

RIGHTEOUSNESS #1343 *Prov. 21:21; He who pursues righteousness and loyalty finds life, righteousness, and honor.*

The words “righteous” and “righteousness” are found much more in biblical language than in everyday language. Both words, however, are concerned with everyday matters, and for these reasons some modern versions of the Bible prefer to use such words as ‘right,’ ‘fair,’ ‘just,’ and ‘honest.’ This may be because we have, in our society, almost abused and reduced the word “righteous” in our everyday language to a point of being a slanderous statement. But, a righteous person is one who, among other things, does right or is in the right.

Biblical righteousness is the conformity to the claims of higher authority and stands in opposition to lawlessness. In the OT as well as the NT it is the state that is commanded by God and standing the test of His judgment, **2 Cor. 3:9; for if the ministry of condemnation has glory, much more does the ministry of righteousness abound in glory. 2Cor. 6:14; Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? Eph. 4:24; and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.** As we examine the verse in Eph. 4:24 we can see that the “new self” that has been created in us after our conversion, should show the evidence of having the likeness of God, because the “new self” has been created in God’s righteousness and the holiness of His truth, so let’s take a closer look at this verse: *So, as one being born again, or as a new creature in God, we should assume a better character like that of a person that has been renewed and changed from evil to good by the Spirit of God, which has, according to God, been regenerated in conformity to all that God commands or appoints and in the keeping of His ordinances which denotes the spirit and conduct of one who is joined in fellowship with the love of truth both in words and conduct.* In the teachings of Christ we learn that at the time of our conversion we put away our old man which grows corrupt through deceitful lusts. The old man means all that a person was before his conversion, i.e., all that he was as a child of Adam or a son of Satan. It is corrupted as a result of giving in to deceitful evil cravings which are pleasant and promising in anticipation but hideous and disappointing in retrospect.

As far as his position in Christ is concerned, the believer’s old man was crucified and buried with Christ. In practice, the believer should reckon it (or count it as) to be dead. Here Paul is emphasizing the positional side of the truth—we have put off the old man once for all. We are also renewed in the spirit of our mind. This change points to a complete about face in our thinking, a change from mental impurity to holiness. The Spirit of God influences the thought process to reason from God’s standpoint, not that of an unsaved person. We have now put on the new man, or as we could put it as Jesus Christ put it, we are born again. The new

man is what a believer is in Christ. He is a new creation in which all things old have passed away and all things have become as new.

This kind of man is created in Christ-likeness. And it manifests itself in true righteousness and holiness. Righteousness, meaning, that state which is commanded by God and standing the test of His judgment. Since God Himself is the standard for all believers, the righteousness of God means the righteousness that belongs to God or to oneself from God, or God-like righteousness, **Matt. 6:33; “But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you.” James 1:20; for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God.** The verse in Matthew 6:33 implies that God not only gives us a promise of blessing, but also an admonition to keep things in the appropriate priority. Follow the command first, anticipate the blessing second. If we expect to be blessed by God we must first seek His kingdom and His righteousness. Let’s look more deeply into these words to grasp the full meaning of His teaching: *Also if you should especially and continuously strive after the glorious reign of the Messiah and the righteousness that belongs to God with earnestness and anxiety, then every one of your needs will be provided to you.* In this verse the Lord makes a covenant with His followers. He says, in effect, “If you will put God’s interests first in your life, I will guarantee your future needs will be met.”

Being omniscient God knows better than to bless us first and then hang around to see if we keep our side of the bargain. He is working with sinners who did not acquire that title by being perfectly righteous. To seek His kingdom is to desire more and more participation in the rule of the Father’s grace in Christ, enjoying more and more the blessings of that rule of grace which eventually becomes a rule of glory. Only the righteous participate in the kingdom, so all who are seeking the kingdom are at the same time seeking after His righteousness. Seeking after His righteousness and His kingdom keeps what we are seeking to enjoy appropriate. If we seek after His kingdom and His righteousness we will not be seeking after the same things that the non-believers seek after, that is, the appetites of the flesh which go beyond sexual sins. Thus righteousness, in general, is God’s uprightness or standard, without reference to any particular form of its manifestation, to which man is expected to conform.

The righteousness of God is the claim which God has upon man. In order for man to recognize and fully submit to that claim of God upon his life, he must receive God as He offers Himself and His righteousness to him as a gift, **Rom. 5:17; For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.** This verse can be intellectually challenging at first take, so let’s take it apart and amplify it so that it can better serve our desire to seek Him and His righteousness: *Therefore, there is no doubt that through the work of one (Adam), the antithesis of righteousness was accomplished, that is rebellion*

toward God's authority, which put into place the inability of man to exercise the right of being a child toward God as one's legitimate Father, which had the effect of causing eternal spiritual separation from God, and the predominance in our life of the sin by this one person, (Adam); comparatively, though, much more was granted to those in this condition who accept the extraordinary amount of divine favor exhibited in the pardon of our sins and admission to the divine kingdom and also the supernatural, gratuitous, free gift of God's own righteousness which will be the predominant effect manifesting itself in that life of bliss and glory in the kingdom of God which awaits the true disciples of Christ after the resurrection, which comes about through the work of the One and Only Jesus Christ the Messiah. This verse teaches us that it was by the single sin of Adam, and the first sin committed by him, that death had reigning power over all of mankind since that time. This is both a spiritual death and a physical death.

At first glance this may seem a little harsh or unfair to us, that is, that we should be included in the consequences of Adam's sin and made to suffer for what someone else has done. It would seem that we had no say in the matter yet we have to bear the burden and penalty of a sin committed by another. This attitude, even though I have to claim it as being mine in a certain time of my life, is very arrogant, ignorant and least of all prideful. We have proved to ourselves, the very first time that we were disobedient in any manner to any person, that we would have done the same thing that Adam did had we been given the opportunity to be the first one.

But, even greater than that, focusing of the degree of justice involved in this condition of ours or at this point in history when sin entered the world, takes away from the profound greatness and immensity of God's love that He has shown us by providing a means by which we can be freed from this consequence! Death here is represented as a powerful monarch, a mighty king and not only can this king reign in our physical lives but also in our spiritual life as well. Through God's immense love for us He provided grace to us, purely as a gift, for us to accept or deny. Denial will mean that we will continue to live this present life and our eternal existence with death reigning over us, or in other words continue on into eternity separated from God and all of His attributes. But, if we receive His abundant grace and the gift of righteousness, we will go through a regeneration process and a conversion of our heart and receive various gifts of grace that will be planted there in, including a pardoning of our sin. This is the response to our faith in the work of Jesus Christ as our only Lord and Savior.

Since this is a free gift, available to anyone who accepts it, there is no room for boasting only great reason for gracious thankfulness. Now, those of us who have accepted this free gift shall reign in spiritual and physical life and are not subject to spiritual death as the penalty for our sin, as other non-believers are subjected, and though we believers will eventually die a

physical death we will triumph over that death on our resurrection. We shall rise again to eternal life, both in duration as well as quality of life. We will now reign in spiritual life over sin, Satan and the present evil age will have no power over us. We shall metaphorically sit on thrones, wear crowns and possess the kingdom of glory forever along the side of Jesus Christ. And all of this was accomplished by One, Jesus Christ, and not on account of anything that we did or could have contributed, but as a demonstration of God's immense love for us.

Man can only accept the claims of God upon his life as he repents of his sin and he receives Christ as his Savior by faith. He thus becomes a child of God, realizing God's claims upon him by the miraculous regenerating action of the Holy Spirit, **John 1:12; But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name. Rom. 4:11-13 and he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while uncircumcised that righteousness might be reckoned to them, and the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also follow in the steps of the faith our father Abraham which he had while uncircumcised. For the promise to Abraham or to his descendants that he would be heir of the world was not through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith. Rom. 5:21; as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Rom. 6:16; Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves to obedience, you are slaves to the one you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or in obedience resulting in righteousness? Rom. 8:10; And if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness. Rom. 9:30; What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, attained righteousness, even the righteousness that is by faith? Rom. 10:6; But the righteousness based on faith speaks thus, "Do not say in your heart, who will ascend into heaven? " (That is, to bring Christ down). 2 Cor. 6:7; in the word of truth, in the power of God; by the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and the left. 2 Cor. 6:14; Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? Eph. 6:14; stand firm therefore, "having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness." 2 Pet. 1:1; to those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ.** John 1:12 comes right out and calls those who believe in His name, that is, in the reputation of our Lord Jesus Christ, God's children, so let's take a closer look at this verse and see if we can uncover what value there is in being child of God: *but on the contrary and likewise just as great a number of persons that actively received Him as their friend, to them He gave to have as their possession a relationship with Him that has the full power to have a new character as one who is the object of God's parental love and care and is one who in return yields love and reverence toward Him, even those persons who have faith and trust in all His being, attributes, relations and manifestations of Jesus Christ Himself.* So now God offers Himself to all mankind in Jesus

Christ who is the revelation of God in human form, again and to those who choose to receive Him, He gives the right or authority to become children of God.

This verse tells us clearly how we can become children of God. It is not by good works, not by church membership, not by trying to do one's best—but by receiving Him, by believing in His name. The Greek word for "name" I believe could be better translated as *character and authority*. We trust in and rely on the veracity of His authority and character to not only be truthful, but to make the truth perceivable. Once again it is important to come to the realization that the word for "believe" means to "trust in, have faith in and rely on fully in every aspect of your life." If we believe in the character and authority of Jesus Christ we will embrace everything that He stands for, without exception! We can't pick and chose which truths we are going to trust in or believe on because they are more beneficial to our current life, then leave the rest because they are just too hard to follow or they will interfere with our social life. We can't add Him to our daily schedule or routine; our daily schedule should be full of giving Him the praise and glory that He deserves; we add the other earthly things in our life to *that* full schedule. We must make His whole being, all of His attributes, our relationship with Him and His manifestations, what we rely on and have faith in. Believing in His character and authority means that we trust in and rely on the truth that He has the power to save us from the condemnation of our sin and can give us life everlasting through His justification of us.

In the NT, righteousness is sometimes used more comprehensively to denote the equity or uprightness of God in general. Through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, God imputes His righteousness to those who receive Christ. The word "impute" is defined Biblically as *to take into account or consideration*. So when God imputes His righteousness to those who receive His Son we could say that He takes into consideration the righteousness or potential righteousness that He sees in believers, which is the same righteousness that He sees in His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Those who having attained this righteousness through faith, become His friends, He treats justly, as one would his friends. He does, however, discriminate against those who prefer to remain His enemy by not believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, but this is not His choice; He would rather that *all* men choose to be His friend. Therefore the exercise of His justice is toward those who appropriated His righteousness by faith as well as those who rejected it by rejecting the Lord Jesus Christ, ***John 3:18; "He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."***

When we enter into this world through our natural birth, we enter as sinners. Sin must be judged, that is, condemned. God's kingdom cannot tolerate any sort of sin. So when we reach the age of accountability and the Holy Spirit convicts us of our sin and God reveals Himself to us as our Redeemer, we have the opportunity to repent of the sin that we are judged

as guilty. If we, as ones judged to be a sinner, do not take the opportunity to repent of our sins and choose not to believe in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ we don't have to go through a judgment for that sin because that sin and all sin has already judged us to be guilty. Let's break this verse down and amplify it to get a better understanding of what Christ is teaching us: *the one who has faith in and trusts in Jesus Christ as being sent from God and acting under His authority, is not in a position to be condemned for his sin; however the one who does not have faith in and trust in Jesus Christ as having been sent to us from God and acts under the authority of the Father has already been condemned, because he has not had faith in nor trusted in the character and authority of Jesus Christ as One acting under the authority of God as His unique only one of a kind Son.* All of mankind is divided into two classes; either they are believers or non-believers. Our eternal destiny is determined by our attitude toward and the value we place on the Son of God. The one who puts his trust in the Savior is not condemned, but the one who does not trust in Him is condemned already because our salvation can come only through the Savior. So if we do not put our trust in the Savior the only option left is to be condemned. The Lord Jesus has finished the work already, and now it is up to each individual to decide whether he will accept His work or reject His work. It would be a terrible thing to reject such a gift of love. If a man will not believe on the Lord Jesus, God can do nothing else but condemn him.

Perfect righteousness is found in God alone. He is perfect in goodness and has a perfect knowledge of what is right and what is wrong, ***Deut. 32:4; The Rock! His work is perfect, for all His ways are just; a God of faithfulness and without injustice, righteous and upright is He. Ps. 145:17; The Lord is righteous in all of His ways and kind in all of His deeds. Isa. 45:21; Declare and set forth your case; indeed let them consult together. Who has announced this from old? Who has long since declared it? Is it not I the Lord? And there is no other God beside Me, a righteous God and Savior; There is none except Me. Rom. 9:14; What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be! Heb. 6:18; in order that by two unchangeable things, (the unchangeableness of His purpose and His oath), in which it is impossible for God to lie, we may have strong encouragement, we who have fled for refuge in laying hold of the hope set before us.*** The verse in Deut. 32:4 pretty much sums it all up, so let's amplify this verse to get its full meaning and to contribute to the context of this teaching: *He is our Rock, His work in His dealings with people is blameless and righteous, because the entirety of His pathways of life are just and righteous; a mighty and holy God of truth and faithfulness and One that does not have any part of unrighteousness; just and right is He.* The description of God as being a Rock is placed first absolutely to give it greater prominence. God is called "the Rock" as the unchangeable refuge, who grants a firm defense and secure resort to His people, by virtue of His unchangeableness or impregnable firmness; He cannot and will not change, nor does He have any reason to change. He is the refuge for sensible sinners to flee to for shelter and safety from His wrath and judgment. He is the Rock that the church of God and every believer are built on and where they dwell.

In Genesis 49:24 He is called “the Stone of Israel” whom Jacob prophesied about. He is the Rock of ages that will endure forever as the Savior of His people and the foundation of their faith and hope. This descriptive characterization is how God desired for the people of the Mosaic age to the present to see Him. He is perfect, that is blameless, without fault or blemish, in everything that He does. The ways in which He chooses to govern the world are right. As the Rock He is a God of faithfulness, men can rely on Him and trust that He will get them through any storm of life. His nature is such that He cannot be crooked or false, He can only be truthful and honest.

The law is perfectly fulfilled through Him, justice is fully satisfied, and a perfect righteousness is brought about. A complete pardon was procured for sinners, perfect peace with God was made, full atonement for sins was obtained and the whole work was finished. This work was done so perfectly that there was nothing left wanting or that could be added to it, nor can it be unraveled or undone again. Likewise the work of building His church on this Rock is being carried on and will also be perfected when all of the elect of God, all of those who were given to Christ and redeemed by His blood shall be called by His grace and gathered in.

When the last of the chosen ones, the redeemed of the Lamb, are called, Christ shall deliver up the kingdom to the Father complete, and God shall be all in all, and His church and His people will be in a perfect state for all eternity. All of the methods that He took or used while He walked the earth, were perfectly just and were all formed according to the counsel of the Father. They were planned with the greatest of wisdom, founded in His righteous nature and according to His Father’s will. He brought about the salvation of His people in perfect consistence with the justice and holiness of God and to the honor of them and His holy law. The ways in which He presented His people to walk in, and in which He leads them, are ways of **truth, righteousness, and holiness**. All of the truths and promises of Scripture have been fulfilled in Him and He is the sum and substance of all truths and doctrines because they all come from Him and are centered on Him. He is the object, author and finisher of our faith. There cannot be any iniquity found in Him, in His nature, in His heart, in His lips, nor in His life and He never committed any iniquities.

Since God created man in His image, man also has a sense of His righteousness. If people are characterized by proper behavior and moral uprightness, the Bible may speak of them as being righteous, ***Gen. 7:1; the Lord said to Noah, “enter the ark, you and all your household; for you alone have I seen to be righteous before Me in this time. Ps. 15:2; He who walks with integrity, and works righteousness, and speaks truth in his heart. Prov. 12:3-10;*** (An excellent contrast between righteousness and wickedness) ***A man will not be established by wickedness, but the root of the righteous will not be moved. An excellent wife is the crown of her husband, but she who shames him is as rottenness in his bones. The thoughts of the***

righteous are just, but the counsels of the wicked are deceitful. The words of the wicked lie in wait for blood, but the mouth of the upright will deliver them. The wicked are overthrown and are no more, but the house of the righteous will stand. A man will be praised according to his insight, but one of perverse mind will be despised. Better is he who is lightly esteemed and has a servant, than he who honors himself and lacks bread. A righteous man has regard for the life of his beast, but the compassion of the wicked is cruel. Luke 1:6; and they were both righteous in the sight of God, walking blamelessly in all of the commandments and requirements of the Lord. 2 Cor. 9:9-10; as it is written "He scattered abroad, He gave to the poor, His righteousness abides forever." Now He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. Let's take a deeper look at verse at Psalm 15:2, this verse is a response to verse 1 which asks the question of **"Who may abide in Thy tent?" who may dwell on Thy holy hill?** *The person whose way of life is marked by blamelessness and follow through and practices a right relationship with God and His standards for living, and also promises to be faithful and truthful in his inner disposition.* In this Psalm David is describing the conditions in which we can have access to God. In verse 2 the question is directed toward God but it is not a direct answer from God, but it is David reading God's heart and answers it himself while in prayer.

Not everyone who says "Lord, Lord" will enjoy the rights of friendship with Him but only those who do the will of God, **Matt. 7:21; not everyone who says to Me Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of the Father who is in heaven.** In this case we must have an inward state of the heart towards God which will be evidenced in our performing our duties toward men as written in His law and is a direct result and evidence of our faith. A person who practices righteousness is also characterized by his outward walk and action which flows from his inward nature of speaking truth in his heart, not with merely his heart, i.e.; with his mouth. What we see in this man is not a man that is not entirely sinless but characteristics of a righteous man, a person who walks a spotless walk to the fullness of his capacity, conduct as ordered by God's will, and a truth loving mode of thought. Spiritual maturity and uprightness often signify sincerity. **John 1:47; Jesus saw Nathanael coming to Him and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile.** The phrase *"in whom there is not guile"* fits such a person. One who's faith is genuine, whose love is not concealed, whose hope is without hypocrisy and whose conduct is not filled with fraud and deceit. This person walks according to the truth of the gospel and by faith on Christ and in Christ, as he has received Him. A person such as this is fit to be a member of Christ's church. He makes a hearty confession of Christ before men and speaks according to his enlightenment of the Scriptures and whenever he speaks in a common conversation he speaks the truth from his heart. He does not speak with a double heart, saying one thing with his mouth while thinking another in his heart. Such a person is not fit to dwell in a private house, or to be in a civil society, much less is he a proper person to be in the abode of God.

This righteousness is not a moral perfection that people achieve by their own efforts, but it is with a right relationship with God that people enter into through faith and obedience, ***Isa. 50:9; Behold, the Lord God helps me; who is he who condemns me? Behold they will all wear out like a garment; the moth will eat them. Hab. 2:4 Behold as far as the proud one, his soul is not right within him, but the righteous will live by his faith. Rom. 3:4-5; May it never be! Rather, let God be found true, though every man be found a liar, as it is written, "That Thou mightest be justified in Thy words and mightiest prevail when Thou art judged. But if our unrighteousness demonstrates the righteousness of God, what shall we say? The God who inflicts wrath is not unrighteous, is He? (I m speaking in human terms). Rom. 9:31-32; but Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness, did not arrive at that law. Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as though it were by (or out of) works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone. Rom. 10:3-4; For not knowing about God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. Gal. 3:11-12; Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, the righteous man shall live by faith. However, the Law is not of faith; on the contrary, He who practices them shall live by them.***

Let's take a deeper look at the verse in Galatians verses 3:11-12 and examine this verse as if we were looking through a magnifying glass to absorb all that Paul wants to teach us: *However, not one person is declared just before God in the Mosaic code in the presence of God it is plain to see; because, only he who lives by faith in Christ's death as the ground for justification before God shall be blessed (as quoted by Habakkuk 2:4). Now, the Mosaic code was not originated from faith in Christ's death as the grounds for justification before God is plain for everyone to know; but, the righteous were those whose conduct was made conformable to God and who justification was made possible through their faith in the promised Redeemer, these persons shall be admitted to the bliss and privileges of the Redeemer's kingdom by their saving faith. And the Mosaic code is not based on and has no connection to saving faith; on the contrary the individual who continues to do what's written in the code shall live and prosper in the code, as quoted in Lev. 18:5.* It should not come as a surprise to us that we cannot be declared righteous merely by obedience to a law. Many people obey laws that in their heart they don't believe are righteous laws and even if they were it still would not be sufficient to save them. They obey them to escape the consequences and penalties of the law. Paul teaches us the truth that some laws are made for convenience rather than righteousness or according to how God would have us live. An example of this is the freedom we have in the law to murder unborn babies. As Paul tells us this would not be a law, even when man makes it legal, "justified before God." Paul quotes Habakkuk to show that God has always justified men by faith and not by law. The law was created to show the depravity of man, not to rescue him. This quotation in the original Greek says, *"The just (or righteous) by faith shall live."* In other words, those who have been reckoned righteous by faith, not by works, shall have eternal life. The "justified by faith

ones” shall live. The law made by men does not ask men to believe in being justified by the faith in Christ’s death as the grounds for justification. It does not even ask men to try to keep the commandments. It calls for strict, complete, and perfect obedience, as was so clearly taught in Leviticus. It is contrary to the principle of faith. The Law tells us “to do and live” faith says “believe and live.” Paul’s argument then is this: the just person shall live by faith. A person under the law does not live by faith. Therefore, he is not just before God. When Paul says: “The man who does them shall live by them,” he is stating a theological principle or ideal but one that is impossible to attain.

It is a righteousness that comes from a right relationship with God that pleases God and gives us confidence in His help ***Ps. 45:7-8; Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated wickedness; therefore God, Thy God, has anointed Thee with the oil of joy above Thy fellows. All Thy garments are fragrant with myrrh and aloes and cassia; out of ivory palaces stringed instruments have made Thee glad. Isa. 56:1; Thus says the Lord, preserve justice, and do righteousness, for My salvation is about to come and My righteousness to be revealed. 1 Pet. 3:12; For the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and His ears attended their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.*** Since we are all sinners and there is only one God, any righteousness that comes from any source other than God is going to be tainted with sin. So the only righteousness that is going to please God will be the perfect, untainted righteousness that comes from God. The only way that we can be the receptors for this righteousness is by having a right relationship with God. Let’s look a little more deeply at ***1 Pet. 3:12: The truth is the Lord has affection and favors those who have conditioned their lives by the standard which is God’s and He listens to their petitions and for what they need, but the Lord is directed against being kind and favorable those that do evil and hurtful things.*** The Lord looks with approval on those who act righteously. He is attentive to their prayers. The people that the Lord is referring to, that He favors, are the ones that are righteous, not merely in the sight of men, but as He sees the heart of man. Not by their works, but in how they esteem God, through the imputation of righteousness of His Son unto them. And, this is why He loves this righteousness and is well-pleased with it, in that His law is magnified and made honorable through it. Therefore His countenance beholds with pleasure and delights in those righteous ones who are clothed with it. His attributes of omniscience, love, care, and protection, are always upon them watching over them. He sees every injury done to them and in His own time and way will do them justice.

This is why we should not take vengeance ourselves. He already has a plan that is a perfect plan of execution of justice for those He considers our enemy. We should rejoice in this because that means that when it is our turn to receive the consequence of His justice we know that it will also be just for us and according to what we truly deserve, discounting His grace and mercy that we do not deserve but receive as a gift. It gives us comfort to know that He is a God

of hearing prayer and His righteous ones have His ear. In His perfect timing He will respond to our prayer. Actually He responds immediately to our prayer by setting into motion those things that must occur for a righteous response or a response that will be evidenced by our eyes. For those who choose not to live by His standard of righteousness what they have to look forward to is dreadful and intolerable and the consequence of it is everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power.

In Matt. 5:20, the Lord Jesus Christ differentiated between what He meant by righteousness and what the Pharisees meant by it. **Matt. 5:20; “For I say to you, that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven.”** At first glance this verse can be a little confusing, so let’s take this verse apart to get a deeper understanding: *Also I put forth this truth to you concerning your kind of obedience to the law, except that your obedience does in a comparative sense exceed in importance the obedience of the members of the Sanhedrin, that is, in respect to following the written law, you shall never, and by no means ever come into the condition within your heart of knowing the eternal joy of the Lord.* Our Lord doesn’t really care about what we show in the way of obedience to His moral code as much as what’s going on in the inside of us while we are being obedient. If we are begrudgingly obedient He wants no part of that; this is what the scribes and the Pharisees gave Him. Or if our righteousness is only available on certain days of the week, while the other days are filled with unrighteousness, He’s not impressed! That’s why, in the expanded version of this verse it says that He wants more than show, He wants our heart. If our heart is right His righteousness will become our righteousness. The popular Jewish idea of righteousness grew out of the then to the current concept of God and of His revelation. Righteousness was thought of as a consistent obedience to the Commandments, and the nature of divine commands was viewed quite superficially. The rich young man who came to Jesus asking what he should do to inherit eternal life is an illustration of the view that the Jews took of the OT commandments. This young man said that he had kept them all. His concept evidently was that to refrain from the outward sins which they forbade, i.e., lying, stealing, Sabbath-breaking and the like, was to keep the commandments. Only a superficial concept of the importance and obedience to the commandments could have permitted him to make the claim that he had kept them all from his youth. No matter what he thought in his heart if his sin hadn’t manifested itself to become visible to others, than he could still maintain his position of being righteous.

It would kind of be like the old popular saying going around that “you can do whatever you like because it is only wrong if you get caught.” As long as nobody sees your unrighteousness that is in your heart you can claim to be righteous, of course the hypocrisy in this is that God sees and knows everything.

Among the Jews the scribes and Pharisees were regarded as those who most perfectly and completely taught and lived up to the will of God as embodied in the OT. The people looked up to them as being the very greatest in the kingdom, and they held the same high estimate of themselves. These estimates of course were totally false, as Jesus would show them in His Sermon on the Mount. The scribes and Pharisees were the opposite of models for the disciples in meeting the will of God.

Here Jesus lumps the two entities of Jewish culture together as being one. The two are regarded as one body to make a point that, no matter what office they held, they both failed in their own attempts at righteousness. And if you use the example of the scribes and Pharisees to measure your righteousness, then you too will be barred from His kingdom. This point is brought to light in, **Luke 16:15; And He said to them, "You are those who justify yourselves in the sight of (or, before) me, but God knows your hearts; for that which is highly (or, high) esteemed among men is detestable in the sight of (or, before) God."** The formal, outward righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees was adjudged righteousness by these men themselves but before the heavenly Judge it was the very opposite of genuine righteousness. No fulfillment of the law, which even the best of Christ's disciples may attain, will be enough to admit them into the kingdom of God. The kingdom is not acquired by good works; this is what God would have us to do: besides all of the good we are able to do as a result of our faith, we are to humble ourselves before God and say; "Dear Lord, I am a poor sinner, be gracious to me and judge me not according to my works but according to Your grace and mercy, which You have promised and prepared in Christ." Without Christ's redemptive fulfillment we shall never surpass the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees which Christ rejects.

The same faulty notion of the real moral requirements of the law lay at the root of the proud self-righteousness of the Pharisees. They were able to think themselves righteous only because they measured themselves by an imperfect standard, an inadequate idea of the high demands which the law made upon the inner life. Righteousness was thus placed too much in externals and too little in the state of the heart. It exaggerated the ritual features of religion and overlooked its deeper spiritual requirements upon conduct and life. According to the Lord Jesus, a correct action had to overflow from the love of the heart.

Paul asks this rhetorical question: **Rom. 3:3-5; "What then? If some did not believe, their unbelief did not nullify the faithfulness of God, will it? May it never be! Rather let God be found true, though every man be found a liar, as it is written, 'that thou mightest be justified in Thy words, and mightest prevail when thou art judged'. "But if our righteousness demonstrates the righteousness of God, what shall we say?"** The context shows that the "righteousness of God here means essentially the same as the faithfulness or truthfulness of

God (refer to verses 3&4). God's righteousness is His faithfulness to His own nature and promises.

In **Rom. 3:25, 26**, whom God displayed publically as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, that he might be just and the Justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus Christ. Paul speaks of the outward manifestation of His righteousness, which God the Father has made in the death of Christ and which should prevent men from supposing that because God treated leniently the sins of men in past times, He is indifferent to sin or disregards it. Sometimes when we read the book of Romans, because Paul challenges our intellect at times, it takes a little more effort to understand what Paul is teaching us, so let's take this verse apart and amplify it to try to understand it better: *Christ Jesus, whom God had in His design of salvation before hand to set before our eyes as being a perfect sacrifice of blood that represented the life He gave as an atoning for a wrong done by us, which, by the way, was proceeded by faith of what the Father wanted Him to do. This was to show us the result of His doing what was required by the Father, for in the suffering of God He put aside the deeds of our disobedience without punishment that were previously committed; for this manifestation, I say, of the Father, required Him to do this at that present time that was definitely marked out, so that He might act conformably to justice and right without any deficiency or failure and the One who bestows justification upon men through Jesus Christ, through the instrumentation of faith in Him.*

This is still a little difficult to follow so let's talk about these verses. God sent forth His Son as propitiation. Propitiation is a means by which justice is satisfied, God's wrath is averted, and mercy can be shown on the basis of an acceptable sacrifice. Three times in the NT Christ is spoken of as propitiation. Here in Romans 3:25 we learn that those who put their faith in Christ find mercy by virtue His shed blood. In **1 John 2:2; and he Himself is the propitiation for our sins; (or, satisfaction), and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.** Christ is described as the propitiation for our sins, and those of the whole world. His work is sufficient for the whole world but is only effective for those who put their trust in Him. Finally, in **1 John 4:10; In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins,** God's love was manifested in sending His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. **Luke 18:13; But the tax-gatherer, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast saying, God, be merciful to me, the sinner!** The prayer for the tax-gatherer was literally "God be propitious to me the sinner." He was asking God to show mercy to him by not requiring him to pay the penalty of his aggravated guilt. The word "propitiation" also occurs in Hebrews 2:17: **therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in**

things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. Here the expression “to make propitiation” means to put away by paying the penalty.

The OT equivalent of the word propitiation is “mercy seat.” The mercy seat was the lid of the ark. On the Day of Atonement the high priest sprinkled the mercy seat with the blood of a sacrificial victim. By this means sins of the high priest and of the people were atoned for or covered. When Christ made propitiation for our sins, He went much further. He not only covered them but did away with them completely. Now Paul tells us in the verse of Rom. 3:25 that God sent Christ forth as propitiation by His blood, through faith. We are not told to put our faith in His blood; Christ Himself is the object of our faith. It is only a resurrected and living Jesus Christ who can save. He is the propitiation. Faith in Him is the condition by which we avail ourselves of propitiation. His blood is the price that was paid.

The finished work of Christ declares God’s righteousness for the remission of sins that are past. This refers to sins committed before the death of Christ. From Adam to Christ, God saved those who put their faith in Him on the basis of whatever revelation He gave them. Abraham, for example, believed God, and it was reckoned to him for righteousness **Gen. 15:6; then he believed in the Lord; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.** But how could God do this righteously? A sinless substitute had not been slain. The blood of a perfect sacrifice had not been shed. In a word, Christ had not died. The debt had not been paid. God’s righteous claims had not been met. How then could God save believing sinners in the OT period? The answer is that although Christ had not died yet, God knew that He would die, and He saved men on the basis of the still future work of Christ.

Even if the OT saints didn’t know about Calvary, God knew about it, and put all of the value of Christ’s work to their account when they believed God. In a very real sense, OT believers were saved on credit. They were saved on the basis of a price still to be paid. They looked forward to Calvary; we look back to it. That is what Paul means when he says that the propitiation of Christ declares God’s righteousness because He had passed over the sins that were previously committed. He is not speaking, as some may think, of sins that an individual person has committed before his conversion. This might suggest that the work of Christ took care of sins before the new birth, but that a man is on his own after that. No, he is dealing with the seeming leniency of God in apparently overlooking the sins of those who were saved before the cross.

It might seem that God excused those sins or pretended not to see them. Not so, says Paul. The Lord knew that Christ would make full expiation (pay the penalty in full), and so He saved men on that basis. So the OT period was a time of the forbearance (temporary suspension of His wrath) of God. Then in the fullness of time He sent His Son to be the Sin-

bearer. When the Lord Jesus took our sins upon Himself, God unleashed the full fury of His righteous, His holy wrath on His Son.

Christ in essence went to hell and spent three days there for the punishment of our sins that should send us to hell, save for His mercy and grace. Now, the death of Christ declares God's righteousness. God is just because He required the full payment of the penalty of sin. And He can justify the ungodly without condoning their sin or compromising His own righteousness because a perfect substitute has died and risen again.

God's leniency in the past is demonstrated by the use of the word which has been incorrectly translated as "remission" of sin, but it actually should be translated as "tolerance," the passing by of sins. Here, then, the righteousness of God, that reaction of His nature against sin, which must find expression in condemnation of it. Righteousness, in this sense, expresses itself in divine wrath, which is the reaction of God's holy nature against sin.

With Paul, righteousness meant the state of acceptance with God into which one enters by faith. This is the meaning where Paul writes, **Rom. 1:17; For in it (the gospel) the righteousness of God is revealed by faith to faith; as it is written, "But the righteous man shall live by faith."** Another reference that could be used is **Rom. 3:21-22. But now apart from the Law (or, from Law), the righteousness God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction.** This righteousness of God is available through faith in Jesus Christ unto all that believe. Faith, in Paul's view, is a personal relationship with God mediated through Christ. It involves, by its very nature, spiritual union with God, obedience to His will, and increasing likeness of our character to His. There is thus a close connection between the righteous character of God and the righteous status which He reckons (counts) as belonging to believers.

There are two distinct words in the theology of Paul. These are "righteousness, or the inherent righteousness of God, the nature and quality of His character and "justification" or the act of justification, God making a believer what he is, righteous. To justify, in the language of Paul means to regard and treat one as righteous, i.e., to declare one accepted by God. This judgment of justification God pronounces upon a condition of faith. The fact or truth that faith is reckoned (counted or moving toward) for righteousness in **Rom. 4:3, 5, 6, 9, 11, 22** is actually a periphrasis (using lot's of words when one would due) for "to justify" to declare righteous upon condition of faith, meaning the same as to reckon faith for righteousness. **Rom. 4:3; for what does the Scripture say? "And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness." Rom. 4:5,6; But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned as righteousness, just as David also speaks of the blessing upon the man to whom God reckons righteousness apart from works. Rom. 4:9; Is**

this blessing then (the blessing of David) upon the circumcised or upon the uncircumcised also? For we say "Faith was reckoned to Abraham as righteousness." Rom. 4:11; and he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all who believe without being circumcised, that righteousness might be reckoned to them. Rom. 4:22; Therefore also "It was reckoned to him as righteousness." All this talk about circumcision and un-circumcision and what does being circumcised have to do with faith can be kind of confusing if we don't understand all of the nuances of what we are reading, so let's take verse 11 of Romans 4 and break it apart piece by piece to get a better understanding of Paul's teaching: *In addition Abraham partook of the designating sign, that is, the sign of the cutting off of his foreskin as a visible pledge of righteousness that he obtained upon the condition of his faithfulness to God that he had while his foreskin remained in place, he did this so that he had the capacity to be the patriarch or model for everyone who professes to believe in the character and declarations of God creating a complete dependence upon the Lord and not independence from Him, as it was while their foreskin remained, so now God could claim them as being justified and His righteousness can be counted towards them also.* Thus faith is the necessary condition of a gracious salvation; **we must always remember this truth.** *Salvation is a free gift; faith is a humble and thankful acceptance.*

Even though we have expanded this verse in Romans it can still be a little difficult to understand so this next dissertation is an attempt to explain all of the implications of circumcision. Circumcision was a minor surgical operation carried out on baby boys to remove the foreskin from the penis. It was practiced among various Near Eastern peoples and had certain health benefits but for the Israelites it had, in addition, a special religious significance. The first person that God *commanded* to be circumcised was Abraham. God made a covenant with Abraham to be his God, to give him a multitude of descendants who would be His special people. God's commandment of circumcision was a visible sign of that covenant; much like a witnessed signature would be today. As a permanent mark in the body, circumcision symbolized the permanency of God's covenant with His people.

Because of its significance for personal cleanliness, it symbolized also the purity that the covenant demanded of them. God required that all future generations of Abraham be circumcised if they wanted to be His people and a part of this covenant. Abraham believed God's promises and acted upon His commands. His circumcision sealed his faith and demonstrated his obedience.

In Paul's teaching we learn that some of the Jews considered themselves a part of the covenant without fulfilling all that was required of them, they forgot about the obedience part and assumed a distinction as God's people strictly based on their circumcision. But Paul teaches

us that an un-circumcised person that is obedient to God is more acceptable to Him than a disobedient circumcised person.

Circumcision has never been a requirement for salvation. The law was never a means of salvation and neither was circumcision. Abraham and everyone else are saved on the basis of their faith, and in the case of Abraham he was saved before there was a law and before he was circumcised. His circumcision was merely an outward sign of his inward faith. A true Jew, that is, a true person who allows his life to be orchestrated by God, are those who have received an inward cleansing from sin. God's covenant with Abraham reached its fulfillment in Jesus Christ. Now that Christ has come the legal requirements of the former covenant no longer apply. Even more importantly if a person now tries to win God's favor by keeping those legal requirements, he cannot be saved while in this mindset. Our spiritual circumcision of today is no longer physical. It is a circumcision of the inner person, the cleansing from sin that comes through Jesus Christ. These people are the true people of God, the elect who are called the "true circumcision."

This justification, however, is a part of a salvation which consists of not merely a legal transaction between God and man. It involves also a spiritual renewal for man. Salvation gives not only the gift of righteousness which is the basis of justification, but it also imparts a vital righteousness through the Holy Spirit, a new principle of life, ***John 16: 8; And He (the Holy Spirit), when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin, and righteousness, and judgment.***

Man does not simply receive the righteousness of God, but he is made righteous and acquires the nature of God. ***Rom. 5:21; as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. 2 Pet. 1:4; For by (or through) these He granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, in order that by them you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.*** Whenever I hear of a promise from God it makes me pause and take time to fully understand what the promise entails and what my part is in the promise, so let's amplify this verse in 2Pet. 1:4, so we can better understand it: *Through these things faith, righteousness, grace, peace, knowledge, glory and virtue, God has made available to us an undeserved gift of His desirable and incomparable assurance of everything pertaining to eternal life, in order that by them you might become a partner in His divine condition, having fled from the wasting away in a moral or spiritual sense, that is, while being in the state of being a part of this present evil age arising from the influence of a worldly spirit and is one of dire moral corruption by trying to satisfy the carnal appetites.* Included in "all things," which God's power has given to us to promote a life of holiness, are His exceedingly great and precious promises in His word. It has been estimated that there are at least 30,000 promises in the Bible. The pathway of life is

strewn so thickly with the promises of God that it is impossible to take one step without treading on at least one of them. The promises of God are the last of the seven precious things mentioned by Peter in his letters. These precious things are: Our faith which is more precious than gold (1 Pet. 1:7.) The blood of Christ is precious (1 Pet. 1:19). Christ, the living stone, is precious in God's sight (1 Pet. 2:4). He is precious also as the Cornerstone (1 Pet. 2:6). To all who believe, He is precious (1 Pet. 2:7). The imperishable jewel of a gentle and quiet spirit is very precious in God's sight (1 Pet. 3:4). And finally in this verse, the promises of God are precious. If we think of some of the times that we have encountered promises in the Bible we see some that relate to a life of holiness. (1) Freedom from sin's dominion (Rom. 6:14). (2) Grace that is sufficient (2 Cor. 12:9). (3) Power to obey His commands (Phil. 4:13). (4) Victory over the devil (James 4:7). (5) Escape when tempted (1 Cor. 10:13). (6) Forgiveness when we confess our sins (1 John 1:9)—and forgetfulness too (Jer. 31:34). (7) Response when we call (Ps. 50:15).

No wonder Peter says that the promises of God are precious and great. These promises enable the believer to escape the corruption that is in the world that came through man's lusts. God has promised us everything that we need to resist temptation. When passionate cravings come, we can claim the promises. They enable us to escape the world's corruption—its sexual sin, its drunkenness, its filth, its misery, its treachery, and its strife. The positive side to all of this is that by these same promises we may be partakers of the divine nature. This takes place primarily at the time of our conversion. Then as we live in the practical enjoyment of what God has promised us we become more and more conformed to His image. For instance, He has promised us that the more we think about and come to know Him the more we will become like Him, **2 Cor. 3:18; But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.** We make this promise a reality by reading the word, studying Christ as He is revealed in it, and following Him. As we do this, the Holy Spirit changes us into His likeness from one degree of glory to another. This is the miracle of regeneration—man not only is declared righteous but he has begun to be made righteous; from an enemy of God he becomes a friend of God.

In the writings of John, there is demonstrated the righteous treatment of God toward those who have been reconciled to Him through faith in Christ. God treats His own in a very special way and that can never be considered unfair. Only in one passage in John's Gospel is the word "just or righteous" applied to God. **John 17:25; O righteous Father, although the world has not known Thee, yet I have known Thee; and these have known that Thou didst send Me.** What is inherent in God's righteousness here appears to be that quality which prevents Him from passing the same judgment upon Christ's disciples which He passes upon the sinful world.

Upon this equitableness of God, the Lord Jesus Christ bases His confidence in asking that special blessing be conferred upon His disciples.

The thought is similar in **John 17:11**; where the Father is designated as holy. ***And I am no more in the world; and yet they themselves are in the world, and I come to Thee. Holy Father, and keep them in Thy name, the name which Thou hast given Me, that they may be one, even as we are.*** He is designated as the One who is absolutely good—wholly separate from all that is sinful and wrong (holy)—God is besought to guard from evil those whom He has given to His Son. In both of these cases, the righteousness or holiness of God is not conceived of as a forensic (scientific) or retributive (punishes evil) quality, but as God’s own moral self-consistency, His faithfulness to His own equity, that is, remaining constant in His attributes.

1 John 1:9; if we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 2:29; If you know that He is righteous you know that everyone also who practices righteousness is born of Him. In these verses God is described as righteous, and, in both cases, in a sense closely akin to that which we have found in the gospel. 1 John 1:9 is a very well known verse, but let’s amplify it and take it apart to make sure we get the full meaning: *If our heart is in the condition that we desire to continue to make a decision to admit to our natural inclination to sin, God is dependable in His promises and also absolutely good in pardoning us and He causes our sins to stand away from us so as not to receive the penalty which is the result of our natural inclination to sin and He is right and just to purify us completely from the pollution and guilt of our improprieties and render us righteous and transform the repentant sinner by means of His shed blood and reconcile us to God.* This verse in 1 John defines what “doing the truth” is when the truth is in us means. We shall, from this time forward, confess our sins, that is, we acknowledge and admit to our sins in our confession time with Our Lord God. Our sins are not just restricted to our conscious sins, we want to confess all of our sins; sometimes we can be so convinced and self deceived that what we are doing is not sinful until after the fact and our sins do not come to light until after the fact, that is we do not allow our sin to come to the light, so we need to remember to confess even the sins that we are not now aware.

A true believer should want to obtain remission of all of their sin and all of their sins. The one who is “faithful and righteous” refers to God. Fellowship with God starts with the confession and repentance of our sin. When we say that He is faithful we mean that He is true to His promises and this is placed first; righteousness with its legal term, as it is used here, is added to faithful and it has the connotation of a promise that when He acquits us according to His promise, God, as our Judge, is and remains righteous so we know that He will always pronounce a right judgment. The God who is light, acts as a faithful and righteous Judge when He acquits us and remits our sins for the sake of Christ, in that His sacrifice took away from us

all cause for condemnation and acquittal is the only option. Our acquittal is not an act of partiality or favoritism, because if this were the case our Judge could be charged with being unjust. But He is as righteous and just when acquitting the confessing believer for the sake of Christ's blood as when He is damning the non confessing rejecter of Christ's blood. In every case when God must come to a verdict on man He is not only giving man a verdict, but He is pronouncing a verdict on Himself as well. The correlation of the word "righteous" with the word "faithful" (or trustworthy), as well as the whole context shows that righteousness here is that quality of God which would certainly lead Him to forgive those who repent. It would be inconsistent for God—contrary both to His promises and to His nature—not to forgive the penitent and to exert upon his life the purifying influence of His grace because of His covenant promise.

When we take a look at the verse of **1 John 2:29**, the term: "righteous" has a broader meaning and designates the moral perfection of God in general as the type and ideal of all goodness in man. A similar thought, but in reverse order is presented to us in **1 John 3:7; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous**. If we know God, which means more than merely knowing of God, then we should know of His attributes and strive to reconcile our life and character to be shaped to His attributes in our own life. This is the last half of verse 3:7, but let's try to amplify the whole verse and break it down so that we can grasp the fullness of what we are saying when we say that we know God: *As your teacher I want to affectionately address and reinforce this truth to you; do not let a single person cause you to form a wrong judgment of the person that takes a course of action that is in his heart spiritually moral or is being the spiritually moral equivalent to Him being spiritually moral in His nature*. There should be no confusion on this point—a man cannot have a spiritual life and go on embracing his sin. On the other hand, a man can only practice righteousness through having fellowship with Him who in His nature is righteous. Since God is inherently righteous, those who are begotten of Him must also be righteous.

John teaches us and insists on the fact that mere intellectual possession of truth is not enough. Truth, of righteousness, is not merely something to be done, **1 John 1:6; if we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. 1 John 3:12; not as Cain, who was of the evil one, and slew his brother. And for what reason did he slay him? Because his deeds were evil, and his brother's were righteous**. John 1:6 is basically teaching us that we need to allow our conduct to follow our mouth or vice versa. If we don't we are being hypocrites. This is especially true for teachers as mentioned in James. This verse in an amplified way could read like this: *if our heart is in the condition that we are saying to one another that we are in a continual state of having access to God who dwells in absolute light and we are sharing things in common with Him while also maintaining a manner of secretly living a life of sin and misery because we do not accept the work of Christ on the cross,*

and we cannot realize the crossing over into spiritual life with Christ and the light, we speak deceitfully, and also bring about a state of not conducting ourselves nor speaking in sincere holiness. Now it follows that in order for a person to be in fellowship with God, there can be no hiding of sin. Fellowship describes a situation where two or more persons share things in common. It is a communion or a partnership. Light and darkness cannot have fellowship. Light and darkness cannot co-exist in a person's life at the same time, any more than they can exist in a home or in a room. If a man is walking in spiritual darkness, he is not in fellowship with God. A man who says that he is in fellowship with God and habitually and consciously walks in sin has never been saved at all. Not doing the truth is more than an emphasis on *we are lying*. To not do the truth is to not have it, because no one does it without having it in his heart; and not doing it is evidence that the heart is without the truth because of ignorance or because of hostility toward God. To walk in darkness is to believe and to hold on to a lie, to reject and to fight the saving truth, i.e., to hate this light.

John minces no words. Our modern considerateness toward heresies and heretics is unscriptural and dangerous. The man that is righteous is the one who walks in truth as his native element. He is one in whom truth dwells, controlling and guiding him and he belongs to the truth and draws from it the strength and inspiration for life. ***John 8:44; You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies. John 18:37; Pilate therefore said to Him, "so You are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say correctly that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice." 1 John 2:4; The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. 1 John 2:21; I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it, and because no lie is of the truth. 1 John 3:19; we shall know by this that we are of the truth, and assure our heart before Him. 2 John 1:4; I was very glad to find some of your children walking in truth, just as we have received commandment to do from the Father. 3 John 1:3, 4; For I was very glad when brethren came and bore witness to your truth, that is, how you are walking in the truth.*** There is so much deception in the world today and that deception has been here since the fall of Adam, so it has a history and an evidence of life, that is, that it is going to exist past our time here on earth. As long as Satan exists deception will as well. These verses certainly reinforce all of the previous statements made concerning truth and its opposition; truth's opposition and deception is designed to kill. From the very first encounter with deception in Adam vs. Satan up until the last lie that will be told, this truth will always be evident. Although we could learn from amplifying any one of these verses I chose **1 John 3:19**, because it tells us how to recognize that "we are of the truth": *We, as believers in Christ Jesus, shall hereby continually and constantly remain to become known by the means of*

our deeds and by our sincerity to love our brethren and help others in need, that we are adhering to the love of the truth and this is where we draw our strength and inspiration of life, both in words and in conduct with a sincere mind and heart and not merely externally, and we shall affect, either by kind words or motives, a quieting of an accusing conscience by means of God being our witness, knowing and approving of us. When we, as believers, love one another by our conduct and in truth, we know that we are of God, the God of truth and we cannot lie, (without being convicted) just as He cannot lie.

We are of Jesus Christ who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life and we belong to Him and His disciples. Since we have His spirit, we love as He loves, which is evidenced by what we do and how we treat each other, by living according to the gospel of love. As believers we are true, upright and sincere persons, true believers in Christ whose faith is evidenced in our love since we love not only in word but in our deeds and in our sincerity. We have arrived to a full assurance of faith, hope, and understanding that we live truth and do belong to God. We are loved by Him with an everlasting love and are chosen by Him unto salvation. We are adopted and regenerated having passed from death into life which is strongly evidenced by our expression of Christ's love and truth in us. In this our hearts are tranquil and quiet and this can only be accomplished by the sprinkling of the blood of Christ on our conscience. In this serenity we look toward Christ for our righteousness and justification for by Him we have the full and free remission of our sins.

This is in opposition to the man who does not confess his sin nor repent of it. There is no peace for the man that hates his brother because where there is malice, envy, hatred and strife there can be no true peace, pleasure or comfort, but only confusion, uneasiness, distraction and every kind of evil work bothering his conscience. As believers we have a holy confidence before God both now in this present life and also at His throne of grace. At His throne of grace we can come with boldness, unafraid and free to ask for what we *need* and confidently believe that we will receive it. We will not stand before the Judge embarrassed or ashamed of whom we are; He will take notice of how we fed the hungry, clothe the naked, and visited the least of our brethren which He Himself did and does. Doctrine and life are inseparable. Both the book of Hebrews and James allude to righteousness in the sense as of the gift of God on the condition of faith, but both of these epistles generally speak of it as that good life which the Christian loves and seeks, ***Hebrews 11:7; By faith Noah, being warned by God about things not yet seen, in reverence prepared an ark for the salvation of his household, by which he condemned the world, and became an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith. James 2:23; and Scripture was fulfilled which says, "And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to Him as righteousness", and he was called the friend of God.*** One thing that we must remember while reading Scripture; the men of the Bible were not born as being especially holy, sanctified men. Sure, they all had been chosen for a purpose in God's plan, but God has a

purpose for all of us also and these men of the Bible were equally as sinful as we are and what they were capable of-- we also are capable. Let's take apart the verse in **James 2:23**: *And so everything that God had designed in Scripture was accomplished which put forth these words; "And Abraham trusted in and relied on God because Abraham had adopted God's interests as his own, and his obedience was counted to him as a person who is being faithful and a man of moral integrity, and he was described by God as one that truly befriended of God not because of his physical evidence, but for the evidence of his faith that was in his heart.* It is clear by this verse that Abraham's faith inspired his works, and by his works his faith was made perfect. This "perfect" faith means that "it appears as the need arises."

True faith and works are inseparable. The first produces the second, and the second is evidence of the first. In the offering of Isaac we see a practical demonstration of the faith of Abraham. It was the practical fulfillment of the Scripture which said that Abraham was justified by believing in God. His good works identified him as friend of God and being one who possessed faith and trust in God. Our works should have the motivation and intention of evidencing our works without any motives of self seeking or self rewarding. Before God called for the works of Abraham's faith that were manifested in the offering up of Isaac, God spoke the great prophesy and promise that he would have a son and his descendants would more numerable than the stars and Abraham believed it when he heard it and believed it and God accounted it to him as righteousness. Years later, when at God's command, Abraham, who had believed that prophesy and promise, offered Isaac and thereby, as it seemed, was about to destroy that prophesy and promise. God fulfilled this Scripture about Abraham's believing God and the people of the day of James knew that God had fulfilled this Scripture as Abraham's descendants did become as numerous as the stars in the night sky. He did not overthrow that Scripture, nor did He cancel the prophecy and promise thereby making null and void the faith of Abraham that he held onto all these years. Although the command to sacrifice Isaac seemed like a nullification of promises it proved to be a fulfillment. The faith that Abraham had kept through the years "was reckoned to him for righteousness." Although he was not righteous, but a sinner, God counted, reckoned, or pronounced him as righteous, and that not because of the worth and merit of his act of believing, but because of the value of what he embraced by believing. The thought of James is that God reckoned Abraham as his friend because of the way in which Abraham's faith showed itself in the works of faith.

So this Scripture begs the question, why did God have Abraham go through this experience? It wasn't for God's sake, that is, to prove to God that he was faithful; God knew Abraham's heart and knew that Abraham would do whatever he was commanded by God. So the obvious conclusion is that it must've been for Abraham's sake. Since we know the outcome of what God asked Abraham to do we can compare it to experiences that we have in our own life in the times where what God asks us to do at times does not seem to make sense to us at

the time, but after we go through the experience we can see the wisdom of God in what He asked us to do. So what was the wisdom of God behind this Abrahamic experience? It is two-fold; Abraham can use this experience in the future to know that he can trust God to do what will eventually be agreeable to him and also he can use it to be a witness or a testimony to others that they can trust in God and be comfortable in knowing that the end result will be not only beneficial to them but also to everyone who hears the testimony of what God has done in his life.

In the epistles of Peter, righteousness is the holy life in contrast to sin **1 Peter 2:24; that we, might die to sin and live to righteousness.** In Revelation righteousness is predicated on the judgment; **Rev. 19:11; and in righteousness He judges and wages war,** and it is said to be “done” by those who are righteous in the world to come, **1 John 3:7 Little children let no one deceive you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous. Rev. 22:11; “Let the one who does wrong, still do wrong; and let the one who is filthy stay filthy; and let the one who is righteous, still practice righteousness; and let the one who is holy, still keep himself holy.** We have already looked at 1 John 3:7, so let’s open up Rev. 22:11; *“Allow the person who acts unjustly to continue to act unjustly; and allow the person who is morally defiled, remain morally defiled, and allow the person who is just to continue to do what is morally upright; and allow the person who shares in God’s purity and abstains from the earth’s defilement continue to remain to have the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit on his heart.* When the time of fulfillment comes, the unjust will be fixed in impenitence. The filthy will have no further chance to change when the Lord returns to earth. But the righteous will continue to live righteously, and the holy in holiness. This verse is similar to **Matt. 13:30, allow both to grow together until harvest ; and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, “First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn.”** If the unrighteous and the filthy will not listen to the warnings of the words of prophecy of Revelation, the final revelation of God, there is nothing more that can be done. **2 Tim. 3:13; But evil men and imposters will proceed from bad to worse; deceiving and being deceived. You however, continue in the things you have learned and became convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them. Ezek. 3:27; “But when I speak to you, I will open your mouth, and you will say to them: Thus says the Lord God, He who hears, let him hear; and he who refuses, let him refuse, for they are a rebellious house.** Let them go on for the time of judgment is at hand. But to the righteous and the holy, with the last words of God in this book ringing in their ears—let him go on, his salvation is also surely and rapidly coming. Thus we conclude that in the NT righteousness is presented in two ways: (1) as a quality of God’s nature and action, and (2) as the character which God requires of man. What God requires is grounded in who and what God is.

Righteousness is not simply a private affair; it is a matter also for social concern, God's righteousness demands social justice, *Isa. 5:7-9; for the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah His delightful plant. Thus He looked for justice, but behold, bloodshed; for righteousness, but behold, a cry of distress. Woe to those who add house to house and join field to field, until there is no more room, so that you have to live alone in the midst of land! In my ears the Lord of hosts has sworn, "Surely, many houses shall become desolate, even great and fine ones, without occupants." Amos 5:6-7; "Seek the Lord that you may live, lest He break forth like a fire, O house of Joseph, and it consume with none to quench it for Bethel, for those who turn justice into wormwood and cast righteousness down to the earth. Amos 5:24; "But let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever flowing stream.* We can see in these verses that God is not merely addressing righteousness in an individual, but as a community. Certainly in order to make a community act righteously each individual must accordingly act righteously, but we can see in these verses that God is concerned with the righteousness of our society also, so let's take a deeper look at Amos 5:24: *But let the legal decisions given by God that must be followed by the people be trusted in and committed to being compared to as abundant running waters and the same also for blameless conduct and integrity as being compared to a flooding or overflowing of a permanent stream.* The prophet Amos is speaking for God just as all true prophets do and in this verse God is telling His people that His desire is that true justice would be exhibited in abundance, with great rapidity, bearing down on all around them, in such a force that it cannot be resisted. This is the signifying of the plentiful justice being done in all of their land, not just in pockets of society, but all through the land without discrimination. In this case everyone would enjoy the full and free exercise of it without stoppage or intermission. As far as righteousness is concerned His desire is the same, only He uses different words. The whole land should be engulfed with righteousness as compared to a stream that floods and every inch of ground is covered. Justice, in fact, is a prominent characteristic of righteousness in the Bible.

The Bible commonly uses "righteousness" and related words in a legal setting, where a judge must administer justice righteously. The judge in some cases is God, *Gen. 18:25; "Far be it from Thee to do such a thing, to slay righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous and wicked are treated alike. Far be it from Thee! Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?" Ps. 96:13; For He is coming to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness, and His peoples in faithfulness. Eccles. 3:17; I said to myself, God will judge both the righteous man and the wicked man, for a time for every matter and for every deed is there. Acts 17:30, 31; Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all everywhere should repent. Because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead. 2 Tim. 4:8; 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. Rev. 9:11; They have as king over them the angel of the abyss; his name in Hebrew is "Abaddon" (or destruction), and in the Greek he has the name "Apollyon" (or destroyer). Let's take apart the verses in Acts 17:30, 31 that teaches us that God is our ultimate Judge and He judges us righteously: *Therefore God chose to bear with a period of time of heathendom, which was a state of man that renders repentance necessary, God is now announcing henceforth to mankind that everyone everywhere should have a change of mind and turn from their sins and turn to God and the gospel of Christ, on account that He has established a set day in which He will sit in judgment of the inhabitants of the earth by One who He has ordained here and now, Jesus Christ, to execute law and equity, whom He has also furnished the ability for all mankind to believe in when He recalled Him to life after having been dead.* Having exposed the folly of idolatry, Paul goes on to state that for many centuries God overlooked the ignorance of the Gentiles. But now that the revelation of the gospel has come, He commands all men everywhere to repent, that is, to do an about face concerning their sin. Turn from their sin and turn to God as a source of their moral identity. This is an urgent message, because God has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Lord Jesus Christ, the Man whom He ordained. The judgment referred to here will take place when Christ returns to earth to put down His enemies and begin His millennial reign. The positive assurance that this will take place is found in the fact that God raised the Lord Jesus from the dead, which is what no man had been able to do up until then and has not done been able to do since then. In His death and resurrection Christ fulfilled all of the Scriptures, which gives us the assurance that He will also according to what He has told us concerning our resurrection and His righteous judgment. The innocent and the guilty are respectively the righteous and the wicked. In acquitting the innocent, the Judge declares him to be in the right, or righteous; in condemning the guilty, the Judge declares him to be wrong, or wicked, ***Deut. 25:1; If there is some dispute between men and they go to court, and the judges decide their case, and they justify the righteous and condemn the wicked. 1 Kings 8:32; then hear Thou in heaven and act and judge Thy servants, condemning the wicked by bringing his way on his own head and justifying the righteous by giving him according to his righteousness. Job 32:1; then these three men ceased answering Job, because he was righteous in his own eyes. Mal. 3:18; so you will again distinguish between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve Him. Matt. 13:41-43; 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; and 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. Matt. 27:19; And while he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent to him, saying, "Have nothing to do with that righteous Man; for last night I suffered greatly in a dream because of Him."Rom. 2:5-8.***But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart

you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to every man according to his deeds: to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life. The verse in Malachi says it as about as straight forward as it can possibly be said for me, as in the preceding verse that says He will spare the one who serves Him from condemnation just as a father spares his own son, ***Mal. 3:17; And they will be Mine, says the Lord of hosts, on the day that I prepare My own possession, and I will spare them as a man spares his own son who serves him.*** So let's give verses 3:17, 18 a closer look: *And they shall be the ones that do what prepares them to be My special treasure, says the One who is, the One who was, and the One who will always be, that is, the Lord of all powers, and He will do this by way of His words as well as His actions, in the end times when I perform the activities that have this distinctive purpose, moral obligation, and goal in view, to accomplish preparing them for My ascending; and I will have compassion for their mistreatment just as a father has compassion for his own son that labors for him. Then you will again reestablish who are God's people and after making inquiry you will take heed of those who are among those who follow God's standards and do not give heed to the persons who do not serve God and as a result are the ones who do not follow God and are considered wicked and guilty before Him, that is, you need to separate those who are among those who give religious service to worship God and consider it a joyful experience of liberation from those who do not give religious service to Him in worship.* This verse obviously contrasts the people who are righteous with the people who are wicked and defines the righteous as those who serve God, that is to say they appropriately worship Him and live their lives according to the standard that has been set forth for man by God Himself. The wicked are those who are content to live their lives according to their own sense of right and wrong and they themselves set the bar for themselves to measure righteousness, which usually means are they are willing to excuse their sinful nature by setting the bar low and remain subject to their sin. The holy God and just Judge will have the final word on where the bar should've appropriately been set, and it is only His word that has any weight in His court.

The righteous will be rewarded and the wicked will be condemned, all without prejudice or bias. The description of the conduct of the godly is an indirect admonition to the people as to what their attitudes and values should be towards God. What is done by those who revere God should be the model of the whole nation. These words are still true today. The nation should consider what has been said concerning the righteous, by telling them that they will see a difference between the righteous that serve God and the wicked who do not serve Him, that is to say they would learn that it is always profitable to serve God.

This legal sense of righteousness gives meaning to the biblical teaching of justification by faith. (In both the Hebrew and the Greek the word for "righteous" and "justify" come from the same root.) To justify means to declare righteous. Justification is God's act of declaring

righteous those who put their faith in Christ and His saving work. God does not *make* believers righteous in the sense of improving them to a standard of behavior that satisfies Him, but rather He *declares* (or reckons) them righteous. Christ has met God's righteous demands by paying sin's penalty on behalf of sinners. God is therefore able to declare repentant sinners righteous, yet Himself remain righteous in doing so, ***Rom. 5:1-2; therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ., through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God. Gal. 2:15, 16; We are Jews by nature, and not sinners among the Gentiles; nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we may be justified by faith in Christ, and not by works of the Law; since by the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified. Phil. 3:9; not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith.*** Though righteous deeds, or good works, cannot save anyone, once people are saved their lives should be full of righteous deeds on the account of having been declared righteous by faith in Jesus Christ and thus having a righteous nature by following the example of Him and His nature, ***Eph. 2:8-10; For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. Phil. 1:11; having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.*** In our humanness it is sometimes hard to grasp that such a great gift that God has to offer to us can be given to us without us having to perform any kind of act to be claimed worthy of the gift. We, on a human level think that we must somehow merit everything that we get; fortunately this is not true when it comes to our dealings with God. This is what the verse, 2:8-10 in Ephesians is teaching us so let's take a closer look at this verse and pray that we will believe it: *Because of God's divine favor toward us, which He is not obligated to have but is an act of His own good pleasure, is exercised in conferring gifts bestowed in and through Christ Jesus and His gospel, which He exhibited in the pardon of sins and admission to the divine kingdom, you have been rescued and preserved from that spiritual death which is common to all men because of Adam's sin, through your answering the call for faith as an act of the will, in Christ's death; this is the ground for justification before God ; and you knowing this, that salvation is by no means a part of your dead works, good intentions, nor obeying the law, it is an unmerited gift of justification from God; so that everyone knows full well that he cannot take credit, glory, or exult himself for what results from this change in the individual without destroying his individuality. Because we are the result of His creative work, produced from nothing in Christ Jesus for morally virtuous well doing with conscious integrity, a life of the elect merging his own regenerated will with the will of God to accomplish God's eternal purposes, which God foreordained for His glory, so that we should*

desire to live in His purpose for life. These three verses present a clear statement of the simple plan of salvation as we can find in the Bible. It all originates with the grace of God: He takes the initiative in providing it. Salvation is given to those who are utterly unworthy of it, on the basis of the Person and the work of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is given as a present possession. Those who are saved can know it.

When Paul teaches us that we are saved he knew it and we can know it. The way we receive the gift of eternal life is through faith. Faith means that man takes his place as a lost, guilty sinner, and receives the Lord Jesus as his only hope for salvation. True saving faith is the commitment of a person to a Person. Any idea that man can earn or deserve salvation is forever exploded by the words, “and that not of yourselves.” Dead people can do nothing, and sinners deserve nothing but punishment. Salvation is a free gift from God available to anyone who desires it. A gift, of course, is a free and unconditional present. That is the only basis on which God offers salvation. The gift of God is salvation by grace through faith. It is offered to all people everywhere. It is not of works, that is, it is not something a person can earn through supposedly meritorious deeds. People are not saved by works. And they are not saved by faith and good works. They are saved through faith alone. The minute you add works of any kind or in any amount as a means of gaining eternal life, salvation is no longer by grace.

One reason that works are positively excluded is to prevent human boasting. If anyone could be saved by his works, then he would have reason to boast before God and this is impossible because there is nothing that a sinner can do that will impress God. Also, differing amount of works would require a different status of salvation for each individual, because a just God that saved by works would have to justly award the harder worker a higher place. It is my opinion that this type of eternal kingdom does not exist. Also if anyone could be saved by his own works then he would be his own savior, and could worship himself. But this would be idolatry which is forbidden by God.

Finally if anyone could be saved by his own good works then the death of Christ was unnecessary. But we know that the reason He died was because there was no other way by which guilty sinners could be saved. The result of salvation is that we are His workmanship—the handiwork of God, not of ourselves. A born again believer is a creation of God. When we think about the raw materials that He has to work with, His achievement is all that more remarkable. Indeed we are nothing less than a new creation through union with Christ, **2 Cor. 5:17; “for if anyone is in Christ he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold all things become new.”** And the object of this new creation is found in the phrase, **“for good works.”** While it is true that we are not saved by good works, it is equally true that we are saved for good works. Good works are not the root but the fruit. We do not work in order to be saved, but because we are saved. But this begs the question: “what kind of

good works am I expected to do?” Paul answers this question when he says “Good works, which God had prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” In other words it is like God has a blueprint for every person’s life. Before our conversion He mapped out a spiritual career for us. Our responsibility is to find out what His plan and will is for us and then obey it. We do not have to work out a plan for our lives, but only accept His plan for our lives, which He has drawn up. This assures that our lives can be lived in maximum glory to Him, blessing to others, and have the greatest reward for ourselves. In order to find out what good works He has planned for our individual lives, we should (1) confess and forsake sin (2) be continually and unconditionally yielding to Him (3) study the word of God to discern His will for us and then be obedient and do what He tells us to do (4) spend time in prayer each day (5) seize opportunities of service whenever they arise (6) cultivate relationships and gather with other believers.

Once God has declared us righteous, we must make it true in practice by living righteously, ***Rom. 6:13; and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness toward God. Rom. 6:18, 19; and having been freed from sin, you become slaves to righteousness. I am speaking in human terms because of the wickedness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification. Eph. 4:24; and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of truth. Eph. 5:9; (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth). Phil. 3:8-10; More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Jesus Christ my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish in order that I may gain Christ. 1 Tim. 6:11; But flee from these things you man of God; and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness. 1 Pet. 2:24; and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed. 1 Pet. 3:14; But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. “And do not fear their intimidation, and do not be troubled.”*** When I read 1 Pet. 3:14 it really gives me a lot of encouragement to know that I have the assurance that any suffering I may encounter for doing the righteous thing is nothing compared to the blessing God has in store for me for doing the right thing. And it is intimated that I will encounter intimidation in an attempt to scare me into doing the wrong thing, but I should not let their attempts persuade me because it is only a tactic that has no validity. So let’s study this verse a little more closely so that we may be encouraged to stay the course with the goal in mind of entering into His kingdom: *but now even though you should and it is most probable that you will, undergo an experience that subjects you to evil for the sake of doing the morally right thing, you are one who gains satisfaction from being a partaker in God’s nature through faith in Christ and are marked by the fullness of God and are fully satisfied being indwelt by the*

Holy Spirit and not one who gains satisfaction from favorable circumstances. "Also do not let that kind of fear cause you to flee from the morality of God and inspire and instigate terror that could cause you trepidation leading to you questioning your moral integrity." Suppose a Christian should suffer persecution because of his loyalty to his Savior. What then? Three results will follow: (1) God over rules the suffering for His own glory (2) He uses the suffering to bring blessing to others (3) He blesses the one who suffers for His name. We should not be afraid of men, or terrified by their threats. How well the martyrs lived out this policy. When Polycarp, one of the earliest martyrs, was promised release from a death sentence if he would blaspheme Christ he said; "Eighty six years I have served Christ and He has never done me wrong. How can I blaspheme my King and my Savior?" When the proconsul threatened to expose him to the wild beasts, he replied, "It is well for me to be speedily released from this life of misery." Finally the ruler threatened to burn him alive. Polycarp said, "I fear not the fire that burns for a moment. You do not know that which burns forever and forever." The unrighteous world cannot tolerate righteousness. The very presence of true righteousness irritates it, for this righteousness silently condemns its own unrighteousness.