

God is not ignoring mankind, but is working in secret. God's works will be learned from this 2000-year-plus period, and we might be astounded how His grace touched or helped our lives. Otis Q. Sellers defined "grace" as "a love and favor to the undeserving," including all mankind today. People ask: "If God is so loving, why does He put such awful plagues and penalties in the Book of Revelation (like Rev. 16)?" The awful plagues and penalties in the Book of Revelation are for those who deliberately choose to disobey and resist God's instructions. In contrast, the space between 'grace' and 'justice' is a continuum of love, flowing out of God's righteousness. For man, 'righteousness' is obedience to the claims and commands of God, the Highest Authority, and it stands in direct opposition to lawlessness. God's justice is the statement of His righteous order on all the earth. God's righteous order will dominate the scene in the theocratic Kingdom. God will restrain Satan, resulting in mankind experiencing years of peace, health and plenty. When He is ready, God will remove His restraints on men, resulting in testing to see if they have learned righteousness. The Great Tribulation is a testing time, with Satan seeking men's deception. Men who learned "the Law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2) and followed God's righteous order will go on into the Millennium (for time periods, see **Seed & Bread** No. 129, *The Order of Events*, by Otis Q. Sellers; also **More Seed & Bread** No. 219, *Divine Government Impending*, by John C. Ribbens). Sadly, "the rapture" cannot be properly substantiated through the in-depth studying of God's Word (see John C. Ribbens' booklet, *The Imminency of the Rapture: Fact Or Fiction?*). Instead, men will be tested on how they submitted to Christ by what they *believe today and are presently doing with their lives*. Our God is the Master of *unconditional love*; it definitely benefits us to emulate His righteous ways.

God knows exactly what is good and evil for mankind unlike what men think. Today, God's righteousness comes by believing in Jesus Christ; it cannot be earned in any other way. It results in God's act of justification by faith through Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:8-9). Those who submit and receive Jesus Christ as their Savior become in this life true children of God (Eph. 5:1-10). May keeping faith in our righteous God be our enduring goal: **You are from God, little children, and have overcome them** (the world's sinful and evil ways); **because greater is He Who is in you . . .** (1 John 4:4, NASB).

MORE
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FOR THE SOWER FOR THE EATER
Isaiah 55:10

BRIEF BIBLICAL MESSAGES FROM
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MY RIGHTEOUS GOD

By M.B. Hammond

Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness: let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together; I the LORD have created it (Isa. 45:8). This verse predicts a more perfect/changed world, governed in God's righteous order, as opposed to mankind's present unrighteous ways. These are documented in all mass-media forms found everywhere on earth. The Bible records men's unrighteous ways and God's instructions to His children.

Our God prefers the company and love/respect/esteem of those found believing in Him—the obedient men and women in His creation. How many times is it recorded in Scripture about mankind seeking other things or goals in place of worshipping the Living God? One example might be the Israelites who were frequently being idolatrous (they outrightly disobeyed God's commandment that they should not worship any other gods before Him [Exod. 20:3, 34:14]), hence God's banishing them to other lands, like Babylon and Media-Persia. As Isaiah 45:19 records: **I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth: I said not unto the seed of Jacob, "Seek ye Me in vain (without purpose):" I the LORD speak righteousness, I declare things that are right** (I declare truth).

Consequently, men who intimately know God through the study of His Word know that He is, by His very deity, entirely righteous—He is the epitome of all that is "good, right and beautiful," as opposed to the satanic "bad, evil or ugly." It follows that He defines the very meaning of righteousness—God contains all the knowledge of good and evil that exists. Since our God desires eventually to dwell with men in diametrically different circumstances from today (Rev. 22:1-5), He gives us everything in Scripture to help us understand, adopt and develop this, His righteousness (Eph. 1:17-18), more fully as one of our attributes. God's Word (including His law, commandments and precepts) is provided for studying, examin-

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ing, comprehending and grasping. However, in a future time period, men will be examined to see if they have learned righteousness, as found in accord with God's preferences. Of all God's attributes, His righteousness appears to be the most important quality in relating to His creation (Psa. 71:19). When speaking of God's attributes, we understand that they are what God ultimately IS rather than what He HAS. This is very much like the soul of a man; it is what he essentially IS, not what he HAS (see Otis Q. Sellers' booklet and/or **Seed & Bread No. 77, *What Is the Soul?***). Our God is the only truly Righteous Being in the universe and all others are considered "fakes," as "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). The righteousness of God "molds" His Word and promises into "sterling silver guarantees," including future promises to Israel and all those found believing in Him. In ancient times, God promised many blessings to the Israelites as they came out of Egypt and received His Law (Lev. 26:3-13). God also warned them of curses and penalties to follow if they did not follow His commands (Lev. 26:14-45).

Today's world is in Satan's hands, the evil one (Eph. 2:2-3). But, Isaiah says of that future day of righteousness: **Until the Spirit is poured out upon us from on high, and the wilderness becomes a fertile field, and the fertile field is considered as a forest. Then justice will dwell in the wilderness and righteousness will abide in the fertile field. And the work of righteousness will be peace, and the service of righteousness, quietness and confidence forever. Then My people will live in a peaceful habitation, and in secure dwellings and in undisturbed resting places** (Isa. 32:15-18, NASB). This promise relates to the day when God will intervene in the affairs of men, and make His righteousness and justice the basis of a divine world government ("the Day of Jesus Christ" or "the Kingdom of God"). Isaiah also says: **The LORD is exalted, for He dwells on high; He has filled Zion with justice and righteousness. And He will be the stability of your times, a wealth of salvation, wisdom and knowledge; the fear of the LORD is His treasure** (Isa. 33:5-6, NASB).

We, who live in the present day of God's dispensation of grace, recognize that Paul's claim of righteousness by the Law was only an Acts-period carry over. He speaks of himself in Philippians 3:6 (NASB): "... As to the righteousness which is in the Law, (I was) found blameless." He had been a Jew of the strict Pharisee sect, and his life was devoted to serving God even before his encounter with Christ on the road to Damascus. Paul continues: **But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteous-**

ness which comes from God on the basis of faith (Phil. 3:7-9). It might seem hard to accept, but it is true that our complete righteousness before God stems from the act of "believing" in the Lord Jesus Christ. "Believing"—our greatest form of obedience—implies that we find out all we can about this One and what He did for us (such as dying on the cross for all of our sins). "Believing" is not just a onetime act (like standing before a congregation in some church and verbally accepting Christ). Instead, it is a never-ending process or lifelong progression of constantly reading/studying God's Word. The more that we understand about Christ and His teachings, the more our hearts and faith are found secure in Him. The Apostle Peter explains it this way: **But grow (continue) in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity** (the day of the eon) (2 Peter 3:18, NASB).

Since God is righteous, He is fully aware of what men can do—good or evil. His knowledge of the outcome of everything is perfect. Satan lied to Eve when he said, "... Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil" (Gen. 3:5). God says in Isaiah 45:7 (NASB): **(I am) the One forming light and creating darkness, causing well-being (peace) and creating calamity (evil); I am the LORD Who does all these.** Some have asked, "If the Lord is righteous, how could He create evil?" These may not have read portions of the four books after Genesis, where God promised Israel various blessings if they followed His explicit instructions (the Law of Moses). However, along with Israel's promised blessings, God stated the consequences of disobedience for forsaking His covenant with them. Eventually, these penalties transpired, even though God frequently sent prophets with promises of future restoration if they returned and sought His love.

When we say "God is righteous" we should recognize "God is love" (1 John 4:7-8), another attribute of God. God helps us define "love" as "an attitude and behavior that seeks to provide the greatest good for the object of His love." Thus, God's righteousness is *the source of His abundance of good things flowing out in His love to His creation*. But, God's love is not best shown by doing what a person, who is loved, desires, but what the One Who loves deems as being needed by the one loved. John 3:16 describes the provision of man's salvation through believing in Christ—not what man wanted, but what man needed as God perceived his need. "God expressed Himself" through His Son, Jesus Christ (John 1:1-5; *The New Testament in Modern English*, by J.B. Phillips), with the objective of bringing forgiveness to everybody. Every sinner needs a Savior, and God has provided for this with His ultimate loving sacrifice of Jesus Christ—"the Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29, NASB).

God's silence prevails in today's Dispensation of Grace (Eph. 3:2).