

THE RIGHTEOUS MAN — OR WOMAN FOT 2018

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The question that I hope to answer today is: Can you be righteous before God?

Too weak? Too much human nature? Too carnal?

Is it even worth trying to be righteous? Doesn't the Bible itself say all of our righteousnesses is as filthy rags to God? If that's the case ... what's the point?

When I first came into the Worldwide Church of God ... I heard a lot about human nature — all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God ... the heart is deceitful above all things ... there is none that doeth good ... no ... not one ... and of course ... your righteousnesses are as filthy rags.

It doesn't do much for one's self-esteem? Though fair enough — if it's Biblical ... we can't argue with it??

Since then ... I have heard many TV evangelists say much the same. No one can possibly be righteous in God's sight — so Jesus came ... lived a perfect life ... and now His righteousness is imputed to you.

So you may still be a disgusting sinful rotter — but God sees you as righteous in Christ.

Such beliefs can have knock-on effects — unintended. I've seen quite a few where almost it's accepted there's no real need to even try to live a physically righteous life — you won't succeed. Just rest in your imputed righteousness.

Despite the popularity of this view ... I believe it is in error. We can live righteous lives — and should. People did before us. People will in The World Tomorrow. They will live righteous lives.

It's not some clever book-keeping transaction in Heaven — where God pretends we're righteous when we're clearly not.

Let's look at this problem scripture:

Isaiah 64:6

6 But **we are all like an unclean thing,**
And all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags;

We all fade as a leaf,
And our iniquities, like the wind,
Have taken us away.

There it is. You can't argue with the Bible.

Questions to look into:

- can fallen humans ever be considered righteous?
- if we could do acts of righteousness — how would God view them?
- how do we harmonise any apparently contradictory verses?

Let's look at one more scripture that tells us we're "no good".

Romans 3:10-12

10 As it is written:

"There is none righteous, no, not one;

11 There is none who understands;
There is none who seeks after God.

12 They have all turned aside;
They have together become unprofitable;

There is none who does good, no, not one."

The scripture tells us there is none righteous. So ... no one can ever be righteous? Rest in the fact that God sees you as righteous.

Is this correct? If so ... then there's a problem.

But ... what about the next verse?

Luke 1:5-6

5 **There was in the days of Herod,** the king of Judea, **a certain priest named Zacharias,** of the division of Abijah. **His wife was** of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was **Elizabeth.**

6 And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.

That's odd. They were both righteous before God. Maybe the word for "righteous" is different? No. It's the same word.

Greek: Dikaios — the same word as Romans Chapter 3 (the same word used throughout the New Testament — often translated into English as "just").

Luke called them righteous. But ... does God see them as righteous?

Matthew 13:16-17

16 "But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear;

17 "**for assuredly, I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see**, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.

Jesus says there are "many righteous men". He refers to righteous men in the past tense?! This isn't Luke's perspective.

Matthew 23:34-36

34 "Therefore, indeed, I send you prophets, wise men, and scribes: some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from city to city,

35 "that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, **from the blood of righteous Abel** to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar.

36 "Assuredly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.

Abel was righteous says Jesus.

Just to show that we're talking of "real" righteousness ... consider:

John 17:24-26

24 "Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.

25 "**O righteous Father!** The world has not known You, but I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me.

26 "And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them."

"O righteous Father" — the same Greek word — Dikaios.

Some Old Testament examples:

Hebrew: Tsaddiyq — "righteous" or "just".

Used more than 200 times in the Old Testament ... the same root as Isaiah 64:6.

Genesis 6:6-9

6 And the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart.

7 So the LORD said, "I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them."

8 **But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.**

9 This is the genealogy of Noah. **Noah was a just man, perfect in his generations. Noah walked with God. (Just = Tsaddiyq)**

Important! Noah walked with God. To have a relationship with Him.

Was that just Moses' opinion about Noah?

Genesis 7:1

1 **Then the LORD said to Noah, "Come into the ark, you and all your household, because I have seen that you are righteous before Me in this generation."**

GOD says: "You are righteous"!

If all our righteousness is as filthy rags ... how come Jesus and God are calling people righteous? Well ... He did ... and Noah's was.

So ... we can be righteous!! Therefore ... it's not true to say that no one can be righteous.

Ezekiel 18:20-26

20 "The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son. **The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself.** (*Righteous people doing righteousness*)

21 "But if a wicked man turns from all his sins which he has committed, keeps all My statutes, and does what is lawful and right, he shall surely live; he shall not die.

22 "**None of the transgressions which he has committed shall be remembered against him; because of the righteousness which he has done, he shall live.**

23 "Do I have any pleasure at all that the wicked should die?" says the Lord GOD, "and not that he should turn from his ways and live?"

24 "But when **a righteous man** turns away from his righteousness and commits iniquity, and does according to all the abominations that the wicked man does, shall he live? **All the righteousness which he has done shall not be remembered; because of the unfaithfulness of which he is guilty and the sin which he has committed, because of them he shall die.**

25 "Yet you say, 'The way of the Lord is not fair.' Hear now, O house of Israel, is it not My way which is fair, and your ways which are not fair?"

26 "**When a righteous man turns away from his righteousness, commits iniquity, and dies in it, it is because of the iniquity which he has done that he dies.**

God watches righteous men ... they seem to be fairly common? Righteous people doing righteous deeds.

Ezekiel 18:30-32

30 "Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways," says the Lord GOD. "**Repent, and turn from all your transgressions,** so that iniquity will not be your ruin.

31 "**Cast away from you all the transgressions which you have committed, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit.** For why should you die, O house of Israel?"

32 "For I have no pleasure in the death of one who dies," says the Lord GOD. "Therefore turn and live!"

The Book of Proverbs talks about the comparison of righteous versus unrighteousness more than 50 times.

Job 1:1

1 There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was blameless and upright, and one who feared God and shunned evil.

Job 1:8

8 Then the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?"

So ... can we say people like Abel ... Noah ... Job ... are inherently evil and wicked and corrupt men ... when God Himself and Jesus call them righteous and upright? The answer is "No".

The solution is ... that God is not looking for perfection. He doesn't expect it.

In Old Testament times ... the whole sacrificial system was set up in recognition that people would fail — make mistakes — sin. God's system dealt with that (and does for us today — forgiveness ... through the Blood of Jesus).

What God saw in Abel ... Noah ... Abraham ... Job ... Daniel ... David ... Zacharias and others — were people who had certain identifying marks:

- They were loyal to Him — Faithful
- Those who walked with Him — Obedient ... Humble
- Those who loved Him
- Those who had a relationship with Him

That's what God is looking for. This is what a righteous person looks like in God's eyes.

We know people are not perfect. Think of Noah — getting drunk.

Or ...Abraham — "lying" about Sarah being his sister — fearing for his life.

David — what about Uriah and Bathsheba!!

Peter — denying Jesus 3 times. At the most vulnerable point of Jesus' life.

None of God's men and women were ever perfect. None had God's level of absolute righteousness.

But all had an obedient faithful heart — and were loyal to God.

Of course God doesn't want us to deliberately sin — there are often consequences if we sin (think of David's life after Bathsheba) ... and we can give Satan a foothold.

So we can't afford to be careless about sin ... neglectful about our walk with God ... "easy come, easy go".

But God wants us to be as righteous as the Saints of old — at least having a loyal ... obedient ... loving heart. And that — we can do! Even more than the Saints of old ... since we also have the Holy Spirit!

But we shouldn't condemn ourselves ... if we occasionally "fall" from perfection because we're human! God is not surprised. Forgiveness is available. It's always been a part of His plan.

What God would not want is disloyalty. Turning our back on Him ... going after our own ways ... choosing to have a different "Master".

Noah ... Abraham ... Job ... Daniel ... Peter ... were imperfect ... made mistakes (to varying degrees) ... but were loyal and faithful to God. We can be too!

God can add doctrinal truth — knowledge — easily. What He wants is an obedient ... loving ... loyal ... relationship. That's what He demands and looks for.

So ... what about scriptures such as Isaiah 64:6?

For such a so-called "key scripture" ... odd that it's not quoted anywhere in the New Testament? Also — it is not quoted in any writings from the first 325 years of "Christian" authors.

It wasn't seen as a relevant verse.

Look at the Context: It's Isaiah speaking to God. A long section where he is expressing penitence on behalf of the nation. A "Standard formula" to express humility before the Great God when there were major national sins.

It's not God stating an eternal spiritual fact. It couldn't be. God said Noah was righteous ... Job was blameless ... Jesus said that Abel and others were righteous!

Even other nations and their conduct can be acceptable to God ... be righteous.

Acts 10:1-4

1 **There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius**, a centurion of what was called the Italian Regiment,

2 **a devout man and one who feared God with all his household**, who gave alms generously to the people, and prayed to God always.

3 **About the ninth hour of the day he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God coming in and saying to him, "Cornelius!"**

4 **And when he observed him, he was afraid, and said, "What is it, lord?" So he said to him, "Your prayers and your alms have come up for a memorial before God.**

Cornelius and his deeds were a memorial.

Cornelius deeds weren't "filthy rags" to God. God was impressed. Delighted. Chose to use Cornelius to introduce salvation to the other nations.

For us ... the lesson is that we can be righteous in God's sight.

We should be — loyal ... faithful ... obedient ... even if we are not perfect.

We shouldn't "rely" on some Heavenly Accounting System which God pretends we're righteous.

Men and women in the past were righteous. God Himself said so.

In the World Tomorrow ...people will be righteous. God won't pretend they are. They will be righteous!

We can be righteous today. No need to be defeatist — "all our righteousnesses is as filthy rags" so why try?

Let's join the ranks of those who came before us ... whom God declared were righteous in His sight!