

LENT DEVOTION

Austin Christian Fellowship of India (ACFI)

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"Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourself to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness. For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace" (Romans 6:13--14).

As you are aware, the word "righteousness" and "justice" are synonymous and they both refer to the character of God. In fact, the root word *sadiq* (Gk.) actually refers to the Justice and the righteousness of the Holy God. God who is righteous and that means He is "morally and ethically" separated from every other being. That is why He is Holy and pure. The "justice" (that is the way God deals with His creation) is the outcome of His moral and ethical purity. His Son had to embrace the 'death on the cross' in the place of a sinner like you and I because of God's 'justice.' a simple mathematical equation to understand "righteousness" is:

Holiness + Purity (moral & ethical) = Righteousness (or Justice)

"Holiness" becomes the pursuit of a believer not to please others but to please God. "Moral and Ethical Purity" becomes the practice of a believer not to "show off" to others that he or she is better than them but to become an "instrument of righteousness." "Justice" ('right' and 'honest' dealing with others) becomes a believer's norm of life not to have a 'selfish gain' but to reflect God as he/she is "being transformed into the image of Christ" (Romans 12:1). That is the reason why a believer does "not conform to the patterns of this world" (Romans 12:1).

By practicing moral and ethical "Purity + Holiness" a person can never attain the righteousness of God. That is called "self-righteousness" and it gets nowhere near God. Compared to other people a self-righteous person may look righteous. But when compared to God's righteousness a self-righteous person is still not righteous - for no one can never ever attain the same standard as that of God. It is self-deception or that of the Devil. "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 John 1:8). It is also deceiving others and it is called "hypocrisy." "For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). In humility, it is always good to accept your weakness and limitation and that you are a sinner by birth and also accept through faith the "offer of God" by His grace - salvation and all the other benefits in that package (like Justification, Forgiveness of sins, Eternal life, Redemption, Permanent indwelling of the Holy Spirit, Righteousness, Reconciliation, etc.,) and grow from there.

Again, righteousness is imparted by God. It is the "righteousness of Christ" imputed into a believer. It is a growing one and God does it with the cooperation of a believer. A believer cannot pursue, practice righteousness, and deal justly with every one without the help of God (the Spirit). God has chosen to "declare His righteousness" by His grace through the faith of a person in the blood of Jesus Christ. "Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past" (Romans 3:24--25).