

**THREADS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, LESSON 5**

*...that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe, as you hold out the word of life... (Philippians 2:15-16, NIV)*

**I**RECENTLY PLAYED TWO EXCELLENT GOLF COURSES, both of which featured large, undulating greens. Because many putts would change tiers, you had to be adept at reading the greens at both levels. *What will this putt do down here? Then what will it do when it goes over the rise?*

The Bible can sometimes require similar reading. The same word can represent more than one meaning. Indeed, our topic at hand—righteousness—exists in Scripture on more than one level. Those who are saved in Christ are done so by the righteousness of Christ. Only his righteousness counts before the judgment of a perfect God. We must cling to that righteousness if we are to enter eternity with Christ.

However, the Scriptures also speak of various people being righteous in the way they lived their lives. Abel, Job, Noah, Asa, Simeon, Joseph of Arimathea, and Cornelius the centurion are among those deemed “righteous” or “upright.” Even an imperfect measure of righteousness, then, can be noteworthy, standing out against “a crooked and depraved generation.”

For followers of Christ, this righteousness is made increasingly possible as Jesus himself establishes his reign in our hearts. This is done through a combination of our surrender to his lordship and his desire that we would reflect who he is. To surrender is to forsake those affections and sins that establish themselves in opposition to a life of worship and obedience. These are normally remnants of the life we lived before we gave ourselves over to Jesus. It is “only natural” that he should want to replace them, but his work is quite often supernatural in its enactment. God works in us as only God can!

Contrasted against the sinful nature is life in the Spirit. Paul wrote specifically of this separation in Romans 8 and Galatians 5. We cannot ignore the difference, thinking there is a “soft righteousness” toward which we give a reasonable effort while God forgives all else. Yes, our effort is important (2 Peter 1:5). And yes, God forgives our transgressions (1 John 1:9). But we don’t honor Christ by coasting along. There is work to be done, evidence to be given of the word of life that dwells in us and trains us in righteousness. Let’s take up that work!

**Opening questions** How would you define an “upright person?” Where do you think the motivation or example for such uprightness normally comes from? How is Christ’s righteousness different from our own?

**READING** Romans 8:5-14; Galatians 5:16-6:10; Philippians 3:12-14

**Spiritual thoughts**

In Paul’s teaching to the Romans, what contrast do we see in the way the sinful mind works and the way the Spirit-led mind works? How should your thoughts be different if the Spirit of God indwells you?

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**Spiritual actions**

In Galatians 5, what contrast do we see in the way the flesh acts and the way the Spirit-indwelled person acts? How should your actions be different if the Spirit of God indwells you?

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**Pressing on**

In Philippians 3, we find our responsibility as people faithful to God. What is it? How might we set about it? What is its purpose?

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Written by Jeff Hopper ©2014 Links Players International. A 5-minute video accompanies today’s study at <http://youtu.be/EjiaABhf14Yw>