I’d like to share an experience that happened to me several years ago when I was going through one of these times of self-examination. It turned out to be an encounter with Jesus that totally changed my life.

Prior to this experience, although I knew about Jesus and His ransom sacrifice for the sins of mankind, it wasn’t like He was very personal to me. I guess, it’s like the feeling that He was up there in the heavenly realm with the Father, and we are left to our own here on earth to try to ward off Satan’s attacks and make ourselves acceptable to Jehovah.

I fellowshipped at a local congregation of Christian believers; yet, I knew in my heart that I didn’t have Jehovah’s approval upon my life. The questions that kept running through my mind were: “If I were to die tonight, would I be approved or disapproved in Jehovah’s eyes?” “Would He grant me eternal life at the impending judgment?”

There was a sense of guilt that I carried because I knew that no matter how hard I tried, I always failed to “be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matthew 5:48). As James 3:2 states: “For we all stumble in many ways, If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body as well.”

How could I “be perfect”? Is perfection just something we are to “work toward”—not necessarily something we are to master in this life? What about Jehovah’s justice? Is Jehovah just going to balance His justice on the basis of His mercy? How could He be righteous to do this? For to diminish any of His righteousness on the basis of His mercy is to compromise His justice! If I was truly honest with myself, I had to admit that I wasn’t measuring up.

Recently, I was reminded of this fact as I was rushing to the post office to mail a package before they closed promptly at 5:30PM. As I was running through the parking lot at 5:31PM, I could see they were just beginning to lock the main doors. I ran up to the door, knocked and pleaded with the postman to let me in. After all, I was only one minute late! Yet, through the door, he stated that they were closed and he couldn’t let me in.

As I was thinking about this, I contemplated how even in our world today, justice requires that everything be done on time—no exceptions! I began to think of the kind of being Jehovah is. He is a God of order, perfection, and holiness. At no time is He ever late, nor does He ever waiver in His purposes. Although He is infinitely loving, His perfection and holiness requires that nothing enter His Paradise that is unclean. If we in justice require that our fellow human beings live up to perfect standards (such as keeping a schedule—i.e., the post office) that cannot be waved, how can Jehovah be righteous to bend His rules “on the basis of His mercy”? He can’t!! Never let it be said that we human beings are more just and righteous in the standards that we require of our fellow humans than He is! Thus, we see that for Jehovah to diminish His justice on the basis of His love and mercy is to compromise the very nature of His righteousness.

So, you can see the predicament. Pretty bleak, wasn’t it? Although I knew Jesus died for Adamic sin—thus paying for what Adam lost—there was something missing. I still carried the guilt of my personal sins on my shoulders (i.e., all the times I was dishonest, disobedient, rebellious, unfaithful, and disloyal). How I longed to have the assurance that when I would knock on the door for Paradise, Jehovah would let me in! How I longed to have His peace and a sense of Jehovah’s approval upon my life. Hope for me came as I began to internalize the truth of the following passages:

“But God recommends his own love to us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more, therefore, since we have been declared righteous now by his blood, shall we be saved through him from wrath…. The one who did not know sin he made to be sin for us, that we might become God’s righteousness by means of him.”—Romans 5:8-9; 2 Cor. 5:21

What did Isaiah mean when he stated that “all our acts of righteousness are like a garment for periods of menstruation” (Isaiah 64:6)? What did Paul mean when he stated that “the man who does not work but puts faith in him who declares the ungodly one righteous, his faith is counted for righteousness.” (Romans 4:5)?

Light penetrated my heart when I recognized the truth of 1 Peter 2:24: “He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree; that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.” What does the word “bore” mean? It literally means to “carry”. According to this passage, where did Jesus “carry” “our” personal sins? It states that He carried all our own personal sins “in His body.”

As the light dawned in my heart, this wonderful truth hit me: Jehovah God literally transferred ALL my own personal sins to the body of Jesus and He hung there, dying for all my own wickedness—carrying it all “in His body”!!

The impact of that vivid picture struck me at the core of my heart. Jesus died—not just for Adamic sin—but for all my own personal sins! “In His body,” He carried—not just the sins of all mankind—but every thing that I personally had done that made me approved of in Jehovah’s sight—from impure thoughts to self centered motives that resulted in actions that displeased Jehovah.

Have you ever visualized Jesus dying on the tree for all your own personal sins? Have you ever visualized His blood flowing for you? Do you realize that it wasn’t just Adamic sin that put Jesus on the tree, but your sins and my sins that held Him there?

One time when I was thinking about this, all of a sudden I came to the realization that if I were to stand before Jehovah God, He could charge me with the murder of Jesus and I would have to plead guilty—for MY personal sins murdered Him. Pretty sobering isn’t it?
But this is the love Jesus has for you and me. Do you realize that if you were the only person in the world who would personally accept Him, Jesus still would have died for you? Talk about love!! I can't get enough of it, and yet, I am so unworthy of it. “…declared righteous NOW by his blood...made to be sin for us, that we might become God’s righteousness…” These words echoed in my heart.

It was at this breaking point that I realized that there is nothing I can personally do to make myself acceptable to Jehovah and to earn Jehovah’s approval upon my life. I recognized that I needed to go directly to Jesus and ask Him to be my personal Lord and Savior, just as Acts 22:16 commands: “And now why do you delay? Arise...wash away your sins, calling on His name.’”

As I continued to study God’s Word, I discovered how to “be perfect” as the Father requires—not in my own righteousness—but in the righteousness of Christ as His blood covers all my own personal sins. Hebrews 10:10 states that “we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all time.” The word sanctified means “to set apart as holy.”

How are we “set apart as holy”? According to this passage, it is by the “offering of the body of Jesus Christ”. As I read further in Hebrews 10, I noticed verse 14 states: “For it is by one [sacrificial] offering that he has made those who are being sanctified PERFECT perpetually.” The word “perpetually” carries the idea of continual “perfection”—being based on Christ’s “once for all time” sacrifice—that is never broken. It is a righteousness that is literally imputed to my account—never to be taken away from me once I placed my full trust in Christ alone.

At that very moment that I went to Jesus and asked Him to give me His righteousness in exchange for my sin, I became “perfect” in my standing before Jehovah; for Jehovah no longer sees me in the context of my sin and unworthiness, but in the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Just as Colossians 3:3 states: “For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God.”

I can’t put into words the peace that came over me the moment I gave my heart to Jesus and trusted Him alone to be my personal worthiness before Jehovah God. All I know is that one minute, I was under the guilt of my personal sins; the next minute I was free and had the immediate sense of Jehovah’s approval. One minute, Jehovah God was a distant, impersonal God to whom I would pray but never sure if He really heard; the next minute He was real to me and His overwhelming peace flooded me with a joy that I cannot explain.

Jesus had personally heard my prayer, responded by washing me clean of my sin, coming into my life, and inviting me into a personal relationship with Him. Indeed, Paul’s words to the Corinthians have proven true in my relationship with Jesus:

“How can you have “fellowship” with someone you never talk to? Ever since I went to Jesus and asked Him to give me His righteousness in exchange for my sin, I have never again feared disapproval from Jehovah. As I live for Him, Jesus continues to draw me into closer and closer fellowship with Him.

“They said therefore to Him, ‘What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?’ Jesus answered and said to them, ‘This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent.’”—John 6:28-29

Witnesses for Jesus, Inc
PO Box 50911
Colorado Springs, CO 80949 USA
Website: www.4jehovah.org

How Can I Have Jehovah’s Approval Upon My Life?

“Everyone thought I was this happy and vivacious full-time minister. I was always the one to help others with their problems. At the same time, though, I felt as if I were dying inside. Disquieting thoughts and mental anguish were taking a toll on me. I started to feel alienated from people. I just wanted to stay home in bed. For months, I begged Jehovah to let me die.’—Vanessa”

Have you ever felt like no matter how hard you try, you’re not measuring up? Oh, you attend Kingdom Hall and plaster a smile on your face as if to say: “Everything’s fine,” but in your conscience, you know that you do not have Jehovah’s approval upon your life.

“Keep testing whether you are in the faith, keep proving what you yourselves are. Or do you not recognize that Jesus Christ is in union with you? Unless you are disapproved.”—2 Corinthians 13:5

I think we all go through times of self-examination where we reflect back on our lives and question our loyalty to Jehovah God. After all, this is what Scripture commands us to do! Each one of us needs to ask himself, “How am I measuring up?” “Am I truly ‘in the faith’?”