

Title: THREE NOTS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, 1 JOHN 3:1-10.
(Chatham, NJ; 04/26/09, AM) [S-P, Topical]

Theme: Righteousness is a way of life that must be pursued if anyone seeks to follow Christ.

Purpose: To demonstrate that living a righteous life is not optional and that behavior change is demanded.

Introduction:

1. It seems contradictory that John is called the Apostle of love yet is so forthright in demanding that we live a life of righteous behavior.
2. Perhaps in our limited understanding of love we don't associate the two ideas, and yet John clings to both.
3. The passage before us, 1 John 3:1-10, reflects his belief that righteousness is not only something imputed to us by the cross but is also a code of conduct.
4. This whole idea rests upon the fact that we have been made children of God (1).
5. As members of God's household we are in communion with him and are called to "abide" in him.
6. As members of God's family we have requirements to uphold. The gift of adoption brings rewards as well as responsibilities.
7. The foremost responsibility is to live a life of righteousness. Today let's discuss this by determining three things righteousness is not.

I. It is not a life of sinning (6)

A. Death to the old life.

1. The death and resurrection of Christ is the example.
2. Ephesians 4:17-24 expresses the new life.
3. First, we no longer live and the Gentiles do (17): in futility, darkness, and the practice of all manner of impurities (19).
4. Second, Christ's way is different: put off the old self, corrupted by desires, and put on the new self of righteousness and holiness.
5. "God never alters the robe of righteousness to fit the man, but the man to fit the robe." (Doan, *Sourcebook*, p. 215.)

B. The life of sinning is contrary to knowing God (verse 6).

1. The emphasis here is on a life continuing to sin.
2. We are not talking about struggling with weakness and sometimes falling prey to temptations.
3. But we cannot keep doing what we are supposed to repent of.
4. For John righteousness is something you do (7).
5. Whoever doesn't live righteously is not of God (10).
6. Perfection is not the point; a life directed toward right living is the point.
7. We can't sin with impunity and take for granted that grace will cover it.

II. You are not of God if you keep on sinning (6).

A. Of Love and Righteousness

1. We rationalize when we believe that God's love excludes all demands.
2. John asserts a different view: to love God is to obey him.

3. John's whole premise here is that because we are born of God, we must stop the practice of sinning (9)—again, the emphasis on continuing effort, not perfection.
4. "You can always tell when you are on the road to righteousness—it's uphill." (Cory, *Quotations*, p. 331.)

B. Knowledge of God equates with better behavior, 2:4-6.

1. Notice the number of ways John expresses this.
2. First, we must keep his commandments otherwise we can't say we know him.
3. Second, we must keep his word.
4. Third, we must walk as he walked.
5. Every one of these grows from communion with God.
6. "Our sense of sin is in proportion to our nearness to God." (Cory, *Quotations*, p. 353.)

III. Righteousness is not self-righteousness. (When I looked up righteousness in a book of quotes, it had nothing on righteousness but directed me immediately to self-righteousness.)

A. Repentance assumes unrighteousness.

1. Repentance essential to preaching the Gospel, Luke 24:47.
2. It was the first command out of Peter's mouth, Acts 2:38.
3. No one who comes to Christ can claim to be righteous beforehand.
4. Christians know this; we don't come to church because we are righteous, rather we come because we know we are not.
5. Righteous living is something we strive for.
6. Just because we seek to live by God's morality, that doesn't mean we are self-righteous.

B. Moral snobbery is not merely a Christian phenomenon.

1. People feel superior all the time if they behave in any way they consider better than someone else.
2. Furthermore our enemies love to point out our inconsistencies.
3. And if they don't see any they make them up—they lie.
4. Living a righteous life inherently passes judgment on others; many times they know it and resent it.
5. "A holy life has a voice. It speaks when the tongue is silent, and is either a constant attraction or a perpetual reproof." (Doan, *Sourcebook*, p. 125.)
6. We know that we are not superior; we know that we've been given a gift to be one of God's children.
7. Righteous living is a humble response to that.

Conclusion:

1. For John righteousness is something we do.
2. It reflects God's character and his commands.
3. Being born of God demands that we live accordingly.
4. Yet we never forget that we rely on grace and forgiveness; in fact that is what produces the life demanded of us.
5. Live a life of purity, righteousness, and holiness; live the life fitting for a child of God.