

- I. Session 43: Righteousness of God Part 1: Definition and Proofs
- a. Purpose: Define and demonstrate that God is righteous follow by exploring its implications for our lives.
 - b. Defining God's righteousness.
 - i. God's righteousness refer to God's moral goodness often in the context of a legal/forensic sense since God is a Judge.
 - ii. John Feinberg: "Hence God is called just and righteous in himself, and in a forensic sense, his judgments and dealings with mankind are just."¹
 - iii. John Frame's point about the relationship of God's goodness and righteousness: "So God's righteousness is the form or structure of his goodness, and his goodness is the concrete, active embodiment of his righteousness."²
 - c. Proof from Scripture
 - i. Original language word studies
 1. "The Hebrew *tsedeq* and the Greek *dikaioisune* are translated 'righteousness, rightness, justice, lawfulness.' The terms are therefore in the forensic sphere, the sphere of law and the courtroom, the sphere in which one advocates or defends behavior."³
 2. Referring to the Hebrew word group found in the Old Testament, John Feinberg states: "The root word basically speaks of conformity an ethical or moral standard. In the OT that standard is the character and nature of God."⁴
 3. Referring to the Greek word group found in the New Testament, John Feinberg states: "They speak of right conduct before God, but also of just judgments and rule."⁵
 - ii. God is called Righteous throughout the Scriptures
 1. Note: There are many references, we will only look at two of them.
 2. Pharaoh's confession: "*Then Pharaoh [a]sent for Moses and Aaron, and said to them, 'I have sinned this time; the Lord is the righteous one, and I and my people are the wicked ones.'*" (**Exodus 9:27**)
 3. "*Gracious is the Lord, and righteous; Yes, our God is compassionate.*" (**Psalm 116:5**)
 - a. This is a Psalm where the writer is thanking God for deliverance.
 - b. Note the Psalmist praises God, and sings of God's attributes including the fact that He is "*righteous.*"
 - iii. Because God is righteous, His laws and rules are also righteous:

¹ John Feinberg, *No One Like Him* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2001), 345.

² John Frame, *Doctrine of God* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2002), 446.

³ *Ibid*, 447.

⁴ John Feinberg, *No One Like Him* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2001), 345.

⁵ *Ibid*.

1. *"Righteous are You, O Lord, And upright are Your judgments. 138 You have commanded Your testimonies in righteousness And exceeding faithfulness." (Psalm 119:137-138)*
 - a. Both verses mention "*righteous*" both in reference to God and his "*testimonies*," which are His rules.
 - b. Here we see that God has commanded His rules "*in righteousness*."
 2. *"At midnight I shall rise to give thanks to You Because of Your righteous ordinances." (Psalm 119:62)*
 - a. Notice that the author can give thanks to God for His righteous rules even at midnight! How many of us will praise God in the middle of the night?
 - b. The worship of God for His righteous laws are also repeated in **Psalm 119:164 and 119:172**.
 3. His ordinances are described as righteous and everlasting: *"The sum of Your word is truth, And every one of Your righteous ordinances is everlasting." (Psalm 119:160)*
- iv. Because God is righteous, His rule and judgment is stated in Scripture to be based upon His Righteousness:
1. *"Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne; Lovingkindness and [a]truth go before You." (Psalm 89:14)*
 - a. Of course God's throne indicates His rule.
 - b. Notice the "*foundation of Your throne*" are "*Righteousness and justice*"
 - c. This truth is also echoed in **Psalm 97:2**.
 2. *"And the heavens declare His righteousness, For God Himself is judge." (Psalm 50:6)*
 - a. Apparently the heavens declare God's righteousness which in light of **Romans 1:18** also gives us deeper understanding of the wrath that is revealed from heaven is a righteous wrath.
 - b. Notice the basis for God being righteous is "*God Himself is judge*."
 3. *"Before the Lord, for He is coming, For He is coming to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples in His faithfulness." (Psalm 96:13)*
 4. *"The Almighty—we cannot find Him; He is exalted in power And He will not do violence to justice and abundant righteousness." (Job 37:23)*
- v. How does God specifically display His righteousness in His rule and judgment?
1. He will judge with equality: *"And He will judge the world in righteousness; He will execute judgment for the peoples with equity." (Psalm 9:8)*
 2. Yet He will not just treat righteous and wicked alike: *"Far be it from You to do [a]such a thing, to slay the righteous with the wicked,*

so that the righteous and the wicked are treated alike. Far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth [b]deal justly?' (**Genesis 18:25**)

- a. Context is Abraham appealing to God to spare Sodom and here is invoking the character of God which must be true since God didn't correct Him.
 - b. Thus we get this truth that God will deal with people justly in which "*the righteous and the wicked*" will not be "*treated alike.*"
3. He will judge by paying back what was done and not beyond what we deserve.
- a. God has a standard of one to one correspondence for human society in terms of wrong: "*But if there is any further injury, then you shall appoint as a penalty life for life, 24 eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, 25 burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise.*" (**Exodus 21:23-25**)
 - b. This is true in the end times with how God judges: "*For the day of the Lord draws near on all the nations. As you have done, it will be done to you. Your dealings will return on your own head.*" (**Obadiah 15**)
 - i. This is eschatological (end times): "*day of the Lord*"
 - ii. Note this is reference to Edomites, who are Gentiles and not just Israel.
 - iii. We see this principle in action: "*As you have done, it will be done to you.*"
 - c. Many other verses confirm this: **Jeremiah 50:29, Habakkuk 2:8, Joel 3:4, 7.**⁶
- d. Implications
- i. If God is righteous, we must also be righteous! "*Learn to do good; Seek justice, Reprove the ruthless, Defend the orphan, Plead for the widow.*" (**Isaiah 1:17**)
 - ii. We ought to pursue God and His righteousness before anything else: "*But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.*" (**Matthew 6:33**)
 - iii. As we have seen in this lesson from Psalm 119 earlier, do you worship God for His rules, that they are righteous?
 - iv. Are you right with God if He were to judge you?

⁶ John Frame, *Doctrine of God* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2002), 454.