

## Righteous or Not Righteous

Did you ever meet someone who told you they are a good person? “I don’t smoke, I don’t drink, I don’t cheat on my wife, I don’t lie, I don’t steal. The question is; did they say they are good or that they are not bad? Do you get it? How can all the things you don’t do make you good? God says that He is good because He does good things. He shows “kindness and mercy,” Luke 6:36.

When we say we are good or righteous because of the things that we don’t do, we are referred to as “self-righteous.” The scriptures call this kind of righteousness “filthy rags,” Isaiah 64:6. Even those who do good and love without the understanding of God fall short of what God requires. Look at Matthew 5:46, “For if you love (agape) those who love (agape) you what reward do you have, do not even the unbelievers do the same?” Do you see that there is a love (agape) of God and there is a love (agape) of the world? The world says to just love your friends and family. God says to also love enemies and strangers also. One is the love of Adam; the other is the love of Christ.

God’s standards are much higher than ours and He has set a high standard for us, to live without sin and to love like He loves. This is why He chose to become like us. Jesus Christ our God and creator came to demonstrate the love of God not only by dying and paying for our sins but also by serving others, doing for others. When we believe in him, when we see our sin and our dilemma before God and turn from our sins and ask for forgiveness He counts us righteous just because of this simple act of faith. You see it is not just believing but also asking an invisible God for forgiveness. This is the beginning of what is called righteousness by faith. I say beginning because God wants not only to forgive us but also to transform us to be like Christ, like the Creator.

Don’t you see in the scriptures that God wants to make us righteous, not just count us righteous? He says “if you do these things you will be perfect even as your father in heaven is perfect.”

Matthew 5:28. This is what it means to be created in Christ, to put on the new. To not curse or steal or lie is to put off the old. In Colossians 3:10 -14 it says, “and put on the new which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him.” ... Put on therefore as the elect of God, holy and beloved bowels of mercy, kindness, humility, long patience, meekness, forbearing one another and forgiving one another. ...and above all put on love which is the bond of perfection.”

When God said “be holy as I am holy” it was not a suggestion. Our righteousness needs to be different than the world. Our love needs to be different than the world. Those who are created in the image of Christ are doers of the word, not just hearers. Not only do they believe they are forgiven but they also forgive others and not only their loved ones but also their enemies. If we believe and do righteousness, the Lord will say “well done, good and faithful servant.” If we believe and do nothing He will call us lazy and unprofitable.

Friends, don't think you have accomplished anything because you don't steal or cheat on your wife. Jesus said, “Freely it has been given to you, now freely give.” Giving is the opposite of stealing. Ephesians 5 says Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church. In other words serve your wife and make her valuable in your heart. This is the righteousness of God. Jesus said, “Blessed are you if you do these things.”

Today is the day to start doing for others. We also can demonstrate the love of God to other people. Find a way to give to others, not only financially but also your time. What about forgiveness? It is easy to retaliate, especially toward an enemy. Instead think of it as a way to bear fruit, to show the love of God. It is better to forgive your enemy and show them kindness. Also, how can you love your wife better? How can you make her more valuable? Think about it. There are many ways to show the love of God daily. The scriptures constantly exhort us to be doing for others, serving others.

EYE OPENERS  
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