

# What Makes a Nation Stand Up and Out?

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**“The Resurrection Changes Everything!”** Nik Ripkin

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Isn't the obvious answer to that question, how it Loves and cares for its people? 'Love' is the single greatest virtue because it is the panacea to all global ills, ask anyone? Well, at least my sensate ubiquitous version of that state is anyway.

So, once we all agree on this point, now it is just a small step of getting everyone to take that prescribed medicine; easy, yeh?

Even Jesus Christ gave us a New Commandment, one that transcended even the Golden Rule... "To love one another as He loved us." (John 13: 34-35) Now, if He commanded it, (not recommended it) how hard can it be? Well, I suppose that depends on how you, ironically, feel about that command doesn't it?

So, we have love not only, prescribed, and demonstrated, but now commanded by the author of Love.

Let the amorphous mass of 'gooey emotion' wash all over you and all will be well with the world. In my mind's eye, I can see the poorly tuned guitars appearing in the hands of cheesy smile bedecked faces and hear the dulcet tones of a hummed kumbaya! Or perhaps the visual for the non-Christian, in a flower clad garment, with incense burning and spliff toking, tapping the bongos and groaning 'oms'?

On that stereotype, these often, psychedelic drug consumers, have been on about this 'love prescription' for decades, using MDMA, D.M.T, or L.S.D, the so-called love and god drugs – just imbibe one and all, and the 'love' happens, well at least those intense dopamine and serotonin charged 'feelings' are unleashed, which is the essence of love, right?

Again, *Love is the first priority* of Heaven, isn't it? Well, certainly our version of it should be.

So, from all this clear sentimental consensus, we can reasonably surmise that it must surely be love that is the virtue that exalts a nation?

If not love, then what may be the highest priority of heaven to bring about this national exaltation?

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While we are in this effusive love focused mode, what is the chief purpose of the construct of Grace – that incomparable and transcendently magnanimous gift that also issues from that God of Love?

What did The Christ, the Incarnate God, declare must be our paramount pursuit?

Heady questions, with complex, rich, and profound answers, that often escape the un-surrendered soul – Not a ‘convert’, rather the candidate for Discipleship – the one who has denied self, taken up the cross and is following Jesus.

Right here, it is important to note that Jesus was not commanding an emotion (our emotions often betray us when given charge), but a full and wide sacrificial action. Difficult? Even austere? Bu only so, when we are not surrendered to the Holy Spirit and all the Divine resources He wants to release in and through you.

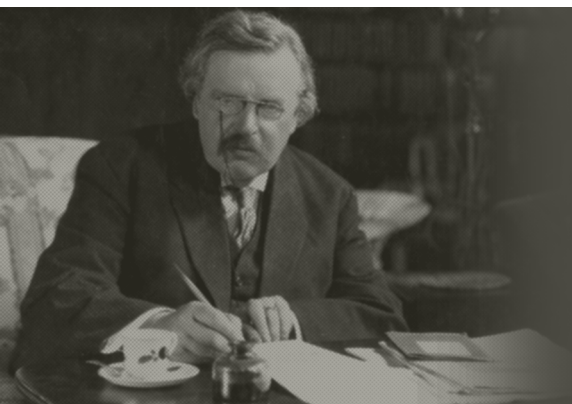
*He does not withdraw His eyes from the righteous [those in right standing with Him]; But with kings upon the throne He has seated them forever, and they are exalted.  
Job 36:7 (AMP)*

*Until the Spirit is poured out upon us from on high, And the wilderness becomes a fertile field, And the fertile field is valued as a forest. Then justice will dwell in the wilderness, And righteousness will live in the fertile field. And the effect of righteousness will be peace, And the result of righteousness will be quietness and confident trust forever. Then my people will live in a peaceful surrounding, And in secure dwellings and in undisturbed resting places.*

**Isaiah 32:15-18 (AMP)**

These resources, these qualities, these virtues of love, grace, tolerance, mercy, and justice not only have little meaning, but are utterly pointlessness without a proper context. What brings worth to these qualities can only be discovered when they are pinned to a fixed point of reference – a standard, a [plumbline](#) – that enables context for understanding of value.

For example, if tolerance is to be a virtue, it must have a clear objection to the thing it is permitting to be in its orbit. If you ‘don’t care’ about an issue, you are not ‘tolerant’, you’re just careless or indifferent. That is why G.K. Chesterton quipped that;



*“tolerance is the only virtue left for those with nothing to believe in.”*

As I touched on previously the arguably highest virtue of love, can never be measured as worthy by simply attaching intense feelings to it – feelings that could well evaporate. If they do, then what ‘action’ is taken by love? The level of commitment, sacrifice, and care for a people, issue, or circumstance must be for an altruistic end. The object of love must be more than ‘desirable’, there must be a longing for the best for that individual. Of course, then comes the question; who or which standard *is the best?*

Grace – undeserved favour; Mercy – not getting what you do deserve; and justice – the dispensing of actions to hold accountable, or direct to change around best practice – all require a reference point to give them, not only focus and intent, but real value. If there is no standard, no benchmark, then how do these incredible and indispensable resources actually; find context, work and/or make a difference?

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There is only one quality that brings a nation into the dizzy heights of being held as exemplary, as a standout – as worthy of lauding to the point of imitation – that will not require a convoluted explanation. It is a quality and a posture that encompasses and embraces all the best-practice virtues and brings them to bear. If you will, a plumbline, a reference point that makes not only sense of the virtues but enables them to transform.

Of course, for anyone remotely acquainted with God’s Word, knows the answer to this question – It is **‘Righteousness** that exalts a Nation’.  
([Proverbs 14:34](#))

## Unpacking and Understanding

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The writers (not Author) of the Divine counsel understood this all too well, as they indeed should. It is the prophetic and historical writings of Jeremiah, that we see one of the compound Names of God first used, ***Jehovah Tsidkenu*** – The Lord who is stiff, straight, righteous.

*“In His days Judah will be saved, And Israel will dwell safely; Now this is His name by which He will be called; ‘The Lord Our Righteousness.’*

### **Jeremiah 23:6 (AMP)**

It is also vital to note the context in which this revelation of another profound aspect of this Ultimate Deity is disclosed. It is both in salvation and dwelling safely – purity, order, clarity, best practice, justice – and all the blessings to do well that issue from that governance.

## What is the etymology of the word Righteousness?

It is not complicated, but consistent in its profundity. In my opinion, because of impassioned narratives emerging about the Divine in recent church history, it has become a word that makes us uncomfortable. Why? Because we have been over emphasising the other virtues of God, whilst unanchoring it from this indispensable core foundations of and in God.

In our core text, Proverbs 14:34, we see the emphasis of this Divine Virtue aligning with our Jeremiah nomenclature for one of the key aspects of The Jehovah. Strong's [6666] from **tsedeq** *'Righteousness in governing, ruling and adjudicating right law – truthful and ethically correct in cause thus conduct and action.'*


The Psalmist reveals even more on this imperative through this lens. *Psalm 89:14 (NASB) Righteousness (6664- What is just, fair and right) and Justice (4941 -right and just sentence/decision) are the foundation of Your throne; [consequently the following] Lovingkindness and truth go before You.*

The Holy Spirit's underlying and clearly declared intent in the Apostle Paul's Biblical writings, was to always focus on best-practice for the most important outcome of the connection to and relationship with the Saviour; and that is the personification of that highest profile as exhorted in [Romans 8:29](#) and [Ephesians 4:13](#) – the conforming to the Perfect One in both stature and conduct.

Jesus Christ seeks for us Christians – 'little Christs' – to conform with His Image. That means all that He is. Lofty, almost in conceivable goals, and perhaps what prompted Chesterton's declaration that;

*“And He will judge the world in righteousness (rightness and equity); He will minister justice to the peoples in uprightness.”*

**Psalm 9:8 (AMPC)**



*“Christianity has not been tried and found wanted but found difficult and left untried.”*

In reality, it is impossible, because it can only be attained when God (The Holy Spirit) is in us.

This is not ‘for Him’ – not to please Him – but to experience the conforming to Him. This will allow the divinely ordained collaboration initiated in Eden to be rediscovered and practiced, with God Himself, as the Holy Spirit, working with us to that perfect end. This is communion and collaboration in the most personal way – authentic relationship, not just obedience, activity and/or service.

So, every posture, purpose, priority, and propensity that is His life on earth, He calls us into and resources us to complete that calling.

***Righteousness*** is the framework (the skeleton, if you like) that holds all these qualities and processes up and it is our total humble surrender to that ***Righteousness*** that will see the manifestation of all that He is, through us – be it ever so slowly and incrementally.

Again, difficult? No, impossible, without Holy Spirit within! However, with Him and His enabling, it is a fixed and achievable goal. That is why it requires our complete surrender and trust.

Of course, it will be correctly stated that *‘we might become the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus’*. At repentance of my sin, acknowledging only Christ’s finished work can save me, and the forgiveness that it brings, I am rescued and adopted. My *standing* has changed, and I am now *justified* by Christ’s sacrifice for me. However, that’s only the beginning; there is more, much more.

To reiterate, one aspect of *Righteousness* is that of a bestowal as a gift at our repentance. We have acknowledged that God not only *is*, but He is perfect and holy; and we also acknowledge that we are not, and we cannot achieve His standard via our own efforts. We confess not only that we are sinners but are utterly unable to ‘save’ ourselves. To quote the great Revivalist, Charles Finney,



*“We must admit God is absolutely right, and we are absolutely wrong.”*

Thus, this surrender to His work and invitation to come in, sees His Righteousness bestowed.

However, this freely given resource, much like the Talents (remarkable and unearned resources given to [trusted servants – Matthew 25: 14-30](#)) is to be accounted for.

It is entrusted to newly rescued and adopted family members, who are welcomed into trading in the Kingdom family mission, through this new growing intimate relationship. An undeserved resource that is granted to help us not only become but enable us and others to conform with the Image of His Son.

We have been Justified – We are being Sanctified – We will be Glorified.

## **I am saved – I am being saved – I will be saved!**

The exhortation of the weeping prophet, Jeremiah is important to reflect on here. Father God is laying out, unequivocally and exactly what Heaven deems worthy of boast. For us, it is vital to note what these prescribed priorities are of value enough to boast of and in. Also, vitally, notice what it is that *lovingkindness* and *judgement* are anchored too? Righteousness.

*Thus says the Lord, “Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord who exercises lovingkindness, justice and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things,” declares the Lord.*

### **Jeremiah 9:23-24 (NASB)**

Priscilla Shirer, Author and Motivational speaker puts it succinctly,

*“Truth – which is basically defined as God’s opinion on any matter – is our standard. Truth is who God is and what He says it is, which is best summed up for us with the Person of Jesus Christ – God’s Truth – Biblical Truth!”*



# Righteousness Revealed – Righteousness in Action?

**M**anifestation is an important aspect of ‘the Kingdom *come*’ dynamic. The Incarnation itself, is the ultimate manifestation of the Divine expression in human form (not transcendent form) and Divine Will is the source and empowerment of that Kingdom manifestation. We have already seen in the Messiah’s priorities recorded in Matthew 6:33 that our first pursuits are linked, Kingdom and Righteousness – Complete jurisdiction (on Divine terms, not earthly) and right standard – which is HIS standard.

Paul’s letter to the Romans, arguably one of the most profound Theological documents written, opens with a Gospel priority, a focal point for much of what is to follow in that outstanding Epistle.

*For I am not ashamed of the gospel. It is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: for Jew first, and then Greek. For in it is revealed the righteousness of God from faith to faith; as it is written, “The one who is righteous by faith will live.”*

## **Romans 1:16-17 (NASBRE)**

This is what I like to call a New Covenant Stake. It sets a new marker for all who want to enter into a relationship with this One True God, that Good News of God’s manifest Kingdom delivered by the Messiah, is now the *Power of God unto Salvation*. This shift of emphasis from the pursuit of perfect human compliance to the law, meant that Righteousness was framed in a much more relational context, and **HIS** Righteousness is now the priority.

Our early Church Fathers understood the need to articulate the utter inseparable nature of Faith and Righteousness and sought to exhort and instruct to that end.



*Our righteousness in this pilgrimage is this—that we press forward to that perfect and full righteousness in which there shall be perfect and full love in the sight of His glory; and that now we hold to the rectitude and perfection of our course, by “keeping under our body and bringing it into subjection,”<sup>2</sup> by doing our alms cheerfully and heartily, while bestowing kindnesses and forgiving the trespasses which have been committed against us, and by “continuing instant in prayer;”<sup>3</sup> -and doing all this with sound doctrine, whereon are built a right faith, a firm hope, and a pure charity. This is now our righteousness, in which we pass through our course hungering and thirsting after the perfect and full righteousness, in order that we may hereafter be satisfied therewith.*

*I suppose, too, that there is a difference between one who is upright in heart and one who is clean in heart. A man is upright in heart when he “reaches forward to those things which are before, forgetting those things which are behind”<sup>4</sup> so as to arrive in a right course, that is, with right faith and purpose, at the perfection where he may dwell clean and pure in heart. Thus, in the psalm, the conditions ought to be severally bestowed on each separate character, where it is said, “Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in His holy place? He that is innocent in his hands, and clean in his heart.”<sup>5</sup> He shall ascend, innocent in his hands, and stand, clean in his heart,-the one state in present operation, the other in its consummation. And of them should rather be understood that which is written: “Riches are good unto him that hath no sin on his conscience.”<sup>6</sup> Then indeed shall accrue the good, or true riches, when all poverty shall have passed away; in other words, when all infirmity shall have been removed. A man may now indeed “leave off from sin,” when in his onward course he departs from it, and is renewed day by day; and he may “order his hands,” and direct them to works of mercy, and “cleanse his heart from all wickedness,”<sup>7</sup>*

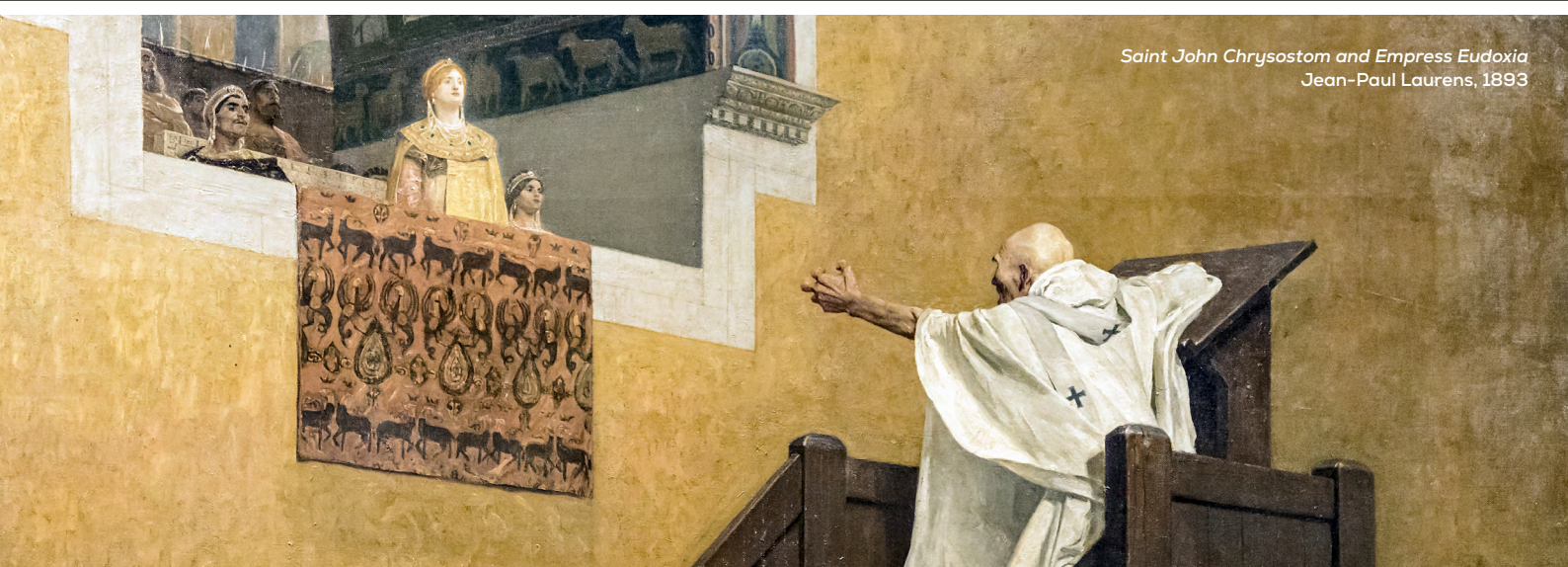
**(Extract from Augustine’s “Retractions,” Book II, Chap. 45, Concerning Man’s Perfection in Righteousness)**

Other Church Fathers aware of [Pelagian heresy](#), but also mindful of the liberation of the will of man that true conversion brings, sought to articulate this divinely enabled and collaborative journey of salvation – justification, sanctification and glorification. A Righteousness that is the result of a relational journey that denotes free will cooperation with the Divine Unction in the relationship-based transformation – Faith unto Faith. Again, delineating from the Righteousness established by the law from the Righteousness crafted with the Author of Salvation – not working *for* it, but *in* it, for our transformation and His subsequent glory.

Chrysostom understood this

*By righteousness is here meant universal virtue. But observe the superior power of grace, in that He requires of His disciples who were yet uninstructed to be better than those who were masters under the Old Testament. Thus, He does not call the Scribes and Pharisees unrighteous, but speaks of their righteousness. And see how even herein He confirms the Old Testament that He compares it with the New, for the greater and the less are always of the same kind. ([Matthew 5:20 - Wikipedia](#))*

*In Chrysostom's sermon on Ephesians 1:4-5, he asked why God chose us: And why did [God] choose us? 'That we should be holy and blameless before him.' So that you may not suppose, when you hear that he chose us, that faith alone is sufficient, he goes on to refer to manner of life. This, he says, is the reason and the purpose of his choice—that we should be holy and blameless... Being holy is a matter of sharing in faith; being blameless is a matter of living an irreproachable life ([Homilies on Ephesians, 1, 1-2](#)).*



Saint John Chrysostom and Empress Eudoxia  
Jean-Paul Laurens, 1893

Yet other church Fathers also understood the three aspects of Divine Righteousness both revealed and in action

*Polycarp taught that there were a number of moral commands to which the Christian must adhere in order to inherit the Kingdom. Faith without meeting these moral demands will not be enough. Polycarp argued that anyone occupied in these three things: growing in the faith, accompanied by hope, and led by love, has fulfilled the commandment of righteousness*

*Ignatius of Loyolas' letters were written while on his way to martyrdom, and he recognized the importance of our actions "motivated by faith," as opposed to a "momentary act of professing" that faith: Those who profess to be Christ's will be recognized by their actions. For what matters is not a momentary act of professing but being persistently motivated by faith (The Letter of Ignatius to the Ephesians, ch. 14:2).*

*Irenaeus, a Western Father, in his writings, Against Heresies, Book I, confirms the necessity of a life of love and holiness, as well as keeping our Lord's commandments in order to receive eternal life: But to the righteous and holy, and those who have kept his commandments and have remained in his love...he will by his grace give life incorrupt, and will clothe them with eternal glory (ch.10:1). It is the entire gamut of the Christian moral life, according to Irenaeus, that brings salvation. Irenaeus believed that conversion was dependent upon Christ's grace, and apart from that grace, man has no power to procure salvation. The more we receive that grace, the more we are obligated to love Christ: No one, indeed while placed out of reach of our Lord's benefits, has power to procure for himself the means of salvation. So, the more we receive His grace, the more we should love Him (Against Heresies, Bk. IV, ch. XIII).*

*Theophilus, an Eastern Father, spoke of a life of doing well and obeying God's command to procure salvation: To those who by patient continuance in well-doing seek immortality, He will give eternal life everlasting life" (Theophilus to Autolycus, Bk. I, ch. XIII). "For man drew death upon himself by disobeying. So, by obeying the will of God, he who wants to can procure for himself life everlasting (Bk. II, ch. XXVII).*

*Origen would speak about having communion and friendship with God only if, along with faith, we lived our life according to the teaching of Jesus: It is those who not only believe, but also enter upon the life that Jesus taught (Against Celcus, Bk. III, ch. XXVIII).*

**(Perspectives of Salvation from Early Church Fathers)**

Two millennia on, scholars are still understanding the centrality of Righteousness and its outworking of 'faith unto faith' in the Salvation experience of those who are Disciples of the Author of Salvation. Prominent Theologian, [N.T. Wright](#) states the following about this Romans 1 pivotal verse;



*In particular, the flow of thought through the letter as a whole makes far more sense if we understand the statement of the theme in 1:17 as being about God and God's covenant faithfulness and justice, rather than simply about 'justification.'...*

*God's righteousness, seen in terms of covenant faithfulness and through the image of the lawcourt, was to be the instrument of putting the world to rights—of what we might call cosmic restorative justice... YHWH is not simply Israel's God, but the creator of the whole world and its judge; as such, YHWH is under an obligation to set things right...*

Sadly, for many caught in reframing this divinely *a) bestowed, b) enacted upon and c) engaged with* resource, into a one-dimensional *Modus Dandi*, that whether inadvertently or deliberately has seen an image of this Divine imperative framed into a bestowal mode only. Yet, this is one of the key misunderstandings that undermines both the witness and power of the Body of Christ.

*Thus 'the righteousness of God' can be thought of as a divine attribute (our God is a righteous God), or activity (he comes to our rescue), or achievement (he bestows on us a righteous status) ...All three are true...I have never been able to see why we have to choose, and why all three should not be combined... In other words, [the righteousness of God] is at one and the same time a quality, an activity and a gift.*

**(John Stott, *The Message of Romans (The Bible Speaks Today: Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1994)* (63)**

The unintentional passivity this (for want of better tags – take your pick) hyper-grace or hyper-Calvinist perspective can induce was clearly never a goal of the New Covenant. Real communion, deepening relationship and Christ living through his Church, individually and collectively, requires – in fact insists on – reciprocity. Not in a grotesque sense of obligation, a *quid pro quo*, or an ‘earning’, rather a requited and longed for communion, that the bestowal has enabled us to enter into, but is only one ‘bookend’ of that relational journey.

Now we can *participate* in the New Covenant, by embracing the ‘Born Again’ experience, and having our sins forgiven, and the slate wiped clean, and a new agency of will that our sin laden and unregenerate state had denied us. However, this is only the commencement of the relationship with our now adoptive Heavenly Father. A relationship He wants to mature – to perfect.

Let us return to **Romans 1:17**

Under this New Covenant, Paul discloses how the Righteousness of God is going to be revealed moving forward. It is revealed – *properly uncovered*, make plain and manifest *what is hidden* – by an ever-increasing faith – *a deep fully persuaded trust* – that only comes from a progressively deepening communion with this HOLY God.

You see, now under this new Righteousness there is a participatory transformation that comes, not because we have ‘worked for it’, but because our deepening *trust, surrender, yielding and the actions they produce*, has enabled greater faith and the subsequent manifestations of HIS Righteousness through it.

This is Kingdom Covenant and the Salvation (*Sozo: Do well, be healed, made whole*) He wants for His highest creation; humanity.

This enables what our Lord and Saviour prayed for as recorded in the Gospel of John, Chapter 17. Referred to often as [\*The Great High Priestly Prayer\*](#) that Jesus prayed not only for His disciples then, but for all those who would follow. A unity, a communion so rich and mature that the following may also enable what Paul writes of in [\*\*Ephesians 3:10\*\*](#) to actualize – God, *through this ever maturing Church* is making known His manifold wisdom to the principalities and powers, through the unfurling of His Righteousness – His Right Kingdom and Covenant ways. This invited into and divinely resourced participation is incredible, and according to the nuance of Scripture an utter surprise to spiritual beings, the Angels. This is just one of the manifestations of a relationship that can only be entered into by free-will imbued beings.

# What is the chief purpose of the Third Person of the Trinity?

As I've reiterated, this can only happen with God in us, and our willing participation in that Covenant relationship.

The Role of the Holy Spirit is that of *Comforter and Counsellor* (John 14:26 AMP) and we are warmed and reassured by these genteel titles, but the purposes this Role facilitates are important to understand.

*And He, when He comes, will convict the world about [the guilt of] sin [and the need for a Saviour], and about righteousness, and about judgment: about sin [and the true nature of it], because they do not believe in Me [and My message]; about righteousness [personal integrity and godly character], because I am going to My Father and you will no longer see Me; about judgment [the certainty of it], because the ruler of this world (Satan) has been judged and condemned.*

## **John 16:8-11 Amplified Bible (AMP)**

*“Righteousness, because I go to the Father”*, therefore ongoing living manifestation of my transformative Righteousness is now made manifest and demonstrated through His followers.

You will note in this passage that God in *available incarnated* form is saying between Sin and Judgement, Righteousness exists as the benchmark. The position and purpose of the Holy Spirit is Counsellor, but His role and purpose are to *convict* on these three key areas. The standard of Righteousness is what

not only continues to manifest the Kingdom, but the Christ of the Kingdom and it is the benchmark that both sin and judgement are measured against.

I repeat here what I wrote earlier; Grace – favour you get that you do not deserve, and Mercy – Not getting what you do deserve, only really mean something and have context and significance when they pivot around something. Measured against something. Justice perhaps springs to mind as a key component to the centre, but Justice itself also pivots around something else, another benchmark – a standard or set of standards that tells us what should be just.

Righteousness is that benchmark, but it is important again to ask, what or whose ‘right standard’ do we subscribe to?

If we treat this freely bestowed *status* and *resource* with a similar familiarity, or worse, disdain – beware. This can lead to and/or be fuelled by the growing misuse of the other remarkable gifts/platforms of Grace and Mercy, only ushering in a careless leaning toward overlooking sin, or worse, a licensing of error.

It is here that I want to look at Paul’s continual revelation on Righteousness in Romans Chapter 1. From verse 18 the Divine Counsel through Paul unambiguously illuminates the outcome of those who mistreat this ultimate of states...

*“For the Lord is [absolutely] righteous, He loves righteousness (virtue, morality, justice);*

*The upright shall see His face.”*

**Psalm 11:7 (AMPC)**

*For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of people who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, that is, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, being understood by what has been made, so that they are without excuse. For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their reasonings, and their senseless hearts were darkened.*



One of the clear motivators for this wrath is not simply the bold irreverence, or that it is an irreverence to the perfect Divine judicial verdict – disturbing of course. However, it is that this posture of unrighteousness and all it manifest, suppresses the Truth – the Kingdom Truth about the realities of the human condition, and the only remedy for them. This is a core perversion of these foundations of The Kingdom and therefore, rightly attract His wrath.

Remember what it is that Jesus said would set us free? (John 8:32) What is it that Jesus came to bear witness too? (Luke 18:37) – Truth!

If we continue in this compromised posture of diminishing the priority of these core values, do we end up retreating from Righteousness instead of pursuing its full and effective manifestation *in our* relationship with The Christ?

Do we then, as both individual family of God members, and His collective Body, fail to make manifest all that Righteousness can bring, thus stifling His saving, redeeming and transforming work?

If we are not diligent and understand our Lord's exhortation in Matthew 24:132... "*but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved*" we can so easily then retreat first from...

- Standing *for* Righteousness (John Baptist, John 16: 8-11) to
- Standing *in* Righteousness, to
- Standing *by* Righteousness, to
- Negotiating *with* Righteousness, to
- *Redefining* Righteousness, to
- *Abandoning* it altogether.

Again, it is God's Righteousness that 'exalts a nation' – *Uprightness and right standing with God (moral and spiritual rectitude in every area and relation) elevate a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.*

The following virtues, priorities, and yes, superlatives, do not exalt a nation, *though they are part of Righteousness* and are in perichoretic connection with it, are not the imperative that *Righteousness* is.

For instance, focus and emphasis of the following virtues/values in scripture do not come close to the foundational virtue of Righteousness.

- **Truth**, alone doesn't – 224 times
- **Compassion**, alone doesn't – 46 times
- **Justice**, alone doesn't – 29 times (stands with and is connected to, the key)
- **Freedom**, alone doesn't – 2 times
- **Love**, alone doesn't – 310 times
- **Hope**, alone doesn't – 156 times
- **Grace**, alone doesn't – 170 times

You see, this *Kingdom Rosetta Stone*, if you like – the interpreter of and skeletal structure that holds all the above keys 'upright' and gives them capacity to make an eternal, as well as interim impact – fail to actualize into glistening best practice without Righteousness.

**RIGHTEOUSNESS** = Best-practice mode for all virtues, and it *appears between 545-619 times in the Biblical Text*, depending on interpretive emphasis.

The priority, and the centrality of Righteousness in The Author of Salvation's teaching is also vital to remember.

- *“Blessed are they that hunger and thirst for righteousness [\*1343 –dikaiosunén – righteousness /justice], for they shall be filled / satisfied.” Jesus (Matthew 5:6)*
- *“Seek first the Kingdom of God and His Righteousness [\*1343], and all these things will be added unto you.” Jesus (Matt 6:33)*
- *“Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets. I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. Amen, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or the smallest part of a letter will pass from the law, until all things have taken place. Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do so will be called least in the kingdom of heaven. But whoever obeys and teaches these commandments will be called greatest in the kingdom of heaven. I tell you, unless your righteousness [\*1343] surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter into the kingdom of heaven.” (Matthew 5:17-20)*

**\*Strong's 1343 = 'Judicial approval – approved of God. What is deemed right by the Lord after His examination – what is approved of in His eyes.'**

God's Righteousness is such a profound state of integrity and purity and an incredibly difficult state to attain, even with complete and thorough compliance to the law – remember *God's law is perfect, converting the soul* (Psalm 19:7).

Whilst the Old Covenant engaged with the Divine unction and the surrendered heart enabled connection with the Divine (a covenant is not necessary if cannot achieve this end), and as we have read, established a righteousness, it could not usher in that perfection – or the capacity to connect more profoundly so that perfection can be worked in us, not we for it.

Enter the New Covenant. In this context as before the advancing state of perfection cannot be earned, it must be bestowed. However, once bestowed we have all the potential to become the *complete righteousness of God in Christ Jesus* (2 Corinthians 5:21) and are then ever better enabled to be co-labourers in manifesting it to the world.

Relational covenants commission this collaboration. If there is not participation, engagement and or embracing with communicative relationship (God's original intent for *Their* special created beings) then we are not fully human in the Divine intent, merely Image bearing automatons. Rather we are created to be agents of free will, surrendering to the Divinely imbued capacity to enter into a *relationship* with our Creator

To emphasis this collaborative and relational priority I want to parallel it with similar principals, such as outlined in Ephesians 4:3. The text says that we are to *'maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace'*. So, we see here that we do not create unity, rather that unity is bestowed by our collectively coming to Christ, but then we are active collaborators in maintaining it (the need for maintenance suggests potential for decline or deterioration). The Ephesians letter (sent to all churches at the time) gives us instruction on how we do that – (along with our humble surrender to Christ) – and that is *'in the bond of peace'*.

None of this is 'working to earn' unity (our salvation), but a privilege and sacred labour to share in God's restorative and redemptive work – we become light, when once, we were darkness.

A further example of this can be seen when we draw a comparison from the *Parable of the Talents* as Jesus taught in Matthew 25: 14-30. The initial financial resource given to each servant was bestowed, and it appears wisely, according to estimated capacity of the servants. However, their role then was to take that 'gift' and employ it to advance the kingdom. The expectation of the King was that the resource was not just held, sat upon, hoarded or worse, squandered, rather

that it was grown. The bestowal enables and equips in the sacred privilege of co-producing *with* the Source, not *for* the Source. So, seeing nothing produced from it is a travesty that cannot be overlooked by the Just, Righteous and Truth originating God.



## Calling out unrighteousness

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**T**o emphasise again, in line with our Ephesians 4:3 unity text, the biblical Hebrew word for “Righteousness,” is *tsedeqah* and applied more specifically: it is an ethical standard that refers to right relationships between people; it’s about treating others as made in the “image of God” with the God-given dignity they deserve – remember that dignity is geared to God’s standard - righteousness. So, it is also important this word “justice” in the righteousness context (can be interchangeable), which in Hebrew is *mishpat*, and can refer to retributive justice. The notion of penalty for action, for instance, if you steal something, you pay the consequences, not just cease the wrongdoing.

In our current first-world west, the great reprehensible act of our post-Christian and consequently post-Truth era is in refusing to embrace or validate people's Biblical disobedience and rebellion. For this, now 'heinous act' (as ruled by our broken culture), we will be reviled and labelled as judgmental – the worst of all 'brands' in the progressive version of inclusive culture.

Yet most often in the Bible, *Mishpat* refers to, restorative justice. It means going a step further, actually seeking out vulnerable people who are being taken advantage of and helping them.

Now it is important to refresh ourselves with the context of this helping hand, it is not first and foremost around alleviating felt needs but understanding the real need and how all restorative justice is tied to God's Righteousness, not just charity.

Who more vulnerable than those enslaved to the Evil one, separated from the Divine communion, and [destined for a destruction](#) never meant for them.

On this aspect of Righteousness, and restorative discipleship, I'd refer you to the Paper, [Meeting the Welfare Need – A Proactive Disciple-making Approach.](#)

# Conclusion

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**R**epetition and a perceived intense reiteration can be labelled by some as dogmatic, and whilst that term is often understood in a pejorative context, in reality that couldn't be a more unfair and unhelpful caricature.

More than that, when it comes to Righteousness – this profoundly indispensable and seminal aspect of God – Dogma in its purest sense is most needed.

According to the Collins Concise Dictionary Australian Edition, Dogma is...

*“A Doctrine or systems of Doctrines claimed, by ecclesiastical authorities to be true.”*

Again, in our post-Christian and consequently post-truth era, language and what it is supposed to accurately convey are easily distorted, diluted, and devolved; with it the potential to deconstruct not only Divine prescriptions and proscriptions, but the foundation for them, is either corrupted, or worse, collapses all together.

If Revival and more importantly, the Reformation that must come to The Church, is to be realized, then the Divine platform of Righteousness must be central – must be.

I encourage anyone who calls upon the Name of the Lord as Saviour and King – those who understand that to follow Jesus, you *must first deny yourself, and then take up the Cross* to be enabled to do so – to study this core Kingdom value so as to fully understand its content, context, purpose, priority and power.

Righteousness is central, core and catalytic to all things Kingdom.

The time for ‘dancing with definitions’ is over.

***‘Seek FIRST the Kingdom of God and His Righteousness’***

Shane Varcoe – Disciplesplanet. 2019



**“The Resurrection Changes Everything!”** Nik Ripkin

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