

# Discover True Righteousness: Understanding What It Is and What It's Not!

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[0:00] Righteousness, what is it? Does it matter? How can I be righteous? It's a good thing to consider what is righteousness and how we are to get it because we're told we should hunger and thirst for it.

We should get hungry. We should be more hungry for righteousness than lunch today. We should hunger and thirst to want to be filled.

And it says we shall be filled if we hunger and thirst for it. And our Lord says, but seek ye first. Make this number one. The kingdom of God and his righteousness.

What is righteousness? How can I be righteous? Here's a clue right here. His righteousness. His righteousness.

Firstly, it's important to understand what righteousness, what true righteousness is not. Is not. True righteousness is not self-righteousness.

[1:06] Self-righteousness. Think of that. What could you describe that as? It's when we believe that we are righteous because of our own efforts. Our own good deeds.

And we compare one another. Am I good deeds more than his good deeds or her good deeds? Or am I better than them because I'm doing this or doing that? But true righteousness, it doesn't come from our doings.

It comes from humility, from faith. Not from our boasting about ourselves and our own actions.

That's getting it wrong. Self-righteousness.

It's a form of pride really, isn't it? Where we think of ourselves as better than others, more righteous than they, based on our own standards, our own works, measuring ourselves by what we do and what they do or don't do.

And the Pharisees were like that. They followed the letter of the law to the nth degree. But they lack the true spirit of humility, of love, of true devotion to the Lord.

[2:13] Self-righteous people. Look, I can make that mistake. I can be self-righteous. Self-righteous people, they emphasize the outward, the actions, the appearances.

More concerned with looking righteous than being righteous in the eyes of God. It's a great mistake, isn't it? Self-righteousness. I can make that mistake of having a judgmental attitude, of finding fault, picking, judging others harshly, and comparing ourselves to those that we consider less righteous.

And we look down our nose, I'm holier than thou. Self-righteousness is a lack of genuine humility, isn't it? When we see the emphasis of the word of God is, Unto him be the glory, not unto us.

Unto him, unto his name, give glory. Not unto us, O Lord. Not unto us, but unto thy name, give glory. Unto thy name, give glory.

For thy mercy and for thy truth's sake. It's not unto us, but the self-righteous would say, Look at me. I'm so good. I'm just so, so got it all together.

[3:25] And people who are self-righteous, they make this mistake of not recognising their own sinfulness, their own need of him, of God's grace. And they think their own actions justify themselves before God.

It's a great mistake. Of course, our Lord rebuked the Pharisees for their self-righteousness. They believe that their strict adherence to the law made them righteous. And friends, it's true today still, isn't it?

The son who think that their church going, their church actions, their good works, their charity, is somehow buying themselves favour, that somehow that is their righteousness.

What they do, do, do. In Luke 18, we hear the story, our Lord tells of the two men who went to the temple to pray, and the one there was self-righteous.

This Pharisee there, he's saying how, he's praying to himself, virtually. He's praying within himself, and he's bragging on, and he's praying of all the things that he does, and saying, That man over there, he's a sinner.

[4:29] And yet, this man over here, God, be merciful. God, be merciful. God, forgive me. God, cover my sin, is the sense of it.

It's about atoning. It's about atonement. When he says, Be merciful, he's saying, Make atonement for me. Be my atonement. I'm a sinner. God, be merciful. God, have mercy on me, the sinner.

And, of course, our Lord tells us that the one who prayed so, who asked in humility, in faith, in turning to Christ, in leaning on him for his saving, for his forgiveness, for his grace, he was saved. But the man who prayed, Oh, I'm so righteous, and he's a sinner, and I'm above him, he was not justified. And this word justified is righteous, declared righteous.

So the one who was declared righteous of the two was the one here. God, have mercy. Forgive me. True righteousness. That man went home justified. The other did not.

[5:25] True righteousness is not legalism. Legalism, we think, is the belief that we can achieve righteousness by adhering to some rules, some laws, some rituals.

Of course, God's law is true and right, and we should adhere to the scriptures to strive to obey. But legalism places the focus on all of that instead of the condition of the heart.

It focuses the attention on all the striving to fulfil laws and rules and measure up, whereas grace says, I'm a sinner, save me.

It says, our heart is broken up to know him, to trust him, to believe. It's possible to follow the rules and still be far, far from God.

We see that said of the Pharisees. Our Lord tells us in Matthew 15, verse 8 through 9, he tells of these ones who tried to justify themselves, this people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth and honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.

[6:32] But in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines, the commandments of men. Legalism is not true righteousness. True righteousness is not perfection, because we can't be perfect.

We never can be this side of heaven. It's not perfection. Righteousness does not mean that we are without sin. Of course we know Romans 3, 23, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

Being righteous means we're forgiven of our sin and then we're growing in that, in our relationship with God. It doesn't mean we're never going to make mistakes. What then is righteousness?

What does the Bible say? And you could do a word study, go through your concordance, through references to the word righteousness. It's really an eye-opening study. What then is righteousness? Just some striking scriptures on that theme this morning. Righteousness means to be right with God, to be right with God, to be in right standing with God.

[7:34] And it's important to grasp the truth. How do we get that? That right standing with God, that righteousness. It's not earned through our works, but it's granted through faith. It's not by the works, it's by the faith.

This is the contrast, this extreme contrast. Because all other religions would say it's about working, it's about doing, it's about striving to measure up.

In Christ it's about faith, it's about trusting, it's about he has done everything to save me. And now someone questioned, well what's this got to do with Father's Day?

It's got everything to do with Father's Day. Because we are children of Abraham by faith. So I'm going to talk about Father Abraham. So it's drawing this long bow that between Father's Day and faith this morning.

We'll get to that. It's important to understand that righteousness is not earned through works, but granted through faith. And we see the first time, the very first reference, and theologians say there's a significance to the first mention, and the first mention of righteousness is Abraham.

[8:57] Genesis 15 verse 6, the very first reference to righteousness, it tells of him, of Abraham, and he believed the Lord, he believed in the

Lord, and he counted it to him for righteousness.

It's talking here about your father, you that are saved this morning, Father Abraham. All right? People might know the children's song, Father Abraham, as many sons, I am one of them, and so are you.

Amen? It's true. If you're saved, you're a child of Abraham. It's talking here about Father Abraham. Abraham's faith was credited to him for righteousness, as righteousness.

And that was before he had done any works at all, that he was considered righteous simply by faith, simply by trusting, not by human standards or effort or actions.

It was, he believed and it was counted righteousness. Paul tells of Abraham, Romans 4, 5, but to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.

[10:13] So get this now, and there's a common thread, a common theme of faith and righteousness. They're allied, they're synchronised, there's a harmony that faith and righteousness, they come together.

We're not righteous because of what we do, but for what Christ has done for us. In Romans 4, 11 it says, Abraham is called the father of all them that believe.

The father of all them that believe. So you're sons of Abraham this morning by faith. Father Abraham has many sons, I am one of them and so are you. God declared Abraham righteous, why?

Because of his faith. We see that said again in Galatians 3, verse 6 through 7, even as Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness.

Know you therefore that they which are of faith the same are the children of Abraham. So if you are of the faith, in other words, if you are a believer in Christ, then you are one of the children of Abraham.

[11:24] Faith is our righteousness. The reality is that no one is righteous. We see that as it tells us here. As it is written, there is none righteous, no not one.

Really, it's a very humbling thing to realise I'm a sinner, isn't it? And I can't say I'm righteous by my own effort or by my own goodness of my own making.

There's none, not one, not one who is righteous, no, not one. And it reads on, even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe. for there is no difference. The righteousness of God which is how? By faith. The righteousness of God is by faith of Jesus Christ.

How do we get the righteousness of God? Do you see it there? Faith in Christ is how we can know the righteousness of God. It's not faith in ourselves, it's faith in Christ.

[12:29] Faith in Christ is how we know the righteousness of God. righteousness comes through faith in Christ to all who believe. Another important factor is the grace of God too. Romans 3.24 tells us being justified freely by his grace through the redemption, salvation that is in Christ Jesus.

And when you think this word justified, you could put it justified or rendered righteous. We are made righteous, it says, freely by his grace.

We are made righteous freely by his grace. We are made righteous, we are justified. He declares you justified, he declares you just, he declares you righteous, how?

By his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ. So it's a gift, that's the wonderful blessing of it, that it is a gift, not a reward.

And it happens how? Freely, by his grace. It's the same word where he says, come and drink freely of the water of life. Come and drink freely.

[13:34] There's a wideness to his welcome. He says, freely come, come and drink, come freely, come, be justified freely, be declared righteous freely by his grace.

It's a gift. It's not something we earn by our works. As much as that doesn't discount that we shouldn't work, but the justifying, the being made righteous is not by the works, but by grace.

God declares us righteous by faith, without works. Notice, here's another one, same theme.

Therefore, we conclude that a man is justified, in other words, declared righteous by faith, without

the deeds of the law.

He declares you righteous by faith. He declares you righteous by faith, without the deeds of the law. And the righteousness is by faith in Christ. There's many we could turn to.

These are just some. Therefore, being justified, again, declared righteous by faith, being justified, declared just, by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

[14:41] Friends, this morning, you can know that you're justified. You can know this morning that you're declared righteous. He calls you righteous. Why? By his grace, by the faith in Christ, by faith in him.

And you can have peace with God. You can know that today. The son that spent a lifetime of religious striving, trying to be justified by works, but it doesn't happen that way.

The righteousness is made possible by the shed blood of Christ. We see, again, much more than being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.

Again, you could put it being now justified, in other words, being made righteous, being declared righteous by his blood. Because of his blood shed, you can be declared righteous.

You can be declared a just one, just righteous before God. And this is a recurring theme. Many times, the righteousness of God is the righteousness of God.

[15:43] It's ours by faith. Paul tells the saints of Philippi the same kind of thing. And Paul recounts of his background, of his strict religious upbringing and his line through Benjamin, etc.

But he says that what matters to him is to be found in him. Not having mine own righteousness, he says, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.

So there's a contrast here. Paul didn't rest on his knowledge of the law and his outward trappings of religion, but his righteousness, he says it is of God and it is by faith.

Here's the contrast again. Are we trusting in our own righteousness or are we trusting in the righteousness which is of God by faith? They're different.

Contrary. The righteousness which is of God is by what? By faith. Righteousness is not following a set of rules. Righteousness is by faith and trust.

[16:58] Righteousness by faith. Righteousness which is of God. We're not able to achieve righteousness through our own efforts. This is the striving of vain religion.

We see Isaiah 64. It tells us that we are all as an unclean thing and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags and we do all fade as a leaf and our iniquities like the wind have taken us away.

It's telling us in Isaiah 64 here that all our righteousnesses, all our best efforts, even the best of them, they just fall short of God's standards.

It's just like a dirty rag. It's something objectionable. It's something gross. The law makes us aware of sin but it cannot make us righteous.

Righteousness is through faith in Christ and that's the emphasis through the word of God. It's not based on our works but on our trust in what Christ has done. Of course we know Abraham did work but that was more the fruit of his faith.

[18:09] Abraham did obey but that was the fruit of his faith. The root of his faith was the saving grace of God. It was his faith, his trust because he was declared righteous before he took Isaac to the mountain.

Righteousness comes through faith in Christ to all who believe. So friends this morning if you've yet to have that simple faith let go of your own righteousnesses of your own strivings and be trusting.

Not trying but trusting. Not doing but done. Christ has done it all and righteousness comes to all who believe regardless of their background and the wonderful truth as a transfer can happen.

2 Corinthians 5.21 on for he God have made him Christ to be sin for us who knew no sin that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. Notice it again we can gloss over it the righteousness is of God.

The righteousness of God. Do you want your own righteousness? Or do you want his? His righteousness the righteousness of God. Don't we want that? At the cross this great exchange takes place where Christ took our sin on himself and he exchanged in return his righteousness to us.

[19:34] Righteousness is not something that we can earn by our own efforts. It's a gift from God that we can receive through faith in Christ and having God said we want to live right because we deserve nothing of it but we can.

God helping us will put that righteousness into action as well. But the saving faith the righteousness is God's gift. It's given. And once we're made righteous by faith let's live it out.

Sure. But understand that the righteousness is the righteousness of God. It's not of your own works. Not in any part. Of course there's practical applications when we're made righteous.

We recognise the gift is from God. That we're undeserving of it. It's all glory to him unto him. It's not something we earn or we can blow our trumpet about.

And we need his grace daily. That righteousness of God. We need it daily as we come in confession of our sin in seeking our forgiveness in our day by day walk in relying on his grace his strength day by day.

[20:44] And righteousness it comes by faith. So let's live by faith. Let's make that faith live. Live it out to trust him to walk in his ways to pray to serve to encourage to fellowship and seek that heart relationship with him.

As you read your word worship as your life shows God's working as you reach out to others as you show his love as you extend grace to others as recipients of grace let's extend it to others let's forgive others be patient with others love one another as I have loved you he says and practically let's seek to bring reconciliation to love to reach out and all the time thinking that our righteousness is of God I love this one too where Isaiah tells I will greatly rejoice in the Lord my soul shall be joyful in my God for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation he hath covered me the robe of righteousness as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels and we've been to some weddings lately we've seen the bride adorned with the jewels with the ornaments and the bridegroom decking himself how much greater to be clothed with the garments of salvation how much greater how much more glorious and what's more covered with the robe of righteousness think of that when you think about it salvation is given isn't it the garments of salvation he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness the salvation is given to you the righteousness is given to you it's the same picture isn't it he hath covered me don't you want him to cover you with his righteousness with his robe or you're going to try to

I'll just scrub this up I'll put it in the washing machine a few times and somehow it's going to turn glorious white but no it's not it's never going to my garments my robe of my own righteousness is never going to be like his his glorious robe his gleaming glorious white robe of righteousness what is true righteousness again it's being right in standing with God in right standing with God how by by faith in Christ it's a gift from God it's not a striving of our own working now don't get me wrong I'm not saying don't do anything with your faith of course not but let the faith be what you're trusting in for your salvation let it be the faith that saves you not any striving of your own sure add to your faith make your faith grow keep growing in your faith live out your faith the just shall live by faith but our actions don't save us the faith does amen it's the faith that saves us as brother Eli referred to for by grace he is saved through faith that not of yourselves it is the gift of God not of works lest any man should boast there's so many church going people who still have this idea and we see them on the doorstep as you're reaching out to some and they say

I think I'm going to make it I'm trying really hard I'm doing lots of good things no no no you got it all wrong it's not about what you do it's not of your works it's not of yourself it's the gift of God it's the gift of God have you trusted Christ to be your one saviour to pay for your sin have you trusted him have you simply extended your hand and said I want that I want that gift the gift of God and truly our righteousness is Christ himself isn't it I love this one too prophesying of our Lord to come it tells of him the righteous branch in the context and of his name it's talking of our Lord our Lord Jesus it says of his name he shall be called the Lord our righteousness my righteousness or the Lord my righteousness which one are you going to have my righteousness self righteousness or the Lord he's my righteousness the Lord is my righteousness which would you rather have friends think of righteousness today and it's not our righteousness our righteousness is his righteousness truly any righteousness that we have is thanks to him and it's in humility we recognize our sinfulness we reach out to him to meet our need his mercy to save it's understanding no matter how good we do

we cannot earn our way into heaven friends if you're resting in your works you're lost you're lost this morning if it's your works you're trusting in you're lost don't trust in your works trust in his work his work his grace not depending on our own efforts they'll fall short they always will but resting on the grace entirely on the grace of

[26:27] God and not about outward transformation cults do that they turn over a new leaf they stop their sinful habits or what people would consider sinful habits and they reform their character but they're still lost it's not about the transforming of outward behaviour or actions it's about a transformed heart it's Christ in your heart by faith dwelling in your heart and we see self righteousness we see true righteousness self righteousness relies on yourself it's not going to make it you can't make it it's trying to climb up some other way the ladder is not high enough you've got to go through the gate through the door through the way the open door which is Christ the one way self righteousness is pride and arrogance they think oh I'll try my chances I hope I'm just going to get in there by my own effort it's blindness and it's not going to cut it but true righteousness is relationship with

God it's by faith the Lord is my righteousness that's what I can count on it's his righteousness and so have we this righteousness today friends the wonderful truth again in the context of Abraham as Paul talks of him and of this righteousness which is by faith he tells how David knew the same truth of the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works so it's credited David says this righteousness is credited it's transferred it's counted as mine his righteousness his righteousness is counted as mine without works of course we know David failed miserably but yet God's grace prevailed more friends we do not have to strive to earn God's favour it's already given us through Christ and I just urge you in that simple truth to trust him that it is a gift it says of this imputing in other words this transferring it says by one man's offense by Adam's sin death reigned by one Adam's sin is imputed it's counted upon all of us we counted as sinners because we're sons of Adam and it's imputed to us but then it says that we can receive an abundance of grace of the gift of righteousness by Jesus Christ notice again righteousness is what a gift a gift it's simply receiving it simply receiving God's salvation God's righteousness is a gift and when we get this concept it makes it all make sense it's not over here saying look at me I'm so good and I've got it all together I'm so righteous that man is a sinner so say Lord I'm a sinner save me save my soul I come and I've got nothing to give I'm just unworthy of your grace I'd simply trust I simply believe and that's the one who's justified that's the one who's declared righteous because God's salvation God's righteousness is a gift and of course then having been saved our desires our actions our lifestyle there should be a change we should see something by God's grace that we want to serve to live to please him but the saving is by faith Romans 10 10 it says how does the righteousness come when you believe it's when your heart believes yes Jesus died for my soul he died for my sin it's when your heart believes that you have righteousness by faith are we like the pharisee boasting over all of our good things all of our own goodness or like the tax collector humbly in the atonement when he says

God be merciful to me a sinner it's got the sense of covering my sin this sense of covering this mercy it's the mercy scene it's coming to the mercy scene where the blood was shed it's coming for atonement and in the present day we could see that he's coming to Christ as the one to atone to pay for his sin is that where we are or are we over here with our own righteousness it's not going to make it by our own righteousness friends just to close strive for true righteousness which is not by our own efforts it's trusting it's faith let your faith grow such that you'll know his saving let your faith be that source of that righteousness that we need as you trust Christ as you give your life to him in faith it tells us our righteousness is Christ notice this one Paul tells the Corinthian saints and they were a sorry bunch of people really the

[31:53] Corinthians they weren't very good examples of how to be a Christian but yet he tells these saints in Corinth he says of him are ye in Christ Jesus who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption the believers here this morning is that you can know by faith he's my righteousness Jesus is made unto me righteousness Jesus is made my righteousness Jesus is my wisdom Jesus is

my sanctification my holiness Jesus is my redemption my setting free from sin Jesus is everything that we need let us pray Lord we thank you that your grace was extended and still is to those who will believe Lord that it's not our righteousness of our own making but it's your righteousness that we need help us Lord to realize it by faith in Christ Lord to take heart today that when we might feel we stumble and fail yet your righteousness is that gift that we have

Lord help us not to take it lightly help us Lord to live it out that we live rightly but knowing that our salvation our righteousness is gifted because of your grace Lord help us to appreciate it and to live it out we pray in Jesus name Amen Thank you.