

# Righteousness And The Christian

Explore Your Faith Teaching Series - Explo-22 ©

With Pastor Joseph Rodrigues

## OUTLINE

### Introduction:

In this session, we are going to have a look at the Righteousness of the believer; what it is, how it is received, and how a proper understanding of righteousness is vital to determining our spiritual temperature. *To not understand 'righteousness' is to fail to enjoy the full benefits of what Jesus died on the cross to achieve for us in this life on earth.*

When we understand 'righteousness' we can experience what it is "to be seated in heavenly places in Christ", and "to reign in life by One, Christ Jesus". God's plan for Christians is that we should be able 'to mount up with wings as eagles', and 'to run and not be weary; walk and not faint'.

To live victoriously therefore, we need to be certain about whether we are 'righteous' or we are not. What we believe about ourselves will influence the way we live even though we profess Christians!

### Meaning of "righteousness" in the OT and the NT

**General:** conveys the idea of "straightness"; the notion of an action that conforms to a norm or standard.

#### **Biblical:**

Basic ingredient in the OT idea of righteousness is *relationship* both between God and man (Ps. 50:6; Jer. 9:24) and between man and man (Deut. 24:13; Jer. 22:3).

The concept included the promotion of well being and the peace of the community (righteous acts include the helping of the poor and needy (Daniel 4:27; Amos 5:12). Hence the 'almsgiving' in NT

The righteousness of God involved not only his moral attributes but also his redemptive activity.

In the NT, the idea conveyed is a sense of conformity to the demands and obligations of the will of God. For example in the NT we come across the term "righteousness of the law" (Gal 3:21; Phil 3:6, 9 etc.) Human attainment of righteousness is sometimes relatively positively viewed (Lk. 1:6; 2:25; Mt. 5:20) but in the end is shown as falling short of true conformity to the divine will (Rom. 3: 9-20; Lk. 18:9-14; Jn. 8:7). In contrast to this *human unrighteousness* stands the righteousness of God (Rom. 1:17) which, in consistency with OT understanding, conveys the thought of God's redemptive activity in the miracle of his grace.

This righteousness of God is proclaimed by Jesus as a gift to those who are granted the kingdom of God (Mt. 5:6). The unrighteous sinner who repents and believes receives God's righteousness: i.e., he is given *a true relationship with God* which involves *the forgiveness of sin* and a new moral standing with God in union with Christ "The Righteous One" (Rom. 3:21-31; 4:1-25; 10:3; 1 Cor. 1:30; 2 Cor. 5:21; Phil. 3:9).

### **It is this understanding of righteousness that is crucial to experiencing victory in our Christian walk.**

The question we must ask ourselves is: "how righteous am I?"

### **What hinders us from living righteously?**

Misconceptions about righteousness, which have come from wrong teaching, such as:

Christians are "sinners saved by grace" - the bible reserves the term 'sinner' for the unsaved!

It is *normal* for Christians to sin ("we're only human!"); therefore, it is easier for the Christian to sin than to do right

Bad thought and temptations are sinful

Sainthood is something that needs to be achieved (i.e., there are classes of Christianity)

We can only draw close to Christ through acts of righteousness

Only Church activities and other 'religious' activities (e.g. Social work) constitute righteous acts

### **Why do such teachings hinder us?**

1) *Because they bring us back under the law* (trying to attain righteousness/god's approval through good works). This was to some extent true in the OT where *obedience to the law* was essential to righteousness. In the NT, it is different. **See Gal. 2:16**. When we try to do this, we are actually under a curse! But Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law (Gal. 3:13) and we have a righteousness that is by faith, *apart from the law* (Rom. 3:21, 22, 28). ***We cannot be more righteous than God has declared us to be; however, we have to learn how to let that righteousness be outworked in our lives.***

2) *Because they succeed in making us put off to the future most of the benefits that we should enjoy as a result of whom we are NOW, not when we get to heaven!* For example:

We *already* are more than conquerors (Rom. 8:37)

We *already* are complete in him (Col. 2:10)

We *already* have been released from condemnation (Rom. 8:1)

We *already* are kept from falling and *have been presented* (are being and will be presented) faultless ... (Jude 24)

We *already* are being changed into the image of Christ from glory to glory (2 Cor. 3:18)

We *already* have victory over the lust of the flesh by walking in the Spirit (Gal. 5:16)

We are *already* blessed with all spiritual blessings/ are chosen have obtained an inheritance etc (Eph. 1:3 ff)

We *already* have the experience of being filled with the fullness of God/ have his power working in us (Eph. 3:19-20)

### **How are we righteous?**

-Because God has made it possible to regain the righteousness lost by Adam. This is the good news of the gospel (Rom. 1: 16-17)

-God transfers our sins onto Jesus and his righteousness onto us (2 Cor. 5:21). This is *imputed* righteousness ('credited to your account'). It covers the believer (like the sprinkled blood on the mercy seat covered sin) and ***is sufficient***. This covering is referred to as 'propitiation' (Rom. 3:25), meaning that God has made Jesus to be *a covering* for us.

This righteousness cannot be taken away from the believer and needs no good works to be retained. It is a gift given to believers, and is appropriated only through faith (Rom 5:1).

This righteousness of Christ cannot be improved upon by any of our good works. It is perfect and complete. Our responsibility is to allow this *imputed* righteousness to be *imparted* to us. This impartation is progressive, not instantaneous. It happens through the process of 'sanctification'. Very simply, it means allowing Jesus' righteousness to seep into every area of your life, producing holiness and the very character of Jesus in you as you yield yourself to God as a 'servant of righteousness' (Rom. 6:19), co-operating with Him and consequently producing the fruit of his holiness (v.22) in your life.

In your own time read the book of Romans - its main theme is 'Righteousness'.

### **What can the righteous be confident about?**

That we have peace with God (Rom. 5:1)

That we have access into our total inheritance (Rom. 5:2)

That we can rejoice as we enjoy the fullness of the hope of the glory of God (Rom 5: 2b) *both in this world and in the world to come!*

*Righteousness is 'believing God', not trusting in your own efforts (Ephesians refers to it as a 'breastplate', something that protects the heart).*

**How righteous are you? Settle this in your heart today! You have the righteousness of Jesus. Therefore, think about how God sees you and live out your righteousness!**