



THE RIGHTEOUS

The name of the LORD is a strong tower,
The righteous run into it, and they are safe (modern praise song from Proverbs 18:10).

Questions

- what is a righteous person like?
- how do the righteous differ from the wicked?
- what blessings can I expect for being righteous?
- what is the difference between imputed righteousness and experiential righteousness?
- how can I become righteous?
- how can I live a righteous life?
- am I righteous?

Three Kinds Of Righteousness

- positional righteousness
 - experiential righteousness
 - ultimate righteousness
- *positional righteousness* is to have the righteousness of God imputed to us; that is, to be declared righteous by God because of our position "in Christ" (positional truth):

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

"that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

- *experiential righteousness* is to live a righteous life now (experiential truth):

"to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age" (Titus 2:12).

"pursue after righteousness" (1 Timothy 6:11; 2 Timothy 2:22)

"practice righteousness" (1 John 3:10)

- *ultimate righteousness* is to be made perfectly righteous by God in our resurrection bodies (ultimate truth):

“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” (2 Timothy 4:8).

Righteous Living

- the emphasis of this study is on righteous living—experiential righteousness

(1) the righteous have just thoughts:

The thoughts of the righteous are just,
But the counsels of the wicked are deceitful (Proverbs 12:5).

- “just” is contrasted with “deceitful”
- if you have deceitful thoughts, you’re wicked and not righteous

Do not eat the bread of a selfish man,
Or desire his delicacies;
For as he thinks within himself, so he is.
He says to you, “Eat and drink!”
But his heart is not with you (Proverbs 23:6–7).

(2) the righteous hate deception, lies, and falsehood:

A righteous man hates falsehood,
But a wicked man acts disgustingly and shamefully (Proverbs 13:5).

- the wicked love falsehood and consequently do disgusting and shameful deeds

(3) the righteous desire to do only good for others:

The desire of the righteous is only good,
But the expectation of the wicked is wrath (Proverbs 11:23).

- the wicked do evil to others and expect their wrath

(4) the righteous know the Mosaic Law:

The law of his God is in his heart;
His steps do not slip (Psalm 37:31).

- his knowledge of the Law protects him from harm (assuming he is obedient to the Law)

(5) the righteous are growing in the knowledge of God:

Give instruction to a wise man,
and he will be still wiser,
Teach a righteous man,
and he will increase his learning (Proverbs 9:9).

- righteousness must be present for spiritual growth to take place

(6) the righteous care about the poor:

The righteous is concerned for the rights of the poor,
The wicked does not understand such concern (Proverbs 29:7).

- selfishness crowds out a man's concern for the rights of the poor

(7) the righteous are good men:

So you will walk in the way of good men,
And keep to the paths of the righteous (Proverbs 2:20).

- this verse is an example of synonymous parallelism in which "good men" is parallel to "the righteous"

(8) the righteous will be well remembered:

The memory of the righteous is blessed,
But the name of the wicked will rot (Proverbs 10:7).

- people will bless you by saying good things about you and by doing good things for you—even after you're dead

(9) the righteous are obedient to all the commandments in the Mosaic Law:

And they were both righteous in the sight of God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and requirements of the Lord (Luke 1:6).

- this refers to John the Baptist's mother and father, Zacharias and Elizabeth

(10) the righteous trust God in times of danger:

But the salvation of the righteous is from the LORD;
He is their strength in time of trouble.
And the LORD helps them, and delivers them;
He delivers them from the wicked, and saves them,
Because they take refuge (*hasah*, *הָסֵךְ*) in Him
(Psalm 37:39–40).

- *הָסֵךְ* means "to seek shelter or protection" as in the shadow of a tree ((Judges 9:15)
- these are promises of protection from the wicked

(11) the righteous have fellowship with God:

These are the records of the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his time; Noah walked with God (Genesis 6:9).

- Adam and Eve walked with God before their fall (Genesis 3:8–10) and Enoch walked with God before the flood (5:22–24)

(12) the righteous provide spiritual food for others:

The lips of the righteous feed many,
But fools die for lack of understanding (Proverbs 10:21).

- you don't feed physical food to others with your lips—only spiritual food such as the milk and meat of the Word (1 Corinthians 3:2; Hebrews 5:11–14; 1 Peter 2:2)
- it's our job to feed spiritual food to any who will listen
- give them the knowledge of God, an understanding of spiritual things, and the wisdom of God
- they are babes and are dependent on us for spiritual food

(13) the righteous are spiritual guides to others:

The righteous is a guide to his neighbor,
But the way of the wicked leads them astray (Proverbs 12:26).

- our job is to point out to others the road God wants them to walk—

the way of the righteous (cf. Proverbs 2:20)

- the way of the wicked leads to the second death (Psalm 1:6)
- the way of the righteous is the only smart way in light of coming judgment (Psalm 1:4–6)

(14) the righteous are kind to animals:

A righteous man has regard for the life (nephesh, נֶפֶשׁ) of his beast,
But the compassion of the wicked is cruel (Proverbs 12:10).

- literally, 'A righteous man knows (*yada*, יָדַע) the soul of his beast;' that is, when he needs water, food, rest, shelter, and medical attention
- *incongruity*: compassion is the opposite of cruelty—the wicked are selfish and have little compassion for their animals

(15) the righteous are gracious and giving (Psalm 37:21; Proverbs 21:26):

The wicked borrows and does not pay back,
But the righteous is gracious and gives (Psalm 37:21).

- the righteous fight their natural selfishness and are willing to make sacrifices for others

The desire of the sluggard puts him to death,
For his hands refuse to work;
All day long he is craving,
While the righteous gives and does not hold back (Proverbs 21:25–26).

- the sluggard refuses to work and has nothing to give
- it's hard to be lazy and generous at the same time

(16) the righteous are persecuted (Psalm 34:19; Proverbs 24:15; Matthew 23:35):

Many are the afflictions of the righteous;
But the LORD delivers him out of them all (Psalm 34:19).

Do not lie in wait, O wicked man, against the dwelling of the righteous;
Do not destroy his resting place;
For (כִּי) a righteous man falls seven times, and rises again,
But the wicked stumble in time of calamity

(Proverbs 24:15–16).

- destroying the house of the righteous is futile because God helps the righteous rise again—as often as they need help
- but when God punishes the wicked, they will stumble and not rise again
- this is a promise to the righteous, a warning to the wicked, and a great blessing for being righteous

“Therefore, behold, I am sending you prophets and wise men and scribes; some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues, and persecute from city to city, that upon you may fall the guilt of all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar” (Matthew 23:34–35).

- the ultimate persecution is martyrdom (cf. Revelation 2:10)

(17) the righteous are tested (Psalm 11:5):

The LORD tests (יִקְוֶה) the righteous and the wicked,
And the one who loves violence His soul hates (Psalm 11:5).

- יִקְוֶה is usually used of the righteous (Psalm 11:2)
- it’s important to know that God also tests the wicked. Why? Perhaps to establish a comparative norm for each test; that is, to determine if believers do better or worse than unbelievers (cf. Proverbs 17:3)

(18) the righteous receive answers to prayer (Psalm 34:15, 17):

The eyes of the LORD are toward the righteous,
And His ears are open to their cry.
The face of the LORD is against evildoers,
To cut off the memory of them from the earth.
The righteous cry and the LORD hears,
And delivers them out of all their troubles (Psalm 34:15–17).

- a promise to hear and answer the prayers of the righteous

(19) the righteous receive rewards (Luke 14:14):

And He also went on to say to the one who had invited Him, “When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your

brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return, and repayment come to you. But when you give a reception, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, since they do not have the means to repay you; for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous" (Luke 14:12-14).

- your choice is repayment in this world or in the world to come (cf. Matthew 6:1-6,16-18)

(20) the righteous inherit the Kingdom (Matthew 13:43, 49; 25:37):

"The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear" (Matthew 13:41-43).

PARABLE OF THE DRAGNET

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet cast into the sea, and gathering fish of every kind; and when it was filled, they drew it up on the beach; and they sat down, and gathered the good fish into containers, but the bad they threw away. So it will be at the end of the age; the angels shall come forth, and take out the wicked from among the righteous, and will cast them into the furnace of fire; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 13:47-50).

- this parable also indicates the fate of the wicked
- *implication*: the righteous are left on earth and enter the millennial Kingdom (cf. Matt 13:43)

JUDGMENT OF THE SHEEP AND THE GOATS

"But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. And all the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. 'For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.' Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You

drink? 'And when did we see You a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You? 'And when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' And the King will answer and say to them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me'" (Matthew 25:31–40).

- the sheep (= the righteous) inherit the Kingdom
- Jesus inherits all things that belong to his Father (Heb 1:2)

"Then He will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry, and you gave Me nothing to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me nothing to drink; I was a stranger, and you did not invite Me in; naked, and you did not clothe Me; sick, and in prison, and you did not visit Me.' Then they themselves also will answer, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not take care of You?' Then He will answer them, saying, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.' And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life" (Matthew 25:41–46).

JESUS' DEFINITION OF ETERNAL LIFE

eternal life is the opportunity to know (present active subjunctive)
Jesus and God the Father:

And this is eternal life, that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent (John 17:3).

- in other words, to be given eternal life is to be given the opportunity to know Jesus and God the Father in this world and in the world to come

PURPOSE OF ETERNAL LIFE

the reason for offering eternal life to men is to give them an opportunity to get to know Jesus and his Father better; that is, to have a closer relationship with Jesus and God the Father for all eternity—in other words, the main goal of eternal life is a deeper relationship with Jesus and God

(21) the names of the righteous are written in the Book of Life (Psalm 69:28):

May they be blotted out of the book of life,

And may they not be recorded (כְּתֹב) with the righteous (Psalm 69:28).

- this is the conclusion of David's imprecatory prayer against his enemies (69:22–28)
- he is asking God to kill his enemies (verse 25) and to wipe their names from the Book of Life (verse 28)
- *implication*: the righteous are recorded in the Book of Life

(22) the righteous have eternal life (Matthew 25:46):

And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life" (Matthew 25:41–46).

- eternal life is living in God's Kingdom forever
- eternal death is separation from God's Kingdom forever

(23) the righteous are loved by God (Psalm 146:8):

The LORD opens the eyes of the blind;
 The LORD raises up those who are bowed down;
 The LORD loves the righteous;
 The LORD protects the strangers (גֵּרִים);
 He supports the fatherless and the widow;
 But He thwarts (עָוָה 'makes crooked') the way of the wicked (Psalm 146:8–9).

- a *ger* (גֵּר) is a *sojourner*, a temporary dweller, a new-comer with no inherited rights, the opposite of *homeborn*. *Gerim* (גֵּרִים) live in Israel with certain conceded, not inherited, rights. A sojourner participates in the Sabbath rest and the other covenant obligations of Israel (Louw & Nida)