

Righteousness

Righteousness of God Revealed in Christ

God made the one who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that in him we would become the righteousness of God.

(2 Corinthians 5:21)

<https://tinyurl.com/RightWithGod>

Righteousness Starts With God, Not Man

Regardless of God's display of righteousness, mankind, throughout history has sought to establish himself as the measure of all things. Why?

Human Righteousness Tries to Earn God's Favor

Paul warns against trying to create one's own righteousness.

"They sought to establish their own righteousness, and did not submit to God's righteousness." (Rom 10:3 NET)

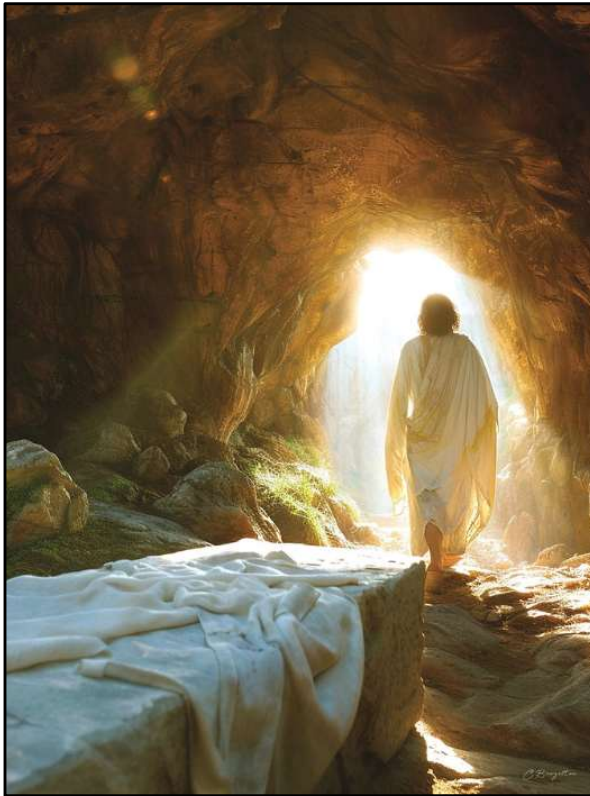
This is the heart of the difference.

Human righteousness says:

"I can make myself right."

God's righteousness says:

"You cannot make yourself right, but I will make you right through Christ."



He has destroyed what was against us, a certificate of indebtedness expressed in decrees opposed to us. He has taken it away by nailing it to the cross. **Disarming the rulers and authorities, he has made a public disgrace of them, triumphing over them by the cross.** (Col 2:14-15)

Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, he likewise shared in their humanity, so that **through death He could destroy the one who holds the power of death** (that is, the devil) and **set free those who were held in slavery all their lives by their fear of death.** For surely his concern is not for angels, but He is concerned for Abraham's descendants. (Heb 2:14-16)

Reclaim the Sacred Space

Matt 28:16-20 So the eleven disciples went to Galilee to the mountain Jesus had designated. (17) When they saw him, they worshiped him, but some doubted. (18) Then Jesus came up and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. (19) Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, (20) teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

The Temple is now represented by each Human Being. The sacred space. Take the Kingdom back one temple at a time.

Quick Review

Who are the 'sons of God'?

Romans 10:3 *They sought to establish their own righteousness and did not submit to God's righteousness.*

The Bible presents rebellion as both human and angelic. **Genesis 6** introduces "*sons of God*" who cross boundaries. **Psalms 82** shows heavenly rulers judged for injustice. **Isaiah 24** speaks of heavenly powers imprisoned for later judgment. Second Temple literature like 1 Enoch connects these pieces. Angelic beings' rebel. Corruption spreads. Judgment is promised but not yet complete.

The New Testament declares that Jesus reverses this order. Through the Resurrection, Jesus defeats death, which was the operating sphere of rebellious powers (**Heb 2:14**). He is raised and enthroned "far above every ruler and authority" (**Eph 1:20–21**). **Colossians 2:15** says he disarmed those rulers and made a public spectacle of them.

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Quick Review

Who are the 'sons of God'?

Then Paul says something direct: "*Do you not know that we will judge angels?*" (**1 Cor 6:3**). **Daniel 7** had already said that judgment would be given to the saints. Revelation shows the saints seated on thrones and given authority to judge (**Rev 20:4**).

So, the arc is clear. Heavenly beings once called "*sons of God*" fail in their stewardship (**Ps 82**). They are sentenced. Christ, the true Son, is enthroned. Those united to him are adopted as sons. And in the age to come, they participate in judgment; even over angels. The authority that was corrupted is reassigned. The hierarchy is reversed. The Resurrection marks the turning point.

Galatians 4:7 *So you are no longer a slave but a son, and if you are a son, then you are also an heir through God.*

Reclaiming the Sacred Space – The Nations

The Temple is now each Believer. Redeemed one at a time.

Matt 28:16-20 *So the eleven disciples went to Galilee to the mountain Jesus had designated. (17) When they saw him, they worshiped him, but some doubted. (18) Then Jesus came up and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. (19) Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, (20) teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.*

2 Corinthians 3:17 *“Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is present, there is freedom.”*

Romans 8:15 *“For you did not receive the spirit of slavery leading again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption.”*

Reclaim the Sacred Space

The Temple is now represented by each Human Being. The sacred space. Take the Kingdom back one temple at a time.

How the Early Church Responded

Abstract Summary

The early church resisted system-driven religion by:

- centering on Christ, not control
- trusting grace over law
- valuing relationship over regulation
- obeying from love, not fear
- living by covenant, not contract

They were not anti-order.

They were anti-replacement of **Christ alone**.

Anything that replaces trust in God's righteousness becomes the righteousness of man.

How the Early Church Resisted System-Driven Religion

1. They Resisted Replacing Christ With a System

The apostles did not offer a new religious structure. They proclaimed a risen Lord.

Acts 2:36 *“God has made this Jesus whom you crucified both Lord and Christ.”*

Their allegiance was personal, not institutional. Christ was not the foundation of a system. He was the center of life.

This is why the church spread before it had buildings, creeds, or hierarchies.

2. They Rejected Law as a Control Mechanism

The first major crisis tested this directly. Should Gentile believers submit to the Jewish Law? The apostles answered clearly.

Acts 15:10–11 *“Why are you putting God to the test by placing on the neck of the disciples a yoke that neither our ancestors nor we have been able to bear?”*

They refused to rebuild the Law as a righteousness system. This moment defined the church: no ethnic righteousness; no performance entry; no system replacing grace

How the Early Church Resisted System-Driven Religion

3. They Centered on Fellowship, Not Regulation

Early Christian life was relational, not procedural.

Acts 2:42 *“They were devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.”*

Notice what is missing: no rulebook; no enforcement structure; no membership system. Order existed. Control did not.

4. They Lived Without Temple Dependence

The early church did not build a replacement temple. They believed something radical.

1 Corinthians 3:16 *“Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit lives in you?”*

This removed sacred space as a control tool. No priesthood monopoly. No sacred geography. No system of access.

How the Early Church Resisted System-Driven Religion

5. They Resisted Religious Elites

Authority existed, but it was relational and accountable.

Matthew 23:8 *“But you are not to be called ‘Rabbi,’ for you have one Teacher and you are all brothers.”*

Early leaders served. They did not dominate.

1 Peter 5:2–3 *“Shepherd the flock of God among you... not as lording it over those entrusted to you.”*

System-driven religion needs rank. The early church emphasized brotherhood.

How the Early Church Resisted System-Driven Religion

6. They Refused Social Contract Morality

The church did not blend into Roman civic religion. Their righteousness did not come from social approval.

Acts 5:29 *"We must obey God rather than people."*

They were willing to suffer exclusion rather than compromise allegiance.

- This is why persecution followed.

Grace-made people do not submit easily to moral systems.

7. They Practiced Voluntary, Not Enforced, Obedience

Giving, service, and sacrifice were not compelled.

2 Corinthians 9:7 *"Each one of you should give just as he has decided in his heart... for God loves a cheerful giver."*

Fear systems demand compliance.

Grace invites response.

This preserved sincerity and humility.

How the Early Church Resisted System-Driven Religion

8. They Kept Repentance Central

System religion minimizes repentance. It prefers rule-keeping. The early church preached repentance constantly.

Acts 3:19 *“Therefore, repent and turn back so that your sins may be wiped out.”*

Repentance keeps power from settling into systems. It keeps everyone equal at the foot of the cross.

9. They Expected the Spirit to Lead

The early church trusted the Spirit more than structure.

Romans 8:14 *“For all who are led by the Spirit of God are the sons of God.”*

This did not mean chaos. It meant dependence.

Systems promise predictability. The Spirit requires trust.

How the Early Church Resisted System-Driven Religion

10. They Warned Against Returning to Systems

The apostles repeatedly warned believers not to go backward.

Galatians 5:4 *“You have been severed from Christ, you who are trying to be justified by the law.”*

Returning to system-based righteousness was seen as spiritual danger.
Not maturity. Not stability.

11. Why This Resistance Could Not Last Forever

By the late second and third centuries:

- persecution increased
- growth demanded organization
- fear re-entered
- Systems slowly replaced trust.

But the New Testament witness remains clear:

- life before institution
- grace before structure
- covenant before contract