

1 John 3:7

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.

Analysis

Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. John issues an urgent warning against deception regarding the relationship between righteousness and righteous living. "Let no man deceive you" (mēdeis planatō hymas) suggests false teachers were active, promoting a view that separated justification from sanctification, claiming one could be righteous before God while living unrighteously.

"He that doeth righteousness is righteous" (ho poiōn tēn dikaiosunēn dikaios estin) uses the present participle for habitual practice. True righteousness manifests in righteous deeds. The standard is "even as he is righteous" (kathōs ekeinos dikaios estin)—Christ's perfect righteousness. This doesn't teach works-righteousness; rather, it affirms that genuine imputed righteousness (justification) invariably produces imparted righteousness (sanctification).

Reformed theology maintains this inseparable connection: we are justified by faith alone, but the faith that justifies is never alone—it produces works. Those who are declared righteous in Christ (forensic justification) are also being made righteous by the Spirit (progressive sanctification). Doing righteousness doesn't make us righteous, but being righteous (by grace through faith) inevitably produces doing righteousness. The tree is known by its fruit (Matthew 7:16-20).

Historical Context

The Gnostic crisis involved both libertine and ascetic errors. Some Gnostics taught that since salvation was by spiritual knowledge and the body was mere matter, moral behavior was irrelevant. Believers could engage in immoral acts without affecting their spiritual status. John's vigorous refutation—"let no man deceive you"—indicates this teaching had infiltrated Christian communities.

Paul faced similar errors (Romans 6:1-2: "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid."). The apostolic witness consistently affirmed that grace transforms, it doesn't merely pardon. Righteousness is both imputed (credited to our account) and imparted (worked within us), never the former without the latter.

Related Passages

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How would you explain to someone that we're saved by grace through faith alone, yet true faith always produces righteous works?
2. What deceptions about righteousness exist in contemporary Christianity that separate justification from sanctification?
3. How does Christ's righteousness serve as both the grounds of our justification and the pattern for our sanctification?

Interlinear Text

Τεκνία	μηδεὶς	πλανάτω	ὑμᾶς·	ὁ	ποιῶν	τὴν
Little children	no man	deceive	you	G3588	he that doeth	G3588
G5040	G3367	G4105	G5209		G4160	
δικαιοσύνην	δίκαιός	ἐστίν·	καθὼς	ἐκεῖνος	δίκαιός	ἐστίν·
righteousness	righteous	is	even as	he	righteous	is
G1343	G1342	G2076	G2531	G1565	G1342	G2076

Additional Cross-References

1 John 2:29 (Righteousness): If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.

Romans 2:13 (Righteousness): (For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified.

Psalms 45:7 (Righteousness): Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.

1 John 3:3 (Parallel theme): And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

1 John 2:1 (Righteousness): My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:

1 John 2:26 (Parallel theme): These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you.

Acts 10:35 (Righteousness): But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.

Psalms 106:3 (Righteousness): Blessed are they that keep judgment, and he that doeth righteousness at all times.

Ephesians 5:9 (Righteousness): (For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;)

1 Corinthians 6:9 (Righteousness): Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind,

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