

Blessed to be a blessing!

Our blessedness as disciples of Jesus comes in the form of the divine presence. Jesus prayed and promised His peace, the full measure of His joy, and that His divine glory would be upon those who follow Him. (John 14:27; 17:13; 17:22) Therein lies our blessedness. It is not in mammon—it is in the baptism of the Holy Spirit—life immersed in the triune Name. The “Name” of God always represents His personal presence and power. Everything the disciple does (potentially at least) is done in the name of Jesus—in other words, for His sake, and literally in His presence and power.

The divine indwelling also creates our righteousness. Yes, praise the Lord, we are declared righteous (justified) by the merits of Jesus (Ro 5:1). But we become intrinsically righteous through the indwelling action of the Holy Spirit. “For it is God who works in you to will and to act according to His good purpose.” (Php 2:13) God is making a people who are uncompromisingly righteous, not by means of Law, but by means of His Spirit (Ro 8:4).

Jesus said, “For I say unto you, that expect your righteousness shall EXCEED the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of the heavens.” (Mt 5:20) This statement, I’m sure, stunned Jesus’ original hearers in His Sermon on the Mount. They could not imagine anyone more righteous than the Scribes and the Pharisees, men utterly devoted to keeping the most miniscule requirements of God’s Law. But they lacked the most essential thing—the divine presence. The righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees was completely a work of man, an outward show, designed to justify themselves and bring attention to themselves.

Jesus pointed His disciples to an INNER righteousness, beyond that of external Law keeping. This inner righteousness would come as they learned to abide in Him and bring forth the fruit of the Holy Spirit. (Jn 15:5; Gal 5:22)

Do you know the futility of trying to achieve righteousness by means of Law? The Bible presents two ways for us to become uncompromisingly righteous—either Law or Spirit. The “natural” way people attempt righteousness is by trying to obey God’s Laws. Since most people believe themselves to be inwardly good, they assume that in general they can keep and have kept God’s Laws. Let’s take a look at that. Let’s also kind in mind that the Bible says, “For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.” (Jas 2:10)

Take the 1st Commandment: “Thou shalt have no other gods before me.” Jesus said, “No man can serve two masters. For either he will



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hate the one and love the other; or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.” (Mt 6:24) Have you ever failed to give God ten percent of your income—the tithe? The Law of God says then that you have robbed God (Mal 3:8). By not tithing you have in effect worshiped another god—mammon. The 2nd Commandment says “Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image.” Possibly you have always given ten percent of your income to God. Have you ever put your own will ahead of God’s will? Have you ever known the good you should do, but failed to do it? Then you have created and worshipped a graven image—namely, Yourself. The 3rd Commandment says “Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.” Have you ever cursed using God’s name? Or made jokes about God? Or treated Him with anything but the utmost reverence? The 4th Commandment, “Remember the Sabbath,” at least refers to regular worship. Have you ever missed worship services, when you could have gone, but just didn’t feel like it? The 5th Commandment is “Honor thy father and thy mother.” Have you ever disobeyed your parents, cursed your parents, or shown or felt any disrespect towards them? The 6th Commandment says “Thou shalt not kill.” Jesus said that when you are angry with someone you have committed murder. The 7th Commandment, “Thou shalt not commit adultery,” according to Jesus Christ is broken every time you have looked at someone in order to lust after them. The 8th Commandment, “Thou shalt not steal,” refers not only to robbery, but to shoplifting, plagiarism, and cheating on tests. The 9th Commandment, “Thou shalt not bear false witness,” refers to gossip, slander, and lying. Have you ever lied? Have you ever talked badly about someone else? The 10th Commandment, “Thou shalt not covet,” covers everything from greed, to discontent with what God has given you. Have you ever felt envious, or disliked someone for what they had? Have you ever complained about your own life?

You who wish to be righteous before God by means of the Law must realize that Law can show no mercy—it only records your failure. “Therefore no one will be justified in God’s sight by observing the Law. Rather through the Law, we become conscious of sin... For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” (Ro 3:20, 23)

It brings me no pleasure to recite the demands of the Law. In fact, I feel fearful just recounting the relentless demands of Law. God’s Law is good and was intended to be a path of blessedness. However, because of the power of sin at work within us, especially when aroused by the demands of God’s Law, the Law serves only to kill and condemn us. This is why God sent us a SAVIOR, Jesus Christ, who bore in His own body the sum total of all our sins, paid the penalty for our Law-breaking, and in His death and resurrection, ATONED for our sins. “God made Him who had no sin, to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.” (2 Cor 5:21) The Bible says, “But now a righteousness from God, APART FROM LAW, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through FAITH in Jesus Christ to all who believe.” (Ro 3:21-22)

Listen to these words of Scripture: “You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace. But by faith we eagerly await through the SPIRIT the righteousness for which we hope. (Gal 5:4-6) And more: “Therefore by dying to what once bound us, we have been discharged from the Law and serve in the new way of the SPIRIT, and not in the old way of the written code.” (Ro 7:6)

Keeping in step with the Holy Spirit, the divine Presence, is the way to become inwardly righteous. We “keep in step with the Spirit” by learning to trust Jesus in every situation and by following the voice of the Holy Spirit in obedience. Faith, expressing itself through love, constitutes the righteousness that exceeds the righteousness of the Scribes and the Pharisees. And with one more glorious note. The Scribes and Pharisees wanted to be righteous for their own sake. Their quest was utterly designed for their own personal satisfaction. We are blessed with the divine Presence for our own happiness, yes, but also that we might be God’s blessing to others!

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