

Righteousness

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Date: 01 January 2000

Preacher: Rev Innes Macrae

[0 : 00] 1 John chapter 2 verse 29. If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that everyone that doeth righteousness is born of him.

The Apostle John in his first letter is concerned with the subject of assurance. He wants Christian believers to be assured of their salvation.

He gives to us various tests which we can apply, which true believers can apply to give to them this assurance.

One of those tests is the moral test, to that he refers several times throughout his letter. And with that he is dealing particularly in this verse of our text this morning.

You notice here, first of all, that he tells us that God is righteous. God is righteous. He says, if you know that he is righteous.

[1 : 11] God is righteous. What does this mean? God has given to us his law. His moral law. And that law is itself an expression of his own righteous nature.

He, to break that law is sin. Transgression of that law is sin. And that God never condones.

He cannot and will not tolerate it. He is absolutely intolerant of sin. He must punish sin. God is of purer eyes than to behold evil.

He cannot look upon iniquity. We read in the Old Testament in the prophecy of Habakkuk. God is separate from sin. He is continually and completely and utterly and eternally separate from all sin. He will not and he cannot save the sinner by overlooking his sin. God sent his son into this world in order that he might take the sinner's place.

[2 : 36] That he might stand in the sinner's stead and take the punishment due to the sinner. He, Christ Jesus, God incarnate, took the penalty himself.

All the sins of all those who will ever be saved were laid upon him. And as he bore them, the wrath of God against them was poured out upon his own beloved son.

The cross declares God's righteousness. The cross declares the love of God. God is light, the Bible tells us.

In him is no darkness at all. The gods of the heathen all come short, very far short, of the standard of perfect righteousness.

They are capricious and vindictive, sensual and violent. But the one true God, the Lord of all the earth, the God of all the earth, the Lord.

[3 : 53] He is perfectly holy. He is light. God is light. And God is fire, we are told as well.

The book of Hebrews says to us, our God is a consuming fire. Fire is the symbol of purity.

No sin can enter into his presence. God is righteous. This means too that God is faithful.

Because God is righteous, he is faithful. He is true. He is always true to his own word. This is a strong emphasis running throughout the Bible.

God has entered into covenant with his people. And in that covenant he has promised to do his people good.

[4 : 53] He has promised that he will cause all things to work together for the good of his people.

He has promised to save his people. He has promised that he will bring those people included in his covenant to everlasting glory.

And God will do that. God must do that. He must do so because he is righteous. Not to do so would be going back upon his word.

It would be failing to discharge those obligations which in his own sovereignty he has bound himself to in the covenant that he has made.

That would not be consistent with his righteousness. I was reading this morning in the book of Nehemiah. I was reading there how the people were confessing their sins before God.

And as their leaders were praying to God they were recalling in that prayer there in Nehemiah chapter 9. How God had made his covenant with Abraham promising him a great seed, a great number of descendants.

[6 : 05] And that he would give to them a land of great fertility and of great wealth. And the prayer goes on to say these words.

God is truth. He is faithfulness.

His truth is faithfulness that all times firmly stood and shall from age to age endure. His faithfulness, his truth is an expression of his righteousness.

Because God is righteous, he makes his people righteous. When a person believes upon Jesus, he is pronounced righteous.

He is justified. He is pronounced righteous in his status before God. The righteousness of Christ is imputed to him. But God is determined to bring that person into a state of perfect righteousness and character.

[7 : 14] To make that individual perfectly righteous in character. He writes his law upon his heart. He puts his Holy Spirit within him.

He begins within him the great process of making him holy. And that process will continue within him as long as he remains here and there there.

God subdues his sins and he makes them like Christ. He conforms him to the image of his own son. God subdues his sins and he makes them like Christ.

God subdues his sins and he makes them like Christ. God subdues his sins and he makes them like Christ. God subdues his sins and he makes them like Christ. For in shall dwell only righteousness. All sins.

Satan and all his hosts, all his demons. And all who remain in their sins. All who refuse the salvation that is in Christ. All who remain sinners will be outside of that universe.

[8 : 41] They will be banished eternally into outer darkness. God's universe will be perfect.

It must be so. For God is righteous. And there shall in no wise enter into it. We read in Revelation 21.

And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defiles it. Neither whatsoever worketh abomination or maketh a lie.

But they which are written in the Lamb's book of life. God is righteous. He is totally righteous. He is utterly righteous.

He is 100% righteous. God is righteous. Our text speaks secondly of those who do righteousness.

[9 : 39] Those who do righteousness. He says if you know that he is righteous. You know that everyone that doeth righteousness.

Everyone that doeth righteousness. There are those in this world who do righteousness. There are people here in this world on this earth of whom the Bible says that they lead righteous lives.

The Bible does not mean of course that they reach a state of sinless perfection here in this world. That they are perfectly righteous in character.

They do not lead perfectly righteous lives here in this world. We must interpret this in the context of the whole Bible. The most righteous person on earth this morning comes short, far short of the standard of perfect righteousness.

Sin adheres to everything he does. Sin survives in every believer. Sin ■■■ seeks to be righteous man. Yet there are those of whom it can be said here on this earth this morning that they do righteousness.

[10 : 58] Now what does this mean? Let us take the negative first of all. This does not mean that simply that they conform outwardly to the law of God.

The righteousness referred to here is not a mere outward conformity to the law of God. The person in mind that John has in mind here is not at all the ordinary, decent, respectable, upright living person.

That's not the person he has in mind. Saul of Tarsus, before ever he was converted, was a man like that. He could say that as touching the law, he was blameless.

Nobody could point the finger of accusation at him. Concerning outward conformity to the law, before ever he was a Christian at all, he was blameless.

He had tried so desperately hard to keep God's law. But although he was doing so outwardly, he was not doing righteousness.

[12 : 11] He was not a truly righteous person. He was still under condemnation. But let us be positive.

What does this mean? Well, let me say right away that it includes outward conformity to God's law. It means much more than that.

But it does include that. Those who are doing righteousness are people who are living according to the law of God.

They observe the Ten Commandments. They worship only the one true and living God. They have respect for the name of God. You don't hear them using the name of God or the name of Christ as a swear word.

They remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. They do good to their fellows. They lead clean lives. They have respect for the property of others. They do not steal.

[13 : 15] They tell the truth. And so on. They keep the law of God. The person who does righteousness orders his outward life by the law of God that we have given to us in the Ten Commandments.

Are you doing that? But this means much more than that. The person who does righteousness, the person referred to in our text, has an inner love for the law of God.

He can say with the Apostle Paul in all his inner thoughts and motives and desires and attitudes. It rules his inner life and is as well as his outward conduct.

This has been so well illustrated by our Lord in the Sermon on the Mount. He referred there to the Sixth Commandment.

Thou shalt not kill. Now, none of those people, I presume, to whom Jesus was speaking had broken that commandment. None of them was actually a murderer, had spilt blood.

[14 : 31] Just as there is none of us here in this congregation today who has broken the commandment. But yet Jesus went on to give his own interpretation of that commandment.

And he said, I say unto you, that he who is angry with his brother without a cause is in danger of the judgment. And he went on to say, he who says to his brother, Raka, that was a term of abuse.

He who says to his brother, Raka is in danger of the counsel. And he who says to his brother, Raka is in danger of the fire.

To be unjustifiably angry with somebody else. Or to hurl abuse at somebody else. Is an infringement of God's law.

It is a breaking of the Sixth Commandment. A person who is doing righteousness. Observes God's law in his thoughts and in his motives and in his attitudes.

[15 : 38] And again in the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus made it so plain that doing righteousness, keeping the law of God. Means loving even our very enemies.

Another marvelous illustration of this given by our Lord. Is that in that incomparable parable that he told.

The good Samaritan. That Samaritan came to the assistance of the poor man. Lying there wounded and half dead by the wayside.

Now I suggest to you that most right thinking people would do that. The priest and the Levites were surely unusual.

In their hard heartedness. Most right thinking people would go to the help of a poor man. Lying, dying there by the roadside. But this Samaritan went far further than that.

[16 : 39] He did everything that he could do. For that poor suffering man. He bandaged his wounds. Probably he had to tear up some garment of his own to provide the bandages.

He poured in the soothing oil. And the disinfecting wine. He set him upon his own donkey. He mounted him upon his own donkey. It meant that he himself had to walk.

While he brought him to the nearest inn. He stayed with him overnight there at the inn. He paid the innkeeper to look after him. And he told the innkeeper to give to him all the attention that he needed.

And if what he paid was not enough. Then he would reimburse him when he came again. He did everything he could do for that poor suffering man.

And it was no burden for him to do it. He felt it no burden. He was glad to do it. He was doing righteousness. He was conforming to the law of God.

[17 : 43] To do righteousness. To do righteousness. To do righteousness. To do righteousness. Means to love God wholeheartedly. It means to love others also.

It means to love one's neighbor as oneself. Are you doing righteousness? Those who do righteousness.

God is righteous. Those who do righteousness. And our text speaks thirdly of the new birth. The new birth.

It ends by referring to one who is born of him. If we know that he is righteous. We know that everyone that doeth righteousness.

Is born of him. A person born of him. A person born of God. The new birth. Now what is the connection with what has gone before?

[18 : 46] If we know that he is righteous. We know that everyone that doeth righteousness. Is born of him.

As I said in my introduction. John is concerned here with a great issue of assurance. What are the tests he is giving. By which.

The tests which believers should apply to themselves. And by which true believers can come to assurance of their salvation. There are various tests he gives. The test of love.

And is referred to throughout this epistle. The doctrinal test. Or the test of faith is referred to. And here he is referring to the moral test.

He refers to it several times throughout the epistle. We were reading of it very clearly earlier on. In this same chapter. Where we read that.

[19 : 46] Hereby we do know that we know him. If we keep his commandments. If a person is leading this kind of life.

If he is doing righteousness. Then he has ground for assurance. A person is not saved.

On the ground of any righteousness in himself. Not on the ground of anything that he himself does.

He is saved only on the ground of Christ's righteousness.

And Christ's finished work. But if a person is doing righteousness. In the sense in which I have tried to explain the term. Then there is evidence.

That he has been born of God. And that he is relying upon the Lord Jesus Christ. With a true justifying and saving faith.

[20 : 51] Assurance. There are those who would tell us that. A person's assurance really has nothing whatever to do. With a kind of life which he leads.

They say that what is essential is faith. Faith in Christ. And really they make little distinction. There are those who would make no distinction at all. Between a faith in Christ.

And assurance of salvation. But John will not have that. Certainly faith is essential. Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is through faith. And through faith alone. That a sinner is justified. That he is put into a right relationship with God. But the only evidence.

That he has come to a true saving faith in Christ. Is that he does righteousness. I will show you my faith.

[21 : 52] By my work. Says James. James chapter 2. And verse 18. What John is saying here. Is that a righteous life.

Is evidence. Of the new birth. Evidence of faith in Christ. And of the new birth. By nature. We don't have this righteousness.

We don't do those righteous acts. In our outward life. Or in our inward life either. The Bible tells us. That the carnal mind.

The carnal heart. Is enmity against God. It rebels against God's righteousness. It finds his law irksome. The natural heart of man.

Is not in line. With the law of God. The Bible's teaching is. That the heart of man. Is deceitful above all things. And desperately wicked.

[22 : 54] That's what we find in. The book of Jeremiah. The heart of man. Is really a well of corruption. And even if we are. Outwardly conforming.

To God's law. Then surely. We are aware of those. Ugly things. That are within. And if we are not prepared. To admit that.

Then that is just evidence. That we don't really know ourselves. At all. If we love. God's law. And are truly.

Keeping it from the heart. If we do righteousness. Then we have been. Made anew. We are new creation. We have been born again.

Nicodemus was a very upright man. He was indeed a master in Israel. He would have led our most upright lifestyle. And yet. Jesus said to him.

[23 : 52] Nicodemus. You must. Be born again. When a person has been born again. His nature is renewed.

He comes to love the things he used to hate. And to hate the things he used to love. A new principle of holiness is implanted within him. He is made anew.

By the energy of a holy spirit of God. He has been brought into the family of God. Born into that family. He has become a child of God.

And of course. The righteousness of God appears in him. The family likeness shows in him. He is made.

The Bible says. A partaker. Of the divine nature. The seed of God is in him. Something of a father's righteousness. Comes to be seen in him.

[24 : 56] That is evidence. Evidence for himself. And for others as well. That he has been born of God. He has passed from death to life.

He is now a child of God. By their fruits. You shall know them. Has this change taken place in you? Have you been born again? Without any question whatsoever. That is your greatest need. Jesus said.

Except a man be born again. He cannot see the kingdom of God. You cannot enter into that kingdom. Unless you are born again. You cannot be saved.

Unless you have been born again. You must. Must. Be born again. Oh my friends.

[25 : 55] Cry out to God. To work this change in you. Only he can. The Ethiopian cannot change his skin. Or the leopard his spot.

But God can bring you. To the new birth. Ask him to do so. And if you already profess faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Look at your life this morning. As you do so I'm sure you'll find. As I find when I look at my life. That there are many things there. Of which you will be ashamed.

But be honest. Have you been changed? Do you find within a love of righteousness? Are you in a measure from the heart doing what is righteous?

From the heart doing what is righteous? If so. Then your heart does not condemn you. You are relying upon Christ.

[26 : 59] With a true saving faith. The righteousness of Christ. Is credited to you. For his sake. God pardons you.

Accepts you. And saves you. We pray oh God. That thou wilt truly write thy word upon our hearts. Teach us that thou art righteous.

Thou art utterly and completely righteous. We pray that we will have our true understanding. As a true understanding as a human being with a finite mind can have.

That our God is totally righteous. We pray oh God that thou wilt so work in us. So renew us. So bring us to this experience of the new birth.

That we will be able to trace within ourselves the working of God. In that we do righteousness. May we be a righteous people.

[28 : 07] And have this evidence. Of God having worked within us. This great change. We know that it is only God who can work this change within us.

And we cry out to thee oh God this morning. That we as individuals. May be born again. From heaven. For Jesus sake.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.