

*O be careful little eyes what you see  
O be careful little eyes what you see  
There's a Father up above  
And He's looking down in love  
So, be careful little eyes what you see*

*O be careful little ears what you hear*

*O be careful little hands what you do*

*O be careful little feet where you go*

*O be careful little mouth what you say*

*There was a time where children's ministry had a lot of teaching about morals and good behaviour and how to be a "nice little boy", or a "nice little girl"... And even parents who didn't come to church themselves, would often send their kids along to Sunday School to learn a few 'morals', and come back home as a better person, that wouldn't give their parents so much grief...*

But then, when we grow up, if we're still in the church, (if it's a good Protestant church), some pastors feel it's their duty to preach this 'moralising' out of us, so that we can begin to understand that we're saved by '**grace** alone' and saved by '**faith** alone', and that being good people, isn't what's going to get us saved...

And this is true. **None** of us are good enough, to save ourselves – we are all sinners in need of a Saviour. And it's

only through the grace and mercy of God, that we can be saved. And it's only through faith in the Lord Jesus, and the forgiveness that we have in His Name, that we're saved.

But then sometimes, something disastrous happens:

**Man's theology** takes over from the Scriptures. And sometimes we (and when I say "we", I mean, "people who believe in Jesus" / people who are already saved) – **We**, start to get given the message, "If we make the effort, to try to be a good person – that's 'legalism'. And it's not living by 'grace'..." And we get left feeling, that if God wants us to change the way we live, **he** will do that work in us, and we don't even have to try... And if I continue to sin, that's OK, because I'm living in grace, and God will change me when He wants to...

**But that's not the Gospel.**

Now, I very purposely said "That's **man's theology** – not the Scriptures", because the Scriptures teach us something very different...

I've given today's message the title, "**Being** the new creation we are.", because today, we're going to talk about 'holiness'.

The very first verse of today's reading, is one of the most profound verses in the whole of the Bible.

**5:21** For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

This is telling us, that Jesus Christ lived a perfectly sinless life. Jesus **knew no sin**. He is the Lord God almighty (the Holy One), and He stepped down from Heaven to Earth... And He lived as a human.... **God** and yet human. And yes, Jesus was tempted (as we are), but He didn't give in to that temptation (like we often do). Jesus remained holy (sinless)...

But for our sake, it was the will of God the Father, for Jesus to suffer for us... When Jesus was nailed to the cross, He died for us... But the excruciating pain of crucifixion, wasn't what cost Him the most... Something that happened, that I don't understand (and I'm not going to pretend to understand it), But at that point, Jesus didn't just 'pay the punishment' for my sins ... – but somehow, God caused the sinless one, to be sin... so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

In theological terms, this is what we know as the atonement. Jesus, who was sinless, was caused to **be sin** (I don't know how), that in Him, we might become the righteousness of God.

He changes us, you see.... I'm going to be using a few theological terms today, because this is deep. And the first theological term is "Justification", "We are **justified**."

- We were full of sin

- but Jesus became the atonement **for** our sin, (taking our sin upon Himself)
- so now, those who are in Christ (- that is: those who repent of sin, yield to Jesus as Lord, and have faith in Him for forgiveness)

Those who are in Christ, are now **justified**. That means, that when we stand before the judgment seat of God, the verdict is “Justified” – we’re not guilty...

This is one of the most profound verses in the whole Bible.

But what’s this phrase here? “so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Is this just righteousness:

- “in a theoretical sense”?
- “in a legal sense”???
- **Or** do we truly become the righteousness of God???

A very common defence given for Christians who behave badly, is “*Christians aren’t perfect, they’re just forgiven.*” You would’ve heard that said. You’ve probably said it. I know I have... And usually, when it gets said, it’s in the context of when a **non**-Christian, points the finger at someone who professes to **be** a Christian, and calls them out for their sinful / unethical behaviour...

And you’ve got to admit, the optics aren’t good... There are some very well behaved unbelievers, and there are some very

immoral people who profess to being Christians... It doesn't look good...

But it's not only the optics... This goes to the very heart of what it means for us to become the righteousness of God...

- Is it merely a theoretical righteousness?  
(we continue to live as people of the world, but theoretically we're righteous)
- Is it merely a legal righteousness? (Even though we aren't particularly godly people, we're off the hook. We've got a get-out-of-jail-free card, which means we are righteous)

**Or** do we actually **become** the righteousness of God... Does our behaviour change, so that we actually begin to live in a way the pleases God...

So, if Jesus was the perfect sinless man,,,, that's what we become... And the theological term for this is "Sanctification"... "Sanctification" simply means "becoming holy"...

And so, that defence "*Christians aren't perfect, they're just forgiven.*" Is quite wrong... We are much more than "just forgiven" – we are **being** sanctified... We are **becoming** holy... And if (as a disciple of Jesus), I am not becoming more and more holy, there's something drastically wrong in my walk with Jesus... Because a Disciple of Jesus follows Jesus, And following Jesus, always leads us into holiness...

Now, the big question is, **who does** this sanctification???

Some people like to believe that it's entirely God's responsibility:

- “God does it, and we're along for the ride.
- We just believe in Jesus, and we're saved. And;
- if Jesus wants to change us, it's entirely His work, and in their view,
- if we put any effort into changing our own behaviour, we get told “That's not living by grace...” ...

But what do the Scriptures say?

Well, let me tell you what they don't say. **Never** do the Scriptures say:

- Don't try and be good;
- Don't try to live righteously;
- Don't resist temptation;
- Don't put the effort into being a better person...

In fact, they say exactly the opposite... The whole 'easy believism' thing – just believe and you'll be saved – it's a nonsense. It depends on a redefinition of the word “repentance”...

**6:1.... we appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain.**

That means, don't receive the grace of God:

- with no purpose;
- with no result;

The terrible cost of our salvation, was for the beautiful, holy, sinless one, to be sin.... Don't receive that costly grace in vain...

To receive the grace of God in vain, is the antithesis of being the new creation that God has made us. 5:17 <sup>17</sup> Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

And to receive the Grace of God in vain, is the **opposite** of being a new creation...

*It's like taking a farm dog, and turning it into a house dog... Now, what is it about dogs? My dad used to say, "That's something I just don't understand – how something with such a sensitive nose, loves the smell of the most putrid things..."*

*It's like a dog comes across a dead kangaroo out in the paddock, and the dog thinks to itself: "Now what's the best thing I can do with this kangaroo carcass that's been lying in the hot sun for 3 days???" I know. I'll roll in it, and that way, I can take the smell with me wherever I go...". And they do exactly that, don't they – they find the most putrid thing, and they roll in it, so they've applied their essence of rotting macropod and it'll be with them for a week or more...*

*But imagine that you want to take that farm dog, and turn it into a house dog... [not going to happen at my place]. Take the dog, and put it in a tub of soapy water and scrub & scrub*

*& scrub & scrub.... Until you get that dog clean [maybe perfume it a bit]... So that it's fit for the house...*

And that's what it's like for us to be saved... We were putrid with sin, but we've been washed clean by the blood of Jesus. By the grace of God, we've been made holy... But to take the grace of God in vain, is for us to go back sinning again...

*It's like that freshly scrubbed, cleaned, and blow-dried dog, going outside and finding a dead goanna to roll in...*

You see, the thing is, grace isn't a 'once only' application... Grace is like a river that continues to flow... Now, I don't know about you [actually I do know, but I'll say it from my perspective]: Even though I'm forgiven, and trying not to sin, I still do... And so I have to keep repenting of my sin. "God, I've rebelled against you again, but I'm going to try again to do the right thing. Lord, will you help me to live righteously this time?" And His grace doesn't stop. It continues to flow...

Don't now – don't ever, receive the Grace of God in vain.

*But to take the grace of God in vain, is to be like that dog, who isn't changed... Its desire isn't to be fluffy clean – its nature remains the same – its desire, is to roll in a dead kangaroo; or a dead goanna; or a dead something, or a bit of poo (if that's all it can find)... That dog remains the same creature it always was, and it's still wired to desire the putrid...*

But as a new creation, we are changed – but we're not just changed – we become a new creature – a new creation. Our



desire is to live righteously, so that we're not just theoretically righteous / legally righteous – we **are** the righteousness of God.

Now, we don't achieve this on our own – the Holy Spirit living inside of us, is helping us to live by the Spirit... But Holy Spirit doesn't do it on **His** own either. We work, **with** the Holy Spirit, to live righteously. That's why Paul is appealing to the Corinthian church "Don't **receive the grace of God in vain.**" Why would he be appealing to them, if they didn't have a part to play? **Of course** we have a part to play...

And to illustrate this, in 2 places in today's reading, Paul quotes the prophet Isaiah, as well as sundry other Old Testament verses.

The first one, is Isaiah 49:8

<sup>2</sup> For he says [God says],  
"In a favourable time I listened to you,  
and in a day of salvation I have helped you."

He's connecting this to the time when Israel were captives of Babylon... But the time was coming when God would save them, and bring them back to the promised land. This is something that they couldn't do for themselves – Just like this is something we can't do ourselves [being saved] – this is something that God was going to do for them...

And then when he gets to 6:16, he's quoting Isaiah 52:11 and other various Old Testament passages:

"I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them,  
and I will be their God,  
and they shall be my people.

<sup>17</sup> Therefore go out from their midst,  
and be separate from them, says the Lord,  
and touch no unclean thing;

then I will welcome you,

<sup>18</sup> and I will be a father to you,  
and you shall be sons and daughters to me,  
says the Lord Almighty."

Israel, had to work with God in this... God was going to bring them out of captivity, and the temple would be rebuilt, and He would live in their very presence... Therefore, if holy God was going to live in their presence, guess what: They had to leave behind the pagan ways of their Babylonian captors. And they had to separate themselves from unholiness... Israel had a part to play in this. And so do we.

BTW, those passages he quoted, are also looking forward to when Jesus comes...

Alright, so let's go back to 6:2

<sup>2</sup> For he says [God says],

"In a favourable time I listened to you,  
and in a day of salvation I have helped you."

Behold, now is the favourable time;  
behold, now is the day of salvation.

What does that mean? That means, that in Christ, we have the promise that the Holy One will actually be with us.

And then he launches in to what we covered last week – the example of how Paul and his fellow missionaries live for Christ:

By their:

- Great endurance
- purity
- knowledge
- patience;
- kindness;
- the Holy Spirit;
- genuine love;
- truthful speech; and
- the power of God;

That's the attributes of a disciple of Jesus. And that stuff doesn't just happen naturally. It's the fruit of the Spirit. The presence of the Holy Spirit, is both a help (to help us live righteously), and a **motivation** (to motivate us towards righteousness)...

I struggled with what word to use here: “Exalted”, or “humbling”? I think “humbling”... What a humbling thing – to be a temple of the Holy Spirit...

*Royalty deserves the very best lodgings... Everybody's jumping up and down at the moment, because Prince Harry and Megan have announced that they're stepping down from*

*public royal duties, and want to live a more self-directed life... But of course people are wanting to know, “Well, what about this “Frogmore Cottage” that Millions of pounds of public money was spent on in renovations” ... Imagine that – renovations of more than A\$4M. Royalty like to live in the very best lodgings...*

Do you know where God chooses to live???

In us. We are the temple of the living God... You are the temple of the living God. And you're not just his Sunday home. The King is in residence 24/7.

Under the Old Covenant, everything about the Temple, was to create a place of holiness... All of the sacrifices and cleanliness procedures – their purpose, was to make the temple; and the priests; and the Levites, holy,,, because **unholiness** has no place, in the presence of God...

What a **fearful** thing, to be the temple of the Living God.

You know, most of us amend our behaviour, depending on what company we're in ... *I'm always mildly amused, when I might meet someone, and they're swearing away, and then during the conversation, I tell them I'm a pastor, and they go “Ow, Sorry Father”.*

- *School kids are extra well behaved when the principal's in the classroom;*
- *We're extra careful what we say, when we know it's being recorded;*

- *We drive extra carefully when there's a police car behind us;*

Most of us, whether we're conscious of it or not – amend our behaviour, depending on who's there...

Now, if you truly believe, that our bodies are the residence of the living God, do you suppose, that maybe that might motivate us to change our behaviour a bit???

What do you reckon? If we truly believe that the living God is with us and in us, that's a pretty big motivation isn't it...

And so Paul says:

**7** Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse **ourselves** from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God.

You see, when it comes to the presence of God, “humbling” “exalted” – I that's why I was struggling – neither of them are really the right word... “**Fearful**” is the right word...

And do you notice his language here: let us **cleanse ourselves** from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God.

Righteous living, isn't an optional extra... The presence of the Holy Spirit, helps us to live righteously, but He also motivates us to live righteously...

If we leave “holiness” half-done – that’s taking the grace of God in vain. God has made us a new creation. Therefore **be** the new creation we are. Let us **cleanse ourselves** from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God.

We’re going to leave it at that for today. Next week, we’re going to carry this theme of “holiness” further when we discuss being unevenly yoked and “separation”... And how:

- we are called to be in the world, but not of the world;
- separate ourselves from unholiness,
- but we are also ambassadors of Christ, to an unholy world.

That’s for next week.

But for this week, I’m going to finish off with a song. And during this song, let’s be in an attitude of prayer,

“Lord, help me to make the alterations I need to make in my life, so that I can be truly holy. Lord, because you are living inside of me, I want to truly **be** the righteousness of God

- not just a theoretical righteousness
- not just a legal righteousness
- but truly righteous

Let’s listen: