

What is Righteousness About?

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[0:00] As we get started today, when some people take a look at this, they talk about stepping stones, ! Don't be a stumbling stone.

And other people say stuff like, turn your stumbling stones into stepping stones and help you. We're not going to deal with any of that garbage. I mean, it's not garbage, garbage.

It's just, it completely and 100% misses the point. It is way too thin for us.

We want to go into this with a little bit more of a meaty feeling. We want to deal with something that's going to hopefully, well, hopefully when we get done today, you will be challenged, you will be encouraged, and you will be motivated.

Otherwise, I hope you have a really good nap. But open up your Bibles to Romans chapter 14.

We're going to pick this up in verse 13.

[1:17] So read along with me, Romans 14 through 13. Therefore, let us not pass judgment on one another any longer, but rather decide never to put a stumbling block or a hindrance in the way of a brother.

I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself, but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it is unclean. For if your brother is grieved by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love.

By what you eat, do not destroy the one for whom Christ died. So do not let that, what you regard as good, be spoken of as evil.

For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating or drinking, but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. Whoever thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men.

So then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding. Do not for the sake of food destroy the work of God. Everything is indeed clean, but it is wrong for anyone to make another stumble by what he eats.

[2:32] It is good not to eat meat or to drink wine or to do anything that causes your brother to stumble. The faith that you have, keep between yourself and God. Blessed is the one who has no reason to pass judgment on himself for what he approves.

But whoever has doubts is condemned if he eats because the eating is not from faith. For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin. Again, this is a pretty common passage.

And like I said, a lot of people will focus on the stumbling stones and other people will try and be more positive by saying make it stepping stones.

But I want you to look at verse 17. Verse 17. For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

The kingdom of God is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. Now, it's really interesting to find this verse 17 right in the middle of this passage because as we start here, we're going to talk about righteousness because that's the first part of the kingdom of God, right?

[3:48] But look, when some people read this, what they're going to read is a whole bunch of lists of restrictions while other people are going to read a whole bunch of freedoms.

Like in verse 13, it says, don't pass judgment. In verse 13, it says, don't put a stumbling block.

Verse 15. Don't destroy the one for whom Christ died.

Okay? Don't for the sake of food destroy what God is doing. Verse 20. A whole bunch of restrictions and limits. Other people see that, you know, like in verse 14, nothing is unclean.

Nothing's unclean. Nothing's unclean. Or in verse 16, don't let what you believe is good to be evil spoken of. We have freedom in Christ. And I've got news for you. All of that is not only the Word of

God and absolutely true and it's great, but it is secondary.

But he just spent all these verses talking about it. How can it be secondary? Well, let's take a look at this. First thing you need to remember is that righteousness is about God's judgment.

[5:04] Now, you need to understand, we're going to be back here in chapter 14, but let's turn over to Romans chapter 3. Romans chapter 3, verse 10 says, none is righteous, no, not one.

Anybody ever heard of verse 23 out of that? All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God? Look, man, you can't be righteous by do the do's and the don'ts.

The do's and the don'ts aren't what make us righteous. You can put all of this list of things and modify your behavior as best you can to fit that list. It doesn't have a lick of impact on your standing in righteousness.

Righteousness is only the result of God's judgment upon us. Take a look in verse 21 of Romans chapter 3.

But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law. Remember, they had the Mosaic law, the total list of do's and don'ts. This is what the righteous do, this is what the righteous avoid.

[6:18] And how did Israel do living according to that standard? Not real well, right? But he says, look, now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the law and the prophets bear witness to it, the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe.

Does it say anything about following a list of rules? Does it say anything about whether or not you do the right thing and don't do the wrong thing? No. The righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe, for there is no distinction.

For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God and are justified by his grace as a gift through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood to be received by faith.

This was to show God's righteousness because in his divine forbearance, he had passed over the former sins. Look, when God says that it's about righteousness, what he's talking about is not what we do, not what we accomplish, not what we can achieve, but what Jesus Christ did when he left glory, took upon himself human flesh, lived a sinless life, paid a death debt that he did not owe, was buried and rose again.

Jesus Christ did the work. He paid the penalty for sin so that through faith, righteousness can be ascribed to us, not by what we do, but by whom we believe in, by whom our faith is.

[8:02] And when we turn, when we take a look at the word of God, we go, wow, I'm a sinner. And we turn to God and we confess our sins and repent and turn to him in belief, God sits in judgment.

I mean, it's, have you ever been to court? I mean, honestly, been to court. When the judge rules, everything else is secondary.

You know, all the motions, all the, but when the judge smacks the gavel and makes a ruling, that's when things happen. And when you go to God and ask for forgiveness and turn your life over to him in faith and belief, as the judge, he smacks the gavel and says, you are declared righteous.

And the blood of Christ is applied to your account. And from that point on, you have been judged righteous. Righteousness is not about following this list of rules, but about our faith in God.

Believers, just start right there. I'm not talking about people who went forward and said the magic prayer, you know, and now they can go, no, I'm talking about people who truly have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who've truly repented, who've truly turned to him in faith.

[9:32] Believers are righteous. Not perfect. Not all of us can be Mrs. James. We're not perfect.

We're not sin free. But by proclamation of God, we are righteous. Given new life and eternal hope. When it says that the kingdom of God in verse 17 of Romans chapter 14, when it says the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating or drinking, but of righteousness, that first must be established by faith.

Righteousness. Then it says that it is a matter of peace. And I, how many of you have ever heard of the hound of heaven?

You know, chases you around declaring to you the word of God, right? Look, above all things, when we turn to God in faith, when we accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, we now have peace with God.

Turn to, turn to chapter one of the book of Romans. Chapter one. Okay.

[11:00] Okay. Elders of the church, Frank, Bill, do I have permission to say something? It is a loaded question.

Permission to make a pertinent parallel. Thanks. I'll take that as a, as a, as a full throated approval of what I'm about to do. Romans chapter one.

Take a look. Oh, let's start in verse 18, shall we? For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.

For what can be known about God is plain to them because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived ever since the creation of the world in the things that have been made, so they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

[12:24] I don't even need to say what I'm thinking about, do I? For years, we've been lied to by people who knew better, and anybody with a brain could see it.

I'll be honest with you. In this church, we pray. Let's see. Who was the president when I first started? Was that Obama? After Obama was Trump, then on Biden, now Trump again.

It doesn't matter who's sitting on the hot seat. We in this church honor that by praying for them. We honor that by lifting them up before God, whether we agree with their policies or disagree with their policies.

And this church stands on the word of God, which says pray for those in leadership that you might live a quiet life. And we did that for every, and we continue to do that for every president.

But for four years, they told us that President Biden was sharp as a tack. I got news for you. My dad died of Alzheimer's.

[13:35] I knew exactly what was going on with dementia and with him struggling from before the election. But what did they tell us? They told us he was fine.

They lied to us. They stuck their heads in the sand. And claiming to be wise, they became fools. And now we see the aftermath. That is a direct parallel to what we read here in Romans chapter one, right?

Now, get this. Above all things, the believer has peace with God. As we live our lives as unbelievers, we have to turn our eyes off and turn our brain off in dealing with the reality of what we see around us.

Science claims that evolution works. Garbage. It takes more faith to believe that the magic wand of time turns inorganic material into living material.

That just doesn't work. But because they close their eyes and stomp their feet and say it does, long and loud, people begin to believe it.

[14:55] But do you know what's going on right here? Do you know what's happening right here? Everybody knows the truth. They have to actively deny the truth.

That's what we read about here in Romans chapter one. It's people actively choosing to deny the truth. And when we turn to God and we agree with Him that we are sinners in need of salvation and we say, please, Daddy, we now have peace.

We no longer have to run away from God. We no longer have to deny the evidence which is all around us. We can go.

God is right. That's what He says in His Word. And it brings peace to our lives. God is in heaven and we acknowledge it and the relief that comes from that is amazing.

Above all things, when we turn to God, we find peace. Now, beware. There is a peace stealer.

[16:11] Satan the accuser. Follow along. Revelation chapter 12. This is where we kind of get the official name or whatever.

But in Revelation chapter 12 in verse 7, it says, Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon.

And the dragon and his angels fought back, but he was defeated and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. And the great dragon was thrown out, that ancient serpent who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world.

He was thrown down to the earth and his angels were thrown down with him. And I heard a voice loud saying, Now the salvation and power and the kingdom of God and the authority of Christ has come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down.

See, Satan is the accuser of our brothers. Do you remember the book of Job? What was Satan doing? Walking to and fro on the earth, showing up in the throne room of heaven and accusing people, causing problems.

[17:16] And that's the way it is in our life today. Look, before we're saved, I've done this before you and I'm going to do it again because it's one of those most helpful things for believers that I've encountered in a while.

before salvation, Satan is telling you, you're good, man. You're not as bad as Pastor Todd. You're doing okay.

Look, man, you're not... whatever. Relax. And the Holy Spirit's going, wake up, stupid. Wake up. God is a perfect judge who's not biased and he can't be bribed.

You're in danger of hellfire. Wake up. Once you get saved, Satan spends every day going, you're not good enough.

God doesn't love you. How could God love someone who says that they believe but still sins? You stink. You're the worst Christian there's ever been. How selfish.

[18:22] How self-righteous. How arrogant. And what does the Holy Spirit say? Beloved of God. Child. Redeemed.

Saved. Rescued. Be at peace. See, the accuser today will rob you of your peace by taking your eyes off of our Father and placing them back on the list of do's and don'ts.

Back on your failures and your shortcomings. Back on those things that you know you're working on and those things that you wish you were working on. You see, above all, the believer has peace with God.

But if we don't take care, the accuser will rob us of our peace because instead of listening to the Holy Spirit, we listen to the accuser.

Instead of trusting that God who has forgiven us knew that we were still going to need to work on things after we got saved. God who thousands of years ago sent His Son to live and die on a cross for you understood that you were still going to have bad days and still loved you enough to die on a cross.

[19:38] You are redeemed and at peace with God. But the accuser, he's going to say other things.

Who will you listen to? You see, the peace of the believer is not built on circumstances, not built on events or how easy your life is.

It is the result of a right relationship with God. I'm reminded of the Gospel of John chapter 14. I'm in verse 23.

Gospel of John chapter 14. Pick it up in verse 23. Jesus answered them, If anyone loves me, he will keep my word and my Father will love him and we will come to him and make our home with him.

Whoever does not love me does not keep my words and the word that you hear is not mine but the Father's who sent me. I want you to stop for just a minute and think about this because this is going to become important.

[20:52] If you love the Lord, you're going to do what he asks you to do. That's not the prerequisite. That's the result. Do you understand? It's not the precondition.

It's the end result. But read on. These things I am verse 25. These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you.

But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

Peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled.

Let not them be afraid. When we trust the Lord Jesus Christ as our personal Lord and Savior, God judges us.

[22:02] And by applying the blood of Christ to our account, he judges us righteous. And he establishes with this, with us, peace. He no longer is chasing us around trying to get us to see the truth of our sins.

He's no longer trying to get us to turn away from sin. All that is gone. Now what he's trying to say is, Beloved, come.

Beloved, come. Beloved, you're okay. He's the one that's picking us up, dusting off our knees and saying, you can do it. He's the one who comes behind you and says, I am with you.

Nothing can stand against you. He's the one who comes along and says, dude, that looked like it hurt. Here, let's try it again. He is our friend.

He is our Savior. He is our God. He is our encourager. It says that the Holy Spirit is sent directly from heaven to be our helper, to encourage us. We are at peace.

[23:08] We can have peace not only with God, but with ourselves, too, when we turn to Him. But it says in Romans 14, verse 17, that the kingdom of God is a matter of righteousness, it is a matter of peace, and it is a matter of what?

Joy. Oh, wait, wait, wait. We all know Romans 15, 13, right? Yeah? May the God of all hope fill you with all joy and peace.

Take a look at that again. It's right there. 15, 13. 13, 15. I'm in 1 Corinthians. Holy Toledo. I went the wrong way.

How about this? May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace and believing so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound and help.

We've talked about that for a year or more. I mean, God's the active agent that's filling us with hope, that's filling us with peace. It's God that's at work in our hearts and our lives.

[24:17] But I want you to turn to Philippians 2 because there's something in there that we probably shouldn't ignore.

Philippians chapter 2 because I think the joy quotient is a little bit low.

Can I get an amen? I think the joy quotient could go up a bit. I know it certainly can in my life.

So let's see if, let's take a look at Philippians chapter 2. Paul's writing and he says, so, if there is any encouragement in Christ, well, I certainly think so.

he loved me enough to pay my penalties so that I don't have to. That's encouraging. He knew me before I ever lived and loved me enough to die for it.

[25:32] That's encouraging. If there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort in love, not puppy love, not mushy, mushy love, but agape love.

You know, the love that loves you even when you do the absolute wrong thing, the love that is self-sacrificing and it's not based on how you act, but it's based upon the heart and the love of the giver.

That's encouraging. If there's any encouragement in Christ, any comfort in love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy.

This is the same guy who wrote Romans 15, 13 where it says that God, may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing.

If God's doing all the work, why does He say complete my joy? Because there's an element here that we need to pay attention to. Complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.

[26:46] Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

And then it goes on to talk about having the mind of Christ. joy is complete when we live as God calls us to live.

I want you to think about this. When we turn to God, He judges us. He judges us righteous, which is much, trust me, much better than the day of judgment when everybody else gets judged. You want to stand before God today and have the blood of Christ applied, right? Because, yeah, that's what today is for. And because of that, we have peace with God and we can have peace here.

And God is the one that is active in bringing joy into our lives, but we have a role in that. I can't improve on what Christ did on the cross.

[28:08] He did it. And that's just a fact, and the fact is that I have peace with God because I've given up my own narrow-minded, selfish ways, and so God and I are good, and I have to be wary of Satan, and so I can impact that.

I can learn to say no to listening to Satan and yes to, but joy, joy is something that we can throw a rope on, put a saddle on, and ride, and really put some hooks into it.

Look what it says. Make my joy complete by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord. Now I want you to think about that, and then I want you to go back to Romans chapter 14.

In Romans chapter 14 it says, let's not pass judgment on one another, let's not put stumbling blocks, let's not, you know, be thoughtless about others, let's care about others.

The point here is us living the way God calls us to, and that is valuing other people. That is being willing to sacrifice for other people.

[29:19] We live in a world today where it says, well, these are my rights, and don't you dare infringe upon my rights. That's not what God calls us to do. God calls us to love others, to treat them with value and respect.

Joy is complete when we value others more than ourselves, when we find set ways to serve them, when we see other brothers grow and mature. permission to use a football illustration?

Thank you. Oh, there we go. Anybody know who that is? Bruce Matthews. He was incredible. He never missed, I mean, he played for like 12 years, I don't know, 296 games, 293 of them he started.

The only time he didn't start a game was when the player strike happened. Remember way back when? Otherwise, he played every snap of every, just, he was there.

[30:33] And you know what position he played? Well, nobody really knows. Because he was offensive lineman, meaning tackle, guard, and center.

He played them all. He played every position on the line. And he was an all pro in all of them. Not only was he all of those, he was also the long snapper and the the guy for the PAT.

Not only was he that, but he was also on the practice squad as a kicker and as a fill-in quarterback. Look at that guy.

He's not a quarterback. That doesn't look like a kicker. You know where he is today? Hall of Fame. Do you know why?

Because he was a great servant. He was willing to do what it took. You cannot be an offensive lineman and be one of those peacocks strutting around, look at me!

[31:42] You know what the offensive lineman does? Gets in the trenches and does the hard work. It's the offensive line that makes her break a team.

Quarterback gets his offensive line mad at him. You know what happens? When he calls hike, they all blow their nose and turn away and all these linebackers just pound the guy, right?

It's the offensive line that is willing to make the hard work. You don't see them on ESPN very often. You don't see them getting the huge money contract.

You don't see them getting all the accolades. guys, but they're in the weight room doing the hard work. They're on the practice field, muddy and dirty.

They're doing it without all the fame and glory. You know what's amazing about this man right here?

Well, fun trivia, he comes from a big family and two of his brothers were special needs and they played in the special Olympics and they got kicked out because they were too competitive.

[32:58] But this man, not only was he a hall of fame football player, a devout Christian. And I think we see that in his willingness to play any

position it was asked of.

He was willing to make whatever sacrifice was called upon him for the good of somebody else.

when we're taking a look at who we are in Christ, you are righteous if you are a believer.

God has said so. You need to be careful. Don't let the accuser steal your peace. And seek to serve others and watch your joy grow.

Let's pray. Father, I thank you. I thank you for your word. I thank you for the fact that you love us, even though, quite honestly, we don't often deserve it.

I thank you for the fact that you are more than we could ever ask for.