

ABOUT RIGHTEOUSNESS

Righteousness is central to God's character, and therefore should be a core element of who we are.

KEY POINTS

- ❖ Job was a man beset with suffering, loss, opposition and confusion. He understood nothing about his current situation, about people, about himself, or about God.
- ❖ But one thing he was pretty sure about was that God was – and would always be – righteous. God would do what was right, no matter what. It was one of the few things Job felt he could count on.
- ❖ On the other side of that relationship, what God liked about Job, blessed him for, and talked about was Job's commitment to being righteous (Job 1:8, 2:3).
- ❖ To understand how important righteousness is to God, consider this: when God wants to say that He is pleased with a person, He describes what they are doing or the way they are being as "righteousness". Abraham had faith (James 2:23). God called that righteousness. Lot felt vexed about some sinful practices going on around him. God called that righteousness (2 Peter 2:7).
- ❖ And there are blessings to be had for being righteous. The Bible says that if your ways please the Lord, He will make even your enemies to be at peace with you (Proverbs 16:7). Another promise is that the steps of a righteous person will be organized and directed by the Lord (Psalm 37:23). The blessings extend even beyond individual people – righteousness exalts a nation while sin is a reproach (Proverbs 14:34). It's a stain on your clothes; a weight that pulls you down.
- ❖ So what is righteousness? It is *doing what is right*.
- ❖ Some people know the law of God, which tells us what is right. But they don't really like it. They don't like righteousness in their heart. It's more a duty or an inconvenience – a discipline that they have to keep forcing themselves to do. Have you ever felt that way?
- ❖ Jesus cautioned us that our righteousness has to go beyond that of "the Pharisees" (Matthew 5:20). It has to be more than keeping rules or impressing others or showing ourselves in a good light in comparison to others. Otherwise, we are actually not in the kingdom of God. He is not ruling in us. We are not on His wavelength and we are just not feeling Him.
- ❖ God is at work in me when I feel a love for righteousness begin to grow in my heart; when I'm glad about it; when I really want to do right; and when I view it with joy, not resignation.
- ❖ Then I find myself wanting to take some actions that were not very important to me yesterday. Actions that would not have even occurred to me before. Or if they did, I would not have seen any reason why they would be necessary, or as something that I should do.
- ❖ The first step of righteousness is to believe that God is for real, as we saw before regarding Abraham.

KEY SCRIPTURES: Genesis 18:25, 4:7

- ❖ Step two is to agree, intellectually and emotionally, with God (Psalm 119:128).
- ❖ Righteousness has to go deep. "Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts" (Psalm 51:6).
- ❖ Consider Zacchaeus (see Luke 19:1-10). He was rich as could be, and by all appearances needed nothing and cared little about anyone.
- ❖ But in the privacy of his heart, Zacchaeus had started to think and care about God. So much so that in the middle of a lucrative business day he did something that other people would see as positively strange: a middle-aged man in expensive clothing climbing a tree.
- ❖ But a person wanting to get a better view of God was enough to make God stop and say, "I'm going to come into your house today. I want to spend time with you."
- ❖ And when God started walking with him, something started working within Zacchaeus.
- ❖ Righteousness got hold of his heart. Between the tree and the house he made some swift and sure decisions that freed him from the hold that money and material things had had on him, and freed his heart from years of guilt.
- ❖ By the time they got to his house, he felt so light he was almost dancing. That day, salvation came into his life and it came with an overwhelming desire for righteousness.
- ❖ If you want that kind of freedom – that kind of joy; if you want God to come into your life in a greater way and be happy to be with you – teach your heart to love righteousness and your hands to do it.

DISCUSSION/REFLECTION TOOLS

1. Last week's lesson reminded us that we have to stay alert, continuing to do righteous acts. Share what you usually think about when you think of "righteousness". Does it match the definition in the lesson? If not, how does it differ?
2. Consider the following examples from scripture and discuss what was right or wrong with their heart condition concerning righteousness: Lot's wife (Genesis 19:15-26); Onan (Genesis 38:8-10); King David (1 Chronicles 21:15-27).
3. Share some specific ways your thoughts and actions have changed since you became a follower of Christ. (Reflect: If you can't think of any, what might be the reasons?)

Prayer Time

"Righteousness is what I long for. Righteousness is what I need. Righteousness is what You want for me." Please help me to live a righteous life. In Jesus' name, amen.

WEEK OF SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 24, 2019

NOTES

Meditate as you read through/listen to this week's message. If it helps, use symbols for your notes.

- ✓ (Reminds me/Confirms) 💡 (New idea) 🧠 (Think about)
- 👉 (Do this) ❤️ (Speaks to my heart) ↺ (Must share)

PRAYER NEEDS/THANKSGIVINGS

Start-up: If you looked back on pictures from 10, 20, 30 (etc.), years ago, what differences would you notice to the "you" of today?

Go deeper with your Life Group family.
CONNECT-REFLECT-DISSECT THE WORD
Your Life Group ~ Your Lifeline