

## Study # 6

### Cruciformity = God's Righteousness and Ours

[P]ut on the new [cruciform] self created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. (Eph. 4:24)

Let us consider the meanings of “righteous” and “righteousness”, according to

Zodhiates:

When used . . . adjectively of persons, it [*δικαιος, dikaios* #1342] refers to the one who **acts conformably** to justice and right without any deficiency or failure. Thus it is applied to God . . . [and] Christ . . . Being *δικαιος*, just, means that **one conforms in his actions** to his constitutionally just character.<sup>1</sup> (emphases mine)

[The noun *δικαιοσυνη* (#1343)] is thus **conformity** to the claims of a higher authority . . . the state commanded by God . . . conformity to all that He commands or appoints. Since God Himself is the standard of the believers, the righteousness of God means the righteousness which belongs to God or to oneself from God, or God-like righteousness.<sup>2</sup> (emphases mine)

As has been stated in the two quotations above, God's righteousness refers to **His actions toward us**, which are expressions of His character or which are “**conformed**” to His essentially just nature. Now, because Jesus is the “image of the invisible God” and because “God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him” (Col. 1:15, 19), we know that Jesus' “righteousness” is a perfect expression of God's righteousness. Therefore, we can say that Table I on pages 7 to 9 lists some aspects of the “righteousness of God” that Jesus manifested through the Cross and that the **righteousness of God and of Jesus is truly “cruciform”**. Since we as disciples are to be conformed to the cruciform nature of Christ, we can say that **our righteousness, like**

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<sup>1</sup>Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*, 457.

<sup>2</sup>Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*, 458.

**Jesus' righteousness, is to be completely cruciform in nature** and this table could then be entitled:

**TABLE I — LIKENESS TO JESUS = CRUCIFORM RIGHTEOUSNESS**

Our righteousness, then, is not to be defined by mental or physical actions conforming to a set of laws or principles, our being righteous means that our attitudes and actions are conformed to the cruciform nature of Christ, the paradigm of the Cross.

The verb *δικαίωω* (*dikaioo* #1344) means to “set forth as righteous, justify as a judicial act”<sup>3</sup> and occurs often in Romans and Galatians. In the next section (# 7), faith will be presented as confidence in, dependence on and obedience to the Lord; thus, justification by faith involves our confidence, dependence, and obedience that God will accomplish His righteousness in us (Rom. 6). Justification, then, is not accomplished by simply accepting as truth our position of righteousness, but by offering ourselves as slaves to righteousness or to the cruciform nature of God.

If we can accept that our righteousness can be defined as the cruciformity of Jesus Christ working in us, then reading through Romans and Galatians gives us much to consider about truly being righteous. Every time we see this word or the related causative verb translated “justify”, we can reflect on the cruciformity of Jesus (i.e., His righteousness) and His passion to see this cruciformity developed in us and expressed through us.

In the Gospels, the words righteous and righteousness of people refers to their right attitudes and actions, not to a positional status. Christ's great exposition of the law in the Sermon on the Mount can be seen to contain much that can be described as a definition of cruciformity. Jesus' actions and attitudes during His suffering and death

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<sup>3</sup>Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*, 465.

manifest fully His righteousness and a fleshing out of His teaching in the Sermon on the Mount.

In the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector in Luke 18, Jesus says that the tax collector's humility and plea for mercy resulted in his being justified before God, whereas the Pharisee was not justified for his rejoicing in his apparent righteousness. Note that all that the Pharisee boasted about were good actions; however, his self-exaltation was completely unrighteous, opposite to the cruciform humility of Jesus. It seems that the tax collector realized that he was not able in his own strength to change and become righteous and was crying to God to help him. When we consider the cruciformity of Jesus, we must also realize our complete inability to be righteous like Him and need to cry for mercy for Christ to work His cruciformity in us. We can conclude that Jesus is stating below, in other words, that our righteousness must be His cruciform righteousness, which He expressed most gloriously in His suffering and death, and which we are completely unable to accomplish on our own:

[U]nless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter into the kingdom of heaven.  
(Matt. 5:20)

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