

What is Righteousness of God?

What does it mean righteousness? How can we be righteous before a Holy God? Righteousness is the quality or state of being morally correct and justifiable. It can be considered synonymous with "rightness" or being "upright" Righteousness is the condition of being in right relationship with the Lord. God's standard is what defines true righteousness; His power is what enables it. No amount of man-made effort will result in righteousness. To be righteous is to be right with God.

Righteousness is one of the chief attributes of God as described in the Bible. All that He is and all that he does is right, He is righteous in all He says. Psalm 7:11a, we read "God is a righteous judge." The word righteous in Hebrew is "tsaddiy" which means just, lawful, correct, straight, acting in obedience to God's commands. The word righteous in Greek word "dikaio" which means observing divine laws or upright, faultless, innocent, guiltless, equal and avoiding sin. In a moral sense they both mean 'right.' The righteousness of God is virtually synonymous with His justice. God is just, we are saying that He always does what is right, what should be done, that He does it consistently, without partiality or prejudice. God always acts righteously; His every action is consistent with His character. God sets the standard of righteousness.

May my tongue sing of your word, for all your commands are righteousness.(PSA119:172) Whoever commits sin commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness.(1JO3:4) To be righteous is to do what is right in God's eyes. God's commandments are righteousness. In contrast, lawlessness is sin, and sin is the opposite of righteousness. So to be righteous is to obey God's laws of love. "But we are all like an unclean thing, and all our righteousness are like filthy rags; we all fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.(ISA64:6)The scripture makes it clear that our individual level of righteousness is on par with "filthy rags"—and when you're looking to protect yourself from death, filthy rags make for a lousy breastplate. A self-righteous person is defined as one who is confident in his own righteousness; a self-righteous person shows superiority above all others, especially if they have a different opinion than theirs. Scriptures show that true righteousness comes from God. "I will fetch my knowledge from afar; I will ascribe righteousness to my Maker.(JOB36:3) "Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness,(EPH6:14) It is God's righteousness, and not our own, which must serve as our breastplate and defense against Satan. But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation.(1TH5:8) Faith and love also protect our hearts. It's interesting to study how faith and love relate to righteousness. Faith works "through love" (GAL5:6) "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness."(ROM4:3) Abraham's faith (which was shown by his doing what God said to do) It was faith in God, which allowed Abraham to be justified before God. "Faith,' as the motive within, and 'love,' exhibited in outward acts, constitute the perfection of righteousness" The breastplate was a central part of the soldier's armor—it provided protection for vital organs like the heart, lungs (faith, love). A soldier with a breastplate (chest protector), goes into battle boldly with confidence. The devil is constantly attacking with lies, accusations and reminders of past sin. Without breastplate of righteousness, these will penetrate your heart. Spiritual breastplate of righteousness refer to the covering of the righteousness of Christ.(2CO5:21)It protects from sin which leads to confusion. With a strong breastplate, the very same attacks become ineffective as blows glance off the armor. Riches do not profit in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death.(PRO11:4) Bible gives us the command to "take up the whole armor of God" Once we have put on the breastplate of righteousness, we must be sure not to remove it.

God's purpose for calling Abraham and making a covenant with him was for Abraham to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice and to teach his offspring to do likewise.(GEN18:16-33) Righteousness is the divine goal for Abraham and his offspring. This characteristic is the basis for Abraham's intercession to God for the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. God is described here as having heard the "great outcry of Sodom and Gomorrah"(v.20) "righteous Lot, whose righteous soul was vexed by the wickedness of these cities.(2PE2:6-8) God judges these cities, He does so justly for they were wicked. When God informed Abraham He was about to destroy the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, Abraham began to intercede for them. Abraham proceeds to intercede with God on behalf of the righteous. But God, in His justice, would not deal with the wicked in a way that punished the righteous. He did not spare the cities, but He did spare Lot and his family by rescuing them from the city of Sodom before the angels destroyed them. The righteousness of God, in Christ, means that you are justified, declared righteous because you have had your sins cleansed by Jesus. This is both all of your past sins, and all of your present and future sins (that you've repented for and/or are covered in God's grace for).

"For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith."(ROM1:17) Paul writes with full knowledge that the church in Rome is facing persecution and suffering under Roman oppression. Many of the believers there are experiencing humiliation because of their faith in Christ. Paul wants them to be assured that the worldly power of Rome cannot hold a candle to the mighty power of God—the gospel of Jesus Christ. Righteousness is thus a complete and total work of God. It is a right standing before God that has nothing to do with human accomplishment or worth. It is received by faith. There is nothing we can do to deserve or earn it. The words "from faith to faith" mean declaration of people being righteous is by faith from start to finish. We must trust God "from start to finish" and rely on His mighty power, from day one of our journey of faith until the very last day, Also "from faith to faith" speaks of a progressive, growing development of faith from one degree of faith to another to ever-increasing glory.

God's righteousness was to be seen in His every dealing with the nation Israel. Bible speaks of God being righteous. O Lord God of Israel, you are righteous.(EZR9:15) *"Then Samuel said to the people, "It is the Lord who raised up Moses and Aaron, and who brought your fathers up from the land of Egypt. Now therefore, stand still, that I may reason with you before the Lord concerning all the righteous acts of the Lord which He did to you and your fathers"*(2SA12:6-7) God reveals His righteousness by revealing His will and His word to the world through the nation Israel. *"what great nation is there that has statutes and judgments as righteous as this whole law which I am setting before you today?"*(DEU4:5-8) God often tells men what He will do well in advance of the event so they will know God and He has accomplished what He promised.

God reveals His righteousness by instructing men in His word. *Good and upright is the Lord; Therefore He instructs sinners in the way.*(PSA25:8) Often this instruction came through levitical priests.(LEV10:11) or through the prophets like Moses.

God reveals His righteousness by fulfilling His promises. *You have performed Your words, For You are righteous.*(NEH9:8)-

God reveals His righteousness by judging the enemies of Israel.(Exodus 9:27) *Before the LORD, for He is coming; For He is coming to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness, And the peoples in His faithfulness.*(PSA96:13)

God likewise shows Himself to be righteous when He judges the nation Israel for their sin and disobedience:(2CH12:1-6)

God reveals His righteousness in the way He rules. *Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne;*(PSA45:6)

God reveals His righteousness in His hatred and in His anger. *The Lord tests the righteous and the wicked, And the one who loves violence His soul hates.*(PSA11:5) *God is a righteous judge; And a God who has indignation every day.*(PSA 7:11)

God reveals His righteousness in His protection of the poor and the afflicted. *And justice for the poor.*(PSA140:12;12:5)

God reveals His righteousness when He shows mercy and compassion. *Gracious is the Lord, and righteous;*(PSA116:5-6)

God reveals His righteousness in saving sinners: *The Lord has made known His salvation; He has revealed His righteousness in the sight of the nations. All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.*(PSA98:2-3) The

Scriptures teach God's righteousness is the cause of both condemnation and justification. He is righteous in saving sinners, as well as merciful and compassionate. God is righteous in all His dealings with men. The righteousness of God is to be the guiding principle for the people of God. When the prophets sought teaching regarding man's conduct, it was that men practice righteousness or justice: *But let justice roll down like waters And righteousness like an ever-flowing stream"* (AMO5:21) And what does the Lord require of you But to do justice, to love kindness, And to walk humbly with your God?

The Righteousness of God in the New Testament: Jesus set out to contrast His interpretation of the Old Testament teaching on righteousness with that of the scribes and Pharisees. In reality, Jesus ought to reestablish the proper understanding of righteousness as taught in the Law and the Prophets. The scribes and Pharisees thought of themselves as setting the standard for righteousness. They felt that they, of all men, were righteous. Jesus said, *"For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven"*(MAT5:20) Jesus said those who appeared to be the righteous would not make it into the kingdom on their kind of righteousness, He said who would be "blessed" by entrance into the kingdom: those the scribes and Pharisees thought unworthy of the kingdom. Those blessed were the "poor in spirit," those who "mourn," the "gentle," those who "hunger and thirst for righteousness," the "merciful," the "pure in heart," the "peacemakers," those "persecuted" on account of their relationship with Jesus.

Jesus taught that true righteousness is not that which men regard as righteous based upon external appearances, but that so judged by God based upon His assessment of the heart: And He said to them, *"You are those who justify yourselves in the sight of men, but God knows your hearts; for that which is highly esteemed among men is detestable in the sight of God"*(LUK16:15) The Scribes and Pharisees, who thought themselves so righteous because of their rigorous attention to external matters, proved to be just the opposite when judged by our Lord: *Even so you too outwardly appear righteous to men, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!*(MAT23:28-35)

In Sermon on the Mount, Jesus warned against externalism and traditionalism. *"Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven"*(MAT6:1) According

to Jesus, true righteousness is vastly different from the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees. False righteousness is measured by men on the basis of externalism. True righteousness is judged such by God, in accordance with His Word.

Because of this, men need to beware of attempting to judge righteousness of others.(MAT 7:1) Those whose deeds seemed

to indicate they were righteous were those whom God denied ever having known as His children.(MAT7: 15-23) Those who appeared to be righteous were not, and those who appeared unrighteous of that day may well have been righteous.(JOH9:16)

Righteousness Involves Judgment: God reveals His righteousness by loving the things that are good and by hating the things that are evil. Consequently His righteousness results in judgment: *Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me on that Day,*(2TI4:8) This crown is given to those who

have lived a good and righteous life for God while living on earth. God's righteousness is an attribute that leads Him to do only those things that are right. Because God is righteous He must judge evil. God's justice allows Him to reward those

who have been faithful to Him. Someday He will rule in absolute righteousness. *And I heard the angel of the waters saying:*

'You are righteous, O Lord, the One who is and who was and who is to be, because You have judged these things'(REV16:5)

The prophet Isaiah spoke of the coming Messiah as the "Righteous One" who would "justify the many" (ISA53:11) Jeremiah 23:5, spoke of Him as the "righteous Branch" When Jesus was baptized, it was to "fulfill all righteousness" (MAT3:15) Both Pilate's wife and the soldier at the foot of the cross acknowledged His righteousness at the very moment when men were condemning Him. (LUK23:47) Apostles likewise bear witness to righteousness of Christ: *And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.* (1JO 2:1) everyone who practices righteousness is born of Him. (1JO2:29)

The righteousness of God is particularly important in relation to salvation. (ROM 3:21-28) Men have failed to live up to the standard of righteousness laid down by the Law. God is just in condemning all men to death, for all men without exception have sinned and come short of the glory of God. (ROM3:23) All men are worthy of death because the "wages of sin is death" (ROM6:23) God is just in condemning the unrighteous. But God is also just in saving sinners. He is "just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus" (ROM3:26) God is just because His righteous anger has been satisfied. Justice was done on the cross of Calvary. God did not reduce the charges against men; He did not change the standard of righteousness. God poured out the full measure of His righteous wrath upon His Son, Jesus on the cross of Calvary.

In Him, justice was met. All of those who trust in Him by faith are justified. Their sins are forgiven because Jesus paid full price; He suffered full measure of God's wrath in their place. And for those who reject the goodness and mercy of God at Calvary, they must pay penalty for their sins because they would not accept Jesus made in their place. The cross of Calvary accomplished a just salvation, for all who will receive it. God is righteous and in Christ, those who are justified have been punished and then raised to newness of life. God is righteous for judging all those who refuse to accept His offer of salvation in Christ. God fulfilling His justice in Christ, whether by His sacrificial death at His first coming or by His judging the unbelieving world at His second coming. The good news of the gospel is that salvation by grace is offered to all men, and by the righteousness of Jesus Christ, men may be forgiven of their sins and made righteous.

If sin is the manifestation of our unrighteousness and we can be saved only through a righteousness not our own—the righteousness of God—then the ultimate sin is self-righteousness. Jesus did not reject sinners who came to Him for mercy and salvation; He rejected those who were righteous in their own eyes to need grace. Jesus came to save sinners. No one is too lost to save. In the Gospels, those who thought themselves most religious, and righteous were the ones condemned by our Lord as wicked and unrighteous. If we are among those who have acknowledged their sin and trusted in the righteousness of Christ for our salvation, the righteousness of God is one of great and comforting truths we should embrace.

The justice of God means that when He establishes His kingdom on earth, it will be a kingdom characterized by justice. He will judge men in righteousness, and He will reign in righteousness. If we love righteousness, we most certainly dare not envy the wicked, whose day of judgment awaits them. Their day of judgment is rapidly coming upon them, and justice will prevail. If we realize that righteousness is not to be judged according to external, legalistic standards and that judgment belongs to God, we dare not occupy ourselves in judging others. We should realize that judgment begins at the house of God, thus we should be quick to judge ourselves and to avoid those sins which are an offense to the righteousness of God.

The doctrine of the righteousness of God means that we, as the children of God, should seek to imitate our heavenly Father. We should not seek to find revenge against those who sin against us, but leave vengeance to God. (ROM12:17-21) Let us suffer injustice of men, even as our Lord Jesus, that God might even bring our enemies to repentance and salvation. Having Christ's righteousness imputed to us through the process of sanctification. And let us pray, as our Lord instructed that the day righteousness reigns may come: *"Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, On earth as it is in heaven"*. (MAT6:10)

But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. (MAT6:33) To seek God's kingdom and His righteousness means to live in that ongoing repentance from sin, and to lead the kind of sincere, from-the-heart, devoted-to-God lifestyles Jesus has been describing. In response, God will make provision for whatever it is we truly "need" in order to accomplish His will. Jesus tells His followers to trust God to provide what they truly need. The context of what we "need," however, is the will of God—which might look very different from what we would prefer.

Proverbs 15:9 says, *"The Lord detests the way of the wicked, but he loves those who pursue righteousness."* To pursue righteousness means we must recognize that we cannot please God in our sinful state. We desire that He transform our minds and conform us "to the image of His Son" We pursue righteousness when we pursue character of Christ and desire holiness more than fleshly indulgence. The humble, believing heart leads to a lifestyle of righteous action acceptable to God. A heart that is right with God results in a life that bears "fruit" Pursuing righteousness means we perfected over time through our obedience to Him, and it slowly reveals itself as evidence of our faith. We work at it every day spend time in the presence of God, with the goal of seeing its true perfection one beautiful day when we see Jesus in person.

Ezekiel 33:13 shows that wearing righteousness is not a one-time event; rather, it requires a lifetime of action. We are promised, *"The work of righteousness will be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever"* (ISA32:17) By faithfully living God's way, we will find this peace, quietness and assurance—forever. Jesus is the King of Righteousness. In His grace, He pours precious peace of God into the hearts of His children who walk in spirit and truth.