

REFLECTIONS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

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Righteousness from the Hebrew word *sedeq* and the Greek word *dikia* has been defined as “purity of heart and rectitude of life; being and doing right.”¹ Further, it means, “Holy and upright living, in accordance with God's standard. The word righteousness comes from a root word that means ‘straightness.’ It refers to a state that conforms to an authoritative standard.”² When the gospel was first preached to Gentile people, Peter echoed the prophecy of Isaiah concerning how the righteousness of God would be reflected through his people. Isaiah prophesied, “For Zion’s sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem’s sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth. And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the LORD shall name” (Isa. 62:1-2). About eight years after the establishment of the church of Christ, Peter preached to the Gentiles as Luke recorded, “Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him” (Acts 10:34-35). Required reflections of righteousness for God’s people are to:

Reach

The lost must be reached with the gospel. The Lord commanded, “And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen” (Matt. 28:18-20). A burning desire for the salvation of men’s souls must characterize the Christian and consume the church. The wise man wrote, “The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise” (Prov. 11:30).

Renew

The spiritual sentiment of King David for God to “renew a right spirit within me” is the responsibility of the church toward the membership of the church. Under the terms of edification or up building Paul in this regard wrote, “But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:

From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love” (Eph. 4:15-16). Speaking the truth or the word of God in love provides the basis for all spiritual growth (John 17:17). As the years of Christian living bring maturity, the spirit of man is renewed on a daily basis. Paul said, “For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day” (II Cor.4:16). Renewal is what Jesus taught when he said, “Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.”

Renewal also may sometimes mean the restoration of erring Christians. The Bible says, “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted” (Gal. 6:1).

Relieve

The compassion of Christ must be reflected through his body, the church (Eph. 1:22-23). Paul wrote, “And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith” (Gal. 6:9-10). Benevolence is a demonstration of true religion. James noted, “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world” (Jas. 1:27).

ENDNOTES

1J. Denney, *New Unger's Bible Dictionary* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1988), p. 100.

2Herbert Lockyear, Sr., *Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Incorporation, 1986), p. 918.