

I. Introduction:

- A. I can tell you from experience that the more a person studies the Bible, the more he will see which he has never seen before.
1. Sometimes we learn that our doctrinal perspective is askew.
 2. But often there is just new stuff that God has not brought to our attention before.
 3. We cannot exhaust the depths of God or of His Word. There are always things to learn.
 4. And this week I have learned something about the righteousness of God.
- B. Our unnamed worship-leader makes a statement in **verse 8** which the Holy Spirit highlighted in my mind.
1. The man said, Lord, thou *“**hast performed thy words, FOR thou art RIGHTEOUS.**”*
 2. At first I thought – Lord you want me to bring another lesson on this?
 3. I thought – this is so simple and elemental that it will be difficult to teach – to keep people’s attentions.
 4. But I was wrong – at least in part. I may not keep your attention, but this isn’t simple.
 - a. First, this has nothing to do with what I initially thought, and I think the subject might surprise you too.
 - b. Second, in the dozen books which I have on the attributes of God, not one of them deals extensively with God’s righteousness, and most don’t even mention it.
 - c. And third, there are two hundred scriptures on this subject, opening dozens of interesting doors.

II. When I first read this verse my mind automatically substituted the word “holy” for “righteous.”

1. Lord, thou *“**hast performed thy words, for thou art (HOLY).**”*
 2. But here is the thing – the **righteousness** and the **holiness of God** are **NOT the same thing**.
 3. They are not synonyms of each other.
 4. And when the Bible speaks of righteous people it doesn’t always mean *“saved”* people – *“saints.”*
- B. God is **holy** in the sense that He is **separated**; He **stands apart** from **sin**; He is **sanctified**.
1. And when God saves a sinner, that person becomes one of the Lord’s saints – sanctified, set apart, separated unto God and His glory.
 2. But that doesn’t mean that they are righteous in the sense the word is used in this verse.
- C. The Hebrew word **“holy”** is also translated *“dedicated to God,” “consecrated”* and even *“a sanctuary.”*
1. But the Hebrew word **“righteous”** does not refer to *“separation”* or *“holiness”* – it refers to **“JUSTICE.”**
 2. It is translated *“righteous”* 162 times and *“just”* 42 times and not necessarily in the sense of *“justified.”*
 3. **God is HOLY by NATURE**, but – in addition to that – He is **RIGHTEOUS in His ACTIONS**.
 4. And when a man is said to be *“righteous,”* it means that he **acts with justice** towards other people.
 5. Are you still with me? **“Holy”** means *“sanctified,”* but **“righteous”** speaks of *“justice.”*
- D. Perhaps you can see the meaning of this word more clearly later in this prayer – or song or whatever it is.
1. Look at **Nehemiah 9:31**. After describing Israel’s rebellious history, our Levite says –
 2. *“Nevertheless for thy great mercies’ sake thou didst not utterly consume them, nor forsake them; for thou art a gracious and merciful God,”*
 3. *Now therefore, our God, the great, the mighty, and the terrible God, who keepest covenant and mercy, let not all the trouble seem little before thee, that hath come upon us, on our kings, on our princes, and on our priests, and on our prophets, and on our fathers, and on all thy people, since the time of the kings of Assyria unto this day.*
 4. *Howbeit thou art JUST in all that is brought upon us; for thou hast done right, but we have done wickedly.”*
 5. God is righteous or just in the way He has treated rebellious Israel.
- E. When it comes to men, it is easy to show that **“righteous”** is not the same as **“holy”**.
1. A **“righteous”** man is not necessarily a **“saved”** person.

2. For example when Solomon ordered Benaiah to execute Joab for murder, he said, *“And the LORD shall return his blood upon his own head, who fell upon two men **MORE righteous** and **better** than he, and slew them with the sword...”*
 3. If the word *“righteous”* meant *“holy”* explain how something can be *“more holy”* than something else.
 4. And when Abraham was arguing for the people of Sodom, he said, Lord, *“peradventure there be fifty **righteous** within the city: wilt thou also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty **righteous** that are therein?”*
 5. He wasn't saying there might be fifty saved people in the city; he was referring to the possibility of honest or just men.
 6. **Genesis 7:1** – *“And the LORD said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen **righteous** before me in this generation.”*
 7. The Lord didn't find Noah holy or in a state of salvation. Noah was an honest man in a dishonest society.
- F. There is an abundance of scriptures which contrast *“righteousness”* with *“wickedness.”*
1. *“Oh let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end; but establish the **just**: for the **righteous** God trieth the hearts and reins.”*
 2. In that verse from **Psalm 7** the Hebrew word is translated both as *“just”* and *“righteous.”*
 3. The Bible says, *“God judgeth the **RIGHTEOUS**, and God is angry with the wicked every day.”*
 4. *“The memory of the **JUST** is blessed: but the name of the wicked shall rot.”*
 - a. *“The mouth of a **RIGHTEOUS** man is a well of life: but violence covereth the mouth of the wicked.”*
 - b. *“The labour of the **RIGHTEOUS** tendeth to life: the fruit of the wicked to sin.”*
 - c. *“The tongue of the **JUST** is as choice silver: the heart of the wicked is little worth.”*
 5. There are a dozen more scriptures all making this comparison between the wicked and the righteous.
 6. And these scriptures are talking about behavior – not spiritual condition.

III. The Lord our God – as our prayer-leader tells us – is righteous.

- A. I could share two dozen scriptures restating this if you'd like.
1. **Exodus 9:27** – *“And Pharaoh sent, and called for Moses and Aaron, and said unto them, I have sinned this time: the LORD is **RIGHTEOUS**, and I and my people are wicked.”*
 2. One of my favorite verses in **Deuteronomy** uses this Hebrew word, but translates it as *“just.”*
 3. **Deuteronomy 32:4** – Jehovah our God, *“He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, **JUST** and right is he.”*
 4. **Ezra** prayed in **9:15** – *“O LORD God of Israel, thou art **RIGHTEOUS**: for we remain yet escaped, as it is this day: behold, we are before thee in our trespasses: for we cannot stand before thee because of this.”*
 5. **Psalm 116:5** – *“Gracious is the LORD, and **RIGHTEOUS**; yea, our God is merciful.”*
 6. **Psalm 119:137** – *“**RIGHTEOUS** art thou, O LORD, and upright are thy judgments.”*
 7. **Psalm 145:17** – *“The LORD is **RIGHTEOUS** in all his ways, and holy in all his works.”*
- B. None of these scriptures are saying that the Lord is holy, because that is a different Hebrew word.
1. They are saying that He always does what is right – He is just.
 2. **Psalm 11:3** is a memorable verse.
 - a. *“If the foundations be destroyed, what can the **RIGHTEOUS (people)** do?”*
 - b. Just and honest people need a standard upon which to establish their lives – they need laws and rules of morality.
 - c. When there is no foundation, by what principle can we prove that a person's deeds are righteous/just?
 3. When Moses was exhorting Israel to learn God's law and to be obedient to God's law, he said, *“And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so **RIGHTEOUS** as all this law, which I set before you this day?”*
 4. He wasn't speaking of a holy law, but a just law.

- C. All of this came out of my study after the Lord highlighted the statement – Lord, thou *“hast performed thy words, for thou art righteous.”*

IV. But my first intention for tonight’s lesson was to pursue the things which characterize the righteous.

- A. We are told here that God is righteous, He is just, and therefore **He has always keeps His word** – His promises.
1. God is righteous and therefore He cannot lie – **Titus 1:2.**
 2. This is essentially the theme of this long prayer.
 3. **Verse 31** again, *“Nevertheless for thy great mercies’ sake thou didst not utterly consume them, nor forsake them; for thou art a gracious and merciful God.”*
 4. And **verse 33** – *“Howbeit thou art **JUST** in all that is brought upon us; for thou hast done right, but we have done wickedly.”*
- B. This same word is used to describe people who are righteous?
1. When it comes to civil government, *“The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men must be **JUST (righteous)**, ruling in the fear of God. – **II Samuel 23:3.***
 2. King Saul, in a moment of sanity and lucidity, said of David,
 - a. *“Thou art more **righteous** than I: for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil.”*
 - b. Righteous people are not retaliatory – they bless when they are cursed; they do good unto those who mistreat them.
 - c. In other words they behave in a similar fashion to the Lord.
- C. I could go on, but I don’t want to become excessively tedious.
1. So I’ll close with some of God’s blessings upon people who are righteous.
 2. As I do, please keep in mind that to receive these blessings we must be righteous like God.
 3. For example, if you do not keep your word, you shouldn’t expect to receive these blessings.
- D. What does the faithful, just, righteous God do for those people who are righteous in their behavior?
1. **Ps. 146:8** – *“The LORD openeth the eyes of the blind: the LORD raiseth them that are bowed down: the LORD loveth the **RIGHTEOUS.**”*
 2. **Ps. 5:12** – *“For thou, LORD, wilt **bless the RIGHTEOUS**; with favour wilt thou compass him as with a shield.”*
 3. **Ps. 34:15** – *“The eyes of the LORD are upon the **RIGHTEOUS**, and his ears are open unto their cry.”*
 4. **Ps. 34:19** – *“Many are the afflictions of the **RIGHTEOUS**: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all.”*
 5. **Ps. 37:16** – *“A little that a **RIGHTEOUS** man hath is better than the riches of many wicked.”*
 6. **Ps. 37:25** – *“I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the **RIGHTEOUS** forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.”*
 7. **Ps. 55:22** – *“Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall **sustain** thee: he shall never suffer the **RIGHTEOUS** to be moved.”*
 8. **Prov. 10:3** – *“The LORD will not suffer the soul of the **RIGHTEOUS** to famish: but he casteth away the substance of the wicked.”*
- E. Because the Lord is righteous, it is a part of His nature and character to act in a just manner.
1. That means He will judge the wicked.
 2. But it also means He will be bless those people who behave in a righteous manner – like Himself.
 3. We cannot go wrong in trying to serve God – His way.