

Psalm 11:7

God is Righteous

Open your Bible to...

Ps. 11:7 For the Lord is righteous, He loves righteousness; His countenance beholds the upright.

Pray

Intro

√ Righteous

In the book of Genesis, one of the great lessons of faith is found in the account of Abraham, the father of faith, and his often-wayward nephew Lot.

You can read all about it in Genesis 13 where Abraham and Lot were forced to separate from one another because their flocks had become so large that the land couldn't support both of them.

Being a man of God, Abraham gave Lot the first choice as to where he wanted to settle down, listen to the Bible's account of how Lot made his decision...

“And Lot lifted his eyes and saw all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere (before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah) like the garden of the Lord...” ~ Genesis 13:10

The point is that while Abraham consistently looked to God for direction in life, Lot more often than not made decisions based on what he could with his eyes...

...which led to all sorts of problems!

After separating from Abraham, he and his family settled down in the corrupt city of Sodom.

Then he and his family were captured with the people of Sodom and carried away by invading armies.

Later they had to be dragged from the city of Sodom just before God destroyed it by fire.

Ultimately, he lost his wife, became homeless and while drunk fathered two sons by his own daughters!

Yet, despite all of Lot's poor choices God never gave up on him. Point in fact when Abraham was negotiating with God to protect Lot and his family from being destroyed along with the wicked the people of Sodom, Abraham asked God...

“Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?”

Gen. 18:25

And God did do right by Lot! Even though there weren't 10 righteous people in the whole city of Sodom to save it from destruction...

...nonetheless God sent His angels to get Lot and his family safely out of the blast zone before the fire fell.

Ap. God is righteous

Here's the point, while people in life will often let us down, even those people who should stand with and for us...

...we can face life with courage knowing that because God is righteous, we can count on Him to always do right by us!

God is Truth ~ a Definition

√ God is Righteous

Additionally, when the Bible describes God as righteous, we need to point out that...

...it doesn't mean that He conforms to some standard of goodness, justice or moral perfection.

That would be to elevate the standard of righteousness above God, and nothing is above God!

Rather when the Bible says that God is righteous, like in our opening scripture, the scripture means that He is the standard of what is right, just, good, morally upright and pure.

That is, God is the measure by which all of our thoughts, attitudes, actions, and speech are judged as being either righteous or wicked.

Furthermore, we need to make a distinction between the attribute of God's truth and His attribute of righteousness. The distinction can be summed up this way, whereas...

The attribute of truth tells us that God cannot lie.

The attribute of righteousness tells us that God is never wrong!

So, when the Bible says that God is righteous it means that He is always correct in all...

The words that He speaks

The answers He provides

The choices He makes

The directions and instructions He gives

The thoughts He thinks

The actions He takes

God is never mistaken, never contradicts the facts, is perfect in the implementation of justice, cannot ever be wrong, is always right...

...Because God is righteous!

The Biblical Foundation that God is Righteous

√ God is Righteous

There are dozens of scriptures that describe God's eternal being as intrinsically righteous including Deuteronomy 32:4, where we find Moses teaching the children of Israel to sing about God in this way...

*“He is the Rock, His work is perfect;
For all His ways are justice,
A God of truth and without injustice;
Righteous and upright is He.”*

Those lyrics were to remind the people of Israel that their God—the One true God, is a God who can be trusted to always do the right thing so that...

They could trust Him to lead them to a better land.

That His decisions and judgments would always be fair.

That He would never take advantage of them for His own benefit.

That His character is pure without any flaw.

And that by following Him they would discover the best of all possible lives.

How very different the God of Israel is from the idols worshipped by the nations surrounding the Promised Land! For the gods of the Canaanites, Moabites, Egyptians and Greeks were as unrighteous as the people who worshipped them!

Molech demanded human sacrifice.

Baal encouraged corrupt behavior.

Zeus abused humans for his own pleasure.

But the God revealed in the Bible Who is perfect in righteousness can be trusted to never...

Lead us astray.

Never treat us unfairly.

Will always do right by us.

Next, we turn to Ezra the priest, who acknowledged the perfection of God's being when he prayed...

“O Lord God of Israel, You are righteous...”

Ezra 9:15

Then there is Asaph one of the psalmists of Israel who was inspired by the testimony of Creation to sing...

“Let the heavens declare His righteousness,

For God Himself is Judge. Selah”

Psalms 50:6

And from the pen of the anonymous writer of Psalm 71, we hear words that we often sing in worship here at Calvary Chapel...

“Your righteousness, God, reaches to the heavens, you who have done great things. Who is like you, God?”

Psalm 71:9

Finally, as the prophet Daniel prayed and interceded on behalf of his people he acknowledged...

“O Lord, righteousness belongs to You...”

Daniel 9:7

And in chapter 9:14 we read...

“...for the Lord our God is righteous in all the works which He does, though we have not obeyed His voice.”

From cover to cover the Bible presents to us a God who is always right, in what He says, what He does and how He does it...

In His interactions with mankind, in His motives and thoughts, and in the implementation of His justice both in Eternity and on Earth!

For God alone is perfect in His righteous!

Objections to God's Righteousness

√ Objections

Like me I would guess that most if not all of you here this morning would have no objections to the truth that God is righteous.

The Bible says it is true, that's good enough for you and me!

Yet, as Norman Geisler points in his work on systematic theology there are some who do reject the concept God's righteousness.

Geisler informs us that the chief objection of the critic centers upon the forgiveness that God so quickly extends to anyone who would repentant. Their argument goes something like this...

"If God is righteous, then how can He forgive and save the unrighteous?"

What the critic is pointing out here is that in their view a truly righteous God could not possibly forgive an unrighteous person (you and me)...

Why?

Because they argue that if God did forgive us for our unrighteousness, then He would be ignoring the attribute of His justice and the punishment that our unrighteousness acts demand!

Which they claim would constitute an unrighteous act on God's part because a righteous God must punish every act of unrighteousness.

Therefore, the critic argues that a righteous God cannot forgive us—the unrighteous...

...and *if* He does forgive us *then* He can't truly be righteous.

At this point the skeptic or critic thinks they've got you trapped in a "Catch-22" argument.

So, how do we respond?

√ A righteous substitute

The Bible tells us that *God provided a solution* to the critics dilemma that allows Him to maintain His perfect righteousness while at the same time extending forgiveness to unrighteous people like you and me!

He did so by *punishing* the Righteous One (Jesus), for the sins of the unrighteous.

Thus, satisfying the just demands of God's Moral Law so that He could then transfer Jesus' righteousness to our lives!

Ah, but the critic would respond...

Well, that sounds like an *unrighteous* process.

It seems patently unfair (wrong—unrighteous) that an innocent Person should be punished for the guilty.

Furthermore, how could the guilty person receive the righteousness of the innocent Person?

The answer to both of those questions is found by asking, *who* is the offended party and...

...*Who* was the injustice of our sin done against?

Well, the Bible tells us that while our sins are primarily done against one another that ultimately all sin is done against God.

Ex. David's sin with Bathsheba

For example, you may recall that when David contemplated the depth of his sin against Bathsheba and Uriah, he sang in Psalm 51:4...

“Against You (God), You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight...”

In other words, David recognized that while his crime was committed against Uriah and Bathsheba...

That ultimately his unrighteous acts were against God Who's righteous laws he broke when he committed adultery with Bathsheba and arranged for the murder of her husband.

Think about it... Who established the law that says murder and adultery are wrong?

There are and have been human cultures that justified murder and sexual immorality.

So how do we know that murder and adultery are wrong?

Because God said so in the Ten Commandments!

Thus, all of our sins are ultimately done against God Whose laws we have broken.

Another example is found in the New Testament when Saul of Tarsus was confronted by Jesus on the road to Damascus and when the brilliance of Jesus' presence blinded him, Saul heard a voice from Heaven saying...

“Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?”

Acts 9:4

Confused Saul asked...

“Who are You, Lord?” ~ Acts 9:5

Listen to how Jesus responded, He said...

“I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.” Acts 9:5

That is, Jesus personalized all of Saul’s crimes against the Christians whom he was imprisoning, beating, and sometimes killing!

Jesus meant that any sin against the Body of Christ is ultimately a sin against the Head of the Body...

...that is, Jesus!

The point is that the Bible tells us that all sin is ultimately done against God because all sin is committed against something or someone that belongs to God...

...thus, God alone has the authority to determine what satisfies the just demands of His moral law when it is broken.

Ex. The law of the land

We’re familiar with that concept here in the USA because when someone commits a crime against you or me...we’re not the ones who gets to punish the criminal!

That’s because it is the law of the State or the Federal Governments that has been violated.

While we are the victim, it is the State or the Federal Government's responsibility to judge the law breaker as either innocent or guilty.

Finally, it is the Government, not us, that determines the punishment for the crime done against us.

So too in God's system of justice.

He determines what is right and what is wrong.

What punishment fits the crime

And how the just demands of His law are satisfied.

Therefore, God the righteous Judge may at His discretion allow a voluntary substitute to bear the punishment that our sin demands...

...which is exactly what the Bible tells us that God has done!

Rom. 8:3 For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh,

Rom. 8:4 that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

Here's the point, and the Good News...

God's justice demands that all sin be punished...

...but not necessarily that all sinners be punished for their sin.

Thus, God has chosen to allow His perfect righteous Son to pay the penalty that our unrighteous acts demand.

But, and here's the catch...

...while the just demands for all sin has been satisfied by Jesus' substitutionary sacrifice, it is not automatically applied to all sinners.

Rather, that benefit of God's righteousness is only accredited to those who believe in Jesus' substitutionary death!

Rom. 3:21 But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,

Rom. 3:22 even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe.

The result of God's work through Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection is that He is able to maintain His perfect righteousness...

...while at the same time providing forgiveness to the us—the unrighteous!

So, the objections of the critic fail because the logic of their argument is flawed.

Ap. You're not going to find a better deal!

If you haven't already taken advantage of the free gift of salvation offered by God through a relationship with Jesus that will wash away all of your unrighteousness...

...I'd encourage you to get in on that deal today!

The Implications of God's Righteous

√ The implications of God's Righteous

Now that we understand what the Bible means when it says that God is righteous...

...let's turn our attention to some of *the implications* of His righteousness in our lives and experience.

- 1) Because God is righteous, He cannot do anything wrong

I've already said that, but we need to understand that God's righteousness means *more* than simply that He does not do wrong...it means that He cannot do anything wrong!

The divine being is such that God can only do, say, and think what is right!

It is not within His capacity to do, say or think what is wrong!

That may sound similar to the implications of *God's attribute of Truth*—specifically that He cannot lie...

...but His righteousness is different.

God's truth and His righteousness are similar but they are *not* the same, let me illustrate.

- Ex. A lie verses factual error

A lie is sinful because it is an intentional misrepresentation of the facts.

God's *truth* means that He is *not* capable of saying anything untrue...He cannot lie.

Now consider a *factual error*. For example, if I tell you something that I believe to be true but turns out to be false I'm not lying...I'm just wrong.

For example, because I'm partially color blind I may tell you that the boat is gray...when it fact it is green!

I truly believe it's green, but because I'm color blind to subtle shades of green and gray there are times and lighting conditions when I can't discern the truth that the boat is actually green.

I'm wrong, but I'm not guilty of lying because I had no intention of misrepresenting the facts.

People are mistaken about the facts all the time, but that doesn't make them liars.

Back to God's righteousness...

When the Bible tells us that God is righteous it includes the idea that He cannot lie, but more specifically it means that...

...He has never been wrong about anything, at any time or anywhere.

He will never be wrong about the color of the boat, about human nature, the origin of Man, gender, or anything else.

Therefore, we can confidently build our lives upon God's instructions for life and godliness that He has provided in the Bible.

That's because the attribute of His righteousness tells us that He will never lead us down a wrong path, will never give us bad advice about life, nor will He be unfaithful to do what is right for us.

That's the truth echoed in David's famous Psalm 23, where he wrote that God...

“...leads me in the paths of righteousness.”

Vs. 3b

Not the paths of deception, or the way of error, nor the highway to Hell!

Therefore, we can be sure that if we follow closely behind the Good Shepherd...

...He will faithfully lead us through the various seasons of life and ultimately to the eternal pastures of Heaven.

Because God is righteous and can never be wrong.

- 2) Because God is righteous, there is no hint of hypocrisy in Him

When I think about a hypocrite, I might describe that person this way...

“She doesn’t walk the talk.”

What I mean is that the hypocrite is a person who claims to hold to some standard of integrity, or code of conduct, but in reality, they don’t actually live up to what they claim to believe.

- Ex. The Pharisees

Jesus repeatedly called them out for their hypocrisy because while they claimed to be serious about their faith and love for God...

They were continually scheming for ways to work around obedience to God’s law...

...so that they would appear to be keeping the the Law but were in reality breaking the spirit of the Law as God intended for their own sinful desires.

But with God everything He says and does is perfect harmony with His nature...

There is and never will be a contradiction between what God says He is, and what God actually is, says and does.

He will always conform with His own perfect nature.

Or we might say that God is in private what He is in public...always and forever because His righteousness works out in every attribute of His being.

3) God's righteousness is eternal

Speaking through the prophet Isaiah God said...

“But My righteousness will be forever...”

Isaiah 51:8

Think about it, because God is eternal and unchanging it makes sense that the attribute of His righteous will endure forever.

He has always been righteous, He is presently righteous, and He will always be righteous.

How unlike everyone and everything else in our experience! I'm sure that you can think of someone who started out right...

...but over time faded or changed to become an unrighteous person.

Ap. Many of the people I have served with over the last 50 years

Many started well, were zealous for the Lord, faithful in their devotion and service...

...yet today no longer follow Jesus.

Ex. King Solomon

As a young man he exhibited such great humility that God blessed him more than any other king in Israel's history.

Yet, at the end of his life Solomon was guilty of breaking all three specific prohibitions that God laid upon the kings of Israel as recorded in Deuteronomy 17:15-17...

...not to multiply horses, wives or riches.

Solomon's many sins brought division to the kingdom after his death and great hardship upon God's people...

...but because God's righteousness is eternal, we can rest in the knowledge that the Kingdom He has promised to us will never be divided and will be everything that He has promised it would be, because His righteousness is eternal.

The Blessings & Benefits because God is Righteous

√ Blessings & Benefits

We've already seen some blessings and benefits of God's righteousness in our study this morning that flow from the description and implications of right-on-ness. But let me leave you with one more that you may not have considered.

1) Because God is righteous, every trial will be for our benefit

We've already established that the attribute of God's righteousness means that His decisions—including the ones He makes for our lives are always right, and never wrong.

Therefore, we can be sure that whatever trials and tribulations God allows to crash into our lives will always produce good and will be a benefit to us and others.

Ex. Joseph

God chose to allow Joseph to be...

Sold into slavery.

Falsely accused and imprisoned.

Mistreated.

And because God is righteous all of those difficulties were designed to fashion Joseph into the gracious man that he would become who could be trusted with great power.

Ap. Our lives

That means that like Joseph you and I will one day be able to look back at the difficult times in our lives and say to our persecutors and the haters in life:

“You meant it for evil, but God meant it for good...”

Genesis 50:20

How can, we be sure? Because that wasn't only Joseph's experience, but it is the promise that God has made to every believer, as Paul wrote...

“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.”

That's not just some idealistic hope printed on a Hallmark card, or a plaque from Hobby Lobby, that's a promise that God's righteousness guarantees to us!

Because His righteousness means that He will always choose what is right and good for our lives...

...and a path that will produce the greatest benefit for us and others.

That truth should give us hope and confidence to face the challenges, and difficult times in life.

Close

√ God is Righteous

While people in life will let us down, our parents, our spouse, friends, and other believers even if we can't see it now we can be sure that in the end we'll look back and testify that God always did right by us because...

...He is never mistaken, never contradicts the facts, is perfect in the implementation of justice, cannot ever be wrong, and will always lead you on paths of goodness and mercy because God is righteous!