

Empire Church of the Brethren

Sunday Service Sermons

02 November 2025

God is Righteous

Text: "My little children. Let no man lead you astray: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous." 1 John 3:7

Righteousness and just along with: to make righteous and to justify, are often misunderstood and misused.

We can be very good at our justification of ourselves.

We can "justify" ourselves in ways that are offensive to our Lord.

We need to know the difference between our righteousness, self-claimed or otherwise, and the righteousness of God.

To be righteous is to be wise as to what is right.

This is the etymology of the word righteous.

It comes from the Middle English "right-wise."

To be wise about anything is to exceed mere factual knowledge and to move into the area of experience.

God was acclaimed righteous because he did righteousness.

So he or she is righteous who does righteousness, whose life reveals its effectiveness, who realizes righteousness in conduct.

Just like Love, the one who loves does loving things.

Not a feeling but the action of love.

So with righteousness, doing the right thing at the right time.

Yet to be righteous is more than to do righteous acts. For righteousness is part of a believer's character in Christ.

Wisdom is simplicity and to be righteous is the simplest way to live.

2

It is simpler, for example to tell the truth than to get involved in deceit.

It is plain here, in black and white: to sin is to belong to the devil; to remain in Christ is to be righteous as he is righteous.

To say that God is righteous is to experience his righteousness.

No person has seen God at any time, but God's Son has revealed him.

We have been exposed to the righteousness of God, and it may be seen in three different ways.

Mandatory.

God gives moral laws that he prescribes for human conduct.

Punitive.

God's laws are the standard of judgment.

To fracture them involves fractured relationships.

To fracture them exposes us to the working out of God's wrath.

We must not ignore God's wrath.

Redemptive.

God reveals his righteousness in his redeeming activity.

God does not pass over our sins.

He goes through them when he forgives us in Christ Jesus and calls us his dear children.

Righteousness marks the intervention of God in human affairs, the conquest of sin down on the plains of human history.

3

God can afford to give free, unfettered grace because his righteousness is absolute.
There are not strings attached, no entangling alliances, no compromised principles.
He owes no human anything!
What does all this mean to us?
To say that God is righteous is to set our own course toward righteousness.
How shall we "be righteous"?
We will not be righteous in blind acceptance of certain moral principles.
Righteousness is reasonable.
It involves two positive factors: goodwill and a certain ideal of life.
Righteousness is reasonable: to obey cosmic laws, moral and physical, is sensible.
We will not be righteous in anguished terror.
Righteousness is submission to right in full confidence of God's love.
Discipline is a part of learning and is closely related to discipleship.
While the results of sin remain, the penalty becomes a discipline but blossoms into opportunity.
When a child has a genuine love relationship with his father, he does not say of sin, "I can do that. Father has forbidden it, but he is a dear father and will let me get away with it."
A child who thinks like that does not really love his father.

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And a father who would let his child get away with sin would not be acting in the child's best interest.
A few years ago, young people on a youth retreat were badgering the leader to let them do something that he had told them they could not do.
In desperation they talked to the leader's son.
The son complimented the leader before them by saying, "He will not change his mind, If he said you can't do it, he won't change."
In a genuine love relationship between a father and child, the child fears doing anything the father thinks is wrong.
We will not be righteous in selfish obedience.
Righteousness is involved in redemption.
An illustration of this is the familiar story of Cain and Able.
Both boys sacrificed obediently, but one's sacrifice was acceptable and the other's was not.
This suggests that mere agreement with the principle of sacrifice is not sufficient.
Somehow the ethical element made the difference in the acceptability of that sacrifice.
The violent deed of murder was only the final expression of a hostility that righteousness frequently calls out in those who reject it.
To love one's brother as oneself and to acknowledge God's fatherhood to all men, this is evidence of righteousness.

5

How then does one achieve righteousness?
The familiar words to the hymn ring true.
E'er since by faith I saw the stream
Thy flowing wounds supply,
Redeeming love has been my theme
And shall be till I die.

We cannot achieve righteousness, either for moral uprightness or for acceptability with God.
It is God's Son whose sacrifice makes us acceptable.
The Old Testament principle is clearly stated by the prophet Isaiah: My righteous servant will make many righteous.
It is God's Spirit who assists our moral uprightness.

This is the world of the apostle in *Romans 10:1-3*.

“Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.”

It is, after all, God’s righteousness, not our own, that we seek.

Let Him do His wonderful work in you.

Now and forever, Amen.