

**Loris First Baptist Church**  
**“52 Vital Doctrines of The Bible”**

Doctrine #30 – Four Aspects of Righteousness

Note: Most information based on pages 197-201 of the book “Major Bible Themes” by Lewis Sperry Chaffer.

**Introduction**

1. A vital difference between God and man which Scripture emphasizes is that God is righteous, and man is NOT:

**1 John 1:5** *“This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: GOD IS LIGHT; in him there is no darkness at all.”*

**Romans 3:10** “There is NONE RIGHTEOUS, no, not one.”

2. So also, one of the glories of divine grace is the fact that a “perfect righteousness”, likened to a “spotless wedding garment”, has been provided and is freely bestowed upon all who believe.

**Romans 3:22** *“This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile...”*

**Revelation 7:9-10** *“After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. THEY WERE WEARING WHITE ROBES and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: ‘Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.’”*

**Revelation 7:13-14** *“Then one of the elders asked me, ‘THESE IN WHITE ROBES—who are they, and where did they come from?’ I answered, ‘Sir, you know.’ And he said, ‘These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and MADE THEM WHITE IN THE BLOOD OF THE LAMB.”*

**Revelation 19:6-9** *“Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting: ‘Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give Him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and HIS BRIDE HAS MADE HERSELF READY. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear.” (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.) Then the angel said to me, ‘Write: ‘Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!’ And he added, ‘These are the true words of God.’”*

## **The Scriptures distinguish four aspects of righteousness.**

### 1. God Is Righteous

- a. This righteousness of God is unchanging and unchangeable. He is infinitely righteous in His own being and infinitely righteous in all His ways.

**Romans 3:25-26** *“God presented Him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in His blood. He did this to demonstrate His JUSTICE, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished— He did it to demonstrate His JUSTICE at the present time, SO AS TO BE JUST (i.e. “righteous”) and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.”*

#### 1) God is righteous in His being.

- a) It is impossible for Him to deviate from His righteousness by so much as the “shifting of a single shadow”:

**James 1:17** *“Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, WHO DOES NOT CHANGE LIKE SHIFTING SHADOWS.”*

- b) He cannot look on sin with the least degree of allowance. Therefore, since all men are sinners both by nature and by practice, the divine judgment has come upon all men unto condemnation.

**John 3:17-18** *“For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him. Whoever believes in Him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe STANDS CONDEMNED ALREADY because he has not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son.”*

**John 3:36** *“Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, FOR GOD’S WRATH REMAINS ON HIM.”*

- c) The acceptance of this truth is vital to any right understanding of the gospel of divine grace.

#### 2) God is righteous in His ways.

- a) It must also be recognized that God is incapable of slighting sin or merely forgiving sin in leniency.
- b) The triumph of the Gospel is not in the belittling of sin on the part of God; it is rather in the fact that all those judgments which infinite righteousness must of necessity impose upon the sinner have been borne in substitution by God’s provided Lamb, and that this is a plan of God’s own devising which according to His own standards of righteousness is sufficient for all who believe.

- c) By this plan God can satisfy His love in saving the sinner without infringing upon His own unchangeable righteousness; and the sinner, utterly hopeless in himself, can pass from all condemnation.

**John 3:18** "Whoever believes in Him IS NOT CONDEMNED, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son."

**John 5:24** "I tell you the truth, whoever hears My word and believes Him who sent Me has eternal life and WILL NOT BE CONDEMNED; he has crossed over from death to life."

**Romans 8:1** "Therefore, there is now NO CONDEMNATION for those who are in Christ Jesus..."

**1 Corinthians 11:32** "Nevertheless, when we are judged in this way by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that WE WILL NOT BE FINALLY CONDEMNED WITH THE WORLD."

- b. It is not unusual for men to conceive of God as a righteous being; but they often fail to recognize the fact that, when He undertakes to save the sinful, the righteousness of God is not and *cannot* be diminished.

## 2. The Self-Righteousness of Man

- a. In complete accord with the revelation that God is supremely righteous, there is the corresponding revelation that, in the sight of God, the righteousness of man (see Romans 10:3), is as "filthy rags."

**Isaiah 64:6** "All of us have become like one who is unclean, and ALL OUR RIGHTEOUS ACTS ARE LIKE FILTHY RAGS; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away..."

- b. Though the sinful estate of man is constantly declared throughout Scripture, there is no description more complete and final than is found in:

**Romans 3:9-18** "There is NO ONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE; there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; THERE IS NO ONE WHO DOES GOOD, NOT EVEN ONE. Their throats are open graves; their tongues practice deceit. The poison of vipers is on their lips. Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood; ruin and misery mark their ways, and the way of peace they do not know. There is no fear of God before their eyes.'"

- 1) And it should be noted that this, like all other estimates of sin which are recorded in the Bible, is a description of sin as God sees it.
- 2) Men have erected legitimate standards for the family, for society, and for the state; but these are no part of the basis upon which man must stand and by which he must be judged before a truly holy and righteous God.

- c. In their relation to God, men are not wise when thus comparing themselves with themselves:

**2 Corinthians 10:12** *"We do not dare to classify or compare ourselves with some who commend themselves. When they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, THEY ARE NOT WISE."*

- d. For not merely those who are condemned by society are lost, but those who are condemned by the unalterable righteousness of God

**Romans 3:23** *"...for all have sinned and FALL SHORT OF THE GLORY OF GOD"*

- e. There is therefore no hope for any individual outside the provisions of God's grace; for none can enter heaven's glory who are not as acceptable to God as Christ is. **For this need of man God has made abundant provision "in Christ".**

**Ephesians 1:3-4** *"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, WHO HAS BLESSED US in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing IN CHRIST. For He chose us IN HIM before the creation of the world TO BE HOLY AND BLAMELESS IN HIS SIGHT."*

### 3. The Imputed Righteousness of God

- a. As brought out in previous discussion of the doctrine of imputation, the important revelation of the imputed righteousness of God (Rom. 3:22) is essential to understanding both the principles upon which God "condemns the sinner" and the principles on which God "saves the Christian"..
- b. Although the doctrine is difficult to understand, it is important to understand this as a major aspect of God's revelation.
- 1) The fact of imputation is brought out in the "imputing" of Adam's sin to the human race with the effect that all men are considered sinners by God.

**Romans 5:12** *"Therefore, just as SIN ENTERED THE WORLD THROUGH ONE MAN, and death through sin, and in this way DEATH CAME TO ALL PEOPLE, because all sinned..."*

- a) This is further developed in the fact that the sin of man was "imputed" to Christ when He became the sin offering for the whole world.

**2 Corinthians 5:14, 21** *"For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that ONE DIED FOR ALL, and therefore all died...God made Him who had no sin TO BE SIN FOR US, so that IN HIM we might become the righteousness of God."*

**Hebrews 2:9** *"But we do see Jesus, who was made lower than the angels for a little while, now crowned with glory and honor because He suffered death, so that by the grace of God HE MIGHT TASTE DEATH FOR EVERYONE."*

**1 John 2:2** *"He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also FOR THE SINS OF THE WHOLE WORLD."*

- b) So also, the righteousness of God is imputed to all who believe, so that they may stand before God in all the perfection of Christ.
  - c) By this divine provision those who are saved are said to have been "made" the righteousness of God (1 Cor. 1:30; 2 Cor. 5:21).
  - d) Since it is the righteousness of God and not of man, and since it is said to be apart from all self works or deeds of law observance (Rom. 3:21), obviously this imputed righteousness is not something accomplished by man.
  - e) Being the righteousness of God, it is not increased by the goodness of the one to whom it is imputed, nor is it decreased by his badness.
- 2) The results of imputation are seen in that the righteousness of God is imputed to the believer on the basis of the fact that the believer is, through the baptism of the Spirit, "in Christ".
- a) Through that vital union to Christ by the Spirit, the believer becomes related to Christ as a member in His body.

**1 Corinthians 12:13** *"For we were all baptized by one Spirit SO AS TO FORM ONE BODY—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink."*

- b) And as a branch in the True Vine:

**John 15:1, 5** *"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. I am the vine; YOU ARE THE BRANCHES. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing."*

- c) Because of the reality of this union, God sees the believer as a living part of His own Son.

He therefore loves each believer as He loves His Son:

**John 17:23** *"I in them and you in Me—SO THAT THEY MAY BE BROUGHT TO COMPLETE UNITY. Then the world will know that you sent Me and HAVE LOVED THEM EVEN AS YOU HAVE LOVED ME."*

He accepts him as He accepts His own Son:

**Ephesians 1:6** *"to the praise of His glorious grace, which HE HAS FREELY GIVEN US in the One He loves."*

**1 Peter 2:5** *"you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices ACCEPTABLE TO GOD THROUGH JESUS CHRIST."*

And He accounts him to be what His own Son is—the righteousness of God:

**Romans 3:22** *“THIS RIGHTEOUSNESS IS GIVEN BY FAITH in Jesus Christ TO ALL WHO BELIEVE. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile...”*

**1 Corinthians 1:30** *“It is because of Him that you are IN CHRIST JESUS, who has become FOR US wisdom from God—that is, OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS, holiness and redemption.*

**2 Corinthians 5:21** *“God made Him who had no sin TO BE SIN FOR US, so that in Him WE MIGHT BECOME THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD.”*

- d) Christ is the righteousness of God, therefore those who are saved are *made* the righteousness of God by being *in Him* (2 Cor. 5:21).
- e) They are complete in Him.

**Colossians 2:10** *“and in Christ you have been brought TO FULLNESS. He is the head over every power and authority.”*

- f) And perfected forever:

**Hebrews 10:10, 14** *“And by that will, WE HAVE BEEN MADE HOLY through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. For by one sacrifice HE HAS MADE PERFECT FOREVER those who are being made holy.”*

- 3) Many biblical illustrations of imputation are given in Scripture.
  - a) Garments of skin which necessitated the shedding of blood were divinely provided for Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:21).
  - b) A righteous standing was imputed to Abraham because he “believed” God.

**Genesis 15:6** *“Abram BELIEVED the Lord, and HE CREDITED IT TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS.”*

**James 2:23** *“And the scripture was fulfilled that says, ‘Abraham BELIEVED God, and IT WAS CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS,’ and he was called God’s friend.”*

- c) And as the priests of old were clothed with righteousness...

**Psalms 132:9** *“May your priests be CLOTHED WITH YOUR RIGHTEOUSNESS; may your faithful people sing for joy.”*

...so the believer is robed in the wedding garment of the righteousness of God and in that garment he will appear in glory:

**Revelation 19:8** *“Fine linen, bright and clean, was GIVEN HER TO WEAR.”*

d) The attitude of the Apostle Paul toward Philemon is an illustration both of imputed merit and imputed demerit.

(1) Speaking of the slave Onesimus, Paul said: “*If you consider me a partner, welcome him as you would welcome me*” [**the imputation of merit**]. (Philemon 17)

(2) Paul goes on to say: “*If he has done you any wrong or owes you anything, charge it to me*” [**the imputation of demerit**] Philemon 18.

**Job 29:14** “*I put on RIGHTEOUSNESS FOR MY CLOTHING; justice was my robe and my turban...*”

**Isaiah 11:5** “*RIGHTEOUSNESS WILL BE HIS BELT and faithfulness the sash around his waist.*”

**Isaiah 59:17** “*He put on RIGHTEOUSNESS AS HIS BREASTPLATE, and the helmet of salvation on his head; he put on the garments of vengeance and wrapped himself in zeal as in a cloak.*”

**Isaiah 61:10** “*I delight greatly in the LORD; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and ARRAYED ME IN A ROBE OF HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.*”

4) Imputation affects the standing and not the state.

a) There is, then, a righteousness from God, apart from all human works, which is *unto* and *upon* all who believe (Romans 3:22).

b) It is the eternal standing of all who are saved. In their daily life, or state, they are far from perfect, and in this aspect of their relation to God they are “to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18).

5) Imputed righteousness is the ground of justification.

a) According to the New Testament usage, the words “righteousness” and “justify” are from the same root.

b) God declares the one justified forever whom He sees *in Christ*. It is an equitable decree since the justified one is clothed in the righteousness of God.

c) Justification is not a fiction or a state of feeling; it is rather an immutable reckoning in the mind of God.

d) Like imputed righteousness, justification is by faith (Rom. 5:1), through grace (Titus 3:4-7), and made possible through the death and resurrection of Christ (Rom. 3:24; 4:25).

e) It is abiding and unchangeable since it rests only on the merit of the eternal Son of God.

f) Justification is more than forgiveness, since forgiveness is the cancellation of sin while justification is the imputing of righteousness.

- g) Forgiveness is negative (the removal of condemnation), while justification is positive (the bestowing of the merit and standing of Christ).
- h) James, writing of a justification by works has in view the believer's standing before men:

**James 2:14-26** *“What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,’ but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. But someone will say, ‘You have faith; I have deeds.’ Show me your faith without deeds, AND I WILL SHOW YOU MY FAITH BY MY DEEDS. You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder. You foolish person, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? Was not our father Abraham considered righteous **FOR WHAT HE DID** when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete **BY WHAT HE DID**. And the scripture was fulfilled that says, ‘Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,’ and he was called God’s friend. You see that a person **IS CONSIDERED RIGHTEOUS** (i.e. “by his fellow man”!) by what they do and not by faith alone. In the same way, was not even Rahab the prostitute **CONSIDERED RIGHTEOUS FOR WHAT SHE DID** when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction? As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.”*

- i) Paul writing of justification by faith (Rom. 5:1), has in view the believer's standing before God.
- j) Abraham was justified before men in that he proved his faith by his works (James 2:21); likewise he was justified by faith before God on the ground of imputed righteousness (James 2:23).

#### 4. Righteousness Imparted by the Spirit

a. When filled with the Spirit, the child of God will:

1) Produce righteous works:

**Romans 8:4** *“in order that the righteous requirement of the law MIGHT BE FULLY MET IN US, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit...”*

2) Fruit of the Spirit:

**Galatians 5:22-23** *“But THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.”*

3) And will manifest the gifts for service which are by the Spirit:

**1 Corinthians 12:7** *“Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.”*



- b) These results are distinctly said to be due to the immediate working of the Spirit in and through the believer.
- c) Reference is made, therefore, to a manner of life which is in one way produced *by* the believer; it is rather a manner of life which is produced *through* him by the Spirit.
- d) To those who “walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit,” the righteousness of the law, which in this case means no less than the realization of the whole will of God for the believer, is fulfilled *in* them.
- e) It could never be fulfilled *by* them. When thus wrought by the Spirit, it is none other than a life which is the imparted righteousness of God.

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**Doctrine # 30 - “Four Aspects of Righteousness”**

1. Read Pages 1-9 from the Doctrine#30 Study Guide by next Wednesday.
2. Answer the following Questions about “Righteousness” as you read:

**a. Introduction**

- 1) What is a vital difference between God and man which Scripture emphasizes?  
(page 1, top; see also 1John 1:5 and Romans 3:10)
  
- 2) What is one of the “glories” of divine grace that has been provided and is “freely bestowed” upon all who believe? (page 1, top-middle; see also Romans 3:22; Revelation 7:9-14, 19:6-9)

**b. The Scriptures Distinguish Four Aspects of Righteousness**

- 1) The righteousness of God is “unchanging” and “unchangeable”. In what two ways is God characterized as “infinitely” righteous? (page 2, top)
  
- 2) What is something that the “righteousness” of God cannot do with the least degree of allowance?  
(page 2, middle)
  
- 3) Since “all” men are sinners both by nature and by practice, the divine judgment has come upon all men unto “what”? (page 2, middle; John 3:17-18; John 3:36)
  
- 4) Because God is righteous in His ways, He is “incapable” of what? (page 2, bottom)

- 5) True or False. The triumph of the “Gospel” is that God “belittles” sin and just chooses to turn a blind eye to the righteous judgments that man’s sin deserves. (page 2, bottom)
  
- 6) Although it is NOT unusual for men to conceive of God as a “righteous” being, what is something that men often “fail” to recognize about God? (page 3, top-middle)
  
- 7) The righteousness of “man”, in the sight of God, is described as like “what” in Scripture?  
(page 3, middle; Isaiah 64:6)
  
- 8) True or False. According to Romans 3:9-18, very few men (or women and children) can be classified as “righteous” and amongst those who “do good”.
  
- 9) What are some legitimate “standards” that man has erected for himself that have no basis upon which man must stand and by which he must be judged before a truly holy and righteous God? (page 3, bottom)
  
- 10) In relation to God, what are men not wise at doing when considering standards of “righteousness”?  
(page 4, top; see also 2Corinthians 10:12)
  
- 11) There is NO HOPE for any individual outside the provision of God’s grace, for none can enter heaven’s glory who are not “what”? (page 4, top-middle; see also Ephesians 1:3-4)
  
- 12) What “doctrine” is essential to understanding both the principles upon which God “condemns the sinner” and the principles on which God “saves the Christian”? (page 4, middle)

- 13) Why is the “righteousness” of God “imputed” to all who believe? (page 5, top; 2Corinthians 5:21)
  
- 14) True or False. Based on the Doctrine of Imputation, the “righteousness” that is “imputed” by God to a believer can be “diminished” by sinful, backsliding behavior. (page 5, top-middle)
  
- 15) The “results” of imputation are seen in that the “righteousness” of God is imputed to the believer on the basis of what “fact”? (page 5, middle; see also 1Corinthians 12:13)
  
- 16) Because God sees the believer as a living part of His own Son, what are three things He does for each believer in Christ as if that believer “was” His own Son?  
(page 5, bottom – page 6, top; see also John 17:23; 1Peter 2:5; 1Corinthians 1:30)
  
- 17) Why was a “righteous standing” in God’s eyes imputed to Abraham? (page 6, bottom; Genesis 15:6)
  
- 18) The attitude of the Apostle Paul toward Philemon is an illustration of what aspects of imputation?  
(page 7, top; Philemon 17-18)
  
- 19) True or False. When God imputes “righteousness” to a believer, it changes the believer’s “state” as a sinner on earth. (page 7, middle)
  
- 20) True or False. In their daily life, or “state”, believers who are eternally saved are far from perfect and are encouraged to “grow” in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord.  
(page 7, middle; 2Peter 3:18)

- 21) Imputed righteousness is the ground of “what” biblical status for the believer? (pg. 7, bottom-middle)
- 22) God declares the one “justified” FOREVER whom He sees “in Christ”. Why is this an “equitable” decree of God when no believer can stop being a “sinner”? (page 7, bottom)
- 23) Justification is not a “fiction” or a state of “feeling”, rather it is “what”? (page 7, bottom)
- 24) Why is the “justification” that a believer receives in the mind of God “abiding” and “unchangeable”? (page 7, bottom)
- 25) True or False. “Justification” and “Forgiveness” are both speaking of the same actions of God. (page 7, bottom- page 8, top)
- 26) True or False. According to James 2:14-26, a person’s “justification” (i.e. “standing” before God is based on both their “faith” and their “good works”. (page 8, top; see also Rom 5:1)
- 27) What are three things, when filled with the Spirit, the child of God will “exhibit”? (page 8, bottom; see also Romans 8:4; Galatians 5:22-23; 1Corinthians 12:7)
- 28) True or False. To those who “walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Romans 8:1b), the righteousness of the “law” is fulfilled “by” them. (page 9, top)