

THREADS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, LESSON 1

I will give thanks to the LORD because of his righteousness. (Psalm 7:7, NIV)

SOMEWHERE IN THE COUNSEL OF GOD, SPREAD THROUGH THE INFINITE BEGINNING, the Lord established the standards for his universe.

And may I suggest, nearly 14 years in, that such a statement is the most fantastic beginning we've ever made of a devotion? I don't mean that it is uniquely well-written or otherwise praiseworthy. I mean that it says things about God that reach beyond the confines of our mental capabilities—that God maintains his own counsel, that he has infinitely existed, that he governs the universe in its apparently endless expanse. Imagine! Well, imagine as far as you can.

To me a golf ball is a gorgeous little thing, all shiny and perfectly dimpled. Still I am sure that if I were to look at it through the lens of a jeweler, each ball would have as many pits and flaws as even the finest diamonds. God, however, could stand such scrutiny. In the minutest detail, his perfection would shine even there.

When we think of God this way, we cannot help but ask—albeit with a significant measure of reverent fear—what it is that God demonstrates most and asks unequivocally for from his universe.

The answer appears to lie in two psalmic lines traced back through the ages.

David wrote in Psalm 9: “He rules the world in righteousness and judges the peoples with equity.”

And from the writer of Psalm 33, we see: “The LORD loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of his unfailing love.”

Under the Law, under grace, God has always demonstrated and loved righteousness and justice. And God's people, while imperfect in their efforts and thus ever reliant on the work of the Redeemer, have always been called to obey God in righteousness. Undoubtedly, when we look at Scripture, our righteousness must be rooted in faith—faith that God will replace our failed righteousness with the perfect righteousness of Christ, but also faith that the one who gave his own Son to death on a cross for us would not lead us down a meaningless path in his calling us to righteous living. We say we bear the name of Christ; does that bearing carry with it a desire and a discipline to honor him by reflecting his righteous and just image?

Opening questions When you think of a world class golfer, what does that excellence include? How are you far separated from that excellence? In what ways can you achieve similar excellence in our game?

READING Psalm 71:19-24, Proverbs 21:21, Isaiah 42:5-7, Romans 3:21-26
Read all of today's passages, then respond to today's questions.

God's righteousness and our own
When you think of God's righteousness, what does that include?

To what degree do you think we can reflect this righteousness?

What empowers us to live righteously?

Renewing your mind
Reflecting on today's lesson, how have you perhaps thought inadequately about righteousness (God's and yours)? How are you thinking of it differently now, and what difference will this make in the way you honor and obey God?

Written by Jeff Hopper ©2014 Links Players International. A 6-minute video accompanies today's study at <http://youtu.be/3idwI-6dJGA>