

5. The Blessings of the Righteous (1Q 2015—Proverbs)

Biblical material: Proverbs 10:1–14, Matt. 19:19, Proverbs 11-12, John 3:16, Proverbs 13.

Quotes

- This life therefore is not righteousness, but growth in righteousness, not health, but healing, not being but becoming, not rest but exercise. We are not yet what we shall be, but we are growing toward it, the process is not yet finished, but it is going on, this is not the end, but it is the road. All does not yet gleam in glory, but all is being purified. *Martin Luther*
- Man approaches God most nearly when he is in one sense least like God. For what can be more unlike than fullness and need, sovereignty and humility, righteousness and penitence, limitless power and a cry for help? *C.S. Lewis*
- Righteousness acts never in its own interest, but in the interest of fellow men. *Thaddeus of Vitovnica*
- When you're righteous, you don't have to tell people that you're righteous. *Shaquille O'Neal*
- Seeking Heaven through righteousness is not seeking righteousness, but something else;—it is not loving goodness for goodness' sake, but for its rewards. *E.H. Chapin*

Questions

Do we want to be righteous just to get the blessings? Should we measure blessings? Is it true that those who do right are always rewarded? How should we relate to the perception that God is blessing others? What should we think when things go wrong in our lives? How do these ideas fit into the great controversy?

Bible summary

“Blessings crown the head of the righteous, but violence overwhelms the mouth of the wicked.” Prov. 10:6 NIV. In these words, titled “The proverbs of Solomon” we see the contrast between living a righteous or a wicked life. Not as a goal in itself, but simply the consequence of following God’s wise instructions. If you want to know what the practical difference between a wicked and a righteous life, just read Prov. 10-13. Just about every verse is a comparison. Jesus sums up the commandments in Matt. 19:18, 19. The way God wins us back is summed up in John 3:16.

Comment

Is it always true? The way these Proverbs seem to indicate (see for example Prov. 11:31), there is always a positive result for those who live right. However Job and others have experienced the negative, while David asked why the wicked prospered...

The blessings of the righteous really come down to one thing: trust in the gracious character of God. For in the end we may not have all we want, we may experience terrible disasters, we may not even have things restored to us as did Job. Our lives may not have what we would call a happy ending. But God’s grace is sufficient...

“From beginning to end the Bible, salvation, and even God himself, is grace. It was God’s grace that led him to come to this planet to save us from ourselves. It is God’s grace that is the answer to the issues in the Great Controversy because the devil accused God of being ungracious and legalistic, but he came and proved the devil wrong and in that he proved to all of us and the on-looking universe that he is the most gracious loving God. It is so important to emphasise God’s grace for if you have the wrong picture of God you can really misrepresent him like those who burned heretics at the stake. You need to understand God and his sacrifice for us, and how much he has showed us to prove that. In order to show us grace God took on human form in the person of Jesus who was described by John as full of grace and truth. In his life and ministry Jesus was the perfect representation of grace.”

Rebekah Gallagher

It is the kindness of God that leads us to repentance; it is by his grace that we are saved by our trust in him. We don’t claim any righteousness of our own; we simply place our confidence in God. That’s not to say there are no benefits to a Christian life. We have peace, hope, assurance, forgiveness, mercy etc.etc. Most of all we are friends of a friendly God, and we can be totally sure of his best intentions. So we must not be blind to the delights of living in harmony with God.

But in an ironic sense, the chief blessing of the righteous is they know they are not righteous! If we think ourselves righteous, we do not look for change, we do not seek God’s transforming power. In the first Ellen White comment below we see the truth. When we recognize we cannot possibly save ourselves nor do anything righteous—only then do we really appreciate Christ’s help. That is the true blessing!

Ellen White Comments

He who feels whole, who thinks that he is reasonably good, and is contented with his condition, does not seek to become a partaker of the grace and righteousness of Christ. Pride feels no need, and so it closes the heart against Christ and the infinite blessings He came to give. There is no room for Jesus in the heart of such a person. . . . Those who know that they cannot possibly save themselves, or of themselves do any righteous action, are the ones who appreciate the help that Christ can bestow. They are the poor in spirit, whom He declares to be blessed. {SD 301}

Great blessings are in reserve for us. We may believe in God, we may trust Him, and by so doing glorify His name. Even if we are overcome of the enemy, we are not cast off, not forsaken and rejected of God {2T 319}

When the enemy comes in like a flood, and seeks to overwhelm you with the thought of your sin, tell him, "I know I am a sinner; if I were not, I could not go to the Saviour, for he says, 'I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.' And because I am a sinner, I am entitled to come to Christ." In this way you will have power to overcome the wicked one. Keep looking up, for your faith has bound you to the throne of God. Do not look down, as though you were bound to earth. Do not keep pulling up your faith to see if it has any root. Faith grows imperceptibly, and when the enemy rallies his forces to bring you into a critical place, the angels of God will be roundabout you, and you will have help from on high; for your prayer will be answered in the conflict. If you have genuine faith, you will praise God, from whom all blessings flow; and as you praise him, you will realize more of his blessing. {RH, October 11, 1892}