



Parkway Fellowship

YHWH: NAMES OF GOD • Jehovah Tsidkenu • Jeremiah 23:5-6; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Isaiah 64:6; 1 Peter 2:24 •
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MAIN POINT

The LORD is our righteousness.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Share a story from your childhood about when you did something that damaged your home or room in some way. Did you admit fault? Did you try and fix the damage yourself? What does your response say about you?

Do you tend to struggle more with guilt over your sinfulness or trying to work to pay God back? Share something from your life that supports your answer? What counsel could you give yourself?

We don't always do what is right, but God does. Righteousness is the attribute of God by which He does what is right and in accordance with His nature and law. God always acts rightly, and He has imputed His righteousness onto us through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. We are predisposed to unrighteousness, and our only hope of righteousness is in Christ alone.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| Ask a volunteer to read Jeremiah 23:5-6.

Why is righteousness an important trait for the LORD to possess?

Of all the ways God could have announced the promise of the Messiah, why do you think He chose the words, "righteous Branch" and "The LORD Our Righteous Savior"?

| Ask a volunteer to read 2 Corinthians 5:21.

What does it mean that you have become the righteousness of Christ? How does knowing that make you feel?

How does believing that we have the righteousness of Christ combat the lie that the better we perform, the more God will love us?

Why might God want you to know, today, that you don't have to perform to earn His love? How would knowing that change the way you relate to Him?

God is not the kind of father who is always looking for his children to earn his affection. Nor is he like the employer who constantly demands the bigger and better work. He has fully given His love and approval to us, not because of our merit, but based on the sacrifice of Jesus. When we stop believing the lie of performance, we move deeper into the great life of joy that God has for us.

| Ask a volunteer to read Isaiah 64:6.

Based on this verse, how would you describe yourself?

Is the message in this verse good news or bad news? Is it freeing or oppressive to consider that your very best efforts are "like filthy rags"? Explain.

The confession of sin in this passage continues with the honest admission that uncleanness has infected everyone in the community; no one is righteous, not even one. This shows that the problem being faced by this community was not some outside military force or a problem related to their material circumstances. The central difficulty was the people's personal inability to avoid what was sinful. Clearly, becoming God's righteousness is not something we have earned. We are not loved by what we do.

| Ask a volunteer to read 1 Peter 2:24.

How do you react to these verses? Why?

What does it mean for us to "die to sins"? What about "live for righteousness"?

Even when we know Jesus, we sometimes continue to live as if we're defined by what happened in the past. We still walk with a limp and drift away from God's plan in the present, even though our wounds have been restored.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Because the human race is completely unrighteous, the instigation for providing righteousness had to come from God. God satisfied his own standards of righteousness by offering a righteous sacrifice (his Son) for the sins of mankind. Every person who embraces by faith what God has done can be declared righteous in his sight.

In this week's message, we learned the impact of the Lord's righteousness is that: I am more dependent on Jesus than I realize. I am loved, but not by what I do. Jesus has been and will always be my only hope. Which of these three statements is most meaningful to you personally today? Why?

In what situation do you need to stop trying to be right and depend on the righteousness of Christ?

In what ways do you still try to earn God's love? Why won't that work?

What would change in your life if you were to honestly believe that Jesus is your only hope?

PRAYER

Thank Jesus for descending to the depths of our need and taking upon Himself the penalty and punishment for our sins. Pray that God will give us such understanding and humble appreciation for His righteousness that we will rest in Him like never before.

COMMENTARY

| 2 Corinthians 5:19-21

5:19-21 What Christ did, God did. Christ's death mainly affected the world, that is, human sinners (rather than evil supernatural beings, for whom no divine provision for reconciliation has been made). Christ's death upholds God's righteousness. Trespasses were placed on the One who did not know sin. In return, the righteousness of God is credited (imputed) to all who are in Him. The message of reconciliation is known to others only when ambassadors for Christ spread it. The Great Commission is the responsibility of reconciled human beings, not angels (Matt. 28:18-20).

| Isaiah 64:5-7

64:5-7 Isaiah also confessed sin on behalf of the community, thus justifying God's judgment against them. Though they were like a polluted garment, they will now obey and experience God's salvation. "Polluted garment" means clothes stained by menstrual blood and thus rendered ritually unclean (Lv 15:19-33).

| 1 Peter 2:24

2:24. The ultimate illustration of unjust suffering and pain is seen in the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Christ's death was more than just an example of responding properly to unjust suffering. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree. Christ took the consequences of our sins upon himself, and by his sacrificial death made atonement for them. By his wounds you have been healed cements this thought. Although there is some debate over the extent of the meaning of this phrase, it seems that Peter applied these words normally, in the sense that by Christ's wounds we have been "healed" from sin (Grudem, 132) through the free gift of forgiveness. Peter's emphasis was on spiritual healing or salvation, not physical healing.

Having said all of this, the idea of living a "good life" must not be lost. As we identify with Christ in salvation, the goal is to live for righteousness. The death of Jesus Christ enables believers, even in the midst of suffering, to live a life that is right with God, that models the characteristics mentioned in this chapter. "Righteousness," as it is used here, suggests the right kind of living, the ethical lifestyle that has been the focus of this major section. By living for righteousness, the believer continues to live out the declaration of God's praises not only through a verbal testimony but also as a lifestyle testimony.