

RIGHTEOUSNESS DEFINED

It is imperative that New Testament Christians have a proper understanding of *Righteousness* because of its association with the soul's relation to God and also responsibilities to others. The word *Righteousness* derives from a root meaning **straightness, uprightness**. Explicit in its meaning is **doing what is right**, whether toward God or man. *Righteousness* is a relative term and can be defined as consistency in every given position, whether it is used as a state of uprightness before God, or man. Biblically, *Righteousness* is the foundation on which all Christian life, progress and service rests. God is righteous, and as such, demands Righteousness from everyone who would follow Him. Otherwise, there can be no possible fellowship between Himself and them. (CP Amos 3:3 with Mt 5:6, 10, 13-20; Lu 1:75; Ac 10:35; 17:24-31; Ro 5:17-21; 6:1-23; 2Cor 5:17-21, 6:14-18; 9:8-10 (Psa 112:1-9); Eph 6:13-14; Php 1:9-11; 1Ti 6:11-12; 2Ti 2:22; 3:16-17; He 5:12-14; Jas 1:20; 3:16-18; 1Pe 2:21-25; 3:12-16; 1Jn 2:29; 3:7-10; Rev 22:10-12). While there may be shades of meaning associated with Righteousness, the simple idea resident within the word is **doing what is right**.

Mt 5, verses 6 and 10 above, are two of the nine *Beatitudes* – the principles upon which the Kingdom of God is based – that Jesus designated Christians to live out in their daily lives. The spiritual condition of Christians right throughout their earthly lives will be determined by how much they hunger and thirst after Righteousness. Mt 5:13-20 is a stern warning to Christians to not only be hearers of God's Word but doers also, if they want to enter into the future Eternal Kingdom. Except their Righteousness exceeds the Righteousness of the Jewish Scribes and Pharisees, they shall in no way enter in (CP Mt 5:6, 10, 13-20). In Ro 6 Paul stresses the fact that if Righteousness is not manifest in the lives of Christians then they must seriously question whether they are born again and saved. True Christians have died to sin and are risen again to Righteousness (CP Ro 6:1-23).

The "Righteousness of God in Christ" in 2Cor 5:21 refers to the gracious gift of God to Christians whereby they are brought into a right relationship with God through the Righteousness of Christ's shed blood. This Righteousness is not attainable by any merit other than their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ to save them (CP Ro 10:6-11). Through Christ they have been given the gift of eternal life, but they also are obligated to reconcile others to God too (CP 2Cor 5:17-21). In 2Cor 6:14-18 Christians are admonished not to enter into any mismatched relationships with non-Christians. As light has no communion with darkness, nor Christ with the Devil, neither does Righteousness with unrighteousness. This is also a warning to New Testament Christians to flee from idolatry and other heathen practices that would entice them away from Christianity (CP 2Cor 6:14-18). Eph 6:13-14 teaches that Christians conforming to God's Word need never fear the forces of darkness. The Devil can only overcome those not conforming to the Word. This highlights how imperative it is that Christians know the Word, and that they walk in the way Christ has prescribed they should (CP Eph 6:11-12).

In Php 1:9-11 Paul prays that Christians' love for one another would be increased even further than it already is, void of any offence whatever toward God

or man, until Jesus comes again to take all the saints of God back to Heaven with Him (CP Php 1:9-11). We also learn from this that love that is enlightened enables Christians to avoid what is questionable or wrong. In closing, Paul prays that Christians would be filled with the fruits which Righteousness produces – all the Christian virtues that make up a righteous life. When Christians' love for one another becomes the deciding factor in their choices and the motivating power in their actions, they will be exemplifying in their lives the same self-sacrificial love as Christ's was for them.

Paul injunction to Timothy in 1Ti 6:11-12 to follow after Righteousness and to fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold on eternal life, is further confirmation for contemporary Christians that salvation is not an unforfeitable possession in this life as some in the professing Church would have us believe. *Once-saved* does not mean *always-saved* as they claim (CP 1Ti 6:11-12). 2Ti 2:22 also extends to all professing Christians in the contemporary Church. They must follow after Righteousness and all the other virtues named in order to ensure their eternal security. They must flee from every unholy desire that would divert them from the path of purity and Righteousness (CP 2Cor 2:22). 2Ti 3:16-17 teaches that Scriptures alone, as the inspired word of God, are the only teachings necessary for life and Godliness that New Testament Christians must conform to (CP 2Ti 3:16-17).

He 5:12-14 teaches the importance of New Testament Christians thoroughly immersing themselves in God's Word of Righteousness in order to be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, that they can discern both good and evil (CP He 5:12-14). Jas 1:20 teaches that Christians' new life in Christ demands that they get rid of all moral filth and wickedness which prevents God's Word of Righteousness implanting itself in their spirit (CP Jas 1:20). Jas 3:16-18 teaches that it is only by living Holy lives and treating each other with dignity and honour that Christians can enjoy the fruits of Righteousness (CP Jas 3:16-18). In 1Pe 2:21-25, while Peter attests to bodily healing in Christ's atoning death, he also affirms the fact that unless Christians are living righteous lives, they will have no part in God's Eternal Kingdom (CP 1Pe 2:21-25). In 3:12-15 Peter admonishes Christians to never be found wanting in their witness to God's saving Grace, and that it is better if they suffer for Righteousness sake than for any evil things (CP 1Pe 3:12-15).

Christians' fellowship with God is only maintained by living free from sin and doing righteousness, as God Himself is Righteous (CP 1Jn 2:29). Doing Righteousness is proof of Christians' new birth. Christians are characterized by their Righteousness and love for each other (CP 1Jn 3:7-10). In Rev 22:10-12 we learn that both the righteous and the unrighteous determine their own destinies in eternity. Only those works which survive God's testing fire have eternal value, and only those Christians doing the work of God's Word and sowing to the Spirit at the end of their earthly lives, will inhabit eternity with Jesus (CP Rev 22:10-12). See also author's comments on Mt 5:1-12, 5:13-16, Ro 5:15, 6:1, 6:6-11, 6:12-14, 6:15, 6:16, 6:17-20, 6:21-23, 10:6-11, 10:9, 2Cor

5:21(B), 6:14, Eph 6:11-12, 1Ti 6:6-10, 6:14, 2Ti 3:16-17, He 5:12-14, Jas 1:19-21, 3:17-18, 1Pe 2:11, 2:24, 3:15, 1Jn 3:6-9, 3:10-13, Rev 22:10-12 and all cross-reference Scriptures and studies referred to therein, in his book **A Question and Answer Study of the New Testament**.

It should be noted in closing here that this study does not present the Doctrine of Righteousness in its totality from both the Old and New Testaments. The study mainly expounds Scriptures from the New Testament perspective only, to impress upon professing Christians in the contemporary Church how essential it is to exhibit practical Righteousness in everyday life. Christians are deceived who deem themselves righteous, but fail to manifest Righteousness in their everyday life. *Doing* Righteousness is the sure proof of *being* righteous. A Christian's standing before God is revealed in his or her state among men. One is a reflection of the other

(CP Tit 2:11-15). Christians must faithfully fulfil every obligation of life in every one of its aspects by living righteous lives. To be righteous is simply to *be* right and to *do* right toward both God and man. (See also author's study *Christian Ethics*, following this).

Finally, the Righteous are blessed of God with prosperity (CP Isa 3:10). The Righteous are surrounded with Divine favour (CP Psa 5:12). The Righteous enjoy peace, quietness, and assurance (CP Isa 32:17). The Righteous will be delivered from affliction (CP Psa 34:19). The Righteous have enlightened minds and glad hearts (CP Psa 97:11). The Righteous will never be forgotten (CP Psa 112:6). The Righteous are guarded by God Himself (CP 1Pe 3:8-13). The ultimate blessing of Righteousness is the inheritance of Eternal Life with Him who is our Righteousness, our Lord Jesus Christ. This is the glad hope of all who are righteous (CP Pr 11:28-30; Mal 3:17-18; Mt 13:36-43; 25:46 with Jn 14:2-3). AMEN!