

CHAPTER 3 - CONFORMING TO RIGHTEOUSNESS

When we accept by faith the truth that we are the righteousness of God-2Cor. 5:21-and receive it personally, we begin to conform to what we believe we are. But a lack of understanding about righteousness can result in an approval addiction and other bondages that leave us miserable and without freedom.

Do you have a personal testimony of how you were kept from understanding righteousness and applying it to your life but were finally set free from approval addiction or working thru it right now? Maybe realize thru this teaching that you actually need approval or have needed it in the past.

The Amplified Bible describes righteousness as being made right with God, and then consistently conforming to His will in thought, word, and deed-Rom 10:3. We are made right with God, we begin to think right, we begin to talk right, and we begin to act right. It is a process in which we are continually making progress. The outworking of righteousness cannot begin until we accept our right standing with God through Jesus Christ. It will be seen in right thoughts, words, and actions.

I encourage you to say daily, I am the righteousness of God in Christ, and therefore I can produce right behavior.

1. THINK RIGHT

1. What do you believe about yourself-do you believe you must have approval from people in order to be happy? If so, you will never be happy when anyone disapproves of you. 2. Do you believe you are all wrong? If you do, you will continue to produce wrong behavior. The fruit of your life will be what you believe you are. God will never require us to do something without giving us what we need to do it. God gives us the gift of righteousness so we can become righteous in what we think say and do!

We must learn to think about and believe in our righteousness.

2. TALK RIGHT

Words are powerful; take them seriously. Words can be your salvation. Words can also be your damnation. Matthew 12:37

We learn to talk right by being careful what we say about ourselves. We need to learn by faith to say about ourselves what God says about us in His Word.

What does He say? Make a list of what He says about us and bring Sunday.

3. ACT RIGHT

We all need a strong foundation of good solid doctrine. But along with the doctrine we need to know how to live our lives. If we are going to represent Jesus properly, we need to walk victoriously. The Bible says we are more than conquerors what does that mean? And we are to reign as kings in life through Jesus Christ.

If we are defeated and lack victory, no one will want what we have. But when we are victorious, others see it and want the same victories in their lives. When we call ourselves Christians and go to church but repeatedly behave badly, people think we are hypocrites and phonies.

Don't settle for anything less than the best God has to offer you. You can have a deep, intimate, personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Enjoy daily fellowship with Him and walk in victory as you travel through this life.

The Lord desires to teach us how to live, how to think, how to talk, and how to act for our own good and happiness as well as to glorify Him. We are His personal representatives in the earth and we need to represent Him well-2 Cor. 5:20.

5. DOCTRINE VERSUS LIBERTY

Titus 2:1-But you teach what is fitting and becoming to sound doctrine which means teach what is fitting and becoming to sound wholesome doctrine which is the character and right living that identify true Christians.

We should not go to church just to fulfill an obligation we may think we have to God. We should go to church to fellowship with other believers in Jesus Christ, to worship God, and to learn how to live the life Jesus died for us to have and enjoy. We are called salt and light in the Bible-our lives should make people thirsty for what we have and bring a bright spot into their darkness.

Sometimes religious teaching doesn't take us far enough. We get so tied up in church doctrine and rules and regulations that we never really get over into the power, victory, and freedom Jesus died to give us.

Example: Joyce was never told she could come boldly to the throne of grace. Was not taught righteousness through Christ. She tried to pray with guilt and condemnation and was insecure and fearful that God was not pleased with her.

Her prayers were weak and not very effective because she did not understand the power of prayer available to those who understand righteousness.

We are to walk in this life with our head held high because we are children of God and He loves us.

6. RELIGION AND RIGHTEOUSNESS

We feel we are earning God's forgiveness by feeling guilty. It is our fleshly way of paying for our mistake. The good news is that Jesus has already paid and we can look to and identify with Him when we need forgiveness. Jesus did not die for us so we could have a religion.

He died for us so we could have an intimate relationship with God through Him. He died so our sins could be forgiven and we could have a right standing with God. He died so we could come boldly to the throne of grace in prayer and have our needs met.

7. ARE YOU FELLOWSHIPING WITH GOD OR WITH YOUR SIN?

The devil delights in reminding us daily of all our mistakes from the past. If we spend our time with God fellowshiping with our mistakes from yesterday, we never receive strength to overcome them today. Meditating on all our faults and failures weakens us, but meditating on God's grace and willingness to forgive strengthens us.

How much do you fellowship with your sins, failures, mistakes, and weaknesses? Whatever time it is, it is wasted. When you sin, admit it, ask for forgiveness, and then continue your fellowship with God.

8. ACCIDENTAL SIN

There are times when we still make mistakes and accidentally sin, but it is not the desire of my heart to do wrong. I do not deliberately, knowingly commit sin. I do not habitually sin. So I don't allow those occasions when I do make me feel insecure. We don't do everything right, but I do know that the attitude of my heart is right.

We can have a wonderful day, and then out of no where a comment comes to us and we response with anger and become defensive we did not intend for it to happen. Romans 7-the things I want to do , I don't do, and the things I don't want to do, I end up doing.

I am so glad God sees our hearts and not our sins! A man who was laying in bed prayed Dear Lord, so far today I have not done anything wrong. I have not been grouchy, selfish, or impatient. But, in a few moments I am going to get up, and after that I will need a lot of help. In other words we have no problem getting along with people when no one is home

but me!!

We plan for right behavior because our hearts are right, but like Paul our plans don't always work.

9. COMPETITION

Just because you are a Christian does not mean you are going to do everything right all the time. You can stop comparing yourself to and competing with everyone else.

Despite how wonderful we may appear to others, we all make mistakes. You have strengths and weaknesses, and you do things right and you do things wrong. You win, just as everyone else does. And sin is sin, despite its nature or magnitude.

You are special-unique-and that means there is only one like you, imperfections and all. Told example of husband and his front teeth.

Competing and comparing ourselves with others can cause only two things. It can cause an attitude of pride because we deem ourselves to be better than others, or an attitude of insecurity because we deem others to be better than we are.

Jesus broke down the dividing wall between people-Eph. 2:14. Our strengths come from Him, as gifts, and we cannot take credit for them. Our weaknesses are covered by His grace, and we can only thank Him for it. Since our strengths are gifts from God, it is pointless to judge our worth or value by comparing ourselves to others. We all have gifts, but they differ from one another-Romans 12:3-8

He knew that he was only responsible to be the best he could be. He was not responsible to be anyone else or even to be like anyone else. Sometimes we seek to be like others, hoping to gain their approval. God's approval is what we truly need. God will never help us be anyone other than ourselves. Remember we DO NOT have to be like someone else to be acceptable.

The world's standards are not God's. When we try to be like someone else we lose sight of ourselves and who we are to be. God only wants us to be ourselves-that is why we are all made differently. We don't have to compare ourselves with anyone else. Jesus is our standard-not any other person. He is our righteousness-so embrace righteousness which produces feelings of being right rather than wrong, and begin to live free of insecurity.

NEXT WEEK: How important it is to have a sense of self-worth.

CHAPTER 4 - Changing Your Self-Image

For as he thinks in his heart, so is he. Proverbs 23:7

God wants to help you change your self-image. Your self-image is the picture you carry of yourself on the inside of you.

A lot of people do not know they don't like themselves until it is called to their attention.

A large percentage of people's problems come from how they feel about themselves. Insecurity is why some people struggle for position and power. They derive their sense of worth and value from what they do rather than from who they are and always need the approval of others to be happy and secure.

That is why some are so competitive that they can't enjoy playing a simple game, because they have to win or be first or the best. They are those who seek to succeed without His help. Remember, true promotion comes from God. We may manipulate circumstances and people to get a promotion but we will never be truly happy with it. We will have to do the same thing to keep it.

POWER OF POSITION

But in reality the position may end up having power over us. That church position Joyce wanted and she worked her way until she got it, but then she had to maintain it with keeping the same people happy who she made happy to get the position.

Whatever we gain by the works of our own flesh, we will have to maintain the same way we gained it. Until we accept and approve of ourselves, no amount of approval from others will keep us permanently secure. We work to get approval or a compliment and it feels good for a short while, but then we need another and another and another to keep us going.

Page 2

We don't need to struggle to get from man what God freely gives us: love, acceptance, approval, security, worth, and value. In church people play the same silly games they play in the world and vie for position and power for all the wrong reasons.

When you have a poor self-image you enhance your image through position. What I need to know is that I am valuable to God as a person totally apart from my position in life. Do not let your value become attached to a position. You can lose positions and then where are you?

I insert here something myself- don't value yourself through the words of who you were told you were in your childhood, marriage, etc. You are a person totally separate from your circumstances. You are NOT your circumstances, and are of value despite your circumstances.

Have you ever felt like all the props in life have been kicked out from under you? Maybe God is doing you a favor and in having these things removed gives God a chance to let you realize your security is in Him, not in things or position or jobs.

When we don't have anyone else, we develop a deep relationship with God that will carry us through anything life brings our way. The only thing or person in life we absolutely cannot do without is God.

When we need what the world offers in order to feel good about ourselves, God often withholds it. Once we no longer need those things, He can give them to us, because they will not control us. The key to keeping them is knowing beyond a shadow of doubt that I don't have to have them to be happy and fulfilled. As long as we keep God first in our life, He will give us everything else.

FACE THE TRUTH, AND BE FREE

And you will know the Truth, and the Truth will set you free. John 8:32

When it comes to facing the truth about ourselves, it is quite a different matter .but it is truth that will set us free. I must know
Page 3

who I am in Christ apart from what I do. Be careful not to let anything become more important to you than it should be. Keep God first.

Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.

FAILING DOES NOT MAKE YOU A FAILURE

Don't let the picture you carry of yourself be marred by past mistakes.

GETTING PAST OUR PAST

We are said to be new creatures when we enter into a relationship with Christ. Old things pass away.

For I know the thoughts and plans I have for you, says the Lord, thoughts and plans for welfare and peace and not for evil, to give you hope in your final outcome. Jer. 29:11

Satan wants us to have a negative attitude and to feel hopeless, but God's Word says we should be prisoners of hope. Return to the

stronghold (security and prosperity), you prisoners of hope, even today do I declare that I will restore double your former prosperity to you.
Zech. 9:12

Abraham had no human reason to hope-he hoped on in faith. Don't let your past failures leave you hopeless about your future success. Whatever Satan has stolen through deception, God will restore doubled, if you are willing to press forward, forgetting the past. You have to let go in order to go on.

PEOPLE WITH A PAST

Mary Magdalene was a woman with a past-she was a prostitute. Called an especially wicked sinner by Pharisees in Luke 7:37. God does NOT always close people from popular places with a lot of skills and lovely past. Her town was unremarkable and so was Jesus' town- can any good thing come out of Nazareth?

Mary anointed the feet of Jesus with a bottle of costly perfume, washing them with her tears (humility), and drying them with her hair.
Page 4

Either the perfume was a gift from a client or she had purchased it with money she had earned from her profession. Previously Jesus had cast out 7 demons from her but Jesus knew it was an act of pure love that she did this.

People often misjudge our actions, and we find ourselves caught up in the approval game, trying to convince others that we are acceptable. People don't forget our past as easily as God does. Pharisees could not understand Jesus allowing Mary to even touch Him. But she wanted to give Jesus the most expensive thing she owned, and wanted to serve Him. He saw her heart not her past.

She showed humility by the fact she was at his feet not His head. Many are not seeking to kneel at His feet but want to be at His head. Our position does not impress God, but our posture does. Where are you postured?

PETER

Peter tried to correct Jesus he thought more highly of himself than he should. He was a rough, crude fisherman. He had a pride problem as he saw himself better than other men. Peter denied even knowing Jesus but he wept bitterly showing he had a repentant heart. Jesus forgot the past and said to tell His disciples and PETER that he had risen from the dead.

The key is that Peter pressed past that failure and became valuable to God's kingdom. He had so much Holy Ghost power that when his shadow fell on people they were healed.

He was willing to receive His forgiveness and forgive himself. STOP REMEMBERING WHAT GOD HAS FORGOTTEN!

JACOB

He had been a schemer, a trickster, and a swindler. He was a liar, selfish and sometimes downright crude to others. He took advantage of people in order to get what he wanted. He lied to his father to get the blessing that belonged to the first born.

Page 5

The Bible says we reap what we sow, and he did when he was cheated out of receiving Rachel as his wife the first time. BUT after he experienced a change of heart and became tired of running and hiding from Esau he was determined to receive a blessing from God no matter what it cost him. God changed his name to Israel-contender with God. He faced his failure and repented of it.

RUTH

She worshipped idols and yet she decided to serve the one true God and as a result ended up in the direct bloodline of David and Jesus.

RAHAB

Was a harlot, and yet she helped God's people and ended up in the bloodline of David and Jesus.

PAUL

He persecuted Christians and had them killed, but he wrote two-thirds of the New Testament by direct revelation and was taken into the third heaven where he saw glories he could not even describe. Handkerchiefs and aprons were taken from his body and placed on the sick and they recovered.

MATTHEW

Despised tax collector who became one of the twelve disciples.

Feeling that your past can adversely affect your future is refusing to let go of it. All things work out for good to those who pray, love God, and want His will in their lives.

YOU WILL SUCCEED IF YOU REFUSE TO STOP TRYING

Abraham Lincoln-lost several elections but keep trying but became President of the US.

Thomas Edison said I failed my way to success as he tried 2,000 things that would not work when inventing the light bulb.

Page 6

Kleenex tissues was originally invented as a gas mask filter but it did NOT work so they kept trying to use it other ways until they finally packaged it as disposable handkerchiefs and the rest is history. Failure is part of every real success because failing our way to success humbles us.

God wants you to press on past mistakes. Progress requires paying a price and sometimes the price you pay for progress is just to keep on keeping on. I am not going to quit until I have some kind of victory. Don't be the kind of person whose way of dealing with everything hard is I QUIT!

Keep your dream alive .. Charles Darrow had a dream of being a millionaire but because of the depression he lost everything. But his wife would not let him forget his dream. Because they had no money they began playing a game with fake money he made, buying houses, property, and buildings. His friends told him to market it as they enjoyed playing it, but when he approached Parker Brothers the executives played it and said it was dull, slow, complex, and boring

BUT he persevered and put it in a toy store with money he borrowed, and people liked it. THEN Parker Brothers played it again and decided it was fast-paced and easy to master, and imaginative. INTERESTING. They bought it for 1 million dollars.

His Word says all things are possible to the one who believes Mark 9:23 If we stay positive, keep on believing and refuse to give up, God will do something great through all of us.

You are not a failure just because you have failed.

Next week: What it means to not only understand your worth, but to love and approve of yourself.

Here is the lesson for this week. It is longer than usual but very powerful. Let's read it with expectant hearts and let God do a work in our lives. Many answers to prayer last week and expecting more praise reports this week.

Have a blessed week! Dollie