

THREADS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, LESSON 4

“...and if you swear, ‘As the Lord lives,’ in truth, in justice, and in righteousness, then nations shall bless themselves in him, and in him shall they glory.” (Jeremiah 4:2, NASB)

WHEN YOU POST A LOW NUMBER on a tournament scoreboard, we can make some real assumptions about you—at least for that day. You hit enough good shots and made enough good putts to collect pars, avoid bogeys, and maybe even notch several birdies.

Likewise, when a man or woman displays the righteousness that includes truth, justice, mercy, kindness, and love (among a list of godly traits), we can say of that person, “The Lord is at work in that one.”

This is exciting, really. When you truly open your heart to Jesus’ reign in you and you see him at work changing your attitudes and actions, you know the wonder of being indwelt and influenced by God.

But don’t think that wonder is lost on you alone. As God promised his people through Jeremiah, a righteousness that honors his will for our lives—which is to demonstrate and preach his gospel of forgiveness and grace—will shine forth. Others will see it and be drawn to the Lord.

Jesus pointed out this “spiritual shininess” in his Sermon on the Mount, when he challenged his hearers to let others see their good deeds that these observers might praise God in heaven. And Peter echoed the Lord when he wrote, “[make your defense] with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.” That is, their mocking will reveal what kind of people they are, while your obedience to God will demonstrate what kind of Savior dwells in you.

You see, people recognize God in you. Your living righteously honors him, and that honor multiplies, increasing his glory. But the order must be correct. We can’t win God over by ticking of the right list of *do’s* and *don’ts*. Instead, we have to allow our hearts to be captivated by the God who wants them. When they are, we become enamored with his laws—his designs for righteousness—as David was. In this way, our *being* initiates our *doing*. More accurately, *his* being in us initiates our doing. From there, we are blessed and he is glorified.

Opening questions What makes a person good? What evidence on the outside gives us a sense of a person’s being good on the inside? How are righteousness and “being right with God” related?

READING Jeremiah 4:1-4; Daniel 12:1-3

Circumcised hearts

Physical circumcision set Israelite males apart, distinct from other nations. What would you say it means to have a circumcised heart? How would this set God’s people apart?

How does Jeremiah 4:4 show us the intensity of God’s desire that his people be distinct in their righteousness? For whom is God’s wrath designated?

Shining with righteousness

Daniel’s closing words point to the enduring nature of those God delivers. Who stands to shine in the end? What is entailed in “leading many to righteousness”?

Written by Jeff Hopper ©2014 Links Players International. A 5-minute video accompanies today’s study at <http://youtu.be/fWdLQjfm9Po>