

## Christ our Righteousness

If the work of Christ involved just dying for our sins, he would have paid the penalty and cleared our debt due to sins before God, then we may just be in a state of neutral innocence, but that is not enough to be accepted before our righteous God. Hence, Christ not only removed the wrath of God on our sins by his substitutionary death but by living a perfect life, he became our righteousness and made us whole and acceptable before God.

The default mode of all fallen human beings is self-righteousness. We are so addicted to it, even as believers if we don't watch out in an attitude of faith, we automatically tend to fall into that mode. We generally think, "if I avoid a particular sin, and pray more, read more Bible, we can get closer to God". Frankly, what is that but self-righteousness? It is true we have to grow in holiness by killing sin. But does our standing and relationship with God dependent on our own righteousness or Christ's perfect righteousness? Will our tiny little self-efforts bring us closer to a perfectly holy God? If we have just a minute little sin in our being, that is enough for a burning holy God to banish us in hell forever.

Hence, if we want to have any true and consistent communion with this perfectly righteous God, we need to learn the great truth of Christ our righteousness. Isn't this the great re-discovery of reformation – justification by faith and not by our own works.

### 1. What is righteousness and how Christ becomes our righteousness?

Generally, righteousness is spoken as an attribute of God. Our God is perfectly righteous and he loves righteousness, he is so infinitely righteous that no one without perfect righteousness can ever stand before him. God created man in his own image, perfectly righteous, without any flaw or sin. Adam was a representative of the human race. If Adam would have lived a righteous life, his righteousness would have been imputed. Sadly because he sinned, his guilt was imputed to us because he was our federal head.

Adam, and all his would-be children in him, having broken the law, fell from the perfect state and become depraved and unrighteous. Oh, how great and irreparable was that fall! We became fully depraved in every part of our soul and body; fell to an extent where our redemption seemed humanly impossible. We have broken God's righteous law and were under the curse of that law. Until justice of God is satisfied, and the honour of the broken law repaired; heaven's gates were shut, and eternally barred against man and all his descendants. In this deplorable condition, we could never ever approach God, the wrath of God almighty was ready to break upon our heads; we became slaves to sin, enemies to God, sentenced to physical and spiritual death, subjected to not only a temporal life of vanity, misery, and curse but awaiting as prisoners to be eternally condemned in hell. The state of humanity was the most tragic and pitiable condition before a God of inflexible justice.

God could have justly condemned mankind after their fall. Here Calvin beautifully says here God's attributes struggled with one another. Justice saying "Is the law broken, damn the offender, and send him to hell." At the same time, the mercy of God, his darling attribute, cries out, Oh pity, show mercy "Spare him, spare him." The wisdom of God designs a glorious way in which justice might be satisfied, at the same time mercy can be offered. How was that?

When no eye could pity mankind when no angel or archangel could rescue, just as when God's justice could have crushed us and given the fatal blow, just as the knife was put to the throat of mankind, (as Abraham about to kill his own son). The eternal Son of God, the dear Redeemer, Lord Jesus Christ in his infinite love and pity to perishing sinners, steps in as a Mediator and Substitute. Halts the justice of God saying, "Father, spare the sinner; have mercy and let him live.

A true man has broken your law, and violated your covenant: man deserves to be damned forever; but, Father, I have compassion on this human race. If you will prepare me a body, in the fullness of time I will go and do your will What Adam could not do, and I will do. He has broken your law, but I will go and keep it perfectly, that your law may be honored; I will give perfect unsinning obedience to all your commandments; fulfill all righteousness, and earn spotless perfect righteousness by which you may justify the ungodly without any stain to your justice. I will not only go down and obey your law, but I will bear the infinite suffering due for their sins and bleed; die for him. Father, I will step in between you and sinners as their mediator and surety fulfilling all you demand from them to be reconciled to you. Let your wrath fall on me, the sword of justice pierce my heart, drain my blood, but spare and forgive the sinners!"

Behold the love of the son of God! It is not only the death on the cross that saved us, but he had to take our place under the law and live a life of spotless purity for 33 years and as he said to John the Baptist, 'we have to fulfill all righteousness.' He lived a righteous life in the midst of terrible sinners, senseless disciples, and mortal enemies who thirsted for his blood chased him all his life.

So what is the righteousness of Christ? It's Christ's righteousness purchased by Christ by his active obedience to the law – by keeping the law perfectly, and of course his passive obedience by undergoing sufferings for our guilt and sins imputed to him. Christ's righteousness is an act of amazing grace of God, instead of demanding personal satisfaction, God not only admitted a substitute, but also provided one, and laid upon him all demands of law and justice.

Now how does Christ become our righteousness? A man receives this righteousness when as a response to the gospel, he repents and puts his faith in Christ and his finished work. A man is justified by faith alone, no works are needed. Because Christ's righteousness is perfect.

This righteousness of the Surety is conveyed to us by imputation; God reckons what the Surety did to us; so that his righteousness becomes as much ours and we are justified before God, as though we had obeyed the law perfectly, and satisfied justice in our own person. There is a blessed exchange of places between Christ and the sinner who puts his faith on him.

## 2. Glorious attributes of this righteousness.

- i) It is in every way perfect and spotless righteousness:
- ii) It is a meritorious righteousness.
- iii) It is an incomparable righteousness.
- iv) It is a soul-beautifying righteousness.
- v) It is an everlasting righteousness.

## 3. This righteousness lifts the sinner from below greatest evil.

- i) From the condemning power of the law.
- ii) From trials and accusations of the world.
- iii) From the power and malice of Satan.
- iv) From death itself.

## 4. This righteousness lifts the sinner to the state of greatest blessings.

- i) Reconciled to God and peace with God.
- ii) Sonship.
- iii) Fellowship and very closely familiarity with God and access to him with holy confidence and boldness.
- iv) Endless glory.

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# Importance of Catechism

Catechism or Catechesis always raises a wrong connotation, even among those who identify themselves as evangelical Christians. Coming from a Pentecostal background, my understanding of Catechism is that it is more of a Roman Catholic thing or some mainline denominational thing and somehow seen it as not something scripture demands rather it's seen as an alternative to studying scripture. We as believers should only read and teach scripture and not any other historical document, that's such a wrong understanding. Now after realizing the importance of Catechism and seeing that it is biblical, I tell all my Christian friends about the importance of Catechism but still see that reluctance in their face or they hear it with a smirk. Through this article, I want to show what Catechism is? why is it biblical to catechize? The historical significance of Catechism and the importance of Catechism.

## 1) What is Catechism?

The term Catechism is related to the word catechesis, which is derived from the original Greek word transliterated as 'katecheo' i.e., to teach orally, to instruct.

The instruction is usually based on a book or document known as a catechism, which contains a summary of biblical doctrine, principles, commands often in the form of questions and answers. It helps us to easily understand and apply it in our lives.

The Catechism that we use in our church is Westminster Shorter Catechism and Benjamin Keach Baptist Catechism.

## 2) Is it biblical to catechize?

Paul says in Galatians 6:6 "Let him who is taught the word share all good things with him who teaches." It is so important to understand the word of God and to be instructed in the way of the Lord.

The Greek word for "the one who is taught" is katechoumenos, one who is catechized. In other words, Paul is talking about a body of Christian doctrine (catechism) that was taught to them by an instructor (here the word catechizer). Ephesians 6:4 Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

It is the same word used here. Fathers/Men are called to catechize his family, his children.

## 3. Historical significance of Catechism

Pastors and teachers in the early church regularly used catechisms, and the sixteenth-century Protestant reformers strengthened the practice. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Reformed and Lutheran theologians wrote scores of catechisms in an effort to teach the next generation the faithful believers. One of the best-known catechisms is Martin Luther's Small Catechism, which explains the Ten Commandments, the Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer, the sacraments, and prayer. Luther's intention was to arm fathers with the necessary basic knowledge so they could teach and equip their children for the Christian life.

John Calvin's Geneva Catechism of 1542 was written specifically for children and follows a similar pattern of topics as Luther's Small Catechism. Zacharias Ursinus wrote the Heidelberg Catechism (1563), which is one of the three pillars of the Three Forms of Unity for Continental Reformed churches. And the Westminster Shorter Catechism (1648) is perhaps one of the best-known catechisms in the English-speaking world because of its famous first question and answer:

What is the chief end of man? Man's chief end is to glorify God, and enjoy him forever.

## 4. Why is it important?

First, it's easier to memorize.

The Question and Answer format of the Catechism helps us memorize many major portions of the biblical doctrines in a short clear and crisp way. It helps us and our children to easily relate, memorize and apply them in many areas of their life.

Catechizing is one essential way of rearing our family in the fear of the Lord so that they can hide the truth of God in their hearts. Rote memory of Scripture and catechism early in our life becomes the spiritual building material of a strong Christian life

Second, it's an important form of discipleship.

The practice of Catechism helps us

a) To continue in the faith, stable and steadfast.

b) To attain the unity of the knowledge of God so that we may no longer be children, tossed back and forth and carried about by every wind of false teaching.

c) To be away from many deceivers. Catechism is to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it or preach false doctrines contrary to the teaching of the Bible.



# Katharina von Bora

## - "The women of Reformation"

Katherina Von bora was the wife of the German Reformer Martin Luther. She was born somewhere in the 14th century in a place called Hirschfeld. In 1504, she entered into Benedictine cloister at Brehna. She was placed there by her father for the sake of furthering her education. Later as a teenager, she was moved to a Cistercian monastery where her aunt resided. There she eventually became a nun.

She was very unhappy with the monastic life and was interested in the Church reform movement that was happening in Germany. As a result, in 1523 von Bora and a number of her friends eventually contacted Luther and asked for his help in escaping their monastery. This was an extremely dangerous undertaking in the sixteenth century. A person caught abandoning their monastic vows could be tortured and imprisoned for the rest of their lives.

Luther sort a plan and arranged for a merchant who could help smuggle Katharina and her friends out of the monastery on Easter Eve. When they first arrived in Wittenberg, Luther tried convincing the women to return to their families. This proved to be an unworkable solution since none of their families would have them returned. Aiding and abetting a runaway nun was a violation of Roman Catholic canon law and therefore a grave crime in the sixteenth century.

Due to this reason, Luther started finding husbands for the women in accordance with their wishes. Katharina was difficult to find a husband for since she did not find many of her suitors acceptable. Finally, she made it known that she would be willing to marry either Nicholas von Amsdorf -a university colleague of Luther or Luther himself. After some resistance, Luther finally agreed to marry Katharina in 1525. He was forty-one years old and she was twenty-five.

After Luther and Katharina were married, they moved into the Black Cloister. The Black Cloister was the former Augustinian monastery in which Luther had lived as a monk. The Black Cloister possessed vast holdings of cattle and pigs, as well as a brewery. Katharina took over the management of these holdings and worked as a businesswoman of a sort.

Katharina was in every way a Proverbs 31 woman, tender as silk when husband and children needed encouragement and tough as leather when both got out of line. She planted and harvested a large garden annually, and tended and even butchered the family's livestock. And she helped Martin walk the line, matching him quip-for-quip. No doubt Luther wasn't an easy man to live with, but Katie was more than up to the task. Beyond her work as an entrepreneur and housewife, Katharina also bore six children to Luther. She also took care of four adopted children. And while her maternal qualities are highlighted, with one child on her lap and another standing nearby, she also appears to be discussing or perhaps even arguing a point with her husband. Katharina is speaking, and Luther is listening. . . . Katharina was not a mere bystander; she was an engaged and devoted partner to Luther and an active participant in the Reformation.

As with all good marriages, the Luthers' was filled with both difficulties and delights. They buried two daughters—Elizabeth at eight months and Magdalena at 13. Katie was often anxiety-ridden thinking the Reformation's enemies might eliminate her husband. Along with their six children, their home was perennially filled with guests, from Martin's students to famous friends such as Philip Melanchthon. She welcomed and served them with great hospitality.

She went through a lot of struggles in her life and overcame them through her faith and trust in the Lord. At age 53, she died due to a deadly cart accident at the city gates.

### Learnings:

1. This woman sets a great example and a model of faith to all of us. Her virtues would not have been possible without her faith in the gospel. We must learn from her life to grow more in our faith and trust in the Lord.
2. She knew her priorities well and she managed her roles properly as a wife, mother, and entrepreneur. We must set our priorities right. We must examine how our priorities are listed and if it is pleasing to our Lord.
3. Her life of marriage was a witness to many. She and Luther wanted to set an example to many. We must pray that our marriage life should also be a witness to many young people in the world.
4. Her hospitality is something we must admire, appreciate and practice. So many tasks to accomplish yet she delightfully and cheerfully served God's people.



# **OUR JOURNEY THROUGH EPHESIANS**



The book of Ephesians is a beautiful revelation of the Church and the Spiritual blessings that we have in Christ Jesus. This journey has been so powerful for each one of us. Reading and learning Paul's letter to the Ephesians was like a self-realization trip.

Throughout this journey, we learned about the various blessings that we have. In Christ, we have been predestined, adopted as sons, accepted in the Beloved, redeemed through His blood, forgiven of our sins, given an inheritance, and sealed with the Holy Spirit.

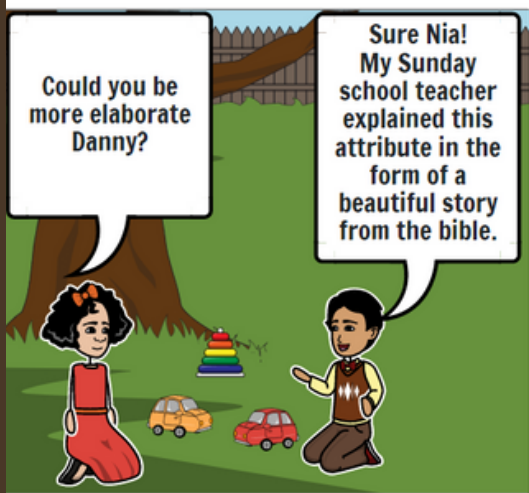
Paul explains the mystery of God and gives us practical insight into living as believers. He also beautifully explains what Christ has done for us and what He has purchased for us.

This book encourages us more to face all the challenges on this earth as Christians, as we know that we have the armor of God to always protect us.

We are so happy that this learning is going to travel with us throughout our lives, to live as strong believers.

- GRBC Youth

# Attribute of God - He is SOVEREIGN



There was a boy named Joseph, he was the 11th child of Jacob. His mother was Rachel. Jacob loved Joseph a lot more than his other sons. He was his father's beloved son as he was born to his father in his old age. Jacob presented a colorful robe to Joseph, this prompted feelings of jealousy within his brothers. They somehow want to get rid of him and they made various plans to throw him in the pit, kill him, at last, they sold him to the traders. He was eventually brought to Egypt, where he was sold to Potiphar, one of King Pharaoh's ministers.

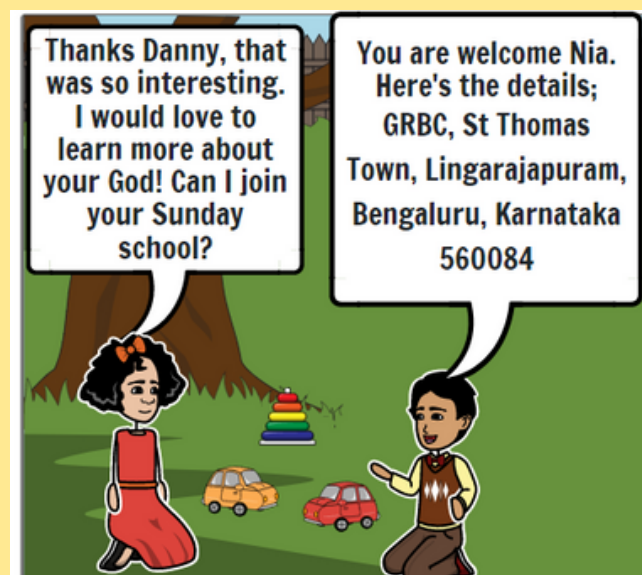
For a while, things started to look up for young Joseph. Success enabled him to find favor in his master's eyes, and he was appointed head of Potiphar's estate.

However, this would not last for long. Attracted by his handsome looks, Potiphar's wife tried misbehaving with him, but Joseph continuously refused. This self-control earned him the title, "Joseph the righteous." But Potiphar's wife turned the tables on Joseph, telling her husband that it was Joseph who had tried to misbehave with her. The angry master reacted by placing his trustworthy assistant in prison.

Joseph's charm followed him to prison as well, and the warden soon appointed him as his right-hand man. When the king's royal cupbearer and baker were imprisoned, Joseph successfully interpreted their dreams, correctly predicting that the cupbearer would be released and the baker, hanged. Two years later, King Pharaoh himself had two dreams, which none of his advisors were able to explain. Remembering the Hebrew youth from his prison days, the cupbearer suggested that Joseph be summoned. Joseph interpreted Pharaoh's dreams as being a Divine prediction for seven years of plenty followed by seven years of famine and advised Pharaoh to prepare by storing grain during the first seven years. Impressed by Joseph's wisdom, Pharaoh appointed him as his viceroy and tasked him with readying the nation for the years of famine.

Meanwhile, the effects of the famine were felt in nearby Canaan. Hearing that there was grain in Egypt, Joseph's brothers journeyed there to buy precious food from the viceroy, not realizing that he was their very own brother. Joseph decided to utilize this opportunity to observe whether his brothers truly regretted having sold him. Joseph tested his brothers' determination to save their youngest brother Benjamin from the plot he set up for him. Once he saw their devotion toward Benjamin, Joseph finally revealed his identity to his siblings.

So, you see children how God had his control in the life of Joseph from the start of his life. From prisoner to prince every act in the life of Joseph was ordained by our God. Hence He is our Sovereign God.



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