

**Pastor Paul Bawden
Grace Evangelical Church
Sunday, November 22, 2009
"God – Righteous"**

**Psalm 7:9; 116:5; 119:137; Daniel 9:14; John 17:25; II Timothy 4:8;
Revelation 16:5,7; 19:2**

A police officer in a small town stopped a motorist who was speeding down Main Street.

"But officer," the man said, "I can explain." "Just be quiet!!!" responded the officer. "...or I'm going to let you cool off in jail until the chief gets back."

"But officer, I just wanted to say...."And I said, PLEASE KEEP QUIET! Now you're going to jail!"

A few hours later, the officer checked up on his prisoner and said, "Fortunate for you that the chief's at his daughter's wedding. He'll be in a good mood when he gets back."

"Don't count on it," said the man in the cell. "I'm the groom!"

Life can get complicated sometimes in man's world when it comes to determining what is the right thing to do.

I trust that we are grateful that in the world of the biblical God, He always knows what is the right action to take regardless of the circumstance.

Why is that so?

The biblical God is righteous. Note what the Bible says in this regard.

I. Scriptures that tell us that the biblical God is righteous.

1. Old Testament Scriptures.

(1) Psalm 7:9,11.

"O let the evil of the wicked come to an end, but establish the righteous; for the righteous God tries the hearts and minds of men" (7:9).

"God is a righteous judge, and a God who has indignation every day" (7:11).

(2) Psalm 116:5; 119:137; 145:17.

"Gracious is the LORD, and righteous; Yes our God is compassionate" (116:5).

"Righteous are You, O Lord, and upright are Your judgments" (119:137).

"The LORD is righteous in all His ways and kind in all His deeds" (145:17).

(3) Daniel 9:14.

"Therefore the LORD has kept the calamity in store and brought it on us; for the LORD our God is righteous with respect to all His deeds which He has done, but we have not obeyed His voice."

2. New Testament Scriptures

(1) John 17:25 -The Words of our Lord - In His High Priestly prayer to His heavenly Father.

"O righteous Father, although the world has not known you, yet I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me."

(2) II Timothy 4:8.

"In the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing."

(3) Revelation 16:5,7.

"And I heard the angel of the waters saying, 'Righteous are You, who are and who were, O Holy One, because You judged these things'" (16:5).

"And I heard the altar saying, 'Yes, O Lord God, the Almighty, true and righteous are Your judgments'" (16:7).

(4) Revelation 19:1b,2a.

"Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God; because His judgments are true and righteous."

Since the biblical God is righteous, what does it mean that He is righteous.

II. Definition of the word righteous that describes the biblical God.

1. Old Testament word used for righteous.

(1) Main word.

In the Old Testament the main word for righteous is "saddiq."

It's root basically means **to conform to an ethical or moral standard.**

The original "sdq" means "to be straight," while also having the idea of standing for a "norm."

When the Scripture reads that God or the Lord is righteous (saddiq), it means, then, that the ethical or moral standard is God Himself- the absolute unchanging standard is His nature, His word and His will. Of course that is all in accord with His holiness, His transcendent moral purity.

This tells us that the biblical God is the moral standard in His character, will always act in accord with His moral standard, and never be inconsistent in His character and actions. What the biblical God does will always be right because it is carried according to His standard of rightness.

(2) Expression of.

The biblical God who is righteous expresses Himself in righteousness in His actions and dealing with people.

As the Psalmist expressed in Psalm 9:8 that "God will judge the world in righteousness," that is according to His standard of rightness.

Psalm 98:2. "The LORD has made known His salvation; He has revealed His righteousness (His holy absolutes) in the light of the nations."

2. The New Testament word used for righteous.

(1) Main word used.

The main word used for righteous in the New Testament is "dikaiousune."

It carries with it the idea of what is right, good and true. Also what is fair and equitable, yes, what is godly.

When applied to the biblical God, as in the Old Testament, it means that the biblical God is right in His character, His word, and in His will. He is the unchanging standard who is never inconsistent in His character with any of His other attributes. He is always right.

(2) Expression of.

Again as in the Old Testament, the biblical God in the New Testament expresses that He is righteous through His actions of righteousness.

"For in it (the gospel) the righteousness of God is revealed. . ." (Romans 1;17).

"Even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe" (Romans 3:22).

A final definition of righteous when describing the biblical God.

Righteous when describing the biblical God means that God in Himself is the absolute unchanging eternal standard in His holy nature, His Holy Word and His Holy Will, while never being inconsistent in His character with any of His other attributes.

III. Man and His relationship with the righteous biblical God.

1. Man has been created by the biblical God to do the right, to follow God's eternal absolute standard of righteousness (Genesis 1-2).

God created Adam and Eve with physical bodies, made for each other to compliment the other, creating as well for them an immaterial part with a mind, will, and emotion, that can think, love, and act.

Now they could worship Him and serve Him and each other. Adam and Eve were created in a state of creaturely holiness with the ability to make right decisions for God, but also with the option to not make right decisions for God.

The righteous God created Adam, then, with the capacity to do what is right, what is in accord with the righteous God, yes, in accord with His eternal absolutes and standard of what is right, what is righteousness.

That's why when God finished His creation at different times, (7 Times), He said that this was "good." The last "good" was when He finished creating Adam and Eve. The word, "good, meant that what God had done was in accord with His righteous will, in accord with His eternal standard of what was right.

The tree of the knowledge of good and evil was given so that Adam and Eve could learn that God had an absolute standard. In following His standard of not eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil in obeying the Lord, they were doing what was right before HIM.

In eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Adam and Eve would not be doing what is right, what is in compliance with God's standard of rightness.

2. Man decided not to do what is right before God (Genesis 3).

Adam and Eve decided that what Satan told them to do was right rather than what God told them to do was right. They believed the lie that they would become like God if they ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

In yielding to the temptation of Satan, Adam and Eve believed in a false rightness and thought that what they did was right. At that moment of decision to not do what is right, follow God's eternal absolute, they acted as god.

They thought that following the so-called rightness of Satan was the way to live rightly.

3. Man became guilty and a sinner when God's rightness, His righteousness, was not followed (Genesis 3; Romans 5:12).

That's why it says in Romans 5 that as by one man sin entered in to the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all have sinned.

By disobeying God's standard of righteousness, he became an unrighteous person before God, not having the standing to have fellowship with Him, but separated from God spiritually and bound to die physically. Romans 3:10 (quoting from Psalm 14), tells us that there is none righteous, not even one; there is none that understands; there is none that seeks after God."

Does that mean that man can't do good things and show a heart of compassion? No, it's obvious in our world that man has done and continues to do help humanity in a number of ways.

What it does mean is that since man's life is polluted by sin, whatever he does for others is tainted by that sin so that all his righteousness (all his righteous deeds) is as a polluted garment (Isaiah 64:6). In fact, the very law he tries to keep, say the Ten Commandments, he keeps breaking, so the very law he is trying to keep condemns him.

Humanity, then, created by God, to do His righteousness, fulfill His commands so the righteousness of God can be experienced, in disobeying God in Adam, is now in a position of not being able to please God whatsoever. One may try, but his very righteousness tainted with sin, falls short of God's righteousness, everything that is in accord with His standard of rightness and holiness.

Man is in a desperate state, a state of condemnation which Christ taught in John 3:18.

Why do we see the deceit, the dishonesty, the jealousy, the idolatry, the sexual impurity, the lust for power, and prestige in our world today? Humanity is displaying its unrighteous condition before God and before all of us. We should not be surprised as we see the descriptions of sin in Romans 1 and Galatians 5 displayed in our culture. It is an evidence of the unrighteous heart of man needing to experience the very righteousness of the righteous God.

So what does God do for man in his unrighteous state before Him not able to please Him in any of what he does as he goes his own way to the destiny of eternal separation from HIM?

IV. The righteous God intervenes on behalf of unrighteous man, unrighteous humanity.

1. From Genesis 3:15 on, the promise of the Redeemer, and through the Old Testament tabernacle/temple and the sacrificial system, God was preparing the way for the Redeemer to come and that He did.

2. The Redeemer came – Jesus Christ, the God-man, the promised Messiah and Savior of the world. We will soon celebrate his birth again as we quickly come into the Christmas season. The Word became flesh and tabernacled, tented among us (John 1:14).

But note one of the words that was used to describe Jesus Christ.

John in I John 2:1 records these words, "If anyone sins, we have an advocate (our defender in the courtroom), Jesus Christ the Righteous."

Don't miss the word, righteous, used to describe Jesus Christ.

What does that tell us about Jesus Christ.? As God's Son, He is in Himself the standard for absolute rightness always consistent in Himself with all His other attributes, meaning as well that in His life on planet earth, He always did what was in accord with the will of God His Father.

Then, in His life on earth He fulfilled all of God's commandments and commands. He lived a sinless life. He is the end of the law for righteousness. That is why Peter says, "He did no sin, neither was any deceit found in His mouth" (I Peter 2:22).

Amazing, no matter how many times we here it, but we need to hear it again and again, that Jesus Christ is the RIGHTEOUS ONE. It is no wonder that he is demeaned by the world. Prayers are not allowed to use His Name. Why there is Turkey Day rather than Thanksgiving Day. Why there are holiday concerts, rather than Christmas concerts, and holiday trees rather than Christmas trees.

What's happening here? Jesus Christ the righteous is being blocked out so that man in his own mind can accomplish what he thinks is righteous, when in reality his actions only depict his own unrighteousness before God.

Jesus Christ is the RIGHTEOUS ONE, over against man who is unrighteous. There is such a gulf between them that it is impossible for man to ever bridge that gulf.

Righteous Jesus Christ - - - - - Unrighteous humanity.

But even more amazing, the righteous biblical God keeps loving unrighteous man. The righteous biblical God bridges the gulf between Himself and unrighteous humanity.

3. Loving unrighteous mankind, the righteous God provides His righteousness for unrighteous humanity.

II Corinthians 5:21 puts it this way, "He made Him who knew no sin, to be sin for us (yes unrighteous for us) so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

How did the righteous God do that?

That is what the cross is all about.

The righteous Christ on that cruel cross was made sin for us, made unrighteous for us, so that the righteous demands of the holy God could be met and He could declare sinners righteous before HIMSELF.

Note the three words used in Romans 3:22-25 for the righteous biblical God to declare unrighteous sinners before Him righteous.

- (1) **Redemption (3:24)**– This is the most emphatic word used for redemption in the New Testament. It is not just making the payment for sin through Christ's shed blood, but it is also taking one out of the slave market of sin, putting one into the kingdom of God's dear Son, Jesus Christ, stressing SECURITY, FREEDOM, BUT COMPLETE FREEDOM. **Christ's redemption is the basis or the root for all the other benefits He provides humanity in His death, burial, and bodily resurrection.**
- (2) **Propitiation (3:25)** – It can mean the place of mercy, the mercy seat, stressing that God's righteous demands, His very holiness and wrath which brings judgment on sin, has been satisfied so forgiveness can be granted to unrighteous man by the righteous God.
- (3) **Justification (3:24)** – He justified. It's a legal term. It doesn't mean to make righteous, but to declare righteous. It means to provide unrighteous man the position of being declared righteous before the righteous God – to have the very rightness of God put on his spiritual ledger.

How could God do all that? – Only because of the righteous Christ on the Cross being made sin for us as He died on the cross, was buried and rose from the grave bodily three days later.

In Christ, then, through His death, burial and bodily resurrection God demonstrated His **RIGHTEOUSNESS TO THE WORLD (ROMANS 3;25, 26)**. If we want to see where God is righteous, where He demonstrated his righteousness ultimately, finally, and eternally, we come to Christ's cross, burial, and bodily resurrection.

The love of the righteous God for unrighteous man is beyond description here! That's why for eternity the Lamb of God, the righteous Christ will be worshipped and served forever and ever.

V. The righteous God gives mankind the opportunity to accept the righteous Christ as his personal Savior.

1. We need to understand our position before God (Romans 3:23).

What does the text say in this familiar verse. "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." All humanity is unrighteous before the righteous God. If we are not sinners we don't need a Savior. But we know that we sin and disobey the Lord. We need a Savior. Francis Schaeffer used to say to fasten a tape recorder on yourself and let it run all day as you go about your tasks, and then play it back at the end of the day. It will be obvious that some of the things that you said, and attitudes expressed will point out that you have sinned against God or broken some of His teachings.

Yes, we who are unrighteous, need the righteous Savior, who can do for us, declare us righteous before the righteous God.

How does that happen?

2. We need to reach out by faith and accept the Savior (Romans 3:22, 25).

“Even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction” (Romans 3:22).

“Whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation (satisfaction) in His blood through faith” (Romans 3:25).

I trust that you have made that decision to accept Christ as your Savior.

At that moment of accepting Christ as personal Savior what does God do for you?

3. Accepting Christ as personal Savior, the righteous God declares the believer righteous – justified in His presence.

God, so to speak in the courtroom of heaven, takes the gavel and hits on His Judge’s bench, and declares,

JUSTIFIED!! DECLARED RIGHTEOUS, FORGIVEN FOREVER.

And it’s all because of His grace, because of His unmerited favor (Romans 3:24).

But it is more than a position of you and I being declared righteous through faith in Jesus Christ.

4. In the power of the Holy Spirit, the believer in Jesus, can live out the righteousness of God in his daily life.

Romans 5:17 says this, which is one of my favorite verses. “For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One Jesus Christ”

That means – through faith in Jesus Christ,

(1) We have peace with God – no longer God’s enemy, God’s friend. (Romans 5:1). We can sleep at night knowing we are in God’s family forever, at peace with God. We can also be at peace with others in the body of Christ, and when there are disruptions in fellowship, we can ask forgiveness as Christ has forgiven us (Ephesians 4:32).

(2) We have access through Christ into the very throne room of God any time through prayer (Romans 5:2). God’s Son has introduced us to His heavenly Father, now our heavenly Father.

(3) We have hope that we can exult in even in the midst of the many challenges of life (Romans 5:3-5a). We know that in those challenges, God is deepening our faith and trust in Him for our good and His glory. We know that whether we live or pass from this life, we are the Lord’s, we will be with HIM forever.

(4) We can display God’s righteousness in our thoughts, attitudes, and actions (Romans 6:18).

The believer is no longer in bondage, a slave to unrighteousness, but now a slave to righteousness,

because the believer has a new master, Jesus Christ, the righteous, and in presenting Himself to God his life can display the very righteousness of God in all that He does, doing what is right before God and others in the power of the Holy Spirit (cf. Romans 6:13).

As Paul told the Ephesians and us, "to put on the new self, (to use the new nature) which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth" (4:24).

Having the mind of Christ, we can have a right view of ourselves and of others –Selfishness is replaced by selflessness. We can think like Christ to serve rather than to be served.

Having the love of Christ, we can have the motivation to reach out to others seeking their highest good, ministering to different needs, even giving a cup of cold water in Jesus' name.

Having the will of Christ we can in the Holy Spirit's power do what is right in action – Telling the truth, not losing our temper, using words that build up, having a forgiving attitude. Young people keeping themselves pure before marriage – no premarital relationships; husbands and wives remaining committed to each other for life; children obeying their parents – yes, each of us in the power of the Spirit doing what is right before God and others – that is living out God's righteousness! (Romans 6:16,18).

Yes, using the Word of God to guide us into those thoughts, attitudes and actions that display the righteousness of God, for it is given for training in righteousness- to do God's will (II Timothy 3:16-17).

How exciting is that to know that as we obey the Holy Spirit through following the teachings of God's Word that we are displaying God's righteousness, His very character that is always in sink with His absolute truth.

Indeed, God wants His righteousness to be displayed through our individual lives, our family lives, our church life, in our neighborhoods, at school, and at work.

5. God also wants His righteousness to be displayed in our nation and world.

Proverbs 14:34 – Righteousness exalts a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people.

Proverbs 25:5 – Take away the wicked from before the king, and his throne shall be established in righteousness.

Proverbs 29:2 - When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: but when the wicked bears rule, the people mourn.

That's why as we see the developments in our country, we need to pray for our nation (as the Scriptures exhorts us in I Timothy 2), yes, pray daily for our country and our leadership that God will convict them to follow His righteousness. We also need to pray for our world that God's righteousness will prevail. Praying as well that the gospel, God's righteousness, will influence the minds and hearts of the people to seek out the Lord.

VI. God's very character is at stake as we display or don't display God's righteousness in our daily lives.

What's at stake here when we have the privilege and responsibility to live out the righteousness of Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit?

It is the very character of God.

That's why it says in Psalm 23 3:

"He restores my soul; He guides me or leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake."

WOW! Do we get that? God has invested His very life in us who know the Lord personally. His very name, His character, is on the line when we live for Him, when we serve Him regardless of the size of the task.

When we're living for Him in the power of the Spirit His righteous character is being displayed through us. We are being a channel for Him, a living epistle of God that people can read. When we're not living for Christ in the Spirit's power, we are not displaying His righteous character, not living up to His name that we bear, Christian.

Bill Gaither in his book, "I Almost Missed The Sunrise," writes:

"Gloria and I had been married a couple of years. We were teaching school in Alexandria, Indiana, where I had grown up, and we wanted a piece of land where we could build a house. I noticed the parcel south of town where cattle grazed, and I learned it belonged to a 92-year-old retired banker named Mr. Yule. He owned a lot of land in the area, and word was he would sell none of it. He gave the same speech to everyone who inquired: **"I promised the farmers they could use it for their cattle."**

Gloria and I visited him at the bank. Although he was retired, he spent a couple of hours each morning in his office. He looked at us over the top of his bifocals.

I introduced myself and told him we were interested in a piece of his land. "Not selling," he said pleasantly. "Promised it to a farmer for grazing."

"I know, but we teach school here and thought maybe you'd be interested in selling it to someone planning to settle in the area."

He pursed his lips and stared at me. "What'd you say your name was?"

"Gaither. Bill Gaither."

"Hmmm. Any relation to Grover Gaither?"

"Yes, sir. He was my granddad."

Mr. Yule put down his paper and removed his glasses. "Interesting. Grover Gaither was the best worker I ever had on my farm. Full day's work for a day's pay. So honest. What'd you say you wanted?"

I told him again.

"Let me do some thinking on it, then come back and see me."

I came back within the week, and Mr. Yule told me he had had the property appraised. I held my breath. "How does \$3,800 sound? Would that be okay?"

If that was per acre, I would have to come up with nearly \$60,000! "\$3,800?" I repeated.

"Yup. Fifteen acres for \$3,800."

I knew it had to be worth at least three times that. I readily accepted.

Nearly three decades later, my son and I strolled that beautiful, lush property that had once been pasture land. "Benjy" I said, "you've had this wonderful place to grow up through nothing that you've done, but because of the good name of a great-granddad you never met."

**"A good name is more desirable than great riches; to be esteemed is better than silver or gold."
(Prov. 22:1).**

Let's live this week in the power of the Holy Spirit so that Christ's righteous character (His Name that we bear – Christian) will be evident in our lives to all with whom we have contact.

