

It is Time to Become Righteous

⁶Just as Abraham “believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness...” ⁹So then, the faithful are blessed along with Abraham, the faithful one... ²⁹And if you belong to Messiah, then you are Abraham’s seed—heirs according to the promise. (Gal. 3:6, 9, 29)

What made Abraham righteous before the Lord? The answer is: ³For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness”... ⁶Then he believed in Adonai and He reckoned it to him as righteousness” (Ro. 4:3, Gen 15:6). I am persuaded that we have an identical decision to make today. Are you ready to become righteous by believing God and His promises? Are you ready and committed to do His Will in everything? Are you ready to stop doing iniquity? What is iniquity?

We were given free moral agency at creation but we were asked to trade it for fellowship with the Creator by doing what He asked. In Genesis 2 God gave Adam (Eve was not yet created) a command, but gave Adam free moral agency, that is, the ability to choose for himself whether to do right or to do wrong. **This was a sovereign decree, irrevocable and forever binding.** Yes Virginia, you and I are always free to make our own choice when it comes to God, when it comes to life, and when it comes to death. He created human life for fellowship with him (Adam walked with God in the garden in the cool of the evening), and as such He desired to be loved and cherished by choice, not by force. If He is God, He could have chosen differently, but He didn’t. We, as humans, make the choice.

The Psalmist states: “Behold, I was born in iniquity and in sin when my mother conceived me.” (תְּמַתֵּנִי אִמִּי וּבְחַטָּא (הָרָב־בָּעֵוֹן חוֹלָלְתִּי וּבְחַטָּא Ps. 51:5). The Hebrew word translated *iniquity* is the word *avón* (אָוֹן) and the Hebrew word translated *sin* is the word *chet* (חַטָּה). These are *two different* Hebrew words, yet Bible translations, such as the NIV, translate them both as sin. Do these two words mean to be sinful? In *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, *avón* is translated as an activity that is crooked or wrong, a **conscious and intentional** offense. On the other hand *chet* means to miss the mark/goal, i.e., to sin against God. The Artscroll TNK uses the word ‘fashioned’. How were you and I “fashioned in an activity that is crooked or wrong with a conscious and intentional offense so we might miss the mark?”

Isaiah has the answer: “each of us has turned to his own way.” Adam and Eve turned their own way – you and I certainly do. It is all about us, all the time. It is ‘how I see it,’ ‘how I interpret it,’ ‘how I believe it,’ and ‘what is relevant to me right now.’ Our actions, especially when we are young, are often based on I, I, I, and Me, Me, Me.

“But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our **iniquities**: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; **we have turned every one to his own way**; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all” (KJV) ... *But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed. We all like sheep have gone astray. Each of us turned to his own way. So Adonai has laid on Him the iniquity of us all” (TLV), (Isaiah 53:6).*

The definition of iniquity is clarified in: ²¹ “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord!’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but **he who does the will of My Father in heaven.**” ²² Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, didn’t we prophesy in Your name, and drive out demons in Your name, and perform many miracles in Your name?’ ²³ Then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you. Get away from Me, you workers of lawlessness (iniquity)!’ Matthew 7:21-23.” We must ask, ‘When is preaching or prophesying iniquity? When is casting out demons iniquity? And when is doing wonderful works iniquity?’ The answer is in the verse: **when we do these activities in our own will instead of the Father’s will.** It is the same Genesis story.

As Believers, we are called to follow in the steps of our Lord and Savior, Messiah *Yeshua*. It is significant that *Yeshua* did **nothing** of His own will, but **only the will** of His Heavenly Father (*John 6:38*).

Yeshua's refusal to follow His own will is lauded: "You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness (iniquity); therefore God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness above Your companions" (Heb. 1:9).

In a sovereign act our Creator endowed us with free moral agency, the right to choose between good and evil, between His Will and our will, between His Way and our way. But we collectively as humans have and continue to choose our own way, so a loving God and Father laid upon *Yeshua* the iniquity (the self-will, and free moral agency taken to the extreme) of us all.

If we use the definition of personal willfulness for *iniquity*, Scriptures burst out with new clarity, meaning and application: "*Direct my footsteps in Your word, and let no iniquity get mastery over me*" (Psalm 119:133). If every one of our decisions is not based on Scripture, we will fall into destructive habits that come by exercising our own willfulness.

Scripture distinguishes *uncleanness* from *iniquity*: "...*For just as you yielded your body parts as slaves to uncleanness and lawlessness (iniquity), leading to more lawlessness (iniquity), so now yield your body parts as slaves to righteousness, resulting in holiness.*"²⁰ *For when you were slaves of sin, you were free with regard to righteousness*" (Romans 6:19-20). Uncleanness involves a violation of God's physical or moral laws. But iniquity is doing even good deeds in our own willfulness – not by God's direction. Self-willed actions tend to produce more self-willed actions; thus, we go from what the KJV states as "*iniquity unto iniquity.*"

The mystery of iniquity (lawlessness) ("⁷*For the mystery of lawlessness is already operating ... They perish because they did not accept the love of the truth so as to be saved... to believe what is false*" See 2 Thes. 2:7-11) is that we will follow our own faulty reasoning when we have available to us the infinite wisdom of God. When we persist in doing our own will, God turns us over to a *reprobate* mind, and we believe the lie that we are equal with God. In reality, we have placed ourselves above God by deciding what our will is in each matter rather than determining the will of God.

'*Departing from iniquity*' ("*Get away from me, you workers of iniquity*" Matthew 7:23) means to stop doing what we want to do and to begin to do the will of God—which will be good works—acts of faith and righteousness. Only as we depart from the iniquity of works that are initiated by our own will, will we be able to recognize and achieve the good works that are initiated by the Will of God. Works that are directed by God fit into His bigger picture and His greater plan for the world. Every good deed must be motivated by God's love – not by our own self-will. Paul was motivated by the love of Messiah in his ministry among Believers – not by his own self-will (2 Corinthians 5:14).

¹⁷ *Now after he returned from defeating Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him, the king of Sodom went out to meet him in the Valley of Shaveh (this is the King's Valley).* ¹⁸ *Then Melchizedek, king of Salem, brought out bread and wine—he was a priest of El Elyon.* ¹⁹ *He blessed him and said, "Blessed be Abram by El Elyon, Creator of heaven and earth,* ²⁰ *and blessed be El Elyon, Who gave over your enemies into your hand."* *Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything.*

Let me ask again: are you ready to become righteous by believing God and His promises? Are you ready to do His Will in everything? Are you ready to stop doing iniquity? **Here is one prominent application:** Abraham gave God a tithe (tenth) of everything. He invested his own resources into the Melchizedek ministry. In return Melchizedek gave Abraham the revelation of bread and wine (and the corresponding blessing that goes with it). A tenth of your resources vs. Kiddush, is it worth it? How long will we strive with God on finances? I think that in 38 years on ministry I have heard every excuse for not tithing. Everyone reasons in his own mind to arrive at his own conclusion for his situation instead of believing (and therefore trusting in) God. Are you ready to: "*believe God, and it be credited to you as righteousness?*" Let me share from Marilyn's story one among many of the things she did in her walk before we were married that drove this matter into my innermost being...