

The fall of Man, the loss of his righteousness and it's restoration.

Readings:

Judges 15.9-16

John 19.19-22

Matt 14.25-32

Cor 3.10

Eph 4.24

Revelation 19.8

We should have just had a group of readings: Samson defeating his people's enemies; Peter rescued from drowning; the sign placed above the cross; texts from new testament letters on righteousness, knowledge and holiness; and white garments of the saints. What do all those readings have in common? Well, I hope you'll see by the end of this talk.

This is the last in our mini study of knowledge, holiness and righteousness.

This one is:

THE FALL OF MAN, HIS LOSS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS AND IT'S RESTORATION.

We've looked at the loss of knowledge and holiness as a consequence of the fall of Mankind. Today we will look at the last one:

Righteousness.

What is it? To put it simply, it's what we do. Conforming to God's law is righteousness.

Transgressing God's law is unrighteousness and results in guilt. The Bible shows that God created man after his own image in righteousness. Righteousness is but another name for obedience to God. He who does what God will have him do, does that which is righteous. So it is quite proper to say that Adam, before he sinned, was a king. A king is someone who rules in righteous action. Adam ruled over all the world that God had placed under his dominion. Because he knew the Lord's will (as a prophet), and desired to serve him only (as a priest), he was also able to do the works of righteousness as king of creation. Thus we see that it is not really accurate to speak of the image of God in man. It is rather proper to speak of man himself as the very image of God. The image of God was not something in man, or some part of man (the soul). No, man himself-thinking as a prophet, feeling as a priest, and acting as a king-was the image of God.

We do well to keep this in mind. For it is only with a proper understanding of man as the image of God at creation, that we come to understand many other doctrines of the Christian faith. Let us briefly cite some examples.

(1) The doctrine of man's total depravity can be understood only if we first grasp the meaning of man's creation in the divine image. It was the whole man that fell in Adam's first transgression, and it is the whole man who is now corrupt in every part.

(2) Again, it is in the light of this teaching that we can best understand the saving work of Christ. The Old Testament unfolds the promise of the Savior, to be sent into the world by the Father, in terms of the prophets, priests, and kings of biblical history. Jesus, in order to save his people from their sins, had to be the perfect prophet, priest, and king. If we keep what we have learned in this lesson firmly in mind, we will better understand why this was so. Another doctrine that we can better understand, if we keep this lesson firmly in mind, is the

conversion of the sinner to Christ. We will see why it is that true conversion involves knowledge, feeling, and will.

(4) And finally, it is in the light of this teaching that we can understand the marks of a true Church to be what they are. The true Church of Christ is not a building, it is an organism-a body of people- who belong to the Lord. It is, in other words, a company of those who have been converted to true knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. And, as we shall see, this is why the marks of the true Church must be the faithful preaching of the word of God, the true administration of the ordinances, and the faithful exercise of Church discipline. In these things we see the glorious fulfillment of Christ's ministry as prophet, priest, and king. And by these we also see his people themselves becoming partakers of these things.

Let me show you a chart. A threefold truth chart

<u>A THREEFOLD TRUTH CHART</u>			
	PROPHET	KING	PRIEST
Man as He was	KNOWLEDGE	RIGHTEOUSNESS	HOLINESS
Man as He is	Ignorance (wilful)	Guilt (omission/commission/ heart)	Pollution (sinful by nature)
The Old Testament	Moses and the prophets	David and his house	Aaron and his house
CHRIST	The Word of God	King of kings	The Sacrifice and Offerer
Salvation	Mind (Law and Gospel) Enlightened	Will (Accept free offer) Justified/Forgiven	Feeling (Need of Christ) Set apart and washed by the blood
A True Church	Faithful in preaching the Word of God	A spiritual army/ Proper exercise of discipline	Right administration of ordinances
Enemies	The false prophet	1st Beast with crowns	2nd Beast like a lamb/ False prophet

So turning back to righteousness specifically.

We lost it in Adam

- 1). In what he did,
- 2). In what he omitted to do
- 3). In what he continued in doing.

As we've seen in the chart, this righteousness is linked to the idea of a king. This is the *Biblical* idea of a king, riding out triumphantly in righteousness, performing great acts, conquering enemies, rescuing, leading and ruling his people. There are types of this in the Old Testament: Like Abraham rescuing Lot; Joshua leading the Israelites; the mighty Judges like Gideon, and in our reading, Samson, given over to his enemies but fighting a mighty victory defeating his people's enemies; and, of course, David the King of Israel. These are all types prefiguring Christ as the King of Kings the 'king of the Jews' as Pilate wrote over His head. The Jewish nation, that typical church prefiguring all believers: the 'Israel of God' as Paul puts it in Gal 6.16.

So, let us carefully consider our actions, and why we need this King. We can all think of those things which we have done that make us cringe with shame, sins committed or omitted, sin continued in. But Mankind in his fallen nature is very adept at pushing these things out of mind. In short, we're too easy on ourselves. These things can pop into our heads after willfully forgetting them for years, but they're still there. And if we can recall them, imperfect as we are, then how much more can God who is perfect. Not to mention the fact that we don't even consider most sins for what they really are and therefore don't even register them, but they're there none the less. The Bible says there is a record of these things, the books will be opened on judgement day. Now, we may make excuses for ourselves about our sins; "well, I was young and immature", "I didn't realize", "It was all so long ago". Did you know there is a list of unacceptable excuses given by authorities for people who break the speed limit?

I didn't see the sign, is one of them.

(If we relate this to breaking God's law; ignorance of God's law doesn't wash, as the Bible says it is written on our hearts and conscience testifies to it)

No one got hurt is another one of these excuses.

(If we relate this to breaking God's law; This is irrelevant and besides that fact, if true, was uncontrolled by you, someone could easily have got hurt. But most likely it's false, we hurt ourselves, others and God by sin and we're often ignorant of doing all three).

I don't agree with the speed limit, is another one.

(If we relate this to breaking God's law; This just compounds the sin, the actual breaking of the law with the underlying reason of proud rebellion against your Creator, thinking yourself superior to Him)

There was a car right behind me is another.

(If we relate this to breaking God's law; That's almost as if you're saying, someone else made me do it, or even God's providence made me do it- Adam tried this by saying "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat." Shifting the blame may be done in your mind, but you'll find in reality the blame is still firmly resting at your feet!)

The last excuse is, *Everyone else speeds*.

(This isn't a logically valid argument. Just because everyone speeds it doesn't follow you're not guilty, only that everyone is!)

This is like us. On judgement day no excuse will be acceptable for the transgressions or non conformity to God's law.

Does sin and the guilt that results from it go away over time? Is a Nazi war criminal, responsible for thousands of deaths in a concentration camp, less guilty because it all happened long ago and now he seems like a kind old man who lives in small town America with his wife, pays his taxes and cares for his dog? No, guilt is like debt. It doesn't go away unless the debt is paid. Old debtors' prisons used to house people until the debt was paid. Hell is a debtors prison, no wonder it's eternal, how can the debt to God ever be paid by those who find themselves there? This begs the question; can the debt of sin be paid before we find ourselves there?

The answer to that is the central theme of the Bible and the good news of the Gospel. The answer is yes. And it's the Lord who can work that needful righteousness for us. In Jeremiah

He is called the "righteousness Branch" and "the Lord our righteousness", that is, He can be our righteousness for us. That heavy price has been paid for all those who put their trust in Christ's perfect life lived and offered up as a righteous sacrifice to God the Father to atone for sin. It also bears away the punishment for unrighteousness. All this was a payment for sins committed and omitted. This work was on Calvary's cross, where the redemptive work took place - He earned salvation there and the Holy Spirit applies it to us at conversion.

All very good, but not so fast. The work is done, but Man's nature being what it is, the realization of his need and laying hold upon the remedy is a significant problem. You see, the way is not barred by God, but no man will come if he doesn't want to. If a man isn't saved, it's not because God prevented it being so, but because the man himself was never willing to come. And no man, in his sinful nature, would ever come, being deceived by his own mind and heart. You see it's a problem of unrighteousness and of human will. So how can anyone be freed from their own will? Does God force salvation upon people? God forbid! But He must conquer His people's enemies and release them, He must remove the blindfold on the eyes of the captive. The eyes of their soul, by working faith and freeing their will from internal bondage to sin, so that the person can now freely act to turn and reach out to God in true prayer.

Let me attempt to illustrate this. A group of young men, maybe like you, are on a journey. They find themselves on a wide road. Along the road they read warning signs which speak of the danger ahead and to turn, by law, on order of the King, onto another path that leads in the opposite direction and to safety. However they mistrust the King and disobey the signs because the signs are very old and no one else seems to be taking any notice and this road seems so much better than the other one they're told of. As they go on they're told to put a blindfold over their eyes because "sight can't really be trusted to give you objective truth" so to rely on your feelings to go forward. Stumbling along and feeling their way, they hear people calling to them from the other path to turn and be saved. But wilfully they go on being convinced by each other that the other road is foolish to take, being harder and without ease and pleasure. As time goes on their companions seem to be less and those that are there fight along the way with each other. The road seems much harder ground and they are aware of a downhill descent. As time goes on their walk turns into a run and it's evident that in order to stop and turn now would be much harder. The truth is they're running right down into the mouth of a volcano and they're unaware! But just before one particular young man reaches the lava, he is aware of someone close behind him, who takes hold of the knot tied in the blindfold and undoes it and removes it. Now able to see clearly, the young man immediately sees his position and how foolish and rebellious he's been. He pulls back and turns around, but his momentum carries him forward, he cries out and reaches out to the person who's taken the blind fold off. This man takes his hand and catches it... He's been saved.

It's then he realises the man who's saved him is none other than the King! From then on the man trusts his King and follows him. He's led onto the right path and into the King's service. This is what it's like when God opens the eyes of the sinner and they now see clearly in faith to turn willingly in repentance, finding the better way.

We have seen from our chart earlier that to accept this free salvation is an act of will, and in turn, to do with justification. That is being declared formally "Not guilty", like in a court of law. If we look back to our speeding infringement, the ticket is ripped up as we stand before the judge in the dock, and he tells us the ticket has been paid for. You are justified and forgiven.

Of course the guilt of Mankind is much worse than a speeding ticket.

Christ is the mighty King able to win the battle at great cost to Himself but offers it freely to you. Your will must turn and reach out and He'll catch you before you fall any further. Call to Him from your desperate need. If you can't see it, pray for that conviction of sin and faith to see. A sincere prayer like that will always be heard by God. His arm will be outstretched to save and he'll catch you, like he caught Peter, from the storm of your life, saving you from sinking and drowning in your sins.

Can you see these things, can you reach out for Christ the King? He'll rescue you and give you his earned righteousness of a perfect life lived. Like those white garments, which we are told in the book of Revelation are the righteousness of the saints, to cloth you and cover our spiritual nakedness, the shame first revealed in Adam our representative first parent.

I'll leave you with these familiar words of exhortation and a precious promise you can depend on.

"Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and *His righteousness*, and all these things will be given unto you."