

Righteousness

The word “righteousness” has become a religious cliché that has lost its meaning to many people.

Even Christians are confused about what righteousness is.

This has left our society without a clear understanding of what it takes to have a relationship with God.

I believe we are seeing it play out in our nation’s moral decay.

It’s imperative that we get back to the basics of **righteousness**.

Let’s take a look at righteousness in the Word of God

“Righteousness” and its counterpart, “righteous,” appear 540 times in 520 verses of the Bible.

In contrast, “faith,” “faithfulness,” and “faithful” are only used 348 times in 328 verses.

This means that there are 1.5 times as many scriptures about righteousness as there are about faith.

Righteousness is important.

The definition of righteousness is simply,

“right standing with God.”

Righteousness is the condition of being in right relationship with the Lord.

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This can only happen through **TOTAL** faith and dependence upon Christ.

Rom. 11:6 But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace.

There is no other way, and there is nothing we can add to our faith to obtain right relationship with the Lord

One of the things that blinds people to a true understanding of righteousness is confusion about how we become right in the sight of God.

It is commonly thought that our actions are the determining factor in God's judgment of our righteousness.

That's is simply NOT true.

There is a relationship between our actions and our right standing with God, but right relationship with God produces actions, not the other way around.

That is to say, we are not made righteous by what we do.

Rom. 5:17-18

17 For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.

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18 So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men.

Righteousness is a gift that comes from the Lord to those who accept what Jesus has done for them by faith

The gift of salvation produces a changed heart that, in turn, changes our actions.

Righteousness is a condition of the heart.

Actions cannot change our hearts.

1 Sam. 16:7 tells us that It's the heart of man that God looks upon and we must be righteous in our hearts to truly worship God.

Jesus taught us in *Matt. 23:25-26*

25 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside they are full of robbery and self-indulgence.

26 You blind Pharisee, first clean the inside of the cup and of the dish, so that the outside of it may become clean also.

It's through a changed heart that our actions change.

The heart is the issue. Actions are only an indication of what is in our hearts.

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Actions are the fruit the heart produces.

Modern-day Christianity often puts the emphasis on actions instead of issues of the heart.

This is reflected in Christians' excessive efforts to legislate change in people's actions instead of changing their hearts by the preaching of the Gospel.

It's the Gospel that contains the power of God, not political action groups (Rom. 1:16). Laws only affect actions. The Gospel changes hearts. Once hearts are changed, actions change.

How do we know if our heart has changed? How do we think towards a person? How do we think towards a person who hurts us?

Contrary to popular belief, Christianity does not promote receiving justice from the Lord.

Praise God for that!

The Lord has a much better plan. We get what we believe.

I once developed pictures in a part time job after school and people would come into the store to look at their proofs and say things like,

"This picture doesn't do me justice." I never had the nerve to say this, but I often thought, *Lady, you don't need justice, you need mercy.*

That's the way it is with God.

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We sometimes call for justice but that's not what we need.

As the Scriptures say, *Is. 53:6*

*All of us like sheep have gone astray,
Each of us has turned to his own way;
But the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all
To fall on Him.*

Again, in *Romans 3:23* the Scriptures say, “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”

“There is none righteous, no, not one” according to *Rom. 3:10*.

The wonderful plan of salvation is that those who put their faith in Jesus and what He did for us get what He deserves.

On the other hand, those who do not put their **TOTAL** faith in Christ will ultimately get what they deserve.

Believe me, that is not what they want. Religion has subtly instructed people to trust in their own goodness instead of God's.

TOTAL faith is the battle field to righteousness, we cannot live a life of right standing (Relationship) with God without giving him everything.

Just like a great marriage it can only be complete through a TOTAL faith in God.

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The Biblical story of the handwriting on the wall illustrates this point

In Dan. 5:1-31 Belshazzar was the king of Babylon.

His father, Nebuchadnezzar, had conquered the nation of Israel and brought all the wealth of the temple, along with most of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, back to Babylon.

During an extravagant feast, with 1,000 of his lords in attendance,

Belshazzar chose to toast his gods using the golden vessels from the temple in Jerusalem, which was in open defiance of the God of Israel.

The Lord moved swiftly and dramatically by creating an image of a man's hand, with fingers that wrote on the wall in front of Belshazzar and all his guests.

Belshazzar called on all his magicians and wise men to decipher the writing, but none could.

Then the queen reminded Belshazzar about Daniel who had interpreted the dreams and visions of Nebuchadnezzar when no one else could.

Daniel was summoned and the writing explained.

The message from God revealed that Belshazzar had been weighed in the balances and was found wanting.

Therefore, his kingdom was divided and given to the Medes and Persians.

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This came to pass that very night. Belshazzar was overthrown, and Darius, the Persian, took control.

If we were weighed in the balances against God's righteousness as Belshazzar was, we too would come up short.

God's righteousness is always more in quantity and quality than ours will ever be.

Is. 64:6 is telling us that our righteousness is as filthy rags compared to God's righteousness.

Someone might say, "That's not fair.

No one can compete with God's righteousness."

That's exactly right!

But, God's righteousness is the standard by which everyone must be measured.

So then, how can anyone be saved?

The answer is that no one can be saved, if they are trusting in their own righteousness.

We all must have a righteousness that exceeds anything we could ever produce through our own effort.

That's where Jesus enters.

Jesus was in right relationship with God as no one else can be.

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He is the Son of God.

1 Tim. 3:16 tells us that He is God manifested in the flesh.

He is holy and pure and without sin, yet He became sin for us according to 2 Cor. 5:21,

He took our sin in His own body on the cross (1 Pet. 2:24).

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” (Is. 53:4-5).

In return for Jesus taking our sin, those who put their faith in Him get His righteousness instead of their own.

Last night what the president did for the world was protect it! He made a decision for Global safety, I believe God saved his life so he could save the lives of thousands if not millions.

In the presidents speech this morning he said God Bless Isrial, God Bless America....

It's not our actions that make us acceptable to the Father.

it's our trust in Jesus that imparts the righteousness of Jesus into our born-again spirits that makes us in right standing with God.

Those who don't understand this righteousness, which comes from God as a gift, become frustrated trying to

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establish their own righteousness through good works (Rom. 10:3). It won't work.

it's an all or nothing situation (Rom. 11:6).

We must trust completely in what Jesus did for us to obtain right relationship with God.

This is precisely the condition of millions of people in the body of Christ today.

They receive salvation by putting total faith in Christ for the forgiveness of their sins,

Failure to understand this truth is at the root of all guilt and condemnation.

Satan's only inroad into our lives is sin.

If we understand our right standing with God on the basis of what Jesus did for us, and not by our own actions, then Satan's power to condemn is gone.

Those who live with a feeling of unworthiness are not trusting in God's righteousness but are looking to their own actions to obtain right standing with God.

That will never work.

Let God be God.....