

Trust Fund

Credited with Christ's Righteousness

June 13, 2021

Today we're talking about walking in the riches of Dad's righteousness!



Why are so many unbelievers nicer than believers? Ever notice that? Ever think: “Why aren’t you a Christian? You act more like *Jesus* than most *believers*.” Why is that? Good question. Glad I asked. We’re talking about **superficial, highly visible identity markers**. And the granddaddy of all, being circumcision, began with the Father of faith, Abraham as 1) **a sign of God’s promise to save us all from sin** through a Son of promise; and 2) as **a seal of Abe’s faith and trust in God to do it**. But soon after the Son of Promise arrived, died, and rose again, His Apostle Paul found himself battling fellow followers, who ...

... were teaching the brothers: “Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by *Moses*, you cannot be saved.” – Acts 15:1 NIV

[Which is why Paul said] Those of the *circumcision group* ... must be *silenced*, – Titus 1:10-11 NIV

On a family trip to Disneyland years ago, we discovered Krispy Kreme. I was so taken, I bought several hundred shares. First stock I ever bought. About \$18 a share. And it quickly shot up to \$50! Know how it feels when someone transfers *real* money in *your* account? Shar said “Sell!” I said “What’re you, like a stock expert?” Turns out, *yes*, she’s like a stock expert. I didn’t *know* that.

So I didn’t sell. And it fell fast to \$13. I ended up selling it for even *less*. Know how *that* feels? It’s such a sad story because I actually called in the sell at \$49.75; but when I was asked if I wanted to sell right then at market value, I said, “Let it hit \$50.” Oh, if only I could take back those words! Thankfully, as Paul explains to the legalistic Christians, our investment in Christ *only deposits* exceeding *riches* of righteousness; if we’ll just give the word.

What does the Scripture say? (Gen 15:6) “Abraham *believed* God, and *it* [his belief and trust] was *credited* to *him* [lit. transferred into his account] as *righteousness*.” [i.e. True riches of right standing and favor with God] Now when a man *works*, [for a paycheck] his wages are not *credited* to him as a *gift*, but as an *obligation*. [to his boss] However, to the man who does *not work* [to try to put God in his debt] but *trusts* God who *justifies* the *wicked*, his faith is credited as *righteousness*. [Otherwise the wages of sin will *bury* him in *debt*; but the *gift* of God is eternal *life* (Rom 6:23)] – Romans 4:1-5 NIV

Why would a holy God “justify the wicked”? Well, 1) **They’re the only ones who need it**. And 2) **that’s all there is!** “There’s no one righteous, not even one,” Paul reminds us in Romans 3:20.

Two reasons we try to put Dad in *our* debt: **being self-condemning and distrusting His love**, and trying to *obligate* Him to give us that grace; or **being self-adoring and trusting our works**, and trying to earn bonus points. Know how to *tell*? There's a *tell*. They *tell*. Self-loving legalists like to list their spiritual scorecard, so they can compare 'em to anyone who *won't* measure up.

[Paul goes on now, quoting Psalm 32] David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the man to whom God *credits righteousness* apart from *works*: "Blessed are they whose *transgressions* [or *debts* (Mt 6:12)] are *forgiven*, whose *sins* are covered [by a *benefactor*] ... whose sin the Lord will never *count against* him." – Romans 4:6-8 NIV

To make the *riches* of His *glory known* to the *objects* of His *mercy*, – Romans 9:23 NIV

In order that in the coming ages He might show the *incomparable riches* of His *grace*, expressed in His *kindness* to *us* in Christ *Jesus*. – Ephesians 2:7 NIV

In *Him* we have *redemption* through His *blood*, the *forgiveness* of *sins*, in accordance with the *riches* of God's *grace* – Ephesians 1:7 NIV

So you see, **we're debt free and rich in the glory of His mercy and grace!** And now Paul goes for the *slam*, to silence his legalistic brothers in Christ, who were advocating food restrictions, holy day mandates, and circumcision as part of the "legal transaction of salvation".

Is this blessedness *only* for the *circumcised*, or also for the *uncircumcised*? We have been saying [by quoting Genesis 15:6] that *Abraham's faith* was *credited* to him as *righteousness*. Under what *circumstances* was it credited? [God made the promise when Abe was 75 (Gen 12:1-5); and he's credited at 85, after *ten years* of believing (Gen 15:4-6, 16:3, 16)] Was it after he was circumcised, or before? [Oh, Paul's got 'em on the ropes!] It was *not after*, but [14 years] *before!* [Because old Abe is 99 at the time; and it's also *after* God had said He'd *already* made him a *father of many nations*, (Gen 17:5) because God had made a *previous* promise to Abe's *other* son *Ishmael* (Gen 16:11-12)] And he received the *sign* of circumcision, [at the age of 99 as] a *seal* of the *righteousness* that he had [credited to him] by [24 years of] *faith* while he was still *uncircumcised*. So then, he is the *father* of all who *believe* but have *not* been circumcised, [Mic drop!] in order that *righteousness* might be credited to *them*. [who walk in faith] *And* he is *also* the *father* of the circumcised who *not only* are *circumcised* [that is, called to carry the sign] but who *also walk* in the *footsteps* of the *faith* that our *father* Abraham had [for 24 years] *before* he was *circumcised*. ... the *promise* comes by *faith*, so that it may be by *grace* and may be *guaranteed* to *all* Abraham's *offspring* [since he had *seven other* sons (Gen 16:16, 15:1-4) *besides* Isaac, the son of promise who became the father of Israel]—*not only* to *those* who are *of the law* [of *Moses*] but also to those who are *of the faith* of *Abraham*. [And so] He is the *father* of *us all*. – Romans 4:9-16 NIV

Because it's our father *Abraham's faith* that first reveals that **our righteousness is not our own**, it's *the* Lord's. And now **our sins are not on us**, they're on the *cross*. And so **our duty is not to deserve Him**, but to *depend* on Him, daily, by faith and growth in *understanding*, which brings *appreciation*, which brings *love*, which brings *gratitude*-based *obedience* ... like Abraham. What makes anyone *true* children of Abraham isn't any rite or ritual, but believing and receiving and then **practicing walking in the riches of the righteousness we've been credited through Christ**.



Because I don't know if you've noticed, but there's a lot of *non*-believers who act a whole lot *nicer* than a lot of those who *claim* to believe. Know why that is? First: *copyright* infringement! The label's been *grossly* abused. **The Christian brand doesn't guarantee fidelity.** So we have to examine the fruit – not for *judging*, but for identifying *authenticity*.

[John the Baptist warned us this way] “Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ [Look for examples, not excuses] ... The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.” – Luke 3:8-9 NIV

[And Jesus is quite okay with “fruit inspectors”, putting it *this way*] No good *tree* bears bad *fruit*, nor does a *bad* tree bear *good* fruit. *Each* tree is *recognized* by its *own* fruit. [It's actually pretty easy] People do not pick figs from thornbushes, or grapes from briars. The good *man* brings good *things out* of the *good* stored up in his *heart*, and the *evil* man brings *evil* things *out* of the *evil* stored up in *his* heart. [Brings 'em out of what? His mouth] For out of the overflow of his *heart* his *mouth* speaks. – Luke 6:43-45 NIV



So there you go. **Are their words sweet and pleasant or barbed and prickly?** Because they're coming straight out of what's stored up. But there's another reason even true believers might not seem to measure up to *nons*: notice that “each tree [must be] recognized by its own fruit”; so **it's about individual improvement, not blue-ribbon perfection!** Otherwise we're throwing in with the circumcision group! The whole point of a living *relationship* versus dead *religious* works is Dad's unique mission in each of us. Turns out the Creator of the universe isn't about stamping out cookie-cutter kids.



Think about teeth whitening strips. It wouldn't be fair to compare a naturally *yellow*-toothed *user* with a naturally *white*-toothed *non*-user. You need a before and after of the *same* person. Likewise the fruit of an authentic follower, in the process of *being* transformed, bump, bump, bump, from one degree of glory to another, by the renewing of their mind, by storing up God's good Word in their heart, can only be rightly compared to their “before”. *Because* ...



He who began a good work in you [i.e. salvation by Dad's grace through faith in the Son of promise] will carry it on [“because by one sacrifice He has *made perfect forever* those who are *being made holy*” (Heb 10:14)] to completion [of gratitude-based expression] until the day of Christ Jesus. – Philippians 1:6 NIV



Ever see Junkyard Wars? I loved that show! Because I'm *from* a *junkyard* – although *we* say auto-wrecking-and-recycling-center. But on the show there's a challenge of some sort, and they have to scavenge a scrapyard and cobble together a contraption. And everyone cheers and screams and is thrilled to see 'em cross the finish line.

Well, **Jesus knows your cobbled contraption.** And He's *cheering!* So don't bother *comparing* yourself to anyone else besides "the Captain of our salvation". (Heb 2:10 NKJ)



Alan the atheist is a very pleasant person, whereas Chris the temperamental but *true* believer is mostly unpleasant, though *slowly* improving. Nature and nurturing produced a pleasant disposition in Alan; **for Alan, nice is natural.** But nature and nurturing – or rather the *lack* thereof – produced Chris' unpleasant distrustful disposition; **for Chris, negative is natural.**

Now *understand*, **Alan's disposition isn't Alan's gift to God, it's God's gift to Alan.** What Alan *does* with what he's been given – the course he chooses, the direction he heads, and the transforming work he may someday allow, is *his* gift to Dad. That's our *living sacrifice*. (Rom 12:1)

Now, *of course* being negative is *bad* and being nice is *good* ... *but* ... **beware of the trap of the naturally white smile.** When someone sees their natural advantage as their own doing, it'll likely be their undoing. Because to *that* degree they'll see no reason to turn to a Savior and then to be turned by His Spirit. So **in the eternal scheme, our disadvantages are likely our advantage.** In fact, some of the *strongest* warnings are aimed at the *niciest* people.

From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked. – Luke 12:48 NIV

A naturally pleasant demeanor is a dangerous thing. It's so easy to let it blind us to the *real* issue, which has nothing to do with *pleasantness* and everything to do with *holiness*. So don't be surprised to find so many naturally trusting-in-their-own-goodness folks *outside* the church, and more of us self-aware-orneries *inside!* Know what the self-righteous *really* disliked about Jesus? He attracted such *awful* people! And still *does*.

The teachers of the law who were Pharisees ... asked His disciples: "Why does He eat with tax collectors and 'sinners'?" ... [Jesus said] "It is not the *healthy* who need a *doctor*, but the sick. I have not come to call the *righteous*, but *sinners*." – Mark 2:16-17 NIV



Know why? 1) **They're the only ones who need it.** And 2) **that's all there is!** I thought we went over this. "There's no one righteous, not even one." (Rom 3:10) Except for the One Promised Son whose smile we're told was like *lightning!* (Dan 10:6) And all it took was a face-to-face with His (literally) *blinding* glory, for the pendulum of Paul's heart to swing from seeing himself as *perfectly* self-righteous (Phil 3:6) to *chief* of the wicked redeemed. (1 Tim 1:15) And *that's* why he's so dead set *against* that "circumcision group", with their superficial, highly visible, religious ways of rendering worthless the priceless sacrifice of the Son of Promise.

Paul learned firsthand that our Savior is really big into bringing *good* fruit out of formerly *bad* trees. So, *can* you pick *figs* from *thornbushes* or *grapes* from *briers*? Apparently. Sometimes. **If they're willing to receive the riches and walk in the fruit-steps of faith.**