tsidkenu – The Lord our Righteousness - (Part 11)

We have looked at God's Holiness and the benefits and consequences of this attribute of God, to man. We have also seen that God calls us to be holy as He is Holy. In its broadest meaning, holiness means to be set apart, in this case *for* God. Israel were called to be a Holy Nation (see **Deut 7:6**), priests at the temple were 'set apart', (**1Chron 23:13**), and we, His followers, are called to be holy. (**Eph 1:4**, **1Cor 1:2**, **Col 3:12**) Peter writes:

“But just as He (Jesus) who calls you is Holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: “Be holy, because I am Holy.”
(**1Pet 1:15, 16**)

Peter, paraphrasing from God's words to the Israelites in Leviticus, is telling the New Testament church that the call to *be* holy is the same as it was for the Jew. However, for the Christian, there are two elements to this new-found holiness. First (but not foremost) there is a call to *do* something about our holiness. Paul, writing to the Colossians, talks about the Christians need to 'put to death' the acts of sin. He goes on to write:

*“Therefore as God's chosen people, **holy** and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience...forgive whatever...you may have against one another.”*
(**Col 3:12, 13**)

Clearly, from these two foundational men, we are called to live a higher life than that of those around us. God wants us to live righteous lives, shunning sin and embracing holiness. We are to clothe *ourselves* in holy-like living. This is our responsibility – and the benefit for us is protection and blessing – we in a real way, choose life! This also has a greater impact for God, as His people are visibly different to the world around them – they will appear to be 'set apart'. Of course, our efforts do not gain us salvation or make us holy, that was the work of a Holy and Righteous God, but the benefits of obedience are manifested in holy living.

This brings me to this week's name for God, Jehovah Tsidkenu, and the second, more important of this holiness, “The Lord our Righteousness”. Tsidek means 'balanced, as on scales'. Full weight, justice, righteous, declared innocent! Christ, the righteousness of God revealed, (see **Rom 1:17**) *is* our righteousness. Note in the above Scripture, Paul declares to the church in Colossus to already *be* chosen and holy! The clothing of ourselves in righteous attitudes is the proper human response to the holiness God has already attributed to those that accept and believe in Christ's work on the cross. We are declared 'holy' through Christ, God, our righteousness! Paul writes to Timothy:

“(God) has saved us and called us to a holy life – not because of anything we have done but because of His own purpose and grace.”
(**2Tim 1:9**)

Our righteousness (and therefore our ability to come before a Holy God), has nothing to do with our righteous acts. It is all through the righteous act of Christ on the cross. It is this righteousness attributed to us by God through faith in Christ's sacrifice that makes us holy in His sight, as He is Holy. A Holy God **declares us righteous**, that is **Justified**. **Just-as-if-I'd** never sinned – holy! It is the basis for Paul's words in Ephesians;

“For it is by grace that you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is a gift of God – not by works, so that any man can boast.”
(**Eph 2:8, 9**)

It is God our righteousness – Tsidkenu – who makes us holy. Yes this new state should spur us on to live better lives for Him, as ambassadors representing Him faithfully to the world, but our right standing before Him comes from His righteousness and Holiness, not our own. Tsidkenu means balanced, as in scales.

To illustrate, I picture myself sad, alone and wallowing in my own sin on one side of the scales, with no way of being able to bring them back into balance. I can try to tip the sin that weighs me down out, but as fast as I scoop it out, more pours in. I know in my heart, that should the scales not be balanced when I am asked to give an account of my life, then a death sentence will be proclaimed upon me. Suddenly Jesus calls out to me. I look up, His arms open wide. He gives to me an invitation, saying He will pay for the debt that has the scales so out of kilter. As I trust in Him, His blood pours out into the other side of the scale. The scales balance again. He takes my hand, and I walk away from the scales, they are balanced, my debt paid in full by His blood and I will never be judged on those scales again. He places on my shoulders a new, white robe, His robe, His Righteousness! *I am* holy.

The writer of Hebrews says:

“...we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.”
(**Heb 10:10**)

To the Corinthian church, Paul writes:

“It is because of Him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become ...our Righteousness, Holiness and Redemption.”
(**1Cor 1:30**)

Study 11 – questions

Jeremiah was the first to use the term Tsidkenu in the Old Testament, both times in reference to Jesus as the Branch of David, the coming Messiah. He declares his name as ‘the Lord our Righteousness. This occurs in both **Jer 23:5 & 6**, as well as **33:16**.

So Jesus Christ *is* Our Righteousness. His righteous act, and our acceptance of it, makes us holy. Sure, as we have seen we are called to live holy lives, avoiding lusts of the flesh, anger and sin, but living holy is the right response to all that Jesus has done, and should come from a heart of gratitude, not in an attempt to gain access to God through our own righteousness. We simply won’t make the grade. But we *are* holy through Christ and now we should live holy lives. It is the right response of the redeemed to the Redeemer, the saved to the Saviour, those made holy to Holiness! Paul writes in Romans:

*“...in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as Living Sacrifices
holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship
Do not conform any longer...to this world.”*

(Romans 12:1 & 2b)

Paul is urging us, in view of God’s mercy, (ie Christ’s sacrifice and the forgiveness of sins and our newfound righteousness, declared holy) we should put aside all the desires of this world, and live holy and pleasing lives for him. **It is our Spiritual act of worship.** This point is important for those of us in a worship team. Worship doesn’t start and end with a few songs on Sunday. Worship is a living sacrifice. A life walked with God, doing what God wants. Our own agendas, desires and ambition laid on an altar and sacrificed to God. This is the holy life that God calls us to, now that we have been made holy.

I see it like this. In the story of the scales, I have walked away from the judgement the scales represent, robed in Christ’s righteousness. I can live a life that shines Christ’s righteousness in me, or I can choose to go back and play in the filth Christ saved me from. The robe can gleam white for the entire world to see and hopefully bring Him glory, or it can become dirty in the muck that I return to and maybe no one would even notice I have a brand new coat. It doesn’t change the fact that I have Christ’s coat of righteousness on, (it was never about my own righteousness) but I will be tainted by my unholy ways, will reap the natural consequences and my witness for that which Christ has done in me will be compromised. Let our lives be Living sacrifices in His Righteousness, holy and pleasing to Him! It is our Spiritual act of worship, team.

1. **Read Eph 1:4-8** How has God made us holy? Do we have any part in this?

2. Being declared holy has both eternal and current implications. How does this change our relationship with God now and into the future?

3. If we are already holy (through Christ’s sacrifice), why should it matter to us, or to God how we should live?

4. **Read Heb 12:14** Compare this with Jesus’ words in **Matt 5:6 & 8**. How do you see the difference between Christ’s righteousness in us, and us living righteous lives?

5. Look again at the story of the scales and Jesus’ robe. Comment on the story. Have you ever heard a similar illustration that might be more appropriate?

6. **Read Romans 12:1 & 2** Comment on true worship from Paul’s perspective. Is this in any way at odds with your established view of what worship is, or how we as a team should behave?

7. What has God revealed to you through this study?