

# Bible Study

Aug. 9, 2022

## What Difference Does the Gift of Righteousness Make?

### I. Announcements:

### II. Introduction:

This morning during our devotional time, we really opened up this discussion about righteousness. We talked about how, for a lot of people, the very word “righteousness” brings up an emotional hesitation, a sense of insufficiency and self condemnation. The word “righteousness” itself becomes almost accusatory because of our battles which, even as children, we fought with ourselves trying to be good, trying to be obedient, trying to be good and constantly failing to maintain. We talked about the roots of that miserable feeling, roots anchored in our own consciences, our parent’s reprimands, and church teachings that, even as believers, our lives were a constant war against our own sin nature.

The Apostle Paul described this situation which he struggled with before he came to Christ. He cries out in Rom. 7 saying, *“I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but I cannot carry it out. 19 For I don’t do the good I want to do, but instead do the evil that I don’t want to do.”* And he concludes in vs. 24, *“What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is infected by death?”*

We’ve all been there. Am I right?

So why study righteousness? Very, very briefly, I’m going to give you four reasons why Christians need to study righteousness.

1. What you’ve been taught about righteousness in most religious settings is simply wrong. What you’ve been taught is wrong.
2. Jesus Himself said that, without righteousness, you can’t go to Heaven. It doesn’t get more straightforward than that. Listen to Matt. 5:20: *“For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.”*

3. Heb. 5 tells us that, without a clear understanding of righteousness, we can never mature spiritually beyond not just kindergarten but spiritual breast milk and diapers.
4. Righteousness is the centerpiece of our spiritual armor, and we are practically defenseless without it.
5. Even though, according to Rev. 1:6, God has made us to be “*kings and priests unto God and his Father,*” Rom. 5:17 says that, as long as we live, it is impossible for us to reign in life without His gift of righteousness.

### III. The Big Secret

So what we need to know is this: There are two kinds of righteousness in the Bible, and they are diametrically opposed to one another.

#### Type A: Works Righteousness

“Works Righteousness” is a system by which men earn the favor of God through obedience to His commandments. It’s that simple. In Deut. 6:25 — (divide the Bible) — no less authority than Moses Himself declares to the children of Israel, “*if we are careful to obey all this law before the Lord our God, as he has commanded us, that will be our righteousness.*” What Moses is really saying is that, if we are entirely obedient to every single commandment that the Lord hands down to us, our obedience will stand as our righteousness. In other words, to Moses and the Jewish people, all the way up to Christ, righteousness and obedience were absolutely synonymous. And God’s Law was the prescription by which they tried to get there.

The bad thing about “works righteousness” is that it never, ever worked. No human being other than Jesus of Nazareth ever lived his life in complete obedience. Everyone else failed. The Pharisees and doctors of the Law tried harder than anyone, perhaps, and, while it brought them social standing, they never achieved true righteousness. No one ever achieved God’s standard of righteousness by being completely obedient.

Rom. 3:10-12 — “*There is none righteous, no, not one: 11 There is none who understands, there is none that seeks after God. 12 They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that does good, no, not one.*”

So what the Bible teaches us is that the 1st righteousness never, never, never ever works.

### **Type B: The Righteousness of Faith**

The righteousness of faith comes to us as believers through the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. And it comes to us through faith, through belief, through surrender to God and by receiving from Him His own — His own! Not ours but His own! — His own divine righteousness.

*Rom. 5:17 — “For if, through one man, death ruled because of that man’s offense, how much more will those who receive such overflowing grace and the gift of righteousness rule in life because of one man, Jesus the Messiah!”*

*Matt. 6:33 — “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”*

## **VI. The Example of Abraham**

Because God is not ruled by time, there were a small crowd of men and women in the Old Testament who actually discovered the righteousness of faith and are people we will come to know in Heaven. A number of these are listed in Heb. 11, which is often called the Hall of Faith. Three people — Abel, Enoch and Noah, all who lived before Abraham are mentioned in this chapter.

Then God comes to Abraham, the Old Testament character who fathered both the Jewish and Arab people, the man with whom God chose to make a binding agreement to open the doors of Heaven even to us. Now make no mistake, Abraham is considered the Father of Faith because of the covenant of faith which God made with Abraham. But the covenant of faith was still built upon the foundation of Christ’s death, burial and resurrection even though Abraham Himself lived 1,800 years before Christ was born.

I want to go back tonight and show you what happened to Abraham and, by His example, how God sees you and me.

*Gen. 15:1-6 — “After this, the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision: ‘Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield and your very great reward.’*

*2 But Abram said, ‘Sovereign Lord, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?’ 3 And Abram said, ‘You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir.’ 4 Then the word of the Lord came to him: “This man will not be*

*your heir, but a son who is your own flesh and blood will be your heir.” 5 He (God) took him outside and said, “Look up at the sky and count the stars—if indeed you can count them.” Then he (God) said to him (Abraham), “So shall your offspring be.” 6 Abram believed the Lord, and God credited it to Abraham as righteousness.”*

This example of Abraham’s righteousness by faith is held up as an example all throughout the New Testament, and both Paul and James refer back and quote this verse, Gen. 15:6. Paul does that twice in Rom. 4:3 and Gal. 3:6. James quotes Gen. 15:6 in James 2:23.

Paul concludes Gal. 3 with these words, *“If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”*

## V. So How Does God See Our Sin?

### A. God’s Promise:

*Gen. 15:1 — “After this, the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision: ‘Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, (Abraham’s protection) and your very great reward. (Abraham’s provision)”*

### B. God’s Time-Table:

*Gen. 18:10 — “Then one of them (Jesus) said, ‘I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife will have a son.’”*

### C. Abraham’s Sin:

*Gen. 20:1-2 — “Now Abraham moved on from there into the region of the Negev and lived between Kadesh and Shur. For a while he stayed in Gerar, 2 and there Abraham said of his wife Sarah, “She is my sister.” Then Abimelek king of Gerar sent for Sarah and took her.”*

### D. God’s Response to Abraham:

#### 1. Protection

*Gen. 20:3-7 — “But God came to Abimelek in a dream one night and said to him, ‘You are as good as dead because of the woman you have taken; she is a married woman.’ 4 Now Abimelek had not gone near her, so he said, ‘Lord, will you destroy an innocent nation? 5 Did he not say to me, ‘She is my sister,’ and didn’t she also say, ‘He is my brother’? I have done this with a clear conscience and clean hands.’ 6 Then God said to him in the dream, ‘Yes, I know you did this with a clear conscience, and so I have kept you*

*from sinning against me. That is why I did not let you touch her. 7 Now return the man's wife, for he is a prophet, and he will pray for you and you will live. But if you do not return her, you may be sure that you and all who belong to you will die.”*

## 2. Provision

*Gen. 20:14-16 — “Then Abimelek brought sheep and cattle and male and female slaves and gave them to Abraham, and he returned Sarah his wife to him. 15 And Abimelek said, “My land is before you; live wherever you like.” 16 To Sarah he said, “I am giving your brother a thousand shekels of silver to cover the offense against you before all who are with you; you are completely vindicated.”*

## VI. Summary

- A. **There are two kinds of righteousness discussed in the Bible: (1) Works Righteousness and (2) the Faith Righteousness.**
- B. **No human being except Jesus ever pleased God through Works Righteousness. No one will ever gain entrance to Heaven by their works. You can't be good enough to please God.**
- C. **Faith Righteousness is the only path to Heaven, the only path to a life that is pleasing to God.**
- D. **If we place our faith in God, believing in Him and pursuing an active relationship with Him, we become heirs of God and will live with Him forever.**
- E. **When we receive Christ into our bodies by faith, He forgives all of our sin — past, present and future — and cloaks us in the gift of His own righteousness. Just as He did with Abraham, He counts our faith to us as righteousness.**
- F. **By the power of His Holy Spirit who enters into our body by our faith, our behavior is transformed over time so that obedience — completely beyond us before — becomes our daily lifestyle. This is all in accordance with God's purpose for us, that we be conformed to the image of His Son.**