

## **RIGHTEOUSNESS SERIES**

### **THE SCEPTER OF RIGHTEOUSNESS**

**In the last message, we concluded with what it means to have Christ living in us. It is not we but Christ who lives in us and we have spoken about how that the secret of the Christian life is in yielding to Jesus Christ living in us. In this message, we want to look at righteousness and show forth how righteousness could cause us to rule and reign in Him.**

**Our key verse is taken from the book of Romans 5:17 *For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.* Those who receive abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One that is Jesus Christ. They will reign in this life. They will be kings and priests before God over every circumstance, problem and over every mountain. They will rule and reign not in the next life, not when they go to God in heaven, not after the rapture but they will reign now in this life with Christ Jesus because of the gift of righteousness.**

**Let us look at Heb. 1, which has a quotation from the book of Psalms. We see why and how righteousness causes us to reign. Heb. 1 and this quotation is taken from the book of Psalms 45. Heb. 1:8 *Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of your kingdom.* A scepter is a symbolic representation of the authority and power of the king. That scepter is not a physical scepter. It is a spiritual scepter that is called the force of the power of righteousness that comes to us as a gift through our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord**

and King of the universe. The scepter of God's kingdom is the scepter of righteousness. And that is why righteousness causes us to rule and reign. That's how kingdoms are born and kingdoms are established. The book of Proverbs tells us that righteousness exalts a nation. It is the force of righteousness that is the real power of kingship and authority in this life, in the natural world, and in the spiritual world because God made this world after His pattern.

Now kingly authority is any form of authority and influence that God gives to us in our life, whether in the business world or in the political arena or church ministry. The key to the authority you have to lead people is in righteousness. Your scepter is a scepter of righteousness. As long as righteousness rules in your heart, you will forever be a ruler. Do you notice before Joseph became the Prime Minister to Pharaoh, he already had righteousness ruling in his life? When he was in Potiphar's house Joseph was faithful, diligent and righteous. When he was tempted by Potiphar's wife to commit sin he said, "No, I will not sin against God." Why did he do things like that? It was because righteousness reigned in his heart. And my friends as long as righteousness reigns in your heart one day you will reign as a king. And God will cause your righteousness to rule over others to help them to establish others. Righteousness is what builds a nation. When a person is in prison, how much lower than that can you get? Shut up as a criminal for a crime he did not commit, righteousness still ruled in his heart. You could be a lowly worker in any place, or a slave, or be in any position in your profession in your life, in your ministry, but if righteousness rules in your heart then you will rule and reign one day. God will promote you. You will rise up above others because God always promote righteousness. The scepter of righteousness is the scepter of God's kingdom.

We see Jesus having the same scepter of righteousness in Heb. 1:9 *You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness. Therefore God, Your God has anointed You with the oil of gladness more than Your companions.* Why, because He love righteousness. It is good to have righteousness. There is always a right way to do certain things. We thank God for \_\_\_ who came home on Christmas and got right with his family. Tomorrow he is going to rectify and register his marriage so that he can have children the proper way. In the eyes of the Government, he would in a sense be recognized in his family. But it is the righteous thing to do to get his marriage all registered and done with. And God will bless you \_\_\_ because you

get all these things right. It is correct to do it for righteousness' sake. When we walk in righteousness and righteousness rules in our heart then God will cause us to rule and reign in this life.

Lets look at some examples of righteousness and how it helps some people rule and reign. Lets look at David's life and see how righteousness rules in his life. We could study the Psalms to see David in his righteousness. Psalms 112 he talks about his heart being fixed or established in God. Verse one, *Praise the Lord! Blessed is the man who fears the Lord. Who delights greatly in His commandments. His descendants will be mighty on earth.* Look at that all your children will rule and reign. Blessed is the man who obeys the Lord's commandments, who follows after righteousness.

*His descendants will be mighty on earth.* God will even cause your children to be mighty upon this earth. *The generation of the upright or righteous will be blessed.* As long as we are righteous, we will be blessed.

*Wealth and riches will be in his house, and his righteousness endures forever.* How powerful is the force of righteousness. No matter how dark the times can be - recession, depression, political turmoil, upheavals, wars etc. can hit the world, yet in the midst of darkness the righteous shall have light. Remember, the scepter of righteousness is the scepter of God's kingdom. We will rule and reign as long as we are righteous.

*Unto the upright there arises light in darkness. He is gracious, and full of compassion, and righteous. A good man deals graciously and lends; He will guide his affairs with discretion. Surely he will never be shaken. The righteous will be in everlasting remembrance. He will not be afraid of evil tidings. His heart is steadfast, trusting in the Lord. His heart is established he will not be afraid, until he sees his desire upon his enemies. He has dispersed abroad. He has given to the poor. His righteousness endures forever. His horn will be exalted with honor. The wicked will see it and be grieved. He will gnash his teeth and melt away. The desire of the wicked shall perish.*

God will promote those who love righteousness. And David love righteousness. David lived his life in righteousness as much as possible. I know David had his failures. But overall, David loved righteousness. I want to encourage you that as long as you love righteousness you may fall here and there but get up as quickly as David did. The moment David realized that he was wrong he got it right quickly and went after righteousness. And God loved him. In fact, every succeeding king after David was measured by the standards set by David.

Look at the book of I Kg. 15 although king Asa did not ascend to the heights that David scaled, but yet there was a measure of greatness in his life. I Kg. 15:11 *Asa did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, as did his father David.* Now the story of the kings after the death of Solomon was very interesting. All the Northern kings were evil kings. But some of the Southern kings were evil and some were good. The interesting thing is whenever a good king comes the Southern kingdom become great. Then when a good king dies and the next king is evil, the nation would fall apart and degenerate. Then another king can inherit a mess created by the former evil king. And if the king is good, out of the mess God creates a good kingdom again. When I read about these kings coming and going, some great, some evil, some righteous, some mediocre, but one of the things that we see is this. It was not really the kings who rules. It was the righteousness in their heart that made them rule. It was because they were righteous that they became great kings for God. And as long as their hearts were righteous and righteousness reign, the kingdoms were blessed by God. Then there were several bad kings in a row, followed all of a sudden by a good king. Which good king wants to inherit a kingdom destroyed by evil from his forefathers? Any normal person would be discouraged. But when a good king comes along who loves righteousness, that scepter of righteousness would promote him and exalt the nation. Righteousness will rule and reign. You can inherit a mess and your righteousness will turn the situation around and make it beautiful. You can take over some chaotic situations caused by unrighteousness and it can become beautiful. It is righteousness that reigns. The scepter is a scepter of righteousness.

Lets look at some of the good kings and how they rule and what took place. The

next king is king Hezekiah that we jump forward to look at. Remember king Hezekiah inherited a broken down kingdom. And during king Hezekiah's time, the Northern kingdom was wiped out. I mean it would have cause great fear among the Israelites. Imagine there was a Northern kingdom with ten tribes and the Southern kingdom got two tribes. Imagine as you inherit the throne of the Southern kingdom the whole Northern kingdom was already wiped out and conquered. What is the situation? Don't you feel small? To make matters worse, the state of the kingdom he inherited was bad due to a series of bad kings who left behind a legacy of corruption, moral disorder, anarchy, Baalism, idol worship, poverty and many other abominations.

It could be almost like inheriting war torn and badly scarred Bosnia now. People look at it and say, "What a mess. How can we build the nation up again?" Yes, you can because the scepter of righteousness is a scepter of God's kingdom. You can inherit the worse things in the world today and who knows there could be leaders hearing this message. And you could be inheriting a terrible state of affairs but as long as righteousness rule in your heart God can restore greatness to your little nation again. And he who loves righteousness will reign in this life.

It can be applied to any situation. Maybe you inherited or took over some business that is messy. And you say there is no way you could redeem it. But wait a scepter of righteousness is a scepter of God's kingdom. You are going to bring God's rule and reign there. And as long as righteousness comes and you bring righteousness in I don't care how messy it is those who have inherit the gift of righteousness and the abundance of grace will rule and reign over every situation in his life.

And king Hezekiah took over at the age of twenty five years. II Kg. 18:2 *He was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Abi the daughter of Zechariah. And he did what was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his father David had done.* Now you notice David was the measurement of righteousness. *He removed the high places and broke the sacred pillars, cut off the wooden images.* Let me tell you when a king does that don't you think it will annoy some people also. He may upset some people. If you are a leader you don't think about upsetting people

you think about whether you are pleasing God and doing what you know your conscience tells you the right thing to do, doing what you know to be the righteous thing. A leader who is afraid to make righteous decisions can never be a leader for long. But if you know what is right, what is righteous and you follow it after your heart even to the point of sacrificing your career, God will take care of you. David says he has been young and he is old but he has never seen the righteous forsaken nor left without food or bread. The young lions do lack and suffer hunger but they who trust the Lord will never lack any good things as righteousness will prevail. Just do what is right in your life, follow after your conscience like the apostle Paul says that he has always lived right according to his conscience. Whether it was a popular thing to do or an unpopular thing to do, do what is righteous and God will bless you. God will take care of popularity, God will take care of criticism, God will take care of all that people throw at you. As long as you walk after righteousness God will line up everything because His kingdom is the kingdom of righteousness.

Seek the Lord, seek His kingdom, seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things will be added onto you. Righteousness is a powerful force. II Chron. 32:23 *And many brought gifts to the Lord at Jerusalem, and presents to Hezekiah king of Judah, so that he was exalted in the sight of all nations thereafter.* Imagine he inherited nothing and he became something in one lifetime. It doesn't matter what your inheritance is. It doesn't matter whether you were born with a silver spoon or wooden spoon or even born without any spoon. It doesn't matter whether you have education or no education. It doesn't matter whether you had it easy in life or had it hard. The most important thing is if you allow righteousness to rule your heart right where you are, from nothing God will make something strong, beautiful, and prosperous.

Many a time as a pastor, I have counseled and pleaded with some people who I know were going into sin. I have told businessmen who were about to do something wrong, "Even if you are about to lose everything because of righteousness, let it go because God will still bless you." It is hard for some to let go and obey their conscience when what their eyes see and what their sense knowledge tells them are so tempting. Yet sometimes some people feel so hard to give up what is wrong. They are afraid to lose money, rankings, status and popularity. It is worthwhile giving everything up for righteousness. If you live

and die knowing you lived for righteousness and you have done the right thing in your life, you will be able to rest peacefully. Sometimes people say, "I want to get all these things first then I will think about God." That's the opposite. If you think about God now, then God will help you get all those things. And some people just don't want to live for God. They say, "I live for God later. I want to do this and get all that I desire then I think of God." But instead, they lose everything.

But you think about God first and say God is first, His commandment is first, let's obey His commandments, let the other things take care of themselves. Isn't it very easy? God doesn't make it very difficult. God never asks you to go and climb Mount Everest. All He asks is listen to your heart, listen to your conscience, listen to Jesus in you, listen to the righteousness in you and yield to it. And in your most difficult times to make a decision, it's not difficult. Just listen on your inside and do what you know your conscience says on your inside. And the rest will take care of itself. Even though things may seem darker and gloomier, if you follow righteousness in the end it will all work out together for good because you love God and you are called according to His purpose.

Let us look at another king here after Hezekiah. Sadly, there was a bad king Manasseh who almost destroyed everything until he repented towards the end of his life but that was too late. Then you have another king II Kg. 22 again a series of bad things take place. By the time Josiah reigns, everything has been destroyed. II Kg.22:1 *Josiah was eight years old when he became king and he reigned thirty-one years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jedidah the daughter of Adaiah of Bozkath. And he did what was right in the sight of the Lord and walked in all the ways of his father David, he did not turn aside to the right hand or to the left.* He followed after righteousness. In his time, the temple was so neglected that there was a great rubbish dump in the temple. Even though he inherited a dumpsite of a kingdom, totally destroyed and annihilated, because he loved righteousness, God promoted him. Some of you could be called to the ministry. Maybe you are called to pastor, evangelize or take over a ministry that is all messed up. Remember if you love righteousness the rest will take care of itself. God can turn a dumpsite into a kingdom. The scepter of righteousness is a scepter of His kingdom.

In the bible, God did provide guidance for the kings so that righteousness can reign. He told Moses to write down commandments for the kings. When a king starts reigning, the first thing he must do is to write down the rules and regulations of God. Look at the book of Deuteronomy. God was concerned. God knew righteousness is what helps kings to rule. In Deut. 17:18 *Also it shall be, when he sits on the throne of his kingdom.* Now that could represent anything. Maybe God is going to bless you until you become the President or a CEO of a multi-conglomerate company. Or God is going to promote you in your department or whatever you are in charge. Remember don't take pride in that. The first thing to do is humble yourself before God and thank God for the greater responsibility He gives you. One of the first things you should do is to set your heart to follow after righteousness. The higher you are the more the pressure is against you to follow righteousness. But you have to follow righteousness. And when you sit on the throne of your kingdom or the throne of your position the first thing you must do it says in verse 18 *Also it shall be, when he sits on throne of his kingdom, that he shall write for himself a copy of this law in a book, from the one before the priests, the Levites. And it shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the Lord his God and be careful to observe all the words of this law and these statutes, that his heart may not be lifted about his brethren, that he may not turn aside from the commandment to the right hand or to the left, and then he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he and his children in the midst of Israel.*

God gives us the situation. It is not the king that rules - it is the righteousness that rules. If the scepter of righteousness is the scepter of His kingdom, whoever holds the scepter is king. If you want to be king, you must get hold of the scepter of righteousness. You get hold of the scepter. If you want to rule and reign in your life get hold of the scepter. And the scepter is not mysterious. The scepter is a scepter of righteousness. It is something that the common man in the street can do. It is something that we can do in our life right now. Get hold of the scepter of righteousness and the scepter will lift you up and promote you and build you and God will cause you to reign in your life, in your ministry, in every work of your hand.

Now an interesting note for us to pay attention to is the fact that in the Old Testament people needed guidance because they were not born again. Moses gave them this piece of advice in the book of Deut. 12:28 *Observe and obey all these words which I command you that it may go well with you and your children after you forever, when you do what is good and right in the sight of the Lord your God. When you do all these things, God will prolong your days.*

Turn over to the book of Judges, which is the story of what happened after Joshua died and the Israelites inherited the land. Anarchy and disorder set in which should not have happened. These words or phrase occurs several times in the book of Judges. Judges 21:25 *In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.* The people decided for themselves what was right and did it. But they need a standard. They need an absolute of what is right and what is wrong. Many times the problem is that each one of us feels right differently. Therefore, we need a standard; we need the Bible. We need the Word of God to tell us the standard. Otherwise, everyone will be saying, "I think this is right." And that was what happened in the book of Judges. Everyone did what was right in their own eyes. They had no king to rule with a scepter of righteousness.

And in Deut. 12:8 *You shall not at all do as we are doing here today – every man doing whatever is right in his own eyes.* God said, "Don't do what you think is right. Do what the commandment of the Lord said is right." And that's what David understood. You know what David said in Psalm 119 David asks, "How shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed to God's Word." When you hide God's Word in your heart, God's Word will be the righteousness that guides us.

The difference in the Old Testament was that they had no new born again nature in their being. They needed an external guidance and they needed the Word of God. So God told them in Deut. 12, "Observe and obey all these words which I command you. The standard I give to you are the standards of right and wrong. Don't every man do what is their own thing and decide for themselves what is right and wrong. What did my Word say?" What did the bible say? The bible is the absolute standard of right and wrong. If you want to rationalize and

intellectualize any moral standards, you can justify almost any sin, for example even making homosexuality acceptable. The fallen mind cannot find what is right and wrong because fallen man has no yardstick of morality. Only our Creator tells us what is right and what is wrong. We have to accept His absolute standard. God says, "This is right and that is wrong." His Word is right. So in the Old Testament they were slightly different. In the Old Testament, the gift of righteousness had not been revealed yet.

So God says don't every man do what is right in their own eyes. God gives them the Word and He gives them kings, prophets and priests. And some of the prophets were bad. Some of the kings were bad. Some of the priests were bad. But there were some good ones who could lead the people. As long as there were good ones to lead, the nation rose up in strength and power. When there were bad ones the nation fell. They rose and fell like the waves of the ocean according to the tide of righteousness. When righteousness came, they rose. When righteousness receded, the nation fell. Righteousness is what helps us rule and reign.

In the New, it is different. Something took place in the New Testament. In the New Testament God reveals the gift of righteousness. Turn with me to the book of Rom. 3:21 *But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets.* That means that God was already pointing to the righteousness of God through the law of the Old Testament. God was not pointing to your righteousness or my righteousness. If we were in the Old Testament and we kept the commandments of God, we would be considered righteous. We would reign by our own righteousness. And God was not pointing to our righteousness. No, in the Old Testament He was witnessing, He was telling by the law and the prophets that the righteousness of God was coming, that even our own standards of righteousness cannot be accepted. Since even our conscience has been defiled by sin, we have to accept God's standard and God says, "Meditate on My word, obey My commandments, follow My commandments."

Now I showed you earlier that the estimation of each king was based on David's

righteousness. David did what was right in the eyes of God. The next question is, "Was David's righteousness due to his keeping the law?" You and I know that David was not perfect. So by what ability did he have? David was the one who brought Israel to its greatness. Every king after him was measured against the standards set by David. David became the standard by which every succeeding king was measured. How did this come about? Let me share a secret that David found. Even David in the Old Testament had a glimpse of the gift of righteousness. And that glimpse was enough to establish a force in his life. It was not David's righteousness that he reigned by. He had a glimpse of the gift of righteousness. He had the righteousness from God that he received by faith.

Look at Romans. You see Abraham was not the only one who saw the gift of righteousness, by which righteousness was imputed to him and not earned. In Rom. 4:6-8 *Just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart of works.* Look at that it's the gift of righteousness that he had a glimpse of. *Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven. And whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord shall not impute sin.* He discovered the gift of righteousness. I am here to tell you that every man and woman of God in the Old Testament and in the New Testament were holy and righteous not by their own holiness. They were holy and righteous because the gift of righteousness affected them, changed them, changed their emotion, changed their thought pattern, changed their lives. It was the nature of God in them. It was a gift of righteousness. And that gift was not revealed in the Old Testament except to a few. That is why God said, "You shall not do what is right in your own eyes. You shall follow My Word." But those who love Him, follow Him and have a heart after God, God reveals the gift of righteousness.

Just one glimpse of the gift of righteousness changed David so much that he understood, "O God I have sinned, O God no matter how I live I can never please You. O God no matter what I have done for you I can never reach up to your standard. O God blessed is the man to whom you count as sinless. In other words, righteousness in Your sight is by Your gift." And that revelation of the gift of righteousness that David had is what changed him. David yielded to that righteousness as much as he was able to in the Old Testament. And after that, every king after him was measured by that righteousness.

From time to time when he first became the king he yielded to the right thing. He knew the right thing to do was to bring God's Ark back into the capital city. He did what was right. There were times when he fell when he didn't yield correctly. He yielded to the wrong passion. But there were times when he yielded correctly. It was not David. When the Old Testament said that such-and-such a king did right as their father David did, it was not referring to the righteousness of David. It was the gift of righteousness given to David through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit was not in him. He was upon him, influencing him and imparting the gift of righteousness. So that as David yielded to the gift of righteousness, he did the right thing. And that ability was still there. Because if it was only David's righteousness, that would mean that when David died, he would have taken his righteousness with him to his grave. But if it's the righteousness of God, any king after that can continue with that same gift of righteousness, that same scepter of righteousness and reign by constantly yielding to that gift and scepter of righteousness. Now you know why every king's reign was measured against the reign of David. David had yielded to the gift of righteousness to the highest measure, and now God expects every succeeding king to equal or exceed that measure.

But God promised something even more beautiful in the New Testament. Look at Heb. 8:10 *For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord; I will put my laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother saying, know the Lord, for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.* The reason in the New Testament for the gift of righteousness to exist is to let it become a part of our heart and our mind.

II Cor. 5:21 Jesus became sin so that you and I can become the righteousness of God. This is something that the Old Testament people couldn't have. And He didn't ask you to live your life according to your ability. He says the scepter of righteousness is a scepter of His kingdom. And He says that His scepter is now a gift to every one who will receive. He didn't say that you have to make yourself

qualify as a king before you get the scepter. It's the scepter that will make you a king. You will rule and reign through the gift of righteousness. You don't have to wash yourself, cleanse yourself, do good works, although those things we will continue to do because of His love and compassion flowing. He says if you want to rule and reign in life, the secret is the scepter of righteousness, which is the scepter of His kingdom. What do you need to do to rule and reign? Do good works and try to follow His commandments? No, all you need to do is to take hold of the righteousness and hold it to your bosom. Let it saturate into your heart, saturate it into your mind and let it change you. Yield to it and it will cause you to rule and reign in your life. What a tremendous gift God has given us! David had a glimpse of it. But my friends you don't have to just have a glimpse of it. God has promised us this gift of righteousness under the new covenant. The promise in the new covenant is the promise of righteousness working in your heart and mind as a gift. The same promise is repeated again in Heb. 10. And the secret of a Christian life is in yielding to the gift of righteousness and allowing it to change your life.