

95 theses on righteousness by faith

(apologies to Martin Luther)

Preface

In these final hours of earth's history "one interest will prevail, one subject will swallow up every other—Christ our righteousness."— *Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 259.

To help fulfill this statement we present these theses on Christ and righteousness by faith. Our author, Morris Venden, pastor at Southwestern Adventist College in Keene, Texas, presents these not as the last word but as a discussion stimulator. In particular we would appreciate your editing any or all of these theses. When you respond, please change or add supporting scriptural references if needed. If a significant number of changes are offered and accepted we will reprint the list in the future. So please write, act, react, submitting your views whether in letter or article form. We want to hear from you.

- No. 1:** A Christian does what is right because he is a Christian, never in order to be one (John 15:5).
- No. 2:** Righteousness equals Jesus. We have no righteousness apart from Jesus (Rom. 1:16, 17).
- No. 3:** The only way to seek righteousness is to seek Jesus. (Rom. 4:4, 5).
- No. 4:** Christianity and salvation are based not on what you do but on whom you know (Rom. 3:28).
- No. 5:** Doing right by not doing wrong is not doing right. Being good by not being bad is not being good (Matt. 23:27, 28).
- No. 6:** Righteousness will make you moral, but morality will not make you righteous (Matt. 5:20).
- No. 7:** Our good works are not what cause us to be saved. Our bad works are not what cause us to be lost (Rom. 3:20).
- No. 8:** Everyone is born sinful (or self-centered) because everyone is born separated from God (Ps. 58:3).
- No. 9:** God does not hold us accountable for being born sinful (Eze. 18:20; John 1:9).
- No. 10:** We sin because we are sinful; we are not sinful because we sin (Rom. 7:14-20).
- No. 11:** Sin (living apart from God) results in sins (doing wrong things) (1 John 3:6).
- No. 12:** Whoever lives life apart from God is living in sin (John 16:8, 9).
- No. 13:** The best definition for faith is trust. Faith is depending upon Another (Matt. 15:21-28).
- No. 14:** Knowing God results in trusting God. If you don't know Him, you won't trust Him; if you don't trust Him, you don't know Him (2 Tim. 1:12).
- No. 15:** Faith is a fruit of the Spirit, not a fruit of the person. It is not something we work on or work up (Gal. 5:22).
- No. 16:** Positive thinking does not produce genuine faith, but faith will produce positive thinking (Rom. 10:17).
- No. 17:** Surrender is giving up on ourselves, not giving up our sins. Giving up our sins is the result of giving up on ourselves and seeking God (Rom. 10:3, 4).
- No. 18:** Working to give up our sins can keep us from giving up on ourselves (Rom. 9:31, 32).
- No. 19:** No one can crucify or bring himself to surrender. Someone else has to do that for us (Gal. 2:20).
- No. 20:** We are controlled by God or Satan. The only control we have is to choose who is going to control us (Rom. 6:16).
- No. 21:** The surrender of the will is the surrender of the power of choice, but we use our power of choice to surrender it. We give up our power of choice toward behavior; we keep our power of choice toward relationship (Phil. 2:13; Rom. 6:11).
- No. 22:** The only deliberate effort in living the Christian life is in seeking God—spontaneous effort toward other things will result (John 15:5; Phil. 4:13).
- No. 23:** Growing Christians experience on-again, off-again surrender—sometimes they depend on God and sometimes they depend on themselves (Luke 9:54; Matt. 16:16, 17, 22, 23).

- No. 24:** Conversion is the work of the Holy Spirit that produces a change of attitude toward God and creates a new capacity for knowing God (John 3:3-8).
- No. 25:** Conversion leads to a changed life (Eze. 36:26, 27).
- No. 26:** Conversion (as well as repentance) is a continuing experience, not once only (Luke 9:23).
- No. 27:** Repentance is sorrow for sin and turning away from sins. Repentance is a gift; therefore, sorrow for sin and turning away from sins is a gift (Acts 5:31).
- No. 28:** We do not change our lives in order to come to Christ; we come to Him just as we are, and He changes our lives (John 6:37).
- No. 29:** God gives us repentance before He gives forgiveness (Acts 3:19).
- No. 30:** Worldly sorrow is being sorry we broke a law and got caught. Godly sorrow is being sorry we broke a heart and hurt our best Friend (2 Cor. 7:10).
- No. 31:** The only known sin that can't be forgiven is the one for which we don't repent and ask forgiveness (1 John 1:9).
- No. 32:** Forgiveness is no good for the sinner unless it is accepted by the sinner (Ps. 86:5).
- No. 33:** God's forgiveness is not limited, but our acceptance of His forgiveness can be (Matt. 18:21, 22).
- No. 34:** Those who are forgiven much will love much; those who love much will obey much (Luke 7:41-43; John 14:15).
- No. 35:** Forgiveness is free, but it is not cheap; it cost the life of God's dear Son (John 3:16).
- No. 36:** God forgives sinners, not sins, but the Bible calls this the forgiveness of sins. Jesus died because sins could not be forgiven (Isa. 53:5-6, 8).
- No. 37:** Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures (1 Cor. 15:3).
- No. 38:** The cross made it possible for God to be just and to forgive anyone (Rom. 3:23-26).
- No. 39:** The death of Christ was necessary in order for us to be forgiven (John 3:14, 15).
- No. 40:** We can add nothing to what Jesus did at the cross, but God can add plenty (Heb. 7:25; 9:11, 12).
- No. 41:** Staying with Jesus is just as important as coming to Him (John 15:4).
- No. 42:** Assurance of salvation continues through the personal daily relationship with Jesus (1 John 5:11, 12).
- No. 43:** Christians should know that they have the assurance of salvation today (John 6:47).
- No. 44:** The Bible teaches "once saved, always saved," as long as you keep saved (Matt. 24:12, 13).
- No. 45:** Peace does not come from victory; victory comes from peace (John 8:11).
- No. 46:** One reason we keep sinning is because we don't believe we are forgiven. Assurance leads to victory, uncertainty leads to defeat (1 John 3:2, 3).
- No. 47:** Righteousness by faith is an experience, not simply a theory (Phil. 3:9, 10).
- No. 48:** The devotional life of the Christian is not optional. The relationship with God is the entire basis of the ongoing Christian life (John 17:3).
- No. 49:** If we don't take time for the Bible and prayer, we will die spiritually (John 6:53).
- No. 50:** Just because you read the Bible and pray doesn't mean you'll have a relationship with God, but you won't if you don't (John 5:39, 40).
- No. 51:** The primary purpose of prayer is not to get answers but for communication—to know Jesus (Rev. 3:20).
- No. 52:** The primary purpose of Bible study is not to get information but for communication—to know Jesus (Rev. 3:20).
- No. 53:** Until we learn to seek Jesus for His sake, not ours, things often get worse when we pray (Job).
- No. 54:** Anyone who gets discouraged with his relationship because of his behavior is a legalist (Rom. 7:14-24).
- No. 55:** True obedience is a gift from God—the robe is free! (Matt. 22:11-14).
- No. 56:** Real obedience comes from the inside out not the outside in (Matt. 23:25, 26).
- No. 57:** Genuine obedience is natural and spontaneous; it comes only through the faith relationship with Christ (John 14:15).
- No. 58:** One who is depending on God for power doesn't have to try hard to obey; he would have to try hard not to obey (1 John 3:6).
- No. 59:** Obedience that is only external is false obedience (Matt. 5:20).
- No. 60:** When we know God as it is our privilege to know Him, our life will be a life of continual obedience (1 John 2:3).
- No. 61:** Anyone who tries to live the Christian life apart from Christ is not a Christian; he is a legalist (whether conservative or liberal) (Gal. 3:1-3).
- No. 62:** There is no power for genuine obedience in the law. Mount Sinai is ineffective without Mount Calvary (Rom. 8:3).
- No. 63:** Christ is the end of the law for righteousness, but not the end of the law (Rom. 10:4).
- No. 64:** Good works done apart from Christ are bad works (Matt. 7:22, 23).
- No. 65:** The purpose of good works is not to save us but to bring glory to God (Matt. 5:16).
- No. 66:** When it comes to genuine faith and works, you can't have one without the other (James 2:17, 18, 26).
- No. 67:** Faith grows in quantity not in quality; growth is in the constancy of dependence upon God (Luke 17:5, 6).
- No. 68:** You don't grow by trying to grow (Matt. 6:27).
- No. 69:** Christians grow stronger by realizing their weakness. When we are weak, then we are strong (2 Cor. 12:9, 10).
- No. 70:** We can do all things through Christ who strengthens us, but without Him we can do nothing (Phil 4:13; John 15:5).
- No. 71:** Satan has no power to cause those who depend on God to sin, but those who depend on themselves are easily defeated (2 Cor. 10:4, 5).
- No. 72:** The abiding daily relationship with God leads to abiding surrender or moment-by-moment dependence on Him (John 15:2).

- No. 73:** Looking to self is always the point of separation from God and breaks the moment-by-moment dependence on Him (Matt. 14:28-30).
- No. 74:** God will never separate from us, but we can choose to separate from God (Rom. 8:35, 38, 39).
- No. 75:** The reason God wants us to witness is primarily for our good (Matt. 11:29).
- No. 76:** The desire to share comes naturally for the genuine Christian (although methods may vary) (2 Cor. 4:13).
- No. 77:** The happiest person in the world is the one whose life is most involved in serving others. The most miserable person is the one whose life is most involved in serving self (Mark 8:35).
- No. 78:** Christian service in the spiritual life corresponds to exercise in the physical life (Acts 3:6-9).
- No. 79:** The "gospel of the kingdom" is the good news of righteousness by faith (Matt. 6:33).
- No. 80:** The real issue in temptation is whether to live a life apart from Christ (John 16:8, 9).
- No. 81:** Temptations become sins when we consent to them in our minds (Matt. 5:21, 22, 28).
- No. 82:** Jesus was tempted to do right, but in His own power, and so are we (Matt. 4:2, 3).
- No. 83:** The Lord knows how to deliver the godly, not the ungodly, out of temptations (2 Peter 2:9).
- No. 84:** Temptations are overcome not at the time of the temptations, but always before (Heb. 4:16).
- No. 85:** Victory is not something we achieve; it is something we receive (1 Cor. 15:57).
- No. 86:** In the Christian warfare we are active toward the fight of faith and passive toward the fight of sins (Eph. 6:10-18).
- No. 87:** Real victory is getting the victory over trying to get the victory (2 Chron. 20:15, 17).
- No. 88:** Perfection of character is not our work; it is God's work in us (Heb. 13:20, 21).
- No. 89:** Perfection can be a dangerous topic if it focuses our attention on ourselves and our own works (Gal. 3:3).
- No. 90:** Jesus was like Adam before the Fall in that He had a sinless nature—He was not born separated from God. Jesus was like Adam after the Fall in physical strength, mental power, and moral worth (Luke 1:35; Heb. 2:17, 18).
- No. 91:** Jesus had no advantage over us in overcoming temptations (Heb. 4:15).
- No. 92:** Jesus overcame temptations in the same way that we can overcome—by the power above Him rather than the power from within Him (John 14:10).
- No. 93:** Jesus found sin repulsive. So long as we are depending on God, we also find sin repulsive (Heb. 1:8, 9).
- No. 94:** We can never be as Jesus was, but we can do as Jesus did (John 14:12).
- No. 95:** The problem of sin is a broken relationship between man and God—the goal of salvation is to restore the relationship between God and man (Rev. 19:7-9).

These theses, along with a twenty-lesson Bible study set, will be available from Pacific Press Publishing Association, Nampa, Idaho, later this year.

Righteousness in Christ

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out from him, and bring him at last to Himself—for this was the gospel instituted. All this God does—in Christ.

Condition of receiving salvation

Jesus bids us, "Believe . . . in me," "Learn of me," "Come unto me," "Follow me," "Abide in me." Personal acceptance of Him as a personal Saviour is the condition of salvation, and the only condition. Surrender to Him, repentance toward Him, confession to Him, acceptance of Him, believing Him, faith in Him, following Him, learning of Him, trusting Him, knowing Him, abiding in Him, resting in Him—these are the indications and blessed privileges of Christian experience.

To be a Christian, then, is to enter into relationship with a Person—a Person who loves you, cherishes you

friendship, deals tenderly and gently with you; who guides you in the way of righteousness and obedience, teaches you the truth; who has strength for all your needs and supplies it to you; who walks with you as a friend and communes with you; who shares His own eternal life with you; who comforts you in trouble, solves all your problems and perplexities, meets every crisis of life with you; who stands by your side always, smooths your pillow in sickness, goes down into the dark valley of death with you, and with whom you are safe. Knowing Him as a friend and a Saviour, you feel assured in leaving all the future in His hands, just as you commit all the present to Him.

Imparting His own life to you, He will fulfill all His commandments in you. Yours will be a commandment-keeping life because it is His life. There will be no

failure in obedience, because He is our obedience. Trusting Him, relying on Him, abandoning ourselves to Him, giving ourselves clear away to Him, we will be brought into full harmony with every requirement of God because of His life in us.

Preaching Christ

This is the glorious message to be taken to all the world in this generation. Christ only, Christ crucified, Christ risen, Christ ascended, Christ interceding, Christ coming again, Christ the only Saviour from sin, Christ our righteousness, Christ our obedience, Christ our coming king. Let us not cease "to teach and preach *Jesus Christ*"—"the chiefest among ten thousand," and the One "altogether lovely" (Acts 5:42; S. of Sol. 5:10, 16).

