

LESSON 2

"THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS"

SCRIPTURES TO STUDY

- ★ Luke 19:1-10
- ★ Romans 4:1-25
- ★ Ephesians 2:8-9
- ★ Ephesians 6:10-18
- ★ II Corinthians 5:21
- ★ Galatians 2:16

CENTRAL TRUTH

People are righteous in God's eyes because they have faith in Christ.

THE SPOKEN WORD

"A man is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ."
Galatians 2:16

TO THE TEACHER

Righteousness is one of the most misunderstood scriptural concepts. It is not a description of our behavior but rather a description of our position with God. He who is righteous is in right-standing with God.

God declared Abraham righteous on the basis of his faith when there was no law. Abraham believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness. Faith is what saved Abraham and the Bible makes this point clear.

When the Law of Moses was instituted, many began to substitute their good works as a replacement for faith. Works became so emphasized it was thought men were made righteous because of them. God never accepted this notion, even during the time of the law. Men have never been accepted by God for their works. Faith has always been required because it pre-supposes that we, as guilty sinners, cannot save ourselves, and we are dependent upon God's favor for acceptance. The person who approaches God on the basis of his own works is suggesting that he can save himself by his behavior.

With these thoughts in mind, righteousness is a gift from God which cannot be earned. We do not deserve it though we can obtain it by our faith in God's provision. There are no degrees of righteousness though there are degrees of spiritual maturity.

The newest babe in Christ is as righteous as the oldest saint. We are right with God by faith in His sacrificial gift.



ILLUSTRATED SERMON

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SCRIPTURES TO STUDY:

- Luke 19:1-10 • Romans 4:1-25 • Ephesians 2:8-9 • Ephesians 6:8-10 • II Corinthians 5:21
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OBJECTS NEEDED:

Create a large poster-board heart with a half-heart flap in the middle. The half-heart should be taped in the middle so it can swing to either side. Label one side of the heart **RIGHTEOUS** and the other side **GUILTY**. Label various household cleanser bottles with the following words: **GOOD WORKS**, **SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS** and **RELIGION**. You will also need a black and a red cloth, both large enough to completely cover the heart. You will need a scrub brush and a sponge.

HOW TO PREPARE:

Fix the heart to a chalkboard or bulletin board on a tripod so you can present it to the class. Do not let the children see the flap. Double-stick masking tape or velcro can be used to make the flap adhere to either face.

MESSAGE:

I. God wants people to have a clean heart.

(Hold up heart with RIGHTEOUS side exposed.)

A. When God created man, there was nothing evil or wicked in him at all.

1. Adam was righteous before God.
2. Because he was in right-standing with God, he was not afraid of God and could talk to Him about anything.

B. When Adam sinned, he became unrighteous.

1. He lost his standing with God.
2. His heart was marred by guilt and sin.

(Use the black cloth to carefully manipulate the flap so the GUILTY side is exposed.)

C. People have guilty hearts because of the sin of Adam and because of our own sins.

1. Because God is totally pure and good, He cannot accept evil.
2. If God accepted evil in the heart of man, He would have to accept evil in the heart of satan to be fair and just.
3. Mankind would be doomed forever to live with satan and his destructive angels.

II. People don't want to have a guilty heart so they try to fix it on their own.

A. When Adam sinned, he tried to cover his sin with fig leaves and he hid himself from God.

(Put the black cloth over the guilty heart.)

1. God could always see the sin in Adam's heart.

(Lift up the cloth.)

2. People cannot hide their hearts from God.

(Remove the cloth entirely.)

B. Many people use religion to deal with their sins.

1. Religion is man's idea of how to be right with God.
2. Religion cannot clean a guilty heart.

(Apply the RELIGION cleanser and attempt to clean the guilty heart.)

C. Some people think good works will make them right with God.

1. They do good things because they think it makes them right with God.

(Apply the GOOD WORKS cleanser.)

2. Good works cannot cleanse away sin.

D. Some don't think they need forgiveness at all because they are self-righteous.

(Apply SELF-RIGHTEOUS cleanser.)

1. The self-righteous person will not admit he has need of forgiveness.
2. He doesn't think he has done anything to make himself guilty before God.

III. God has given us a way to become righteous again.

A. God wants us to come to Him on His terms.

1. He has a way of salvation.
2. We do not get to choose how we will come to God.

B. God paid a great price for us to obtain righteousness.

1. The Blood of Christ had to be shed for us to be forgiven.

(Bring out the red cloth.)

2. Sin had to be punished or else God would have had to let the devil go free.

C. When we accept the Blood of Christ as our cleansing, we are made right before God.

(Rub the red cloth over the heart and carefully turn the flap to reveal the RIGHTEOUS side.)