

# 19. WHAT ARE RIGHT AND WRONG KINDS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS?

## LET THE SCRIPTURES ANSWER

*All Scripture references are from the New King James Translation*

### What Is Righteousness?

#### Genesis 18

19 (God said of Abraham:) “For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the Lord, to do righteousness and justice...”

#### Leviticus 19

15 [God commanded Israel:] “You shall do no injustice in judgment. You shall not be partial to the poor, nor honor the person of the mighty. In righteousness you shall judge your neighbor.

#### Deuteronomy 6

24 And the Lord commanded us to observe all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God, for our good always, that He might preserve us alive...

25 Then it will be righteousness for us, if we are careful to observe all these commandments before the Lord our God, as He has commanded us.

#### Matthew 3

15 (What was Jesus wanting to accomplish when He came to John to be baptized?) But Jesus answered and said to him, “Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he allowed Him.

#### Romans 6

16 Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one’s slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?

#### 2 Corinthians 6

14 Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteous-ness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?

### The Importance Of Righteousness

#### Acts 10

35 “...in every nation whoever fears Him

[God] and works righteousness is accepted by Him.” cf. Prov. 12:28; 14:34; 21:3, 21

#### 1 John 2

29 If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone who practices righteousness is born of Him.

#### 1 John 3

7 Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous.

10 In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother.

Jesus stressed the importance of the new birth when He said: “unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God... unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God” (John 3:3, 5; cf. John 1:12). And righteousness is one of the marks of the new birth:

### Righteousness Ascribed To The Lord, His Leadership And His Word

#### Psalms 11

7 For the Lord is righteous, He loves righteousness; His countenance beholds the upright.

#### Psalms 23

1 The LORD *is* my shepherd; I shall not want.

3 He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake.

#### Psalms 45

6 Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom.

7 You love righteousness and hate wickedness... (cf. Heb. 1:8-9)

#### Psalms 89

14 Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne...

#### Psalms 119

172 My tongue shall speak of Your word, for all Your commandments are righteousness.

Isaiah 5

16 But the Lord of hosts shall be exalted in judgment, and God who is holy shall be hallowed in righteousness.

Isaiah 11

4 But with righteousness He [the Messiah] shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth...

5 Righteousness shall be the belt of His loins, and faithfulness the belt of His waist.

Romans 1

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.

17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith."

2 Timothy 3

16 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,

17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

### Wrong Kinds Of Righteousness Unacceptable To God

1. Righteousness is wrong when it becomes self righteousness:

Ezekiel 33

13 When I say to the righteous that he shall surely live, but he trusts in his own righteousness and commits iniquity, none of his righteous works shall be remembered; but because of the iniquity that he has committed, he shall die.

Matthew 5

20 [Jesus to His followers said:] "For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven." cf. Matt. 6:1-2, 5, 7-8, 16; 23:2-26

Matthew 23

27 Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's

bones and all uncleanness.

28 Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

Luke 18

9 Also He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others:

10 Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.

11 The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men -- extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector.

12 I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.'

13 And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!'

14 I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

Romans 10

2 ...I bear them [much of the Jewish nation] witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.

3 For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God.

2. Righteousness (justification) is wrong which is sought by obeying the Old Law

Romans 9

31 ...Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness.

32 Why? Because they did not seek it by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law...

Romans 10

4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

Man could not keep the Old Law perfectly and the blood of animals could not take away sins (Heb. 10:1-4). Man just could not obtain righteousness and justification under that Covenant.

Galatians 2

21 I do not set aside the grace of God; for if

righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain.

### Galatians 3

**21 Is the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not! For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law.** Cf. Galatians 5:4, 18

### But What About Abraham?

Some insist, based on Romans 4:2-22, that works done in obedience to the Lord have nothing to do with righteousness which is under the New Covenant or dispensation of Christ: **“For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? ‘Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.’ Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt”** (Rom. 4:2-4). But the works and law referred to in this passage was that of the Old Covenant (namely circumcision) that many Jews were seeking to bind on Gentiles in the first century (Acts 15:1; cf. Gal. 5:1-6). The apostle Paul called attention to the fact that God reckoned or accounted faith to Abraham for righteousness long before the Old Law (requiring circumcision) was ever given: **“How then was it accounted? While he was circumcised, or uncircumcised? Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised. And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while still uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all those who believe, though they are uncircumcised, that righteousness might be imputed to them also, and the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also walk in the steps of the faith which our father Abraham had while still uncircumcised”** (Rom. 4:10-12; cf. Gal. 3:1-14). On the other hand, Abraham was justified by works—not works under the Old Law, but rather works of obedience to commands which God had given him: **“Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect? And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, ‘Abraham**

**believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.’ And he was called the friend of God. You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only”** (James 2:21-24); cf. Gen. 15:2-6).

### Righteousness that is accepted by God can come only by, in and through Christ

#### Romans 3

**21 But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,**

**22 even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference;**

#### Romans 5

**18 Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life.**

**19 For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous.**

#### Romans 8

**3 For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh,**

**4 that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.**

#### Romans 9

**30 What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness of faith;**

#### 1 Corinthians 1

**30 But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God--and righteousness and sanctification and redemption--**

**31 that, as it is written, “He who glories, let him glory in the LORD.”**

#### 2 Corinthians 5

**21 For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.**

#### Philippians 3

9 [The apostle Paul's desire was that he might] be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith;

### **The Way Of The Lord Is The Way Of Righteousness, And The Christian Dare Not Depart From It**

#### **2 Peter 2**

20 For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning.

21 For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them.

22 But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: "A dog returns to his own vomit," and, "a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire." cf. Heb. 6:4-6; 10:26-31

### **Righteousness That Is Right And Attributes Thereof**

Righteousness that is right involves doing that which is right in the eyes of the Lord.

#### **Proverbs 14**

34 Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.

#### **Proverbs 21**

3 To do righteousness and justice is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice.

21 He who follows righteousness and mercy finds life, righteousness and honor.

#### **Matthew 5**

6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled. --Christ

#### **Matthew 6**

33 But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. --Jesus Christ

#### **John 7**

24 Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment. --Jesus Christ

#### **Romans 14**

17 for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy

in the Holy Spirit.

#### **Ephesians 4**

22 that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts,

23 and be renewed in the spirit of your mind,

24 and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.

#### **Ephesians 5**

8 For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light

9 (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth),

10 finding out what is acceptable to the Lord.

#### **Ephesians 6**

14 Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness...

#### **Philippians 1**

10 that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ,

11 being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

#### **1 Timothy 6**

11 But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness.

#### **2 Timothy 2**

22 Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

#### **Hebrews 11**

7 By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith. cf. Gen. 6:13-22

#### **James 3**

18 Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

#### **James 5**

16 ...The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.

#### **1 Peter 3**

12 "For the eyes of the LORD are on the

righteous, and His ears are open to their prayers; but the face of the LORD is against those who do evil.”

**Heaven--Home Of The Righteous**

**Matthew 13**

43 [*In heaven*] the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.

**2 Peter 3**

13 ...we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

**Revelation 19**

8 And to her [*the Lord's church*] it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. cf. Rev. 19:7; Rom. 7:4; Eph. 5:23-27

--David W. Echols Sr.