

“Unless Your Righteousness Exceeds”

Matthew 5:20-48

April 27, 2025

INTRO:

VIDEO: *“It’s Just Begun”*

(after Easter)

HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

1st Peter 1:3

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!
According to his great mercy, **He has caused us to be born
again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus...***

Romans 10:4

*Christ is the end/culmination/fulfilment of the law so that
there may be righteousness for everyone who **believes**.
(that Jesus is LORD).*

Matthew 5:20

*For I (LORD Jesus) tell/warn you (listener),
unless your righteousness exceeds/surpasses
that of the scribes and Pharisees,
you will **NEVER ENTER** the kingdom of heaven.*

VIDEO: *“Righteousness Perspective 1”*

BIG IDEA: Christ's resurrection righteousness is key!

In Matthew 5:21, Jesus Christ preaches a righteousness-defined, eternal, heaven or hell,

FORK IN THE ROAD.

(Tragically, too few have heard Him & even fewer still will heed Him.)

T/S: *Right... Righteous... Righteousness...
Just... Justice... Justified... Justifier!*

IMMEDIATE CONTEXT:

Matthew 5:17-19

¹⁷“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. ¹⁸For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. ¹⁹Therefore, whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called **least in the kingdom of heaven**, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called **great in the kingdom of heaven**.

TEXT: Matthew 5:20

*For I (LORD Jesus) tell/warn you (listener),
unless your righteousness exceeds/surpasses
that of the scribes and Pharisees,
you will **NEVER** ENTER the kingdom of heaven.*

VIDEO: *"Righteousness Perspective 2"*

Psalm 119:137-144

137 You are righteous, LORD,
and your laws are right.
138 The statutes you have laid down are righteous;
they are fully trustworthy.
139 My zeal wears me out,
for my enemies ignore your words.
140 Your promises have been thoroughly tested,
and your servant loves them.
141 Though I am lowly and despised,
I do not forget your precepts.
142 Your righteousness is everlasting
and your law is true.
143 Trouble and distress have come upon me,
but your commands give me delight.
144 Your statutes are always righteous;
give me understanding that I may live.

Matthew 5:6

***"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for
righteousness, for they shall be satisfied."***

VIDEO: *"Righteousness Perspective 3"*

Romans 3:9-26

No One Is Righteous

9What shall we conclude then? ...Jews and Gentiles alike are all under the power of sin. 10As it is written:

"There is no one righteous, not even one; 11there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God. 12All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one."

18"There is no fear of God before their eyes..."

20Therefore no one will be declared righteous in God's sight by the works of the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin.

Righteousness Through Faith

21But now apart from the law, the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. 22This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, 23for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. 25God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness... 26...so as to be just and Justifier of those who have faith in Jesus.

VIDEO: "Righteousness Perspective 4"

Romans 6:15-23

¹⁵What then? Shall we sin because we are not under the law but under grace? By no means! ¹⁶Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one you obey—whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? ¹⁷But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you have come to obey from your heart the pattern of teaching that has now claimed your allegiance. ¹⁸You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.

¹⁹I am using an example from everyday life because of your human limitations. Just as you used to offer yourselves as slaves to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer yourselves as slaves to

righteousness leading to holiness/sanctification.

²⁰When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness. ²¹What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death! ²²But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness/sanctification, and the result is eternal life. ²³***For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.***

VIDEO: *"Righteousness Perspective 5"*

Proverbs 21:21

He who pursues righteousness and loyalty/kindness;
Finds life, righteousness and honor.

VIDEO: *"Righteousness Perspective 6"*

Colossians 3:12

So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience;

VIDEO: *"Righteousness Perspective 7"*

2nd Timothy 3:12

Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus **will be persecuted,**

VIDEO: *"Righteousness Perspective 8"*

Ephesians 6:14

Stand firm therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having **put on the breastplate of righteousness,**

VIDEO: *"Righteousness Perspective 9"*

1 John 3:4-11

4EVERYONE WHO MAKES A PRACTICE OF SINNING ALSO PRACTICES LAWLESSNESS; SIN IS LAWLESSNESS. 5YOU KNOW THAT HE APPEARED IN ORDER TO TAKE AWAY SINS, AND IN HIM THERE IS NO SIN. 6NO ONE WHO ABIDES IN HIM KEEPS ON SINNING; NO ONE WHO KEEPS ON SINNING HAS EITHER SEEN HIM OR KNOWN HIM.

7LITTLE CHILDREN, LET NO ONE DECEIVE YOU. WHOEVER PRACTICES RIGHTEOUSNESS IS RIGHTEOUS, AS HE IS RIGHTEOUS. 8WHOEVER MAKES A PRACTICE OF SINNING IS OF THE DEVIL, FOR THE DEVIL HAS BEEN SINNING FROM THE BEGINNING. THE REASON THE SON OF GOD APPEARED WAS TO DESTROY THE WORKS OF THE DEVIL. 9NO ONE BORN OF GOD MAKES A PRACTICE OF SINNING, FOR GOD'S SEED ABIDES IN HIM; AND HE CANNOT KEEP ON SINNING, BECAUSE HE HAS BEEN BORN OF GOD. 10BY THIS IT IS EVIDENT WHO ARE THE CHILDREN OF GOD, AND WHO ARE THE CHILDREN OF THE DEVIL: WHOEVER DOES NOT PRACTICE RIGHTEOUSNESS IS NOT OF GOD, NOR IS THE ONE WHO DOES NOT LOVE HIS BROTHER. 11FOR THIS IS THE MESSAGE THAT YOU HAVE HEARD FROM THE BEGINNING...

VIDEO: *"Righteousness Perspective 10"*

2nd Corinthians 5:17-21

...if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. 18All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; 19that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. 20Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

21For our sake He made Him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.

REVIEW:

Christ's resurrection righteousness is key! In Matthew 5:21, Jesus Christ preaches a righteousness-defined, eternal, heaven or hell,

FORK IN THE ROAD.

(Tragically, too few have heard Him & even fewer still will heed Him.)

PRAYER

WORSHIP: *Hard Fought Hallelujah & Graves To Gardens*

STUDY NOTES:

1343. dikaiosuné ►

Strong's Lexicon

dikaiousuné: Righteousness, justice

Original Word: δικαιοσύνη

Part of Speech: Noun, Feminine

Transliteration: dikaiosuné

Pronunciation: dee-kah-yos-oo'-nay

Phonetic Spelling: (dik-ah-yos-oo'-nay)

Definition: Righteousness, justice

Meaning: (usually if not always in a Jewish atmosphere), justice, justness, righteousness, righteousness of which God is the source or author, but practically: a divine righteousness.

Word Origin: Derived from δίκαιος (dikaios), meaning "righteous" or "just."

Corresponding Greek / Hebrew Entries: - דִּקְדֻקָּה (tsedeq) - Strong's Hebrew 6664: Often translated as "righteousness" or "justice."

- דִּקְדָּקָה (tsedakah) - Strong's Hebrew 6666: Refers to righteousness, justice, or acts of charity.

Usage: Dikaiousuné primarily denotes the quality of being right or just. In the New Testament, it is often used to describe the righteousness that comes from God, which is imputed to believers through faith in Jesus Christ. It encompasses both the legal standing of being declared righteous before God and the ethical conduct that flows from this new status. The term is central to Pauline theology, emphasizing that righteousness is not achieved by human effort but is a gift from God through faith.

Cultural and Historical Background: In the Greco-Roman world, righteousness was often associated with fulfilling one's duties to gods and men, maintaining social harmony, and adhering to laws and customs. In Jewish thought, righteousness was closely linked to covenant faithfulness and obedience to the Law of Moses. The New Testament writers, particularly Paul, redefined righteousness in light of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, presenting it as a divine gift rather than a human achievement.

HELPS Word-studies

1343 dikaiosýnē (from [1349](#) /dikē, "a judicial verdict") – properly, *judicial approval* (the *verdict* of *approval*); in the NT, *the approval* of God ("divine approval").

[1343](#) /*dikaíosynē* ("divine approval") is the regular NT term used for *righteousness* ("God's judicial approval"). [1343](#) /*dikaíosynē* ("the approval of God") refers to *what is deemed right by the Lord* (after His examination), i.e. what is *approved in His eyes*.

NAS Exhaustive Concordance

Word Origin

from [dikaíos](#)

Definition

righteousness, justice

NASB Translation

right (1), righteousness (90).

Thayer's Greek Lexicon

STRONGS NT 1343: δικαιοσύνη

δικαιοσύνη, **δικαιοσύνης**, ἡ (**δίκαιος**); most frequently in the Sept. for דִּקְיָה and דִּקְיָה, rarely for דִּקְיָה; "the virtue or quality or state of one who is **δίκαιος**;"

1. in the broad sense, **the state of him who is such as he ought to be, righteousness** (German *Rechtbeschaffenheit*); **the condition acceptable to God** (German *Gottwohlgefälligkeit*);

a. universally: **λόγος τῆς δικαιοσύνης** (like **λόγος τῆς καταλλαγῆς**, **λόγος τοῦ στανου**), the doctrine concerning the way in which man may attain to a state approved of God, [Hebrews 5:13](#); **βασιλεὺς δικαιοσύνης**, the king who himself has the approbation of God, and who renders his subjects acceptable to God, [Hebrews 7:2](#); cf. Bleek at the passage b. "integrity, virtue, purity of life, uprightness, correctness in thinking, feeling, and acting: [Matthew 3:15](#); [Matthew 5:6, 10, 20](#); [Matthew 6:1](#) G L T Tr, WH; [Acts 13:10](#); [Acts 24:25](#); [Romans 6:13, 16, 18-20](#) (opposed to **ἁμαρτία**, **ἀνομία**, and **ἀκαθαρσία**); [Romans 8:10](#) (opposed to **ἁμαρτία**); [Romans 14:17](#) (? (see c.)); [2 Corinthians 6:7, 14](#) (opposed to **ἀνομία**, as in Xenophon, mem. 1, 2, 24); [2 Corinthians 11:15](#); [Ephesians 5:9](#); [Ephesians 6:14](#); [Philippians 1:11](#); [1 Timothy 6:11](#); [2 Timothy 2:22](#); [2 Timothy 3:16](#); [2 Timothy 4:8](#); [Titus 3:5](#); [Hebrews 1:9](#); [Hebrews 12:11](#); [James 3:18](#); [1 Peter 3:14](#); [2 Peter 2:5, 21](#); [2 Peter 3:13](#), and very often in the O. T.; **ἐν ὁδῷ δικαιοσύνης**, walking in the way of righteousness equivalent to an upright, righteous, man, [Matthew 21:32](#); **τοῦ Θεοῦ**, the righteousness which God demands, [Matthew 6:33](#); [James 1:20](#); of righteousness which manifests itself in "beneficence: [2 Corinthians 9:9f](#) (cf. Tobit 14:11; Gesenius, Thesaurus iii., p. 1151; so Chaldean דִּקְיָה, [Daniel 4:24](#), and in the Talmud and rabbinical writings (Buxtorf. col. 1891 (p. 941, Fischer edition); cf. Winer's Grammar, 32)); where **δίκαιος** καὶ **ὁσιότης** are connected — [Luke 1:75](#); [Ephesians 4:24](#), (Wis. 9:3; Clement of Rome, 1 Cor. 48, 4 [ET] and occasionally in secular writings) — the former denotes right conduct toward men, the latter piety toward God (cf. Plato, Gorgias, p. 507 b.; Grimm on Sap., p. 181f; (cf. Trench, § 88, p. 328f; for additional examples

see Wetstein (1752) on Ephesians, the passage cited;
cf. ὅσιος); εὐσέβεια καὶ δικαιοσύνη, Diodorus 1, 2); ποιεῖν τὴν δικαιοσύνην, to do righteousness, to live uprightly: [1 John 2:29](#); [1 John 3:7](#); [1 John 3:10](#) (not Lachmann); and in [Revelation 22:11](#) according to the text now accepted; in like manner ἐργάζεσθαι δικαιοσύνην, [Acts 10:35](#); [Hebrews 11:33](#); ζῆν τῇ δικαιοσύνῃ, to live, devote the life, to righteousness, [1 Peter 2:24](#); πληροῦν πᾶσαν δικαιοσύνην, to perform completely whatever is right, [Matthew 3:15](#). When affirmed of Christ, δικαιοσύνη denotes his perfect moral purity, integrity, sinlessness: [John 16:8, 10](#); when used of God, his holiness: [Romans 3:5, 25f](#).

c. in the writings of Paul ἡ δικαιοσύνη has a peculiar meaning, opposed to the views of the Jews and Judaizing Christians. To understand this meaning, the following facts especially must be kept in view: the Jews as a people, and very many who had become converts from among them to Christianity, supposed that they secured the favor of God by works conformed to the requirements of the Mosaic law, as though by way of merit; and that they would thus attain to eternal salvation. But this law demands perfect obedience to all its precepts, and threatens condemnation to those who do not render such obedience ([Galatians 3:10, 12](#)). Obedience of this kind no one has rendered ([Romans 3:10](#)), neither Jews nor Gentiles ([Romans 1:24-2:1](#)) — for with the latter the natural law of right written on their souls takes the place of the Mosaic law ([Romans 2:14f](#)). On this account Paul proclaims the love of God, in that by giving up Christ, his Son, to die as an expiatory sacrifice for the sins of men he has attested his grace and good-will to mankind, so that they can hope for salvation as if they had not sinned. But the way to obtain this hope, he teaches, is only through faith (see πίστις (especially 1 b. and d.)), by which a man appropriates that grace of God revealed and pledged in Christ; and this faith is reckoned by God to the man as δικαιοσύνη; that is to say, δικαιοσύνη denotes "the state acceptable to God which becomes a sinner's possession through that faith by which he embraces the grace of God offered him in the expiatory death of Jesus Christ (see δικαιοῶ, 3 b.). In this sense ἡ δικαιοσύνη is used without an adjunct in [Romans 4:5f, 11](#); [Romans 5:17, 21](#); [Romans 9:30](#); [Romans 14:11](#) (? (see b.)); [1 Corinthians 1:30](#); [Galatians 5:5](#); δικαιοσύνη Θεοῦ, ἡ τοῦ Θεοῦ δικαιοσύνη, the righteousness which God ascribes, what God declares to be righteousness (Winer's Grammar, 186 (175)), [Romans 1:17](#); [Romans 3:21](#); [Romans 10:3](#); by a pregnant use, equivalent to that divine arrangement by which God leads men to a state acceptable to him, [Romans 10:4](#); as abstract for concrete, equivalent to those whom God accounts righteous, [2 Corinthians 5:21](#); δικαιοσύνη Θεοῦ διὰ πίστεως, [Romans 3:22](#); ἡ δικαιοσύνη τῆς πίστεως, which is acquired by faith, or seen in faith, [Romans 4:11, 13](#); ἡ ἐκ Θεοῦ δικαιοσύνη which comes from God, i. e. is adjudged, imputed, [Philippians 3:9](#) (where the addition ἐπὶ τῇ πίστει depends on ἔχων, having ... founded upon faith (cf. Winer's Grammar, 137 (130); 392 (367); yet cf. Ellicott, at the passage)); ἡ ἐκ πίστεως δικαιοσύνη which comes from faith, [Romans 9:30](#); [Romans 10:6](#); ἡ διὰ πίστεως Χριστοῦ, [Philippians 3:9](#); ἡ κατὰ πίστιν δικαιοσύνη according to, appropriate to, faith, [Hebrews 11:7](#) (but it should be kept in mind that the conception of 'faith'

in the Epistle to the Hebrews is broader than in Paul's writings (cf. e. g. Kurtz, at the passage)); Christ is called **δικαιοσύνη**, as being the one without whom there is no righteousness, as the author of righteousness, [1 Corinthians 1:30](#); **εἰς δικαιοσύνην**, unto righteousness as the result, to obtain righteousness, [Romans 10:4](#), [10](#); **ἡ πίστις λογίζεται τίνι εἰς δικαιοσύνην**, faith is reckoned to one for righteousness, i. e. is so taken into account, that righteousness is ascribed to it or recognized in it: [Romans 4:3](#), [6](#), [9](#), [22](#); [Galatians 3:6](#); [James 2:23](#); **ἡ διακονία τῆς δικαιοσύνης** (see **διακονία**, 2 b.), [2 Corinthians 3:9](#). Opposed to this **δικαιοσύνη**, arising from faith, is **ἡ ἐκ νόμου δικαιοσύνη**, a state acceptable to God which is supposed to result from obedience to the law, [Romans 10:5](#)f; **ἡ δικαιοσύνη ἐν νόμῳ** relying on the law, i. e. on imaginary obedience to it, [Philippians 3:6](#); **ἡ ἰδίᾳ δικαιοσύνη** and **ἡ ἐμὴ ἐδικαιοσύνη**, such as one supposes that he has acquired for himself by his own works, [Romans 10:3](#) [Philippians 3:9](#), cf. [Galatians 2:21](#); [Galatians 3:21](#).

2. in a closer sense, **justice, or the virtue which gives each one his due**; it is said to belong to God and Christ, as bestowing **ἰσότημον πίστιν** upon all Christians impartially, [2 Peter 1:1](#); of judicial justice, [Romans 9:28](#) R G Tr marginal reading in brackets; **κρίνειν ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ**, [Acts 17:31](#); [Revelation 19:11](#). (See references under the word **δικαίω** at the end.)

Strong's Exhaustive Concordance

righteousness.

From [dikaios](#); equity (of character or act); specially (Christian) justification -- righteousness.

see GREEK [dikaios](#)

What is RIGHTEOUSNESS?

Righteousness

Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology - Righteousness

Righteousness

God the Father is righteous (just); Jesus Christ his Son is the Righteous (Just) One; the Father through the Son and in the Spirit gives the gift of righteousness (justice) to repentant sinners for salvation; such believing sinners are declared righteous (just) by the Father through the Son, are made righteous (just) by the Holy Spirit working in them, and will be wholly righteous (just) in the age to come. They are and will be righteous because they are in a covenant relation with the living God, who is the God of all grace and mercy and who will bring to completion what he has begun in them by declaring them righteous for Christ's sake.

The noun righteousness/justice (Gk. *dikaiosune* [[dikaiosuvnh](#)]) bears meanings in the New Testament related to two sources. The major one is the Hebrew thought-world of the Old Testament and particularly the *sdq* [[q;d'x](#)] word group, which locates the meaning in the sphere of God's gracious, covenantal relation to his people and the appropriate behavior of the covenant partners (Yahweh and Israel) toward each other. The other is the regular use of the words in everyday Greek as spoken in New Testament times, which fixes the meaning in the sphere of a life in conformity to a known standard or law — thus honesty, legality, and so on. This latter meaning in terms of doing God's will is of course also found in the Old Testament.

When we translate the Greek words based on the stem *dikai-* into English we make use of two sets of words based on the stems, just and right. So we have just, justice, justify and right, righteous, righteousness, rightwise (old English). The use of two sets of English words for the one set of Greek words sometimes causes difficulties for students of the Bible. This is especially so when the verb "to justify, " describing God's word and action, is used with the noun "righteousness, " pointing to the result of that action.

The Gospels.

The appropriate background to bear in mind for understanding the teaching of both John the Baptist and Jesus the Christ on righteousness/justice are two of the dominant ideas of the Old Testament. First, Yahweh-Elohim, the Lord God, is righteous in that he speaks and Acts in accordance with the purity of his own holy nature; further, what he says and does for Israel is in accordance with his establishment of the covenant with this people (see [Psalm 22:31](#) ; [40:10](#) ; [51:14](#) ; [71:15-24](#) ; [Amos 5:21-24](#)).

Micah declared the righteousness of God as his faithfulness to keep and act within the covenant and thus to save Israel from her enemies, as well as to vindicate the penitent.

Second, the covenant people of God are called to live righteously, that is, in conformity to the demands of the covenant and according to God's will (see [Psalm 1:4-6](#) ; [11:7](#) ; [72:1](#) ; [Isa 1:16-17](#)).

Having within the covenantal relation with God the gift of salvation, they are to behave as the people of the holy Lord. Hosea, the prophet of divine love, ties righteousness with mercy, loving kindness, and justice ([2:19](#) ; [10:12](#)).

John the Baptist called for repentance and righteous behavior such as is pleasing to God ([Luke 3:7-9](#)).

Further, it was because of the demands of such righteousness fulfilling the will of God that he actually was willing to baptize Jesus ([Matt 3:15](#)).

Likewise...

Jesus presents righteousness as conformity to the will of God expressed in the Mosaic law ([Matt 13:17](#) ; [23:29](#) ; [Matthew 27:4](#) [Matthew 27:19](#) [Matthew 27:24](#)) and also conformity to his own teachings concerning the requirements of the kingdom of heaven ([Matt 5:17-20](#)).

However, conformity to his own teachings presupposes that he is the Messiah, that he fulfills the Law and the Prophets, and that what he declares is the morality of the kingdom of God relating to the totality of life, inward and outward, seen by God.

Further...

Jesus does allow that conformity to the norms of the scribes and Pharisees is a certain kind of (inferior) righteous living, but he contrasts it with the proper righteousness he exhibits, proclaims, and looks for ([Luke 5:30-32](#) ; [15:7](#) ; [18:9](#)) in the disciples of the kingdom.

So...

**IN A FUNDAMENTAL SENSE, IN THE FOUR GOSPELS
RIGHTEOUSNESS AS A QUALITY OF LIVING IS INTIMATELY
RELATED TO THE ARRIVAL AND MEMBERSHIP IN THE
KINGDOM OF GOD AND IS ONLY POSSIBLE BECAUSE GOD
HAS COME TO HIS PEOPLE AS THEIR REDEEMER.**

The Gospel of Matthew makes clear that from the beginning Jesus' mission is to fulfill God's righteousness ([3:15](#)). This is brought to realization in his words and ministry so that the kingdom and salvation of God are in him and come through him. Alongside this is the righteousness in the new covenant, which is right thinking, feeling, speaking, and behavior on the part of disciples of the kingdom, who do what God approves and commands.

This moral substance is very clear from the detailed contents of the Sermon on the Mount ([chaps. 5-7](#)), where the will of God is set forth by Jesus and is contrasted with a mere legalism.

Yet what Jesus proclaims and outlines is certainly not a self-righteousness, for it is portrayed as the outflowing of a life that is centered on submitting to, worshiping, and seeking after God and confessing Jesus as the Messiah (see especially [5:17-42](#)).

In the Gospel of Luke, we read of Zechariah and Elizabeth, Simeon and Joseph of Arimathea being called righteous ([1:6](#) ; [2:25](#) ; [23:50](#)) because they embody genuine religion according to the norms of the Old Covenant.

They trust in and obey God. Further, Jesus himself as the Servant of Yahweh is the righteous or innocent one ([23:47](#)), even as the centurion confessed at the cross. The righteousness of the kingdom of God is practical and reverses the standards of the regular social order ([Luke 3:11](#) [Luke 3:14](#) ; [6:20-26](#)).

At the last day it will be those who have been genuinely righteous in terms of doing the will of God who will be declared just ([14:14](#)).

In the Gospel of John, God is righteous ([17:25](#)) and the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, has a specific role with respect to righteousness ([John 16:8](#) [John 16:10](#)). It is the unique work of the Spirit, who comes into the world in the name of Jesus the Messiah, to convince/convict the world of righteousness. The Spirit both vindicates Jesus as the Righteous One, whom the Father has raised from the dead and exalted into heaven, and also makes clear what kind of righteous life is required by, and, in grace, provided by God.

The Letters of Paul. The uses the noun *dikaiosune* [[dikaiosuvnh](#)] (righteousness), the adjective *dikaio* [[divkaio](#)] (righteous), and the verb *dikaio* [[dikaiovw](#)] (to justify or to declare and treat as righteous) over one hundred times and his usage reflects a particular development from the use of *sdq* [[q;d'x](#)] in the Old Testament. God is righteous when he Acts according to the terms of the

covenant he has established. Righteousness is God's faithfulness as the Lord of the covenant. God Acts righteously when he performs saving deeds for his people and thereby in delivering them places them in a right relation to himself (see especially Isa. 51 and 61). The interchangeability of righteousness and salvation is seen in this verse: "I am bringing my righteousness near, it is not far away; and my salvation will not be delayed. I will grant salvation to Zion, my splendor to Israel" ([Isa 46:13](#)).

Thus, **God's people are righteous when they are in a right relation with him, when they enjoy his salvation; they are considered by God as the Judge of the world as righteous when they are being and doing what he requires in his covenant.**

So...

it may be said that the concept of righteousness in Paul belongs more to soteriology than to moral theology, even though it has distinct moral implications.

God's righteousness is, for Paul, God's saving activity in and through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, his Son. It is activity that is directly in line with the saving activity of God in the Old Testament. The acceptance of the unique saving deed of God at Calvary by faith in the person of Jesus Christ is that which God has ordained to be the means for sinners (the unrighteous and the disobedient ones) to enter into the right with God, the Father, and receive the forgiveness of sins.

God as the Judge justifies believing sinners by declaring them righteous in and through Jesus Christ; then he expects and enables these sinners to become righteous in word and deed.

Faith works by love.

The righteousness of which Paul speaks, especially in the letters to Galatia and Rome, stands in contrast to the righteousness that is based on the fulfillment of the law by man as the covenant partner of God. It is "the righteousness of faith" and "the righteousness of God" ([Rom 10:6](#) ; [Php 3:9](#)), and is most certainly the gift of God.

From the human standpoint what God looks for in those who receive the gospel is "faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" ([Gal 2:20](#)).

God's gift to those who believe is a righteousness that exists and can be given only because of the sacrificial death of Jesus for sinners and his resurrection from the dead as the vindicated Lord of all.

So, God as the righteous Judge justifies places in a right relation with himself within the new covenant of grace those who believe the gospel of the Father concerning his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. And he justifies Jew and Greek alike on precisely the same basis, by faith alone without works, and he makes no distinction whatsoever between the people of the Old Covenant and the Gentiles. Abraham, says Paul, was himself justified by faith alone ([Gen 12:3](#) ; [15:6](#) ; [18:18](#) ; [Rom 4:3](#) ; [Gal 3:8](#)).

In fact, Paul confessed that the power of the gospel to be the word of salvation to both Jew and Greek was based on the revelation of the righteousness of God therein of God the Father acting justly for the sake of his Son ([Rom 1:16-17](#)).

The gift of a right relation with the Father through the Son in the Spirit, which is justification, creates a relationship for believers both with God and fellow believers that they are to dedicate to righteousness in the sense of obeying Christ ([Rom 6:12-14](#) ; cf. [2 Corinthians 6:7](#) [2 Corinthians 6:14](#) ; [9:10](#) ; [Eph 4:24](#) ; [Php 1:11](#)).

Though they could never become righteous before God by their efforts to conform their lives to his will, out of gratitude and love they are to serve him because he has given them the gift of salvation through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. He has pronounced them righteous, he has reconciled them to himself and removed their alienation, and he has transformed their relation to him into that of friendship. Therefore, since God has made them his own and given to them his righteousness, their duty and privilege is to be righteous in conduct.

AND HE PROMISES THAT ON THE LAST DAY AND FOR THE LIFE OF THE AGE TO COME HE WILL ACTUALLY MAKE THEM TO BE TRULY AND EFFECTUALLY RIGHTEOUS IN ALL THAT THEY ARE, BECOME, AND DO.

The word "eschatological" is often used with reference to this gift of righteousness. The reason is this. It is in anticipation of what God will do for the sake of his Son Jesus Christ at the last day that he pronounces guilty sinners righteous now in this evil age. At the last day, God the Father will be vindicated and all will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. Those who believe will become and remain righteous in their resurrection bodies of glory. Now and before the new age arrives, by the proclamation of the gospel and by the

presence of the Spirit, that which is not yet (the fullness of righteousness of the age to come) is actually made available by the will and declaration of the Father, through the mediation of Jesus Christ the Lord and by the presence and operation of the Holy Spirit.

Already there is the provision of a right relation with God through the preaching of the gospel, but there is not yet the experience of the fullness of righteousness as an imparted gift. Now believers merely have the first-fruits of that which awaits them in the age to come.

It would be a mistake, however, to think that Paul does not use the word "righteousness" in its more familiar meaning as a virtue. In fact, he does so particularly in 1 and 2 Timothy.

**HE/PAUL COMMENDS STRIVING FOR
RIGHTEOUSNESS (1 TIM 6:11) AS THE
RIGHT MOTIVATION OF A PERSON OF GOD;
AND HE SEES THE USE OF THE INSPIRED
SCRIPTURES AS BEING TO TRAIN
CHRISTIANS IN RIGHTEOUSNESS (2 TIM
3:16). FURTHER, AS A REWARD FOR HIS
EFFORTS FOR THE KINGDOM OF GOD HE
LOOKS FOR "THE CROWN OF
RIGHTEOUSNESS" (2 TIM 4:8).**

Other New Testament Books.

Righteousness in terms of the actual doing and completing the will of God...

is found outside the Gospels in various places. It is found in **Acts 10:35** *in terms of fearing God and doing righteousness*. In **Hebrews 12:11** we read of *the peaceful fruit of righteousness*. In **1 Peter** *Christians are to die to sin and live to righteousness (**2:24**) and be prepared to suffer for righteousness' sake (**3:14**)*. In **1 John** the *doing of righteousness in terms of following Jesus Christ, the righteous One, who came in flesh and will come again in glory, is what vital Christianity is all about*. Believers who *act righteously in word and deed proclaim their righteous Lord and show the error of the false teachers (**2:29** ; **3:7-10**)*.

THE MOST DISCUSSED PASSAGE OUTSIDE THE PAULINE CORPUS WITH RESPECT TO RIGHTEOUSNESS AND JUSTIFICATION IS
JAMES 2:14-26.

Here, at least on the surface, it appears that James is disagreeing with Paul. In fact, the truth is that they have different starting points and are facing different missionary and pastoral situations.

A faith without works is said by James to be a dead faith, and Abraham is presented as being justified by his works because he was prepared to sacrifice his beloved son. For James, faith comes to completion in practical works and it was this completed faith of Abraham, says James, which was reckoned to him for righteousness ([Gen 15:6](#) ; [James 2:23](#)). Thus, for James a person is placed in a right relation with God by a faith expressed in works. It is possible to reconcile Paul's approach and that of James if it is remembered that Paul himself spoke of "faith expressing itself through love" ([Gal 5:6](#) ; cf. [James 2:1](#) [James 2:8](#)).

Peter Toon

AI Overview

In the Bible, righteousness refers to a person's right standing with God, achieved through faith in Jesus Christ. It's a gift received through faith in Jesus' sacrifice, not earned through good works. Righteousness also involves living a life that reflects God's character, including justice, honesty, and faithfulness.

Elaboration:

- **Righteousness as a Gift:**

The Bible emphasizes that righteousness is not something humans achieve on their own but is a gift from God, bestowed upon those who believe in Jesus Christ.

- **Righteousness as a Relationship:**

Righteousness is about having a right relationship with God, not just about outward behavior.

- **Righteousness in the Old Testament:**

In the Old Testament, righteousness was associated with obeying God's laws and living a life that pleased Him.

- **Righteousness in the New Testament:**

The New Testament emphasizes that righteousness is received through faith in Jesus, who fulfilled the requirements of the Law.

- **Examples of Righteousness:**

The Bible uses various examples to illustrate righteousness, including Noah, Abraham, and those who diligently seek to obey God.

- **The Pursuit of Righteousness:**

While righteousness is received by faith, it also involves actively seeking to live in accordance with God's will and values.

[The Gospel Coalition:](#)

What Does Paul Mean by “the Righteousness of God”?

JUSTIN TAYLOR October 13, 2010

Restless, Reformed, Reflective

Tom Schreiner's *40 Questions About Christians and Biblical Law* releases later this month. As I've said before, I think it's now the go-to book for an accessible introduction to all the major issues related to gospel and law, the role of law in redemptive history, application of the law today, etc. I could not recommend it more highly.

Kregel has kindly given me permission to reprint some of the entries. I'll do so throughout the week. I won't reproduce the footnotes or the discussion questions, but other than that it's the full entry.

Today I'll reprint question #20, **What Does Paul Mean by “the Righteousness of God”?**

What I am trying to answer here is what Paul means by the phrase *righteousness of God* (*dikaiosynē theou*) and by the term *righteousness* when he uses these expressions to refer to God's saving righteousness. Paul often uses the noun *righteousness* to denote ethical righteousness—the kind of behavior that pleases God (e.g., [Rom. 6:13, 16, 18, 19, 20](#); 2 Cor. 6:7, 14; 9:9; 11:15; [Eph. 4:24; 5:9; 6:14](#); [Phil. 1:11; 3:6](#); [1 Tim. 6:11](#); [2 Tim. 2:22; 3:16; 4:8](#); [Titus 3:5](#)). Everyone agrees that Paul often uses the word *righteousness* to denote a life that is pleasing to God. But the intention here is to understand what God's righteousness means when Paul uses it in theologically weighty passages—in texts where he speaks of God's gift of righteousness. Some scholars have maintained that God's righteousness refers to his transforming righteousness. This view is supported by five arguments.

[FIVE ARGUMENTS FOR “RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD” AS TRANSFORMATIVE]

First, *God's righteousness is said to be “revealed”* ([Rom. 1:17](#)) and “manifested” ([Rom. 3:21](#)). Hence, it is argued that God's righteousness is an effective work of God that cannot be limited to a mere declaration, for it includes the entire creation and not just the individual. What God declares becomes a reality since he is redeemer and creator.

Second, *the parallelism between God's “power”* ([Rom. 1:16](#)), his “righteousness” ([Rom. 1:17](#)), and his “wrath” ([Rom. 1:18](#)) is also set forward to defend a transformative view. All of these are understood as genitives of source, indicating God's activity unleashed in the world. His righteousness is not merely a static pronouncement but represents the unleashing of his power in an active way. In the same way God's wrath is effective, judging people for their sin of failing to worship and praise God ([Rom. 1:18–32](#)).

Third, *God's righteousness in the Old Testament is often parallel to his salvation, truth, and mercy* (see question 18). This background demonstrates that God's righteousness is his saving action on behalf of his people and should not be limited to a forensic declaration. God's gift and God's power cannot be separated from one another.

Fourth, in [Romans 3:24](#) God's righteousness is “*through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus*.” Redemption signifies the freedom and liberation from sin through Jesus Christ, finding its precedent in God's liberation of his people from Egypt. If righteousness

becomes ours through the liberation from sin effected by Jesus Christ, then righteousness must include the idea of freedom from sin. Righteousness, then, includes the notion of God's transforming power.

Fifth, Paul speaks of grace reigning through righteousness ([Rom. 5:21](#)), of the service of righteousness ([Rom. 6:18–19](#); [2 Cor. 3:9](#)), and of submitting to God's righteousness ([Rom. 10:3](#)). Therefore, justification cannot be limited to legal categories. God transforms those whom he declares to be in the right. The same point is argued from [2 Corinthians 3:8–9](#). Those who benefit from the “ministry of righteousness” also enjoy the “ministry of the Spirit.” The effective work of the Spirit is part and parcel of the righteousness of God.

[FIVE REASONS WHY “RIGHTEOUSNESS” FOR PAUL IS FORENSIC]

Despite some valid insights in the notion that righteousness is transformative, the case for such a view is overstated, and righteousness in Paul should be understood as forensic only.

First, it has been noted in the previous question that *the verbal form in Paul should be understood in terms of God's declaration*.

Second, Paul often says that human beings are righteous by faith (e.g., [Rom. 1:17](#); [3:22](#), [26](#); [4:3](#), [5](#), [9](#), [13](#); [9:30](#); [10:4](#); [Gal. 2:16](#); [3:6](#), [11](#); [5:5](#); [Phil. 3:9](#)). In such contexts Paul contrasts righteousness by faith with righteousness by works. Ordinarily, people are declared to be righteous in human courts on the basis of their good behavior. That is, if they did what is good, they are declared to be in the right; but if they did what is evil, they are condemned. Paul, however, maintains that it is not those who work but those who believe who are righteous before God ([Rom. 4:4–5](#)). Indeed, no one can be righteous by works before God, for all have fallen short of what he requires ([Rom. 3:23](#)). Righteousness by faith, then, must refer to the gift of righteousness given to human beings by God. Human beings are not justified on the basis of doing but on the basis of believing. God declares the *ungodly* to be righteous ([Rom. 4:5](#)). Nor does Paul view faith as a “work” that merits the declaration of righteousness. Faith saves because it looks entirely to what God has done for believers in Christ. It rests on Christ's death for the forgiveness of sins and his resurrection for the sake of their justification ([Rom. 3:21–26](#); [4:25](#)). The righteousness given to believers, then, is alien since it is not based on anything they have done but only on God's work in Christ. This suggests that righteousness as a gift is granted to those who believe.

Third, *that righteousness is a forensic declaration also is supported by the link between righteousness and forgiveness*. We already have seen the connection between righteousness and forgiveness in [Romans 4:25](#) and [Romans 8:33](#). Paul slides easily from justification to forgiveness in [Romans 4:1–8](#). David's forgiveness of sins is nothing less

than his justification—his being in the right before God ([Rom. 4:6–8](#)). The idea is not that David was transformed by God, even though Paul stresses the transforming power of God's grace in other contexts. The text calls attention to David's sin and his forgiveness by God, confirming the extraordinary nature of God's grace, for he forgives sinners and declares them to be in the right.

Fourth, *the idea that righteousness is counted (logizomai) to believers indicates that righteousness is not native to believers, that it is granted to them by God* ([Rom. 4:3–6](#), [8–11](#), [22–24](#); [9:8](#); [Gal. 3:6](#)). This argument is strengthened when we add that righteousness is counted to those who believe—not to those who work. God does not “count” sins against those who have put their faith in Christ ([2 Cor. 5:19](#)). This is a strange reckoning or counting, indeed, when those who have done evil are considered to be righteous since God “justifies the ungodly” ([Rom. 4:5](#)). However, this fits with the notion that believers have received “the free gift of righteousness” ([Rom. 5:17](#)).

[IS “THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD” FORENSIC?]

Fifth, should “the righteousness of God” also be understood as forensic (esp. [Rom. 1:17](#); [3:21](#), [22](#); [10:3](#); [2 Cor. 5:21](#))? Some scholars have maintained that [Romans 3:5](#), where righteousness is parallel to God's “faithfulness” and truth, supports the interpretation of covenantal faithfulness. Such an interpretation is scarcely clear in [Romans 3:1–8](#), for it seems that God's righteousness here refers to his *judgment* of sinners. [Romans 3:4](#), citing [Psalm 51:4](#) (LXX), refers to God's victory when he judges sinners. The righteousness of God is used in a context that speaks of his wrath inflicted on the wicked ([Rom. 3:5](#)) and his judgment of the world on the Last Day ([Rom. 3:6](#)). Rather than referring to God's covenant faithfulness, this text refers to God's judging the wicked because they have lived in an evil manner. [Romans 3:5](#), then, does not bear on the discussion at all, for it does not refer to God's *saving righteousness* but to his *judging righteousness*. And the question before us here is what is meant by the saving righteousness of God. Based on these reasons, it is best to understand “the righteousness of God” as a forensic declaration.

[[PHILIPPIANS 3:9](#)]

That the “righteousness of God” refers to a divine gift is clear from [Philippians 3:9](#), where Paul speaks of “the righteousness from God” (*tēn ek theou dikaiosynēn*). The righteousness is not Paul's own, deriving from his observance of the law. It is a righteousness from God himself, obtained by faith in Jesus Christ. [Philippians 3:9](#), then, provides an important clue as to how we should interpret God's righteousness in [Romans 1:17](#) and [3:21–22](#). It refers to God's saving righteousness, given as a gift to those who believe. The lack of the preposition “from” (*ek*) in the texts in [Romans](#) is not decisive, for in every instance the same subject is treated: the saving righteousness of God that is given to those who believe. It is unlikely that Paul would use a different definition of the

word for righteousness in texts that are so similar in content—in texts that contrast righteousness by faith with righteousness by observing the law. We have seen that some argue that righteousness is transformative in [Romans 1:17](#) since it is parallel to God’s power and wrath. It is correct to say that each of the genitives should be identified as a genitive of source. God’s anger and power and righteousness all come from him. It does not follow, however, from the collocation of terms that the words all refer to a divine activity—if by that one concludes that God’s righteousness must be a transforming one. “Power,” “wrath,” and “righteousness” ([Rom. 1:16–18](#)) do not all have the same meaning. The phrase “righteousness of God” makes perfect sense if it designates the gift of God’s righteousness.

[PARALLELS BETWEEN [ROMANS 10:1–6](#) AND [PHILIPPIANS 3:2–9](#)]

A powerful argument supporting the idea that God’s righteousness in Romans and Philippians has the same meaning are the numerous parallels between [Romans 10:1–6](#) and [Philippians 3:2–9](#) (see figure 4).

First, there is a reference to God’s righteousness.

Second is the contrast between righteousness by law and righteousness by faith.

Third is the parallel between Israel’s quest to establish its own righteousness and Paul’s quest to establish his righteousness by his observance of the law.

Fourth, in particular we should note Paul’s emphasis on “not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law” ([Phil. 3:9](#)), and Israel’s attempt to establish its own righteousness ([Rom 10:3](#))—a “righteousness that is based on the law” ([Rom 10:5](#)).

The point I am making is that the parallel contexts indicate that righteousness in [Romans 10](#) cannot have a different definition from what we see in [Philippians 3](#). In the latter, righteousness is clearly a gift given to sinners—a declaration that those who have failed to keep the law but have trusted in Jesus Christ stand in the right before God. The same gift character of righteousness, therefore, is in view in [Romans 10](#).

FIGURE 4: PARALLELS IN TWO PAULINE PASSAGES	
Romans 10:3–6	Philippians 3:9
“the righteousness of God” (v. 3)	“the righteousness from God”
“righteousness . . . based on the law” vs. “righteousness based on faith” (vv. 5–6)	“righteousness . . . from the law” or “under the law” vs. “righteousness . . . through faith” or “depends on faith”
Israel sought to establish her own righteousness by observing the law (v. 3)	Paul sought to establish his own righteousness by observing the law

Israel attempted to establish her own righteousness based on the law (vv. 3, 5)	Paul did not have a righteousness of his own that comes from the law
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[\[ROMANS 1:17 and 3:21–22\]](#)

Furthermore, if such is the meaning in [Romans 10](#), it is highly unlikely that Paul means anything different in [Romans 1:17](#) and 3:21–22. Indeed, [Romans 3:21–22](#) unpacks [Romans 1:17](#), clarifying further how God pronounces as righteous those who deserve God’s wrath because of their sin. When he speaks of God’s righteousness in declaring sinners to be in the right before him by faith in Christ, he has in mind the gift of righteousness—God’s declaration of not guilty. Paul would confuse the readers if in some instances he used the expression “righteousness of God” to refer to a gift of a righteous status from God and in others of a divine activity that transforms believers, particularly since the phrase invariably occurs in contexts that contrast righteousness by faith with righteousness by observing the law. If a different definition were intended, this would need to be signified by further clarifying statements. But such clarifying statements are lacking, confirming that the same definition of righteousness is found in all these theologically weighty passages.

[\[2 CORINTHIANS 5:21\]](#)

That Paul refers to the gift of righteousness is also clear from [2 Corinthians 5:21](#). God made Christ to be sin, even though he was without sin, so that believers would “become the righteousness of God.” The meaning of God’s righteousness is explicated by verse 19, which refers to forgiveness of sins. This verse also explains how God could grant the gift of righteousness to those who are sinners. The extraordinary gift of righteousness is secured through Christ’s death on the cross. God “made him to be sin” so that those who are wicked could become righteous. An interchange between Christ and sinners is posited here. Christ was not actually transformed into a sinner. He was reckoned or counted as a sinner, so that believers would be reckoned or counted as righteous. When we observe that Jesus did not actually become a sinner and that the language of substitution is used, it seems quite likely that the righteous status of believers is in view.

[\[ROMANS 3:21–26\]](#)

[Romans 3:21–26](#) is a key text that is remarkably parallel to [2 Corinthians 5:21](#). This paragraph functions as the hinge for the letter to the Romans and is one of the most important (if not the most important) sections in the letter. The placement of the text in the letter should be noted. Paul has finished arguing that all without exception sin and deserve judgment ([Rom. 1:18–3:20](#)). He summarizes this truth in [Romans 3:23](#): “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” God demands perfect obedience, and all fall short of his standard. How then will people become right with God? Paul argues in verses 21–22 that a right relation with God is not obtained by keeping the law but

through faith in Jesus Christ. All people who trust in Christ are justified by God because of the redemption accomplished by Christ Jesus (v. 24).

Verses 25–26 are of particular importance for our subject. God set forth Christ as a propitiatory sacrifice by virtue of Jesus’ bloody death. “Propitiation” and “blood” point back to the Old Testament cultus and sacrificial system. Discussion has centered on the meaning of the term *hilastērion* and whether it should be rendered “expiation” (wiping away or forgiveness of sins) or “propitiation” (the satisfaction of God’s wrath). I would argue that those who defend the notion of propitiation are more convincing, for the term includes the sense of the averting of God’s wrath—the appeasement or satisfaction of his righteousness. This fits nicely with [Romans 1:18](#), where the wrath of God against sin is announced, and [Romans 2:5](#), where the final judgment is described as the day of God’s wrath. The line of argument in [Romans 1:18–3:20](#) provokes the reader to ask how God’s wrath can be averted. The answer in [Romans 3:25](#) is that God’s wrath has been satisfied or appeased in the death of Christ.

The words following “propitiation” substantiate this interpretation. Paul explains that Christ was set forth as a “propitiation,” or “mercy seat,” to demonstrate God’s righteousness. The context reveals that by “righteousness” Paul refers to God’s holiness or justice, for Paul immediately refers to the sins God passed over in previous eras. The passing over of sins refers to the sins committed previously in history, which did not receive the full punishment deserved. God’s failure to punish such sins calls into question his justice. How can he wink at sin and tolerate it and still maintain his righteousness and holiness? Paul’s solution is that God looked ahead to the cross of Christ, where his wrath would be appeased and justice would be satisfied. Christ as the substitute would absorb the full payment for sin.

The interpretation suggested above is confirmed by verse 26: “It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.” Christ’s death as a propitiation, Paul repeats, demonstrates God’s holiness and justice at the present juncture of salvation history. Thereby God is both “just and the justifier” of those who put their faith in Christ. God’s justice is satisfied because Christ bore the full payment for sin. But God is also the justifier because on the basis of the cross of Christ sinners receive forgiveness through faith in Jesus. In the cross of Christ, the justice and mercy of God meet. God’s holiness is satisfied by Christ’s bearing the penalty of sin, and God’s saving activity is realized in the lives of those who trust in Christ. Some object that retribution cannot be in view, for the focus is on personal relationships rather than retribution. But personal relationships and retribution are not at odds with one another. God’s justice is not an attribute that can be separated from his person.

[FURTHER ANSWERS TO ARGUMENTS FOR TRANSFORMATIVE RIGHTEOUSNESS]

Some of the arguments supporting transformative righteousness have been answered, but we need to pause to comment on a few that have not been examined thus far.

First, *the revelation of God's saving righteousness in history does not establish a transformative righteousness*. God's righteousness in Christ is certainly an eschatological work of God. Such a statement, however, does not necessarily establish that righteousness should be defined in terms of transformation. God's declaration about sinners is an end-time verdict that has been announced before the end has arrived. The verdict is effective in the sense that every verdict announced by God constitutes reality.

Second, *the argument from redemption fails to establish the transformation view* as well. Justification belongs to believers through redemption ([Rom 3:24](#)). In some instances in Paul, however, redemption is defined primarily in terms of forgiveness of sins ([Eph. 1:7](#); [Col. 1:14](#)). The forgiveness of sins is communicated as well in [Colossians 2:13–14](#). Paul pictures it as the erasure of debts that had accrued against believers. The definitive nature of forgiveness is portrayed in the nailing of sins to the cross, indicating that Christ has definitively and finally put away sin. The fundamental bondage of human beings can be attributed to guilt that stains us through sin. Hence, the reference to redemption does not clearly indicate that righteousness is transformative.

Third, *the collocation of the “ministry of righteousness” and the “ministry of the Spirit” in [2 Corinthians 3:8–9](#) does not clearly establish a transformative view*. Paul never imagined that one could be righteous in God's sight without then being transformed by the Spirit. And yet it still should be said that it does not follow that the transforming power of the Spirit and righteousness are precisely the same. Too many of those who defend the transformative view argue for identity of meaning from parallelism of terms. Such an approach is flawed, for it collapses the meaning of words so that they become virtually indistinguishable.

SUMMARY

It is often claimed today that God's righteousness in Paul refers to his transforming righteousness, but a careful analysis of the evidence indicates that God's righteousness in Paul is forensic. When Paul speaks of the “righteousness of God” and “righteousness,” he refers to our right-standing with God, the fact that we are now in a new and right relationship with him. The word does not mean that God's people are internally transformed by his grace. Certainly such transformation is part of Paul's theology as well, but the point being made here is that God's gracious work in changing sinners is not communicated by the phrase “righteousness of God.”

What is the difference between righteousness and holiness?

Righteousness and *holiness* are two words that describe states of moral excellence. There is a slight difference between the two concepts. Oxford Dictionary's definition of *holiness* is "the state of being holy," and the definition of *holy* is "dedicated or consecrated to God or a religious purpose; sacred" or "morally and spiritually excellent." The Oxford definition of *righteousness* is "the quality of being morally right or justifiable," and the definition of *righteous* is "morally right or justifiable; virtuous." So, **righteousness is the condition of being proven or declared morally excellent, while holiness is the condition of being consecrated or dedicated to moral excellence.**

Think of it this way: a ballerina who dances for the New York City Ballet has been declared good enough to be part of that company. From a young age, she has set herself apart to that purpose, to honing her skills, and she continues to practice and improve as she dances. In this analogy, righteousness is the ballerina's position in the ballet company. She has been given a position, her talents have been approved, and she belongs to the company. Holiness is the ballerina's dedication and devotion to her art. Everything in her life—what she eats, whom she knows, how she spends her time and money—bows to this purpose.

To some, terms like *righteousness* and *holiness* can be a bit daunting. We think, "But that's not how I am," or we wonder how we can be sinful and also holy or righteous. Many people experience fear and doubt that stem from the idea that we need to "clean ourselves up" or be "good enough" before we come to God. This confusion is natural, considering the strict

definition of *righteousness* and *holiness*. We want to be approved and included, but we often feel like our spiritual “dancing skills” are just not up to par—and never will be.

The Bible provides hope. **WE ARE NOT LEFT TO ACHIEVE RIGHTEOUSNESS AND HOLINESS ON OUR OWN.**

Quite the opposite. In fact, left to ourselves, we would *never* achieve those states. Let’s look at righteousness first, and then holiness.

The story of righteousness really starts with a man named [Abram](#) in the ancient city of Ur in Mesopotamia (modern-day Iraq). God called Abram to leave his country, his people, and his father’s household and go to the land God would show him. God promised to make Abram into a great nation and bless the nations of the world through him ([Genesis 12:1–3](#)). In faith, Abram gathered up his household and left. Several years later, God told Abram, “Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward” ([Genesis 15:1](#)). Abram asked what God could give him since Abram still had no children. God again promised him an heir and offspring as numerous as the stars ([Genesis 15:2–5](#)). **“Abram believed the LORD, and he credited to him as righteousness” ([Genesis 15:6](#)).**

What was “morally excellent” or righteous about Abram believing God? He had not sacrificed anything to God. He had not done some mighty work in God’s name. He had not even perfectly trusted God in the journey so far (see [Genesis 12:11–20](#)). He hadn’t done anything except listen to God’s words and accept them as true. And for that Abram was counted righteous in God’s eyes.

If we look at the definition of *righteousness* again, “the quality of being morally right or justifiable,” it is clear that this incident set the foundation of justification by faith, a concept explored many more times throughout Scripture (Romans 4; Galatians 3; James 2:23).

Galatians 3:7–9 links all who have faith in Christ to their predecessor in faith, Abraham: “Understand, then, that those who have faith are children of Abraham. Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: ‘All nations will be blessed through you.’ So those who rely on faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.” All who have faith in Christ are righteous in God’s sight, regardless of their nationality (Galatians 3:26–29). “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast” (Ephesians 2:8–9). Paul explains, “God made him [Jesus] who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Corinthians 5:21). It is by Jesus’ work on the cross that we are made righteous, and by faith we are justified, or declared righteous, before God.

Now, what about holiness? The Bible says that **“WITHOUT HOLINESS NO ONE WILL SEE THE LORD”** (HEBREWS 12:14).

Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, praised God for sending the Messiah, **saying, in part, that Jesus would “enable us to serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness before him all our days”** (**Luke 1:74**).

The apostle Peter wrote, **“But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: ‘Be holy, because I am holy’”** (**1 Peter 1:15–16**).

Ephesians 4 explains that **WE ARE TO PUT OFF OUR OLD, SINFUL SELF, “WHICH IS BEING CORRUPTED BY ITS DECEITFUL DESIRES; TO BE MADE NEW IN THE ATTITUDE OF YOUR MINDS; AND TO PUT ON THE NEW SELF, CREATED TO BE LIKE GOD IN TRUE RIGHTEOUSNESS AND HOLINESS”** (**Ephesians 4:22–24**).

Like righteousness, holiness is a gift from God.

The process of becoming holy is called sanctification, and God promises to complete His sanctification in us because of Christ’s work on the cross. The writer of Hebrews

*explains positional sanctification: “**By [God’s] will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of***

Jesus Christ once for all,” and also alludes to progressive sanctification, speaking of “those who are being made holy” (Hebrews 10:10, 14).

**We are perfected and sanctified by one event:
Christ’s substitutionary atonement
on the cross for our sin.**

As we live our lives in Christ, our holiness increases as we yield to the work of the Holy Spirit within us and follow this command:

“Continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose” (Philippians 2:12–13; also Romans 12:1–2; Hebrews 12:1–2).

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**HOLINESS IS THE FRUIT OF
RIGHTEOUSNESS**

From The Heart

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*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: 4 According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be **holy and without blame before him in love**. Ephesians 1:3-4 KJV*

*Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; 26 That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, 27 That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be **holy and without blemish**. Ephesians 5:25-27 KJV*

God has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ and He has chosen us to be holy and without blemish. That word “holy” denotes something that is sacred; consecrated or set-apart; physically pure; morally blameless. The blood of Jesus washed away all our sin and His word washes us from all the residue of our sin. We are able to be set apart and unblemished before Him – blameless and faultless.

*Do you not know that if you continually surrender yourselves to anyone to do his will, you are the slaves of him whom you obey, whether that be to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience which leads to righteousness (right doing and right standing with God)? 17 But thank God, though you were once slaves of sin, you have become obedient with all your heart to the standard of teaching in which you were instructed and to which you were committed. 18 And having been set free from sin, you have become the servants of righteousness (of conformity to the divine will in thought, purpose, and action). 19 I am speaking in familiar human terms because of your natural limitations. For as you yielded your bodily members [and faculties] as servants to impurity and ever increasing lawlessness, so now yield your bodily members [and faculties] once for all as servants to righteousness (right being and doing) [which leads] to sanctification. 20 For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. 21 But then what benefit (return) did you get from the things of which you are now ashamed? [None] for the end of those things is death. 22 But now since you have been set free from sin and have become the slaves of God, **you have your present reward in holiness and its end is eternal life**. 23 For the wages which sin pays is death, but the [bountiful] free gift of God is eternal life through (in union with) Jesus Christ our Lord. Romans 6:16-23 AMP*

In this life, it is impossible to be neutral — every person has a master — either God or sin. You are free to choose between two masters — sin or righteousness — but you can’t manipulate the consequences or outcome of your choice. Each master pays with its own kind of currency. The currency of sin is death and the currency of righteousness is life

— eternal life!

The wages of sin is death, but obedience leads to righteousness. The reward of righteousness is holiness and its end result is eternal life. Holiness is not a works program — it's not just a look or an outward act. Holiness is what we ARE — inside and out. Holiness is being submitted to God in every area and in everything. Holiness is the fruit of righteousness. Righteousness is a state of being or condition that is acceptable to God. We are only righteous if God says we are. Righteous is what we are when we have been washed in the blood of Jesus — we have been justified and created a new creature in Christ. Righteousness is also integrity; virtue; purity of life; rightness; correctness of thinking, feeling, and acting — in other words, it is also our code of conduct. We have a choice to be righteous and a choice to act righteously.

*[Live] as children of obedience [to God]; do not conform yourselves to the evil desires [that governed you] in your former ignorance [when you did not know the requirements of the Gospel]. 15 But as the One Who called you is holy, you yourselves also **be holy in all your conduct and manner of living**. 16 For it is written, **You shall be holy, for I am holy**. 17 And if you call upon Him as [your] Father Who judges each one impartially according to what he does, [then] you should conduct yourselves with true reverence throughout the time of your temporary residence [on the earth, whether long or short]. 18 You must know (recognize) that you were redeemed (ransomed) from the **useless (fruitless)** way of living inherited by tradition from [your] forefathers, not with corruptible things [such as] silver and gold, 19 But [you were purchased] with the precious blood of Christ (the Messiah), like that of a [sacrificial] lamb without blemish or spot. 1 Peter 1:14-19 AMP*

Your old life of sin was totally fruitless — it produced nothing — it was dead and useless. You did these things because you were ignorant of the truth. Now, you have no more excuses. You have been washed in the blood and bought with a price and you need to walk in the freedom that has been purchased for you — not freedom to sin, but freedom to serve God in righteousness and holiness. You might feel a pull back to your old ways, but you have to make a decision to leave it in the past and to walk forward with Jesus, growing in grace as you submit yourself to His word and His Holy Spirit. If you keep messing with sin, you will be sucked back into ungodliness and unrighteousness — the fruitless works of darkness.

Jesus is the vine, we are the branches, and we cannot produce any fruit apart from Him. Peter tells us that we can, and we should, be like our heavenly Father. We need to be holy in everything we do. Holiness means being totally devoted, or dedicated, to God. We are holy when we are being set aside for His special use and when we set apart, or cut off, from sin and its influence. We are called to be set apart and different — we are not called to blend in with the crowd. What makes us different are God's qualities in

our lives — we model our way of living on Him! We cannot become holy on our own, but the Holy Spirit is our helper to help us to obey and to give us the power to overcome sin. We have no reason for excuses and we have every reason to walk free, righteous and holy.

Desiring God:

God Is Holy and Righteous — Are Those the Same?

00:00

Episode 1104

Interview with

John Piper

Founder & Teacher, Desiring God

Audio Transcript

Today's question comes to us from a listener named Andrew. "Pastor John, hello. I was wondering if you can explain the difference between God's holiness and God's righteousness? And how does that apply to us? What does it mean that we are supposed to be holy AND righteous? What is the difference for us?"

If we start at the bottom — that is, where we live — I would say that the kind of behavior that would be called holy and the kind of behavior that would be called righteous are, in fact, the same behavior but viewed from different angles. In other words, I don't think it's ever the case that we would do something that would be called righteous, but would be unholy. Or that we would ever do

something called holy that would be unrighteous. When it comes to the actual deeds and attributes, all holy behavior will be righteous behavior and all righteous behavior will be holy behavior. That's the first thing. But that doesn't mean that the words are identical in meaning.

What's the Difference?

So what's the basic difference? The essential idea behind the concept of holiness is being separated from, distinct from, that which is ordinary or common. So, in its initial usage, it could refer to something bad or good.

There might be a temple prostitute who's holy because she's not an ordinary prostitute.

“The essential idea behind holiness is being separated from that which is ordinary or common.”

But in the Bible, that's not the way the word *holy* is used. *Holiness* has taken on a moral meaning that derives from God's holiness. In other words, God is separated from all that is not God and is in a class absolutely by himself. God, like the rarest diamond in the universe, is absolutely unique and infinitely valuable.

HIS HOLINESS, THEREFORE, MOST ESSENTIALLY CONSISTS IN HIS ABSOLUTE UNIQUENESS AND THEREFORE THE INFINITE VALUE OF HIS BEAUTY AND HIS EXCELLENCE. He's in a class by himself. He's above all things.

He's *sui generis*. He's distinct from everything that is not God, and therefore, he is of infinite and of absolute worth.

Holiness and Glory

When [Isaiah 6:3](#) describes the angelic beings crying out, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!” it doesn’t say the whole earth is full of his *holiness*, which is what you’d expect. He doesn’t say, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his *holiness*.” It doesn’t say that. It says the whole earth is full of his *glory*.

The reason, I think, is that holiness is conceived of as the intrinsic worth, beauty, purity, value, and excellence of God. His glory is conceived of as what that looks like when it goes public — when it goes out, when it fills the earth and is made visible for humans to see. He is holy, holy, holy, and he fills the earth with his public manifest holiness called now *glory*.

Now, this implies that God’s holiness in action is all of his thinking, all of his feeling, all of his doing, which is in accord with his infinite value. That’s the way I’m defining God’s holy action, holy thinking, holy feeling. If God ever acted in a way that somehow contradicted his utterly unique existence and his infinite worth and beauty, his action would be unholy.

Right Living

Now, right at this point, there’s an overlap with the concept of righteousness.

Righteousness doesn’t have the basic idea of being separate and distinct from what is

common. Righteousness has the basic idea of conforming to a standard.

When that standard is conformed to, the behavior, the thinking, the feeling is right — it's right.

“God’s holiness in action is all of his thinking, feeling, and doing, which is in accord with his infinite value.”

You can see how the two concepts produce the same behavior, because if you ask what is the ultimate standard by which all thinking and feeling and acting should be measured, the answer for God and for us is the absolute worth and beauty of God himself. Or you could say, in its manifest form, the glory of God. Everything you do should be in accord with the glory of God — the worth of God manifest in his glory. All behavior that is consistently done in accord with God’s glory is righteous behavior. It conforms to the highest standard.

Just in passing, I’ll say we have the word of God because as sinners we can’t know all that conforms to God’s worth without his guidance. If somebody says, “Well, what about the word of God?” I say, “Oh, the word of God is indispensable, but I want to define righteousness and holiness as what they are intrinsically.” I don’t want to just to say, “Obey the word of God and you’re righteous.” That would be true. But it wouldn’t tell you why it’s ultimately righteous. So, the word of God is indispensable in telling us what does conform to the infinite worth of God and to the glory of God.

God Works for His Glory

When the psalmist says in Psalm 143:11, “For your name’s sake, O Lord, preserve my life! In your righteousness bring my soul out of trouble!” That parallel between “for your name’s sake” and “in your righteousness” gives a clue that, for God, to act in his righteousness is to act for his name’s sake — that is, for his glory. Or, said another way, in accord with the ultimate standard of his glory or his manifest worth and beauty.

“For God to act in his righteousness is to act for his name’s sake — that is, for his glory.”

So, my conclusion is that God’s holiness is his complete and utter uniqueness distinct from all other beings in his infinite and absolute worth and beauty. His holy behavior is behavior that accords with that infinite worth and beauty. This overlaps with his righteousness — his unwavering commitment to the highest standard imaginable — namely, his glory. This means that when God acts in a holy way, he is always acting in a righteous way and vice versa.

That’s true of us as well when we are distinct from all that is sinful and bring our lives into conformity with God’s infinite worth and beauty.

That is, when we're holy, we are, at the same time, acting in righteousness because we're conforming to the highest standard in the universe.

John Piper (@JohnPiper) is founder and teacher of Desiring God and chancellor of Bethlehem College and Seminary. For 33 years, he served as pastor of Bethlehem Baptist Church, Minneapolis, Minnesota. He is author of more than 50 books, including *Desiring God: Meditations of a Christian Hedonist* and most recently *Foundations for Lifelong Learning: Education in Serious Joy*.

Additional NOTES:

“What should Christians wear?”

That's a trick question. This devotion isn't about the earthly, material clothing that changes according to the weather and style. It's about the eternal, spiritual clothing that believers should put on each day. After some heavy theology, today we're getting practical. Paul kept coming back to the analogy of putting on Jesus Christ, so it must be important. I've rounded up some great writing on this topic by some well-known pastors to inspire you to dress well.

Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all. Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Colossians 3:9-12

But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts. Romans 13:14

For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. Galatians 3:27

Charles Spurgeon

The command before us is given to those who have the imputed righteousness of Christ—who are justified—who are accepted in Christ Jesus. “Put you on the Lord Jesus Christ” is a word to you that are saved by Christ and justified by His righteousness! You are to put on Christ and keep putting Him on in the sanctifying of your lives unto your God. You are, everyday, to continually more and more wear as the garment of your lives the Character of your Lord.

I now wish to show the description given in Colossians 3—from the 12th verse. I will take you to the wardrobe for a minute and ask you to look over the articles of our outfit. See here, “Put on therefore”—you see everything is to be put on—nothing is to be left on the pegs for the moths to eat, nor in the window to be idly stared at. You put on the whole armor of God. In true religion everything is designed for practical use. We keep no garments in the drawer—we have to put on all that is provided. “Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, tender mercies, kindness.” Here are two choice things—mercy and kindness—silken robes, indeed! Have you put them on? I am to be as merciful, as tender-hearted, as kind, as sympathetic, as loving to my fellow men as Christ Himself was.

See, next, we are to put on longsuffering and forbearance. Some men have no patience with others—how can they expect God to have patience with them? If everything is not done to their mind they are in a fine fury...Our Lord was full of forbearance. “Consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest you become wearied and faint in your minds.” Put on the Lord Jesus Christ and bear and forbear. Put up with a great deal that really ought not to be inflicted upon you—and be ready to bear still more rather than give or take offense.

“Forgiving one another, if any man has a quarrel against any, even as Christ forgave you, so also do you.” Is not this heavenly teaching? Put it in practice! Put you on your Lord! Have you fallen to loggerheads with one another, and did I hear one of you growling, “I’ll, I’ll, I’ll—”? Stop, Brother! What will you do? If you are true to the Lord Jesus Christ you will not avenge yourself but give place unto wrath. Put the Lord Jesus on your tongue and you will not talk so bitterly! Put Him on your heart and you will not feel so fiercely! Put Him on your whole character and you will readily forgive—not only this once, but unto 70 times seven!

“And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfection.” Love is the belt which binds up the other garments and keeps all the other Graces well braced and in their right places. Put on love—what a golden belt! Are we all putting on love? We have been baptized into Christ and we profess to have put on Christ—but do we daily try to put on love? Our Baptism was not true if we are not buried to all old enmities. We may have a great many faults but God grant that we may be full of love to Jesus, to His people and to all mankind!

How much I wish that we could all put on, and keep on, the next article of this wardrobe! “And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful.” Oh, for a peaceful mind! Oh, to rest in the Lord! I recommend that last little word, “Be thankful,” to farmers and others whose interests are depressed. I might equally recommend it to certain trades people whose trade is quite as good as they could expect. “Things are a little better,” said one to me—and at that time he was heaping up riches. When things are extremely well, people say they are “middling,” or a “little better.” But when there is a slight falling off they cry out about, “nothing doing, stagnation, universal ruin.” Thankfulness is a rare virtue—but let the lover of the Lord Jesus abound in it. The possession of your mind in peace, keeping yourself quiet, calm, self-possessed, content—this is a blessed state. And in such a state Jesus was—therefore, “put you on the Lord Jesus Christ.” He was never in a fret or fume. He was never hurried or worried.

John MacArthur

...you can’t crash the Kingdom without the proper robe. You can’t get in unless you have the garment. And what’s the garment? You know what the garment

is? It's what? It's righteousness. And that's Isaiah 61:10, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God for He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness." And so, when you came to Christ you put on Christ in the sense that you put on His righteousness, you put on His holiness, you put on His nature. And God sees you as righteous in Jesus Christ. It's a beautiful, beautiful picture. And you will notice, won't you, from the parable on, even through the Pauline epistles, this imagery of putting on a garment as emblematic of putting on the righteousness of Christ. So when you became a believer you did that...and the best word to use is in a positional sense. You did that before God and God sees you in Christ. We receive then a declared righteousness...But that brings us to the second dimension. Putting on Jesus Christ also is an exhortation given to believers. How can you say to a believer who has already put on Christ, put on Christ? Very simply. What he is saying is this has happened to you positionally, let it happen to you practically. I used to think of it in terms of an athlete who puts on the uniform of a great team. It's one thing to wear the uniform and be on the team, it's something else to play up to the reputation of the team. So act like it.

John Piper

You have already passed from darkness to light. You have already been transferred from the dominion of darkness to the kingdom of Christ. You are already new creatures in Christ. You are already children of God. What remains is for you to dress like it, to live like it, and to fight like it. The clothes, the fight do not make you a child of the light. They show that you are a child of the light.

This is plain in the flow of the book of Romans—that chapters 1–11 precede chapters 12 and 13. First we get right with God by faith in what Christ has done. Then we dress and live and fight like people of the day. But this is even more clear in two other places where Paul talks about putting on the clothes of a believer. Listen to Colossians 3:12: "Put on then, *as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved*, compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience." You are already God's chosen ones, God's holy ones, God's loved ones. Now he says, put on the character that reflects your new identity. And the one other place in all the New Testament where Paul speaks of "putting on Christ" describes it as something already done. Galatians 3:27, "For as many of you as were baptized

into Christ have put on Christ." Baptism is an acting out of what happens by faith in conversion. And what happened was: You put on Christ, once and for all. Which means that the command to put on Christ is a call to become what you are—a Christ wearer.

So keep in mind as we move forward now that putting on the armor of light or putting on Christ in verses 12 and 14 are not instructions to become a Christian all over again. Paul is calling us to be what we are in Christ. You are children of the light, children of the day. Now dress like it, live like it, fight like it.

Misc.

When the Bible says no one is righteous it means that no one could deserve salvation on their own. No one was right enough without Christ to be in right standing with God. "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23) 2 Corinthians 5:21 says, "He who knew no sin became sin so that we might become the righteousness of God in Christ."

People confuse righteousness with right living. These are two different things. Righteousness is a position. When you become saved you are considered in right standing with God. The word says, "Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness" (Romans 4:3; Genesis 15:6). No one is considered righteous based on their behavior. Their righteousness is based on their belief in Jesus Christ (Romans 3:20-22). You don't do right things to become righteous. Because you are righteous you do right things.

4024. perizónnumi ►

Strong's Lexicon

perizónnumi: To gird, to gird about, to fasten garments with a belt

Original Word: περιζώννυμι

Part of Speech: Verb

Transliteration: perizónnumi

Pronunciation: pe-ri-ZONE-noo-mee

Phonetic Spelling: (per-id-zone'-noo-mee)

Definition: To gird, to gird about, to fasten garments with a belt

Meaning: I gird round; mid: I gird myself, generally for active work or travel.

Word Origin: From the Greek words "peri" (around) and "zónnumi" (to gird or to fasten)

Corresponding Greek / Hebrew Entries: - H2296 (חָגַר, **chagar**): To gird, to bind on, to put on a belt

- H247 (אַזַּר, **'azar**): To gird, to equip, to clothe

Usage: The verb "perizōnnumi" means to gird or to fasten garments securely with a belt. In biblical contexts, it often refers to preparing oneself for action or service, symbolizing readiness and alertness. The act of girding one's loins was a common practice in ancient times, especially before undertaking a journey, engaging in work, or preparing for battle.

Cultural and Historical Background: In ancient Near Eastern culture, people wore long robes that could hinder movement. To "gird up the loins" meant to tuck the robe into a belt, allowing for greater mobility. This practice was essential for laborers, travelers, and soldiers. Spiritually, it symbolizes preparedness and vigilance, often used metaphorically in Scripture to encourage believers to be ready for spiritual duties or challenges.