

RIGHTEOUSNESS BY FAITH ALONE

What is righteousness? Righteousness is a three-part experience defined by the following:

1. The covering God places upon His people, ([Isaiah 61:10](#)),
2. The method God uses to save His people ([Psalm 37:29 & 1 Corinthians 6:9](#)), and
3. The operation God has for receiving glory from His people ([Isaiah 60:21, NLT](#))!

Perhaps, more importantly, righteousness, as a gift of God, is unmerited, and no amount of personal labor can secure it ([Romans 4:3-5, NLT](#)). Hence, the expression: Righteousness by Faith, hereafter RBF, exists. This title is short, easy to remember, and meaningful! However, therein lies the challenge. It is perhaps, too succinct a communication device for linking important components of living faith. An example of the limitation imposed by succinctness follows. [Body mass index](#), (weight to squared height ratio), is an indicator of body fatness. It classifies a person into one of [four weight categories](#): underweight, (BMI < 18.5), normal or healthy weight, (BMI = 18.5-24.9), overweight, (BMI = 25.0-29.9), or obese, (BMI ≥ 30). This categorization "...is a surrogate, (substitute), measure of [excess body fat, (adiposity), presented as] excess weight..." ([CDC](#)). However, the excess weight thought to come from fat alone also comes from lean muscle tissue. In other words, "...the accuracy of BMI in detecting excess body..." fat is imperfect ([Romero-Corral et. al., 2008](#)). Likewise, the succinctness of the *RBF statement* contributes to its imperfection. This claim requires explanation to keep the religious SWAT team at rest. The limitation of the *RBF statement* is that it does not explicitly acknowledge the relevance and place of works, the role of the law in the Christian's experience, and the connection to God's promises. What is the source of this observation? Six Scriptures provide data.

1. "...Anyone who believes in me will do the same works I have done, and even greater works..." (John 14:12, NLT). Here it is helpful to recall that belief in God is required for righteousness.
2. "If you love me, obey my commandments" (John 14:15, NLT), and obedience calls for doing.
3. "All who love me will do what I say. My Father will love them, and we will come and make our home with... them" (John 14:23, NLT), and "...everything will be fine..." (Exodus 33:14, NLT).
4. "...Affirm constantly that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works..." (Titus 3:8, NKJV), because "...by works faith [is] made perfect" (James 2:22).

Given the foregoing Scriptures, this study asserts that the *RBF statement* does not explicitly capture the integration of God's promises, His law, and faith that work by love ([Galatians 5:6, NKJV](#)). Therefore, the purpose of this study is to show the interrelationship of works, faith, promises, and law in the lived experiences of God's people. WFPL is the backbone for this study: W is for works; F is for faith; P is for promises, and L is the law. Six WFPL themes appear to broaden understanding of the *RBF statement*. Numbers 1 through 6 list the six WFPL themes. The task, for study participants, includes alertness, openness of mind, and recognition of the connectedness of WFPL as the study advances.

1. Origin of Righteousness

- A. [1 Cor 4:20, NLT](#) "...The Kingdom of God is not just a lot of talk...."
- B. [2 Cor 6:4-7, NLT](#) [We live by] "...God's power... working in us, [as] righteousness...."
- C. [Rom 5:17, NLT](#) Righteousness, (Gk. [dikaiosuné](#)—divine approval), is a gift!
- D. [Jam 1:17](#) "Every good... and perfect gift is from above...."
- E. [Job 29:14 & 36:3](#) "...I put on righteousness and... ascribe [it] to my Maker."
- F. [Eph 6:10-11, 13-14, NLT](#) "...Put on... God's armor..., [His] truth & righteousness."

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2. Criteria for Righteousness

- A. [Gal 4:1, NLT](#) "...Young children... are not much better of than slaves until they...."
- B. [Heb 9:16-17, NLT](#) "...When someone leaves a will, it is necessary..."
- C. [1 Cor 15:3, NLT](#) ".....Christ died for our sins... [that His will might take effect]."
- D. [Rom 5:8-11, GNT](#) "...God... made us His friends through the death of His Son...."
- E. [Jam 2:23 & John 15:15, GNT](#) "God's friends" know His plans & have faith in Him.
- F. [Gal 4:9, GNT](#) "...How is it that you want to turn back... to become their slaves...?"
- G. [2 Pet 2:20-21, GNT](#) "...Better... never to have known the way of righteousness...."
- H. [Rom 2:26-27, TLB](#) "If the heathen obey God's law, won't God give them all the rights..."
- I. [1 Cor 15:34](#) "Awake to righteousness...."
- J. [1 Pet 2:24, NLT](#) "...Having died to sins, ...live for righteousness...."

3. Imputation of Righteousness

- A. [Rom 12:3, NKJV](#) "...God has dealt to each one a measure of faith."
- B. [2 Pet 1:1, GNT](#) "...Have obtained... faith... through the righteousness of God...."
- C. [Gal 3:11, NLT](#) "...[God's will states that] ...the just—righteous—shall live by faith."
- D. [Acts 11:24, NLT](#) "...[God wants you to be] ...full of Holy Spirit & strong in faith...."
- E. [Col 1:23](#) "...Continue in the faith grounded and settled...."
- F. [Matt 21:21, NLT](#) "...If you have faith and don't doubt, you can do things...."
- G. [Eph 4:11-13, NLT](#) "...The church... [will] come... to such unity in our faith and...."
- H. [Col 1:9-10, NLT](#) Knowing God requires "...complete knowledge of His will...."
- I. [Isa 43:10, NLT](#) ".....You are... chosen to know... [God]...."
- J. [Rom 3:31, NLT](#) "...Only when we have faith do we truly [know God &] fulfill the law."
- K. [1 Pet 1:14, NLT](#) ".....Live as God's obedient children..., [obeying Him by faith]."
- L. [Heb 11:8, NLT](#) "...Abraham... obeyed; [&] went [NOT] knowing where he was going."
- M. [Rom 4:20-24, NLT](#) "...Because of Abraham's faith, God counted him as righteous...."
- N. [Rom 4:3, NLT](#) "...Because of [Abraham's] faith, God accepted him as righteous."
- O. [Gen 15:6, TLB](#) "...Abram believed God; then God considered him righteous..."
- P. [Rom 4:4-5, TLB](#) "...God declares sinners to be good... if they have faith in Christ...."
- Q. [2 Thes 1:11, TLB](#) "...God will [reward] your faith with His power."

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4. Authentication of Righteousness—Righteousness is Made Counterfeit Proof

- A. [Gal 3:22, TLB](#) "...If we could be saved by [God's] laws, then God would not..."
- B. [Rom 3:25-26, TLB](#) "...God used Christ's blood and our faith... [for] saving us...."
- C. [Rom 8:1-4, TLB](#) "...God put into effect a different plan to save us...."
- D. [Rom 3:9, NLT](#) "...All people... under the power of sin" need God's way to be saved.
- E. [Rom 3:24, TLB](#) "...Trust in Jesus and God declares us NOT guilty of offending Him...."
- F. [Rom 9:31-32, NLT](#) "...The people of Israel tried hard to get right with God... [but]."
- G. [Rom 3:19-22, NLT](#) "...God has shown us a way to be made right with Him....."
- H. [Gal 2:16, NLT](#) "...A person is made right with God by faith in Jesus Christ...."
- I. [Rom 3:26-27, NLT](#) "...God... makes sinners right in His sight when they believe in...."
- J. [Rom 3:28, NLT](#) "...We are made right with God through faith."
- K. [Isa 45:13 & 32:17](#) God guides the righteous and the effect of righteousness...

5. Selection of Candidates for Righteousness

- A. [Rev 22:13, NLT](#) "I am, [[Exo 3:13-14, NKJV](#)], the Alpha and the Omega...."
- B. [Eph 1:5-11, NLT](#) "...God decided in advance to adopt us into His own family by...."
- C. [Rom 8:29-30, NLT](#) "...God knew His people in advance, and He chose them..."
- D. [Jer 1:5, NKJV](#) "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you...."
- E. [Gal 3:16-17, NLT](#) "...God gave the promises to Abraham and his child...—Christ."
- F. [Gal 3:13-14](#) "...The blessings of Abraham... come on the Gentiles through Christ...."
- G. [Gal 3:29, NLT](#) "...[In] Christ, you are the true children of Abraham...."
- H. [Eph 1:19-20, NLT](#) "...I pray that you will understand the incredible greatness...."
- I. [Eph 3:18-20, NLT](#) "...Understand, ...and experience the love of Christ...; then...."
- J. [John 14:6, NLT](#) "Jesus... [is] the way, the truth, and the life...."

6. Righteousness as the Fruit of Living Faith

- A. [Isa 60:1](#) "Arise, shine; for... the glory of the Lord is risen upon [you]."
- B. [Php 2:14-15, NLT](#) "...Shine like bright lights in a world full of crooked... people."
- C. [Matt 5:16, NLT](#) "...Let your good deeds shine out for all to see...."
- D. [Gal 2:20, NLT](#) "...It is NO longer I who live, but Christ lives in me...."

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- E. [Eze 36:27, NLT](#) "...I will put my Spirit in you so that you will... obey my regulations."
- F. [Php 2:13, NLT](#) "For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power...."
- G. [Php 4:13, NLT](#) "...I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength."
- H. [Deut 6:25](#) "...It shall be our righteousness, if we observe...."
- I. [Jam 2:18-20, NLT](#) "...Faith without good deeds is useless."
- J. [John 9:4, NLT](#) "We must quickly carry out the tasks assigned us...."
- K. [Prov 11:5](#) "The righteousness of the perfect shall direct [their] way...."
- L. [Job 27:6](#) "My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go...."
- M. [Psa 5:8, NKJV](#) "Lead me, O Lord, in your righteousness...."
- N. [Rom 3:27, NLT](#) "Can we boast... that we have done anything...?"
- O. [Jam 4:16, NLT](#) "...Boasting... [outside of Christ]... is evil."
- P. [Psa 34:2, NLT](#) "I will boast only in the Lord...!"

Here is the conclusion of the whole matter. From the very beginning, "...the Lord has chosen the righteous for His own..." ([Psa 4:3, GNT](#)). He did this because He had plans for them, which included giving them a future and a hope ([Jer 29:11, GNT](#)). As a result, the righteous, "...would know, believe, and understand..." God ([Isa 43:10, GNT](#)) because He reconciled them to Himself and filled them with His Holy Spirit; hence, they are strong in faith, do the works of God, obeys His laws, and trusts His promises. This quartet of responses is what it means to "offer the sacrifices of righteousness" ([Psa 4:5](#)) with "...a broken spirit..., a broken and repentant heart..." ([Psa 51:17, NLT](#)). A brief review of each response follows. "...Faith is to be sure of the things we hope for, to be certain of the things we cannot see" ([Heb 11:1, GNT](#)), because we "...judge Him faithful who had promised" ([Heb 11:11, GNT](#)). "...[God] has given us great and precious promises... that enable [us] to share His divine, [righteous] nature and escape the world's corruption caused by human desires" ([2 Pet 1:4, NLT](#)). "...The law simply shows us how sinful we are" ([Rom 3:20, NLT](#)); it was "...our teacher and guide until Christ came to give us right standing with God through our faith. But now that Christ has come, we don't need those laws any longer to guard us and lead us to Him" ([Gal 3:24-25, TLB](#)) because Christ is now "...united with [us]..." ([John 17:23, CJB](#)); therefore, we "...recognize [His] voice... and follow [Him]" ([John 10:27, TLB](#)) as "...He leads [us] in the paths of righteousness, [the way of His commandments, ([Psa 119:172](#))], for His name's sake" ([Psa 23:3, NKJV](#)). Hence, "The noun righteousness, (Greek dikaiosune), ...fixes the meaning in the sphere of a life in conformity to a known standard or law..." ([Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology - Righteousness](#)); AND "righteousness, [which replaces a life of sin], makes a nation great..." ([Prov 14:34, GNT/TLB](#)). "Where is boasting then? It is excluded! By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith" ([Rom 3:27, NKJV](#)). For this reason, righteousness comes by faith and faith alone in Jesus Christ. Even the good deeds that you do as fulfillment of the divine tasks assigned to you do not originate with you, for the Scripture reminds us that "whatever is good and perfect is a gift coming down to us from God our Father..." ([Jam 1:17, NLT](#)). What is the take home message? Only what comes from God returns to God. Faith, works, law, and promises are of divine origin and God is gracious to share these endowments with all whom He calls, reconciles, and commands to shine like bright lights in the world.