



When God promised Abram a son and many descendants, Abram was an old man. Abram's wife, Sarai, was also an old woman. Both were beyond the age of bearing children. It was an exciting yet improbable promise; but at the same time, if it was going to happen, then God would have to do it. Abram could do nothing about it. Therefore, Abram was able to "rest" in that fact and let God do what God had promised.

Abram accepted God's promise and believed in Him. He depended on and gave all his concerns to the LORD to fulfill His good word. This is the Biblical definition of Faith – believing in the promises of God – putting your full confidence in the person of God that He will do what He has said.

Lots of religious people talk about "faith." However, their definition of the word differs from the Biblical definition. For them, faith is about their "religion." Have you ever been asked, "What faith are you?" The question assumes that faith is about one's religion or religious practice. The next time you are asked about your faith you should answer, "The LORD will neither leave me nor forsake me. My faith is in the LORD and what He says."

Yes, they will be a little bit confused, but you will have given a real answer to the question of what your faith is.

The confusion in the definition of faith leads to even more confusion about other Biblical terms. Going back to Abram, God said that Abram's faith (believing in the promises of God) was counted for "righteousness." Righteousness is another one of those confusing religious words. For many, "righteousness" has something to do with "holiness or religious piety." But according to the Bible it simply means "doing the right thing."

Abram believed God concerning His promises and as a result, he is reckoned to have done the right thing. It is really pretty simple. If you believe in something, then you will naturally act on that belief and do those things which are consistent with what you believe.

Then he believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.

Genesis 15:6

The Apostle Paul understood the Biblical definitions of faith, righteousness, and many other terms. His commentary and teaching in the New Testament are based on those Biblical definitions. However, if you substitute the typical of most Christians' definitions for those words, Paul's commentary and teachings will become distorted. For example, Paul teaches extensively in Romans and Galatians about faith being reckoned as righteousness. In particular, he argues against those who define faith as "religion" and righteousness as "holiness or religious piety."

For what does the Scripture say? "And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness." Now to the one who works, his wage is not reckoned as a favor, but as what is due. But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned as righteousness, just as David also speaks of the blessing upon the man to whom God reckons righteousness apart from works: "Blessed are those whose lawless deeds have been forgiven, and whose sins have been covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the LORD will not take into account." Is this blessing then upon the circumcised, or upon the uncircumcised also? For we say, "Faith was reckoned to Abraham as righteousness." How then was it reckoned? While he was circumcised, or uncircumcised? Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised; and he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all who believe without being circumcised, that righteousness might be reckoned to them, and the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also follow in the steps of the faith of our father Abraham which he had while uncircumcised. For the promise to Abraham or to his descendants that he would be heir of the world was not through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith.

Romans 4:3-13

Paul points out that "circumcision" is a powerful sign of one's religion and religious practice; however, religion and religious practice are not the definitions of faith (believing in the promises of God) or righteousness (doing the right thing based on faith). The mistake that trips up religious men is their belief that in order to be saved obeying God's commandments is "doing the right thing," and therefore "righteousness" comes from doing the right thing. Too often, religious people then equate obedience with righteousness and before long they conclude that righteousness results in salvation.

All of the Bible, from the Torah to the teachings of Paul, emphatically states that obedience does not lead to salvation. Salvation by works (works of the Law in keeping commandments) is not the salvation of God; however, the works of the Law produce blessings.

This is the identical argument put forth by Paul to the Galatians.

You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Yeshua the Messiah was publicly portrayed as crucified? This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? Did you suffer so many things in vain— if indeed it was in vain? Does He then, who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you, do it by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? Even so Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.

Galatians 3:1-6

We all know that salvation does not come from works of the LORD. Keeping commandments does not save anyone. Even the family members and friends of new Messianic believers know this. When a new Messianic first appears, their family members wonder and fear that the new Messianic is trying to get saved by keeping commandments (Torah). The truth is that new Messianics are trying to learn what are the “promises of God” so they can believe in Him. Part of their instruction is to understand what God said was the “the right thing to do.”

Paul specifically taught that faith and righteousness originate from the example of our father Abraham. Other definitions supplied by religious men for faith and righteousness lead to misunderstandings. The primary misunderstanding is injecting obedience into the definition of faith or righteousness. Simply said, “Obedience leads to blessings; disobedience leads to curses.” Paul argued that there is a distinctive difference between the faith and righteousness of God and the Law of God.

But now apart from the Law [obedience in keeping commandments] the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God through faith in [the promise of God] Yeshua the Messiah for all those who believe; for there is no distinction;

Romans 3:21-22

It was Abraham who gave us God’s promise of a Son like Isaac, who would become the Lamb of God (the acceptable substitute — sacrifice) for us.

And Abraham said, "God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son."

Genesis 22:8

These are promises that lead to belief and faith. That faith then motivates us naturally to do the right thing. For those who believe in God and trust His word and promises, Yeshua is the promise of God's Son. By believing in God's promises we naturally seek to do what God has said. This is the righteousness that comes by faith. It is not based on keeping commandments per se. Learning to keep God's commandments comes later when we ask for God's instructions. Righteousness is already there because of faith.

Let's look at righteousness a bit further. There is such a strong inclination on the part of many to equate righteousness with a religious act or practice. Even further, many use appearance to make this determination.

Take, for example, two men who come before God. One is from a well known religious organization. The other is a well known fellow of lesser means. The first is clean and proper. The latter is unpolished and embarrassing. The first prays and thanks God that he is not like the second man. The second man, fearing to raise his head to God, says, "Have mercy on me, Oh God, for I am a sinner."

Which one is the righteousness man?

This is the example that Yeshua gave when He taught us about righteousness. He taught that it is not about appearance or status, but about doing the right thing. For the sinner, appealing to God's promise of mercy and forgiveness, his faith produced righteousness. He repented, which was the "right thing to do." The religious man was caught up in his own self-righteousness and ego. Self-righteousness does not come from faith, it comes from pride (self judgment) of keeping religious practices.

Even unbelievers, those who do not follow the LORD, understand the dynamic of self-righteousness. In our culture today, anti-God people almost relish pointing out the hypocritical judgments and actions of religious people, especially when self-righteousness is displayed. However, they are not righteous in doing this, although they consider themselves to be. Instead, they make an even more egregious error about righteousness. They confuse another definition with righteousness.

To illustrate my point, let me take you back to some of the history of the United States. From the beginning of the nation, two classes of peoples were not considered to be included in the definition of "citizens" in the Constitution. One was women and the other were subservient persons such as Africans, Asians, Native Americans, Mexicans, etc. The founding fathers, because of their European culture, thought of themselves only when they wrote the Preamble of the Constitution, "We the people ..." You could say they were "self-righteous."

At the civil war, President Lincoln decided to emancipate the African peoples as an act of freedom for those enslaved and to economically cripple the South. The African peoples were the strongest component in the South's need for cheap human labor. Following the civil war, the 14th, 15th, and 19th Amendments to the Constitution ensured that women and minority peoples could vote. However, individual states still set the dictates for those who could vote and be defined as the people spoken of in the Constitution. To overcome those laws, civil rights became the "watchword" for those seeking racial equality. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said it this way.

"I have a dream... that one day my children will be judged, not by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character." [August 28, 1963 at the Lincoln Memorial]

This is an over-simplification of the historical process, but it seems that the struggle has been an effort to use the ideal of equal rights (the 14th Amendment) to overcome the prejudicial bias inherent in self-righteousness. A noble battle has been fought, but the result has been another failure. In opposing the self-righteousness of men, they have also come against the righteousness of God. Let me state it again, the self-righteousness of men has nothing to do with the righteousness of God.

The righteousness of God is apart from the Law of God. That is to say, they are different elements with different equations and applications. For example, let us examine the concept of equality and equal rights. We are talking about something distinct and different from the righteousness of God. Rest assured I'm not against equality, equal rights, and civil rights. I'm using these principles to show common misunderstandings or misconceptions. To prove that let's use the Torah.

On one side the Law (the Torah) instructs us about equal rights. It says, "Eye for eye, tooth for tooth... life for life." There is one law (Torah) for the native Israelite and for the alien alike. The Law also instructs us about penalties for transgressions of the Law and restitution to those offended. The Law also demands impartiality and due process in its judgments and proceedings. But nowhere does the Law ever offend righteousness. In fact, righteousness is a foundation stone along with justice for the very throne of God. These two elements are the foundation for building a nation.

*Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Thy throne;
lovingkindness and truth go before Thee.*

Psalms 89:14

*How blessed are those who keep justice, who practice righteousness
at all times!*

Psalms 106:3

However, God's throne is not based on equal rights or civil rights. God's throne is based on righteousness and justice.

The Torah also recognizes the difference between a master and a servant. Before you say that Torah justifies what you understand to be slavery, Torah is referring to subservient relationships that exist for everyone. For example, a boss of a company has different rights and responsibilities from the employees of the company. This applies to the owner of a field compared to the hired workers in the field. The Torah governs these relationships as well. This isn't equal rights. In fact, the commandment of an eye for an eye has different results specified by Torah. If a servant is injured, he is set free. Therefore, the Bible recognizes the different levels of citizens and specifies the appropriate "right thing to do" with each.

This is no strange thing that I have said. The world fully understands the difference between equal rights of citizens and the rights of ownership.

However, let me illustrate for you what has now happened in our days by people asserting equal rights without considering –or at the expense of–righteousness (the right thing). Some people now argue that homosexual and lesbian couples should have equal rights along with heterosexual couples, including the right to marriage in the same manner as other married couples.

At the same time, some people believe that a pregnant woman has the right to terminate the life of her unborn child, that the child has no rights in the matter.

Still others say that animals and nature have equal rights with mankind, that man does not have dominion over the birds of the sky or fish of the sea. They view man's presence in wilderness areas as an intrusion on nature's rights.

Even more disgusting, pedophiles are now emboldened to argue that they should have "the right" to have sex with children.

Just as perverse are those who argue that you can do whatever you want as long as no one gets hurt or you don't get caught. Even the most respectable of our society have become thieves and cheats, leveraging their position of respect to avoid penalties and judgments. Justice has now disgraced itself to who has the higher paid lawyer to lean on the scales of justice. Bribery and "Pay for Play" have become the standards for judgments.

We now have some leaders who believe that, as a nation, we should redistribute the wealth of the people taking from those who have and giving it those who do not have in the name of "equal rights."

When the concept of righteousness is brought up, it is victimized and slandered for being associated with goodness. The pendulum of seeking equal rights has swung so far that good is evil and evil is now good.

This activity has now become so prevalent that some people are arguing that the Constitution itself is really wrong because it references God's authority and they want to redefine it. I cannot think of a more sure way to destroy the country and have every citizen break faith with one another as citizens than to attempt to write a new Constitution. The prophet Isaiah defined our days and the dynamic we are facing in this way.

Woe to those who drag iniquity with the cords of falsehood, and sin as if with cart ropes; who say, "Let Him make speed, let Him hasten His work, that we may see it; and let the purpose of the Holy One of Israel draw near and come to pass, that we may know it!" Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness; who substitute bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, and clever in their own sight! Woe to those who are heroes in drinking wine, and valiant men in mixing strong drink; who justify the wicked for a bribe, and take away the rights of the ones who are in the right!

Isaiah 5:18-23

As a general observation, you could say that similar to the mistake of previous religious men being self-righteous, secular men pursuing equal rights have become self-righteousness themselves and are seeking the very destruction of anything defined as "good" before.

Do you think that I have overstated this? Perhaps, but consider this: Even if a few outspoken radicals don't represent the majority, their message is still given air time so that eventually the majority capitulates to the demands of the unbalanced few. Have you ever actually listened to Reverend Wright, the President's former pastor? His words were extreme and put in an extreme manner. I understand why he is dismayed with the lack of support he has received. He knows that his followers believe what he has been preaching for years. His teaching is dark and full of hatred; however, it cannot stand or remain in the light of day.

The same can be said for the arguments of equal rights that assault the righteousness of God. When they do so, they cross into the domain of God. They usurp the very foundation of God's throne. Isaiah spoke of that issue as well. Picking up from the previous quote, Isaiah continues in his warning to a certain group of people:

Therefore, as a tongue of fire consumes stubble, and dry grass collapses into the flame, so their root will become like rot and their blossom blow away as dust; for they have rejected the law of the LORD of hosts, And despised the word of the Holy One of Israel. On this account the anger of the LORD has burned against His people, and He has stretched out His hand against them and struck them

down, and the mountains quaked; and their corpses lay like refuse in the middle of the streets. For all this His anger is not spent, but His hand is still stretched out.

Isaiah 5:24-25

Equal rights is an important principle, necessary for a society to cooperate together. It applies to those who are on the same horizontal level, on the same playing field. It does not, however, apply in the vertical. An employee does not get to tell an employer what his compensation must be. Those at the bottom of the mountain cannot demand that everyone must live at the same level. The poor cannot demand that the rich give of their resources simply because they have more. Nor can the government (all the people) take from those who have worked and earned to give to those who have not worked and earned an income. It is stealing. It is not righteousness, although the claims are toward being made equal. Demanding equal rights for everything, putting everyone on the same level, is not doing the right thing. In fact, in and of itself, it is very wrong and the definition of unrighteousness.

How did we get so off track? How did pursuing equal rights take us to not doing the right thing? The answer has to do with seeking our own righteousness instead of the righteousness of God. It happens when men dismiss the righteousness of God, believing they are more righteous. This mistake is made both by conservative and liberal thinkers. Conservatives are for the “right thing” sometimes to the chagrin of “equality” and balance. Liberals do the opposite, asserting equality to the harm of the “right thing.”

But it is more than a conservative/liberal thing. Take this example. Homosexuals are considered to make up approximately 6% of the population of the United States. These 6% are positioning themselves to demand equality despite the votes and decision of the majority of citizens opposed to it.

Homosexual couples don't get to do the same things as married couple get to do. They don't have the same benefits of the relationship. Homosexual couples do not get to claim their partner for insurance benefits as a spouse of a married couple does. Different types of companies have begun to change this (defining a civil union), but this “inequality” manifests itself in other ways as well. Take the example of a hospital visit. When the hospital posts a requirement that only “immediate family” is permitted to visit a patient, a homosexual partner can be prohibited from visiting because he does not meet the definition of “family.” Homosexuals are not only trying to get married; they are trying to redefine all relationships that spring forth from marriage. This includes family, aunts and uncles, grandparents, cousins, children, including husband and wife.

For the sake of discussion, let's say that homosexual marriage is authorized by the state. When two men get married, is one the husband and the other the wife? Is one dominant and one supportive? Is the dominant one called “Uncle” and the other called “Aunt” to other family members? Or, are they both called “Uncles”

with lesbians couples called “Aunts?” Or, is gender completely passé now, like in the workplace where actors and actresses are just actors?

Excuse me if you think my questions have a mocking tone. It does not. My questions address the consequences and confusion that society as a whole and local communities must face when one decides to change a definition of life that has existed since the beginning. My questions are not mocking; they must be answered when marriage is redefined. Who is going to answer all the other questions about what is the right thing? The State? Do homosexuals have the right to redefine the rest of the world also? My questions are intended to show that the homosexual agenda of attempting to integrate into marriage and family is ridiculously unreasonable.

Now consider what the righteousness of God has given us that the homosexuals want to go away. The definition of marriage and family does not come from the Constitution of the United States, nor the 14th Amendment addressing equal rights. Marriage and the family definition is part of Torah and religious law. It has been so from the beginning, not made up along the way to fit someone’s convenience. It is part of His instructions in righteousness (doing the right thing). Furthermore, the Constitution is prohibited from establishing or prohibiting religious law. The entire argument of using equal rights to define marriage is actually UN-constitutional. Their attempt at using the US Constitution to change a religious law (marriage) is itself UN-constitutional. Religious law defines marriage as a permanent relationship between a man and a woman.

“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.” [First Amendment, Constitution of the United States]

Furthermore, the Torah specifically prohibits homosexual relationships. In fact, it is referred to as an abomination and reflects a reprobate mind (one who has lost all sense of what is the right thing).

The Biblical instruction for marriage is based on and recognizes the differences between a man and woman promoting life and being fruitful in life. A marriage covenant is the prescribed long term agreement to facilitate the conception, birth, and growth of human beings to increase mankind. Homosexuality/Lesbianism in no wise can accomplish this task for mankind. Those who would argue otherwise have defined their own self-righteousness and are no different than any other self-willed person.

Which should prevail? Does a 6% group within a democracy have the right to overrule the majority in a democracy? Does an argument about “equality” overrule common sense and the religious definition of righteousness? Regardless of your interpretations, is the Constitution supreme as law to the laws of God?

The answer to all of these questions is NO. But we are in the days when people don't do the right thing.

The illustration of homosexual marriage is typical of other issues attacking the Biblical definition of righteousness. It comes down to the basis for the answers to these questions: What is the right thing? And, who determines what the right thing is? Our generation seems to prefer the distorted basis to come from "equal rights" or the Constitution itself. However, we have come to understand that the Constitution is not followed even by those who advocate this argument. Like religious men who quote the Bible and don't do what it says, secular citizens reference the Constitution and then seek to flaunt the intent of the originators of it. In fact, this is the core issue dividing conservatives and liberals. Conservatives want the Constitution to be interpreted according the original intent of the framers and Liberals want to modernize the rules to keep up with what they really want to do.

From a theological perspective, we have our conservative and liberal fights as well. Faith and righteousness are supposed to remain steadfast like the very foundation of God's throne itself. However, not everyone (including religious people) likes God being in charge of the world or deciding "what is the right thing to do." It is no wonder that unbelieving anti-God folks have been emboldened with religious leaders openly confessing that they don't believe in the righteousness of God. In fact, the anti-God folks of the world who cite man-made rules over the righteousness of God are making serious headway in the world. Laws have been passed and are being proposed that will dramatically change the direction of the culture of every nation, especially the United States. A consensus is developing all over the world called Globalism. Very soon, it is not going to be fashionable anymore to believe in God or assert goodness and the righteousness of God. In fact, to enforce "equality" and the "enlightened thinking" religious people will just be put to death.

The Apostle Paul saw the final days of this world and described them this way.

But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God; holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; and avoid such men as these.

II Timothy 3:1-5

Our world seems to be filled with men described by Paul. In fact, they appear to be our leaders of business and government. Instead of doing the right thing in their positions, they are out for themselves. The appearance of "doing the right thing" by today's leaders is only a cover to gain access to the position of higher leadership. Once there, the rules are whatever they make them to be. With each

successive leader, the departure from the “right thing” grows in distance like a dog wandering away from home until he is hopelessly lost.

For us who hold to the faith of our father Abraham, the definition of what is the right thing is found in the Scriptures, not government. It is found in the teaching of Moses and the Prophets. It is in the words of Yeshua of Nazareth and instructions of the Apostles. In the same passage, Paul exhorted us in this way:

But evil men and impostors will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them; and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Messiah Yeshua. All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

II Timothy 3:13-17

When I was 12 years old, I had a very serious and profound conversation with myself. I thought it through and I willfully decided that I wanted to do the right thing. I decided that I would do that which was good and not bad. That is when I decided long before I was tempted to not steal nor tell a lie. That is when I decided not to cheat or defraud someone else. I didn't study the Bible to decide every issue but I did understand that the Bible pretty much addressed all of the issues one way or the other. As I have matured, I have learned that the Scriptures really are instructions in righteousness (not my own, but God's). I am still learning the wisdom of His ways and why men fail when they seek only for themselves and define their own righteousness.

My experience is not unique. I have met many men with the same testimony.

In those same days of my youth, I heard my grandparents and other leaders express concerns for the future. They could see the earliest elements of that dog starting to wander. In our day, we don't have to wonder about this anymore. It is happening. The future is here. The poor dog has lost his way. Desperate times are at our doorstep.

President Obama just became the new President of the United States. Many are hopeful that he will bring change. I agree that changes are coming, but they will not be changes the people will like. I believe that within four years everything will be changed and nothing will be the same. I don't believe that our country will be the same country that we see today. My belief is based on two things: No longer do we as a nation believe in the promises of God (we are now in the process of removing Him from everything) and we are no longer willing to do the right thing. Righteousness exalts a nation; unrighteousness destroys it.

We really have no other choice but to believe in God and put our faith in His promises. We need to rest in that. With regard to righteousness, knowing what is the right thing to do is becoming so much easier. Not because we understand the Scriptures so much better. Instead, righteousness has become the opposite of whatever the world thinks is the right thing to do.

Monte

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