

What is Righteousness?

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Philippians 2.19-3.16

Righteousness is covenant loyalty.

Two or more partners enter into a relational agreement.

Righteousness meant you kept your part of the agreement. You were faithful to your covenant promise. “Unrighteous” people were those who did not keep their promise.

Righteousness was a law court word as well. If your covenant partner failed to keep their promise you could take him or her before the judges who would listen to both sides. They would pronounce the faithful party “righteous” and the unfaithful one “unrighteous.”

Israel believed God was righteous. He invited them into a covenant and he kept his promise. His promise meant His presence was with them. He looked out for them and provided for them. They were to worship Him, and only Him, in the way he prescribed in the Law.

Israel failed. They were unrighteous. They did not worship him alone.

Jesus came brought a new covenant (Lk.22.20) and restored righteousness (2 Cor. 5.21). A controversy broke out after Jesus ascension when the Holy Spirit came on Gentiles. This meant God accepted them. But were they righteous? Some said ONLY if they become circumcised (see. Gen. 17.9-14). Paul rejected this as “another Gospel.” He taught righteousness is only available by faith (see Rom. 1.17; 3.22, 25-26; 4.5, 11-13; 10.6; Gal. 3.11; 5.5; Heb. 10.36)