

The Basics of Righteousness

I. Introduction

- A. The wise man observed, "Doing what is right makes a nation great, but sin will bring disgrace to any people." (Proverbs 14:34) and "When good people do well, everyone is happy, but when evil people rule, everyone groans." (Proverbs 29:2)
- B. Our Western society does not offer very much guidance in moral living or social behavior.
- C. The Bible frequently speaks about righteousness.

II. A Righteous God

- A. God's righteousness and His holiness are connected.
- B. The Hebrew word for righteousness is *tsaddik* that means "just, innocent, virtue." David stated, "...He leads me on paths that are right for the good of his name." (Psalm 23:3).
- C. The righteousness of God is a statement of Scripture that is never open for debate.

III. A Righteous Kingdom

- A. The kingdom of heaven was not a sub-theme for Jesus.
- B. Jesus consistently considered the kingdom as His.
- C. When Paul sought to define Christ's kingdom on earth he said, "In the kingdom of God, eating and drinking are not important. The important things are living right with God, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit." (Romans 14:17).
- D. It is unbelievable to imagine a kingdom without a king or governing laws.
- E. All creation demonstrates this:
 - 1. There is the law of conscience, where God has impressed His principles in the subconscious mind of man.
 - 2. There is the law of nature, where God has set processes in motion.
 - 3. The law of His Word, in which He has revealed Himself to us.
 - 4. The law of His Spirit, through which God applies His processes in the relationships of people.
 - 5. God's law is certain, permanent, and fixed. If God says it, that settles it!
- F. In God's kingdom laws, higher law overrides lower law.

IV. Righteous Paths

- A. These "paths of righteousness" which our "righteous God" chooses to lead us into, run north, south, east, and west in our lives.
- B. The Good Shepherd does not drive us into righteous paths; He leads us into them (Psalm 23).
- C. Righteousness is an action of life expressing the attitude of the heart.
- D. Since the Hebrew word used for righteousness means "just or innocent," the prophets used it to describe the person who fit a standard of behavior.

V. Righteous Purposes

- A. God has righteous purposes for our lives.
- B. God declared that His name was Jehovah-Tsidkenu, "The Lord Does What Is Right." (Jeremiah 33:16).
- C. God does demand righteousness of us.

VI. Righteous Provisions

- A. "...In Christ we are put right with God, and have been made holy..." (1 Corinthians 1:30).
- B. God brings us into one realm of righteousness at a time.
- C. Christ's gift of righteousness is progressive, not perfect.
- D. God has never revealed any aspect of His nature to hurt our worship.

VII. Righteousness Is by Faith

- A. A dominant theme of the Book of Romans is that righteousness comes by faith.
- B. The life of faith does not eliminate the tough facts of life.
- C. God spoke the Ten Commandments to Israel as a code of behavior and then carved them into tables of stone.
- D. In His teaching in the New Testament, Jesus not only endorsed the Ten Commandments, He amplified them—making them extremely practical for our everyday living.
- E. In the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:1-12), Jesus dealt with proper attitudes for kingdom believers. We call them the beatitudes.
- F. One reason Jesus was so unpopular with the religious leaders of His day is that Jesus was so very practical in His teachings.

VIII. Righteousness Is Practical

- A. Born-again Christians have been changed inwardly.
- B. New principles [laws] replace old principles (Romans 8:2)
- C. God's revealed code of righteousness is the manufacturer's instructions given to insure pleasurable service.
- D. If, as some say, following God's rules for life squeezes all the enjoyment out of living, why does God call His kingdom "...living right with God, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit." (Romans 14:17)
- E. Some religious people are so heavenly minded that they are of no earthly use.
- F. Modern Christians living in a decaying society need to join David in praying, "Lord, since I have many enemies, show me the right thing to do. Show me clearly how you want me to live." (Psalm 5:8).