

THE MARKS OF MATURE BELIEVERS

PHILIPPIANS 01:03–11

Introduction

What are the marks of a mature Christian believer? What are the marks of a dynamic, mature Christian church? This passage answers these questions. Concisely and clearly, the marks so desperately needed by believers and churches are spelled out.

- I. The mark of a thankful heart (v. 3).
- II. The mark of prayer (v. 4).
- III. The mark of joy (v. 4).
- IV. The mark of partnership (v. 5).
- V. The mark of confidence in God's salvation (v. 6).
- VI. The mark of partnership (vv. 7-8).
- VII. The mark of a growing and discerning love (vv. 9-10).
- VIII. The mark of righteousness (v. 11).

I. Philippians 01:03 Thankfulness for the Brotherhood

There is the mark of a thankful heart. Paul did not stand alone in the world. He was not the only person living for God and sharing Christ. He belonged to a great family, a family of believers who constituted the family of God. They, too, were living for God and sharing Christ with a lost and needful world. Remember that Paul was in prison in Rome and that he was a great distance from the Philippian believers. He did not have their presence; all he had was the memory of their time together. And sitting there in prison, remembering their love and care and support, his heart swelled up with thanksgiving for them, and he thanked God for them.

Thought 1. What a lesson for us! If Paul thanked God for believers who were so far away from him, how much more should we thank God for each other. We have the love, care and support of each other week by week and day by day, and we can call upon each other for help any hour of any day. Yet how often do we thank God for each other?

Another point is this: we should be following Paul's example and thanking God for all believers every day. We are not alone in the world. God is building a body of people worldwide — a body of people who are just like us — committed to live for the Lord Jesus Christ and to carry His gospel of salvation and love and care to a world that reels under the weight of desperate need.

Col 1:12 Giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light.

Col 3:15 Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.

II. *Philippians 01:04 Prayer for the Church*

There is the mark of prayer. Paul says that he always prayed for the church. The idea is that he prayed all throughout the day for them. They were constantly on his mind and in his prayers. As Mathew Henry says, Paul prayed by name for all the churches he knew, and he had seasons of prayer for each church (*Mathew Henry's Commentary*, Vol. 6. Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, n.d., p. 724).

Thought 1. What a dynamic lesson in prayer!

- 1) To pray by name for all the churches we know.
- 2) To take blocks of time (seasons of prayers) to pray for each church.
- 3) To always — all day long — pray for the churches of our living Lord.

John 17:20 *“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message.”*

Rom 1:9 *God, whom I serve with my whole heart in preaching the gospel of his Son, is my witness how constantly I remember you.*

Eph 1:16 *I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers.*

Eph 3:14 *For this reason [the church] I kneel before the Father,*

Col 1:3 *We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you [the church].*

Col 4:12 *Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured.*

1 Th 1:2 *We always thank God for all of you, mentioning you in our prayers.*

III. *Philippians 01:04 Joy of the Lord*

There is the mark of joy. Remember that Paul is in prison, yet his heart is filled with joy. Joy (chara) means an inner gladness; a deep-seated pleasure. It is a depth of assurance and confidence that ignites a cheerful and rejoicing heart. It is a cheerful heart that leads to cheerful and rejoicing behaviour.

The joy of the Lord is not the same as the joy of the world. The joy of the world is more of a temporary pleasure than joy. The world's joy is always nagged by some incompleteness, some lack, some unfulfilling thing, some missing ingredient, some need still existing.

There is not completeness — not a complete sense of assurance, confidence and satisfaction. There is the knowledge, the haunting awareness, that something can go wrong: circumstances can change or some situation can arise to disturb the joy (sickness, death, financial loss, war). The *haunting awareness* always keeps the world's joy from being full and complete, assuring and satisfying.

Several things need to be said about the believer's joy.

1. Joy is divine. It is possessed and given only by God. Its roots are not in earthly or material things or cheap triumphs. It is the joy of the Holy Spirit, a joy based in the Lord. It is His very own joy (Jn. 15:11; Acts 13:52; Rom. 14:17; Gal. 5:22; 1 Th. 1:6).
2. Joy does not depend on circumstances or happiness. Happiness depends upon happenings, but the joy that God implants in the believer's heart overrides all, even the matters of life and death (Psa. 5:11; 2 Cor. 6:10; 7:4).
3. Joy springs from faith (Rom. 15:13; Ph. 1:25; 2 Tim. 1:4; cp. Mt. 2:10).
4. Joy of future reward makes and keeps the believer faithful (Mt. 25:21, 23; Acts 20:24; Heb. 12:2).

The source of the believer's joy is several fold.

1. The fellowship of the Father and His Son brings joy (1 Jn. 1:3-4).
2. Victory over sin, death, and hell brings joy (Jn. 14:28; 16:20-22).
3. Repentance brings joy (Lk. 15:7, 10).
4. The hope of glory brings joy (Rom. 14:17; Heb. 12:2; 1 Pt. 4:13).
5. The Lord's Word — the revelations, commandments and promises which He made — brings joy (Jn. 15:11).
6. The commandments of Christ and the will of God bring joy. Obeying and doing a good job stirs joy within the believer's heart (Jn. 15:11; 17:13; Acts 13:52).
7. Prayer brings joy (Jn. 16:24).
8. The presence and fellowship of believers brings joy (1 Jn. 1:3-4).
9. Converts bring joy (Lk. 15:5; Ph. 4:1; 1 Th. 2:19-20).
10. Hearing that others walk in the truth brings joy (3 Jn. 1:4).
11. Giving brings joy (2 Cor. 8:2; Heb. 10:34).

Rom 14:17 *For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.*

1 Pet 1:8 *Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy.*

Psa 16:11 You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.

Isa 12:3 With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.

Isa 61:10 I delight greatly in the LORD; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

IV. *Philippians 01:05 Partnership and Fellowship*

There is the mark of partnership. Note two significant points.

1. The source of partnership is the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, the great salvation of God. The gospel of Christ is the glorious news that He has died for our sins, risen again and conquered death that we might live with God eternally, never having to die (cp. 1 Cor. 15:3). Christian believers are partners: they have *fellowship*, a spiritual bond, a spiritual union because...
 - they have experienced the *same salvation*, the salvation of God.
 - they have embraced the *same faith*.

Forcefully stated, *genuine believers* — believers who have totally committed their lives to the gospel of Christ — live and proclaim the gospel. Therefore, true believers are bound together around the gospel — all living the same kind of life and doing the same kind of things. They live, serve and bear witness to the same Lord; therefore, their lives are bound together in the Spirit of Christ and His fellowship.

2. The partnership of believers is to exist from the very first day of salvation. What a glorious testimony the Philippian church had! It had been about ten years since some of the members had given their lives to follow Christ and had founded the church. And note: the fellowship of the church had continued from the very first day of its founding. As all churches experience, there must have been differences and problems which had arisen, but the believers handled them *in Christ* — just as they should have. Therefore, the peace and unity of the Spirit was kept alive and the fellowship of the church remained strong. (See *Fellowship*, Acts 2:42.)

Thought 1. One of the most critical needs facing the church today is the need for peace and unity in the Spirit of God — a strong fellowship rooted around the gospel of Christ. Lehman Strauss gives the secret: “There was no conflict, no confusion, but continuance. A continuing fellowship is a *prayer fellowship*. Today a very narrow conception of fellowship prevails. If we attend the same church, recite the same creed, say the same prayers, eat at the same church supper, and socialize with the same crowd, we call this Christian fellowship. But is it? For years I have watched all of

these things going on among professing Christians where there was often little conception of *true fellowship in the gospel*. Among Christians there may be difficulties and disappointments along the way, but never a disruption where there is *prayer fellowship*” (*Devotional Studies in Philippians*, P. 42).

Acts 2:-42 They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

Rom 1:12 That is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other’s faith.

1 John 1:7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

Psa 119:63 I am a friend to all who fear you, to all who follow your precepts.

Mal 3:16 Then those who feared the LORD talked with each other, and the LORD listened and heard. A scroll of remembrance was written in his presence concerning those who feared the LORD and honoured his name.

V. *Philippians 01:06 Confidence and Assurance of God’s Power*

There is the mark of confidence in God’s salvation. God will complete His good work in believers. Confidence and assurance are two of the striking traits of genuine believers. Believers know God, know Him personally. God’s Spirit actually lives within the heart and body of the believer (Jn. 14:16-17; 14:26; 1 Cor. 19:20; etc.). The Spirit of God actually bears witness with the spirit of the believer, that he is going to be redeemed someday – presented perfect before God. In fact, the presence of the Holy Spirit within the believer’s body is the very guarantee of the believer’s salvation (see 2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5; Eph. 1:14).

1. The believer has absolute confidence in the work of salvation or redemption which God has begun in his life. He has confidence through the presence of God’s Spirit who dwells within him.
2. The work begun by God is a *good work*; that is, it is a work that revolutionizes or radically changes the life of the believer. No matter what kind of life a person was living, once God converts him, the new believer begins to live a *good life : a life of...*
 - righteousness, purity and holiness
 - love, joy and peace
 - faith, humility and control
3. The good work is incomplete as long as the believer lives on this earth. He is never perfected, not while a man. There is always work for God to do; therefore, God is always working within the life of the believer to mature him more and more. God is always working to make the man more pure and more faithful in his service to the Lord Jesus.

4. The good work is to be completed when Jesus Christ returns to this earth. At that time, the believer will be transformed into a perfect man and given a perfect body. He will become a perfect man who will live in the new heavens and earth with Christ. And he will worship and serve the Lord Jesus in perfection throughout all eternity.

John 17:11 *“I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name — the name you gave me — so that they may be one as we are one.”*

Phil 1:6 *Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.*

Phil 4:7 *And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

2 Tim 1:12 *That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day.*

2 Tim 4:8 *Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day — and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.*

1 Pet 1:5 *Who through faith are shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.*

1 John 5:10 *Anyone who believes in the Son of God has this testimony in his heart. Anyone who does not believe God has made him out to be a liar, because he has not believed the testimony God has given about his Son.*

Jude 1:24-25 *To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy — to the only God our Saviour be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.*

Rev 3:10 *Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth.*

Gen. 28:15 *I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.*

Psa 31:23 *Love the LORD, all his saints! The LORD preserves the faithful, but the proud he pays back in full.*

Psa 37:28 *For the LORD loves the just and will not forsake his faithful ones. They will be protected forever, but the offspring of the wicked will be cut off.*

Psa 138:8 The LORD will fulfill his purpose for me; your love, O LORD, endures forever — do not abandon the works of your hands.

VI. *Philippians 01:07–08 Partnership in Suffering and Service*

There is the mark of partnership. Note how closely bound together Paul and the church were.

1. They were partners in heart. Paul loved them as he loved himself; he held them ever so dear to his heart and they constantly filled his thoughts.
2. They were partners in the sufferings of Paul. This means...
 - that they were sympathizing with Paul in his imprisonment.
 - that they were sending hope to Paul while he was in prison.
 - that they had or were themselves suffering because of the gospel just as Paul was.

The point is this: the affection between Paul and the Philippians was so tender that their hearts went out to each other. What one experienced, the other felt, even the sufferings of each other.

Thought 1. What a striking picture of the kind of sympathy needed for those who suffer. We must learn to be partners in suffering. Then and only then can we bear each other's burdens and truly minister to each other.

Rom 15:1 *We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves.*

Gal 6:2 *Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.*

Heb 2:17-18 *For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.*

Heb 4:15-16 *For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are — yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.*

Heb 13:3 *Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.*

3. They were partners in the gospel. The Philippians had not given up the gospel, nor had they become silent or complacent in sharing the gospel. They were actively defending and proclaiming the truth of the gospel. The church and its members were busy for Christ — actively bearing witness to the saving grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. They were taking the great commission of our Lord seriously.

Mat 28:19-20 “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Mark 16:15 He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.”

Acts 1:8 “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

Acts 4:20 For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.

2 Tim 1:8 So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God.

1 Pet 3:15 But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.

4. They were partners in the grace of God. Paul was expressing the wonderful grace of God — the favour and blessings of God. And the Philippian church was expressing the same grace. God was pouring the richest blessings upon both Paul and the church. Why? What was it that was causing God to so richly bless these two? Their faithfulness: as this passage shows, they were bearing the marks of mature believers.

Eph 1:7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace.

Phil 4:19 And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.

1 Tim 1:14 The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.

2 Tim 2:1 You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

5. They were partners with Christ. The word *affection* (splagchnois) means tender mercies, compassion, deep affection. And note: it is the tenderness of Jesus Christ that Paul says he has for the Philippians. He longs for them with the very affection and tenderness of Christ Himself.

Thought 1. How desperately the minister and church need such tenderness and affection for each other! What a tremendous difference would exist in churches if believers held each other ever so tenderly — held each other with the tenderness and affection of Christ Himself.

Thought 2. The great need of the church today is for cooperation — partnership among its members. Believers desperately need to become partners with each other and with the minister of God:

=> partners in heart

=> partners in suffering

=> partners in proclaiming and defending the gospel

=> partners in the grace of God

=> partners with the Lord Jesus Christ

John 13:34-35 “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

John. 15:12 “My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.”

Rom 12:9 Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good.

1 Th 3:1 So when we could stand it no longer, we thought it best to be left by ourselves in Athens.

1 Pet 1:22 Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart.

VII. *Philippians 01:09–10 Love*

There is the mark of a growing and discerning love. Note this: love in the Bible never focuses upon *good feelings*. Feelings may and usually do come to the person who truly loves another person, but feelings are never the focus — not with true love. What then is the focus?

=> The focus of love is knowledge. If we truly love someone, we want to know that person. In fact, we want to know all we can about the person.

=> The force of love is *insight* (aisthesei). The word means intelligence or discernment. If we truly love someone, we not only want to know a person but we want to learn all we can about the person. We want to gather all the intelligence and facts possible and discern them so that we can please the person.

Note that Paul wants the believer’s love to grow more and more. We need to know more and more about Christ and each other; we need to gather more understanding, more discernment, and more intelligence about each other. The more we know about Christ and each other, the more our love for each other will grow.

There are three reasons why we need a love that grows more and more.

1. A growing love is needed to discern what is best. It is not enough just to know what is right and wrong. It is not enough just to do what is right. Sometimes the choice is between the good and the excellent, the acceptable and the best. Only a *growing love* will stir us to choose the excellent and the best.

=> The more we love the Lord, the more we will choose the excellent and best for Him.

=> The more we love each other, the more we will choose the excellent and best for each other. A growing love will not want to do anything that would even come close to causing a person to stumble.

2. A growing love is needed to be sincere and pure. The word *pure* (*eilikrineis*) means to sift through a sieve in order to make pure. Therefore, the word means pure, uncontaminated, not polluted, untainted. Note that we are to stay pure until the return of Christ. Only a growing love will keep our eyes focused upon Christ. If we do not love Him, we will not look to Him. If we love Him, we will keep our eyes fastened upon Him, longing to see and be with Him. Only love — true love — will keep us pure waiting for His return.

Thought 1. A good illustration of this point is found in the young lady who loves the soldier and is awaiting his return. If she truly loves him, she will keep her eyes fastened upon him and keep herself pure.

3. A growing love is needed to keep us from causing others to stumble. We must always guard against being an *offense* (*aproskopoi*) or a stumbling block to others. Note: we must be willing to choose the best and the excellent for the sake of others. We may be able to control ourselves, but others may not be able to control...

- drinking
- movies
- makeup
- social functions
- the latest fashion, dress and
- dancing
- television
- eating
- music
- spending

The list could go on and on with almost everything we do. We must control everything we do, not slipping over into the questionable — sometimes not even doing the acceptable and good, but we must choose the best. We must discern what is best. Why?

=> To keep from causing a brother to stumble.

=> To offer up to the Lord the very best we can. This point should *break our hearts*. Just think how often we have chosen to do less than the best for our Lord. We have offered up to Him behaviour, words, thoughts, deeds, works that were second best — and we knew it! How His heart must have been cut — especially when He went to the ultimate limit in loving and giving Himself for us.

Luke 9:23 *Then he said to them all: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me."*

Rom 12:1-2 *Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God — this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed*

by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Rom 14:21 *It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything else that will cause your brother to fall.*

1 Cor 6:19 *Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own. You were bought at a price. Therefore honour God with your body.*

1 Cor 10:24 *Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others.*

Mat 19:21 *Jesus answered, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."*

VIII. *Philippians 01:11 Righteousness*

There is the mark of righteousness. (See *Righteousness*, Eph. 5:9; See also Gal. 2:15-16; 3:6-14.) St. Paul speaks of the *breastplate of righteousness* (Eph. 6:14). The breastplate covered the body of the soldier from the neck to the thighs. It was used to protect the heart. The believer's heart is focused upon the Lord Jesus Christ and His righteousness, and that focus must be protected. The sign of the Christian soldier is righteousness. When a man is saved, God imputes the righteousness of Jesus Christ to him, or to say it another way, God counts him righteous (see Gal. 2:15-16). However, it is not enough to stand in the righteousness of Christ. The Christian soldier must protect his heart. This he does by living righteously. Righteousness keeps the heart from ever being wounded and losing its focus. The Christian soldier is...

- to strive after the very righteousness of Jesus Christ.
- to live righteously in this present world.

Eph 6:14 *Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place.*

Mat 5:20 *"For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven."*

Rom 3:21-22 *But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference.*

1 Cor 15:34 *Come back to your senses as you ought, and stop sinning; for there are some who are ignorant of God — I say this to your shame.*

2 Cor 5:21 *God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

Phil 1:11 Filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ – to the glory and praise of God.

Phil 3:9 And be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ – the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.

Titus 2:11-12 For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age. ■

EPHESIANS 05: 09 RIGHTEOUSNESS (DIKAIOSUNE)

*For the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth.
Ephesians 05:09*

Righteousness means two simple but profound things. It means both to be right and to do right. (See *Righteousness*, Mt. 5:6.)

1. There are those who stress *being righteous and neglect doing righteousness*. This leads to two serious errors:
 - a. False security. It causes a person to stress that he is saved and acceptable to God because he has *believed in* Jesus Christ. But he neglects doing good and living as he should. He neglects obeying God and serving man.
 - b. Loose living. It allows one to go out and do pretty much as he desires. He feels secure and comfortable in his *faith in Christ*. He knows that what he does may affect his fellowship with God and other believers, but he thinks his behaviour will not affect his salvation. He thinks that no matter what he does he is still acceptable to God.

The problem with this stress is that it is a false righteousness. Righteousness in the Bible means *being* righteous, but it also means *doing* righteousness. The Bible knows nothing about being righteous without living righteously.

2. There are those who stress *doing righteousness and neglect being righteous*. This also leads to two serious errors.
 - a. Self-righteousness and legalism. It causes a person to stress that he is saved and acceptable to God because he does good. He works and behaves morally and keeps certain rules and regulations. He does the things a Christian should do by obeying the main laws of God. But he neglects the basic law: the law of love and acceptance – that God does not love him and accept him because he does good, but because he loves and trusts the righteousness of Christ (see *Righteousness*, Mt. 5:6).

- b. Being judgmental and fault-finding. A person who stresses that he is righteous (acceptable to God) because he keeps certain laws often judges and finds fault with others. He feels that rules and regulations can be kept, *he* keeps them. Therefore, anyone who fails to keep them is judged, criticized and censored.

The problem with this stress is that it, too, is a false righteousness. Again, righteousness in the Bible is *being righteous as well as doing righteousness*. The Bible knows nothing of being acceptable to God without *being made righteous in Christ Jesus* (see *Righteousness*, Mt. 5:6; see Rom. 5:1; 2 Cor. 5:21).

Mat 5:20 *“For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.”*

1 Cor 15:34 *Come back to your senses as you ought, and stop sinning; for there are some who are ignorant of God — I say this to your shame.*

2 Cor 5:21 *God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

Eph 6:14 *Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place.*

Phil 1:11 *Filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ — to the glory and praise of God.*

1 Tim 6:11 *But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness.*

Titus 2:12-13 *It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope — the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ. □*

MATHEW 05:06 RIGHTEOUSNESS

*“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.” **Mathew 05:06***

What is righteousness? In the Bible “righteousness” means two simple but profound things; it has a double meaning. It means *to be* right and *to do* right. It may be said another way: *to be good* and *to do good*. This is critically important in the Bible.

Mat 19:17 *“Why do you ask me about what is good?” Jesus replied. “There is only One who is good. If you want to enter life, obey the commandments.”*

Rom 3:10 *As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one."*

Rom 3:23 *For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*

What is being said is that God alone is righteous; He alone is perfectly good. Man is not perfectly righteous; he comes short. How then can a man become perfectly righteous? What is the answer? The answer is what Christ says: "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness: for they will be filled." What happens is this:

God takes a person's "hunger and thirst for righteousness" and *counts* it as righteousness. The person is not righteous, but God counts him righteous. This is the great love of God. A man hungers and thirsts for righteousness; therefore, God fills him.

Several things need to be said about righteousness.

1. Righteousness is explained throughout Scripture in the word *faith*. Faith is believing God and trusting the goodness of God to take our faith and count it as righteousness. "And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists, and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him." (Heb. 11:6)

It is the person who *diligently seeks God* who really believes God. The man who so *hungers and thirsts for God and His righteousness* shall be counted righteous and shall be filled.

2. The righteousness of God has been shown to man. Just what God wants man *to be* and *to do* has been demonstrated perfectly in Jesus Christ. This is the love of God. God has not given man just the written Word describing His righteousness; He has given man a life — the life of His own Son — to show what He means by righteousness. Jesus Christ is perfect righteousness; He did nothing but good. This is what the Bible means when it talks about Christ's being "the righteousness of God." Christ is the picture, the expression, the pattern, the very image of righteousness — of *being right* and of *doing right*.

1 Cor 1:30 *It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God — that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.*

Phil 3:9 *And be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ — the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.*

2 Cor 5:21 *God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

3. Righteousness involves the mind. Scripture says involves being “made new in the attitude of your minds” (Eph. 4:23), and being “renewed in knowledge” (Col. 3:10).

This means that the man who seeks God is “created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.” He “puts on the new self or the new man” and is “made new in the attitude of [his] mind.” (Eph. 4:23).

In other words, the man who seeks God has “taken off [his] old self with its practices and [has] put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator” (Col. 3:9-10). □