

## Righteousness #2: From Proverbs – Thoughts and Attitudes

Mt. 5:6 – “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.”

The previous lesson was an introduction to the topic of righteousness, and a look at many of the promises of righteousness taken solely from the book of Proverbs. It ended with the question of what is really meant by “righteousness”, which is the subject of this lesson.

It is generally good to start with an English dictionary to understand words. But an even more meaningful understanding can be gotten by looking at the actual usage of a word, using a concordance and Hebrew and Greek lexicons. e.g., How is the word “righteousness” actually used in the book of Proverbs or the rest of the Bible?

Most people would have a vague notion of righteousness simply as “goodness”, particularly in relation to morality. It should include the idea of “rightness”, as alignment with moral standards of right vs. wrong. But the standards of true righteousness must be God’s, not merely human ones. Humans can have twisted ideas of morality that can justify lying, abortion, euthanasia, ends justifying the means, etc. Men want to be just good enough to satisfy their own conscience and stay out of jail. Righteousness in the Bible is describing the character of a person who aligns themselves with God’s standards of morality and purity, not just in actions, but also in the things of the heart – thoughts, motivations, desires, etc.

We naturally find a huge number of descriptions and examples in the Bible of the characteristics of a righteous man. Because that topic would be so large, this study will take examples only from the book of Proverbs, although related supporting scriptures will be given.

### Righteous Thoughts and Attitudes

#### 1. It is to have godly desires and goals

11:23 – “The desire of the righteous is only good: but the expectation of the wicked is wrath.”

A righteous man will not desire things that are evil, things that displease God. His goal in life is to serve and obey God and to fulfill God’s purpose for his life. This should affect the way we pray.

1 Jn. 3:22 – “And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.”

Jas. 4:2-3 – “... yet ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.”

#### 2. It is to have right thoughts

12:5 – “The thoughts of the righteous are right: but the counsels of the wicked are deceit.”

If our goals and desires are godly, then our thoughts and words will also be right. We should ask ourselves whether our thoughts are right or not, and reject everything that is not.

2 Cor. 10:5 – “Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;”

Phl. 4:8 – “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.”

#### 3. The righteous man does not trust in wealth

11:28 – “He that trusteth in his riches shall fall: but the righteous shall flourish as a branch.”

Note that it is not riches that are evil, but trusting in them. Our faith and trust is to be in God alone.

1 Tim. 6:17 – “Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy;”

#### 4. Hates lying (loves truth)

13:5 – “A righteous man hateth lying: but a wicked man is loathsome, and cometh to shame.”

The LORD is a God of truth (Dt. 32:4) , and Jesus is Truth incarnate (Jn. 14:6). If we are living in God, and He in us, then how can we tolerate the sin of lying? Mt. 12:36 says that we will give account for every idle word. Lies and deceits are even worse than empty words.

12:22 – “Lying lips are abomination to the LORD: but they that deal truly are his delight.”

Eph. 4:25 – “... putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another.”

Col. 3:9 – “Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds;”

## **5. Takes sin seriously**

14:9 – “Fools make a mock at sin: but among the righteous there is favour.”

The life style of many, even church-goers, suggests that they really don't see sin as very important, or that their concept of “sinfulness” only includes the really awful things (things that even the unsaved world and legal system see as wrong). A righteous man will want to root out every sin, large or small. Can you laugh at wickedness and cruelty, as in TV or movies, or dirty jokes? Do you enjoy seeing blood and gore and sexual sins?

## **6. Has faith in God**

18:10 – “The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe.”

Is your first impulse when faced with trouble or a need of intercession to go to God in prayer and appeal to the name of Christ? Is he your refuge in the storm and in the calm?

Ps. 91:2, 4 – “I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust. ... He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler.”

Isa. 25:4 – “For thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall.

Prov. 3:5-6 – “Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.”

## **7. The righteous man has holy boldness**

28:1 – “The wicked flee when no man pursueth: but the righteous are bold as a lion.”

Because of his faith in God, the righteous man is courageous and does not shrink from challenges and confrontations. Remember David and Goliath, or Jonathan and his armor bearer, or Peter and John, or Stephen.

Mt. 10:8 – “Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give.”

Lk. 10:19 – “Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you.”

## **8. Rejoicing and Gladness**

29:6 – “In the transgression of an evil man there is a snare: but the righteous doth sing and rejoice.”

God expects his people to rejoice and be glad. He is not glorified by a downcast and defeated Christian. We are told to “serve the LORD thy God with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart” (Dt. 28:47).

1 Thess. 5:16 – “Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.”

Trying to be righteous to be saved is to get the cart before the horse. We do not have to be righteous to first believe on Christ – what we really need is to be convinced and convicted of our total unrighteousness, and our need of a Savior to deliver us from our sins. We must WANT to be delivered from sin. Many people are false converts – they say the sinner's prayer but have no desire to be free from unrighteousness. God's purpose is to give us a new heart and then to clean us up so that we can and will live in his imputed and enabled righteousness.

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