

Bible teaching on Righteousness

1 – RIGHTEOUSNESS – THE MORAL STATE OF CREATION

1. Righteousness is a word which means being in a right relationship with God
2. The details of how to live in a right relationship with God are to be found by accepting that the world God has created is a moral world in which right and wrong are absolute, it is just that we do not always manage to see it
3. It was through the Hebrew people that God developed the human consciousness of morality, and the idea that the God who made the world is essentially 'good'.

2 – RIGHTEOUSNESS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

God has to **EXPOSE** the truth without compromising the whole of the Creation, so he chose a people through whom to work, but His eyes were on reconciling the whole world

1. **FAITH** – see Genesis 15:6
2. **LAW** – see Deuteronomy 6:24
3. **COVENANT** – see Isaiah 42:6,7
4. **HOLINESS** – see Psalm 4:1-3

Notice how the idea of a 'righteous people' arise – those through whom God has done what is morally right, or whom God has used to do His will – forefathers, kings, prophets and other special people, Ruth, Esther, Job etc. – see Psalm 7:8,17

3 – NEW TESTAMENT TEXTS ON RIGHTEOUSNESS

On three significant occasions the subject of righteousness comes up in Jesus' ministry

1. **The Baptism of Jesus - Matthew 3:14-17** – in which Jesus submits to both earth and heaven in order to begin His ministry – and thus 'fulfil all righteousness'. This does not mean simply that Jesus was concerned to do everything right. It means that Jesus' ministry as Messiah was an act of God's righteousness
2. **Jesus' teaching – Matthew 6:33-34** – the famous verse 'seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness ...' is not often quoted as a matter of seeking Righteousness – but that is what God wants us to do.
3. **Jesus talks about the coming of the Holy Spirit - John 16:7-14** – We often forget that the purpose of the coming of the Holy Spirit is to correct the world's misunderstandings about what is right and wrong.

4 – THREE GREAT LETTERS ABOUT RIGHTEOUSNESS

The fullest expression of the importance of righteousness is found in the Letters, especially these texts.

1. **Romans – Romans 3:21-26** – Here Paul explains the nature of our salvation and how we are 'put right' with God. Paul uses the word 'righteousness' as a code word for being in a right relationship with God
2. **Hebrews – Hebrews 12:11-15** – here the writer emphasises that righteousness is not just a matter of being in a right relationship with God, but of doing what is right as a consequence. This is impossible without God's Grace and the work of the Holy Spirit.
3. **1 Peter – 1 Peter 2:21-25** – Peter spoke about living in liberty and unbound because God has given us freedom from our sins. We are to 'live for righteousness.

REFERENCES

Genesis 15:6 ⁶ And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness.

Deuteronomy 6:24-25 ²⁴ And the LORD commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive, as we are this day. ²⁵ And it will be righteousness for us, if we are careful to do all this commandment before the LORD our God, as he has commanded us.¹

Isaiah 42:6-7 ⁶ "I am the LORD; I have called you in righteousness; I will take you by the hand and keep you; I will give you as a covenant for the people, a light for the nations, ⁷ to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness.

Psalms 4:1-3 Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness! You have given me relief when I was in distress. Be gracious to me and hear my prayer! ² O men,¹ how long shall my honor be turned into shame? How long will you love vain words and seek after lies? Selah ³ But know that the LORD has set apart the godly for himself; the LORD hears when I call to him.

Psalms 7:8,17 ⁸ The LORD judges the peoples; judge me, O LORD, according to my righteousness and according to the integrity that is in me. ... ¹⁷ I will give to the LORD the thanks due to his righteousness, and I will sing praise to the name of the LORD, the Most High.

Matthew 3:14-17 ¹⁴ John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" ¹⁵ But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now; for it is proper for us in this way to fulfill all righteousness." Then he consented. ¹⁶ And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. ¹⁷ And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, the Beloved,¹ with whom I am well pleased."

Matthew 6:33-34 ³³ But strive first for the kingdom of God¹ and his² righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. ³⁴ "So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today's trouble is enough for today.

John 16:7-11 ⁷ Nevertheless I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Advocate¹ will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. ⁸ And when he comes, he will prove the world wrong about¹ sin and righteousness and judgment: ⁹ about sin, because they do not believe in me; ¹⁰ about righteousness, because I am going to the Father and you will see me no longer; ¹¹ about judgment, because the ruler of this world has been condemned.

Romans 3:21-26 ²¹ But now, apart from law, the righteousness of God has been disclosed, and is attested by the law and the prophets, ²² the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ¹ for all who believe. For there is no distinction, ²³ since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; ²⁴ they are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵ whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement¹ by his blood, effective through faith. He did this to show his righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over the sins previously committed; ²⁶ it was to prove at the present time that he himself is righteous and that he justifies the one who has faith in Jesus.¹

Hebrews 12:11-15 ¹¹ Now, discipline always seems painful rather than pleasant at the time, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. ¹² Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, ¹³ and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed. ¹⁴ Pursue peace with everyone, and the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. ¹⁵ See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springs up and causes trouble, and through it many become defiled.

1 Peter 2:21 - 25 ²¹ For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you should follow in his steps. ²² "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth." ²³ When he was abused, he did not return abuse; when he suffered, he did not threaten; but he entrusted himself to the one who judges justly. ²⁴ He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross,¹ so that, free from sins, we might live for righteousness; by his wounds² you have been healed. ²⁵ For you were going astray like sheep, but now you have returned to the shepherd and guardian of your souls.