

THE WAY

**Restoring Righteousness, Walking the
Ancient Covenant Path of Jesus, and
Uncovering Paul's Impact on Law & Gospel**

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**Healthy in Heart Media, LLC
Roanoke, VA**



Published in the United States of America by

Healthy in Heart Media

P.O. Box 694

Vinton, VA 24179

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Angel Tate Keaton and

Todd G. Keaton

First Printing, June 1, 2025 Cover art and design by the authors

Library of Congress Control Number: 2026913493

ISBN—978-1-969064-34-0 (Hardcover)

ISBN—978-1-969064-33-3 (Paperback)

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Disclaimer

Scriptural interpretations in this book represent the personal study and understanding of the authors. Readers are encouraged to search the Scriptures and seek discernment for themselves.

Scripture Notice

Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are taken from the American Standard Version (ASV), as provided by BibleGateway.com. The American Standard Version was originally published in 1901 and is now in the public domain. This version was chosen for its consistent use of the divine name in the Old Testament and its closer alignment with the original Hebrew.

Throughout this book, “The Way” refers both to the earliest designation for the followers of Jesus (Acts 9:2; 19:9, 23) and to the covenant path of righteousness they sought to walk.

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Introduction

What does it mean to be righteous? For most of us raised in church culture, the answer comes quickly: to be righteous is to be “justified by faith,” declared innocent by God because of belief in Jesus. However, this definition, while it is so familiar in Western Christianity, is not the definition that YHWH gave to Israel, nor is it the one that Jesus lived and taught. In Scripture, righteousness is not about status but about faithfulness. It is covenantal loyalty expressed through justice, mercy, honesty, and love.

This book begins with three simple, but unsettling questions:

What if our inherited definition of righteousness has been distorted?

What if the lens through which most of Christianity views righteousness comes not from Moses, the prophets, or even Jesus, but from Paul—and

What if Paul’s reinterpretation of righteousness created a slippery slope that has shaped the church for nearly two thousand years?

To ask these questions is to touch a nerve. Many believers are warned that questioning Paul is dangerous—that it is the “slippery slope” to denying Jesus Himself.

However, is that true?

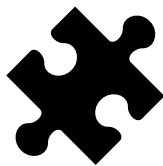
Or is the real danger in never questioning Paul, in building our faith on a Greek legal framework instead of the Hebraic covenant path Jesus upheld? Far from undermining faith, returning to Jesus’s definition of righteousness may be the only way to restore the fullness of the Gospel and the integrity of our walk with YHWH.

In the chapters ahead, we will walk the ancient path together. We will explore the Hebrew words for righteousness, the vivid imagery of Paleo-Hebrew roots, and the voice of Torah, prophets, and wisdom writings. We will see how Jesus embodied righteousness and called His disciples into a way of life that far surpassed outward religion. We will then, with honesty, face Paul’s shift, examining how his legal

definitions set the church on a slope that led away from covenant faithfulness. Finally, we will recover the call to walk in covenant righteousness today, preparing for the Kingdom of YHVH, where justice and peace dwell.

This is not a book of abstract theology. It is a call to realignment—a journey back to the Ancient Way, where righteousness is not a doctrine but a daily walk of faithfulness. It is an invitation to strip away distortions and return to the simplicity and power of living as YHVH intended: a people of righteousness, justice, and shalom.

Part I: Foundations of Righteousness



Righteousness and justice are the foundation of thy throne:

Loving kindness and truth go before thy face.

Psalm 89:14

Every house needs a foundation, and so does every faith. Before we can talk about prophets, Jesus, or Paul, we have to ask: What does righteousness actually mean? Too often, the word has been filtered through Western, Greek, or Pauline lenses, leaving us with something abstract—an invisible status or a courtroom verdict. However, Scripture’s own language tells a different story.

In Hebrew, *tzedek* (righteousness) is not a theory but a way of life. It is seen in fair weights and measures, in fields left open for the poor, in covenant loyalty lived out through justice and mercy. Righteousness is earthly, relational, and communal. It is living in alignment with YHWH and in harmony with His creation.

This first part of our journey will return to the words, roots, and images of righteousness in Scripture itself. Before we hear the thunder of prophets or the teachings of Jesus, we must first dig down deep, down to the soil. Only then will the house of faith have something solid to stand on. With this foundation laid, we now turn to the story of Israel, where righteousness takes shape in covenantal life.

◆ 1 ◆ What Is Righteousness?

If you ask most Christians today what “righteousness” means, you will usually hear something like, “It is being declared innocent before God,” or “It means I am saved because I believe in Jesus.” That is the lens we have inherited from centuries of Western theology. However, here is the thing: if you asked an ancient Israelite the same question, you would get a very different answer.

In the Hebrew Scriptures, righteousness (*tzedek*) was never about abstract legal status. It was about covenant faithfulness—living in right relationship with YHWH and with others. Abraham was not called righteous because he believed the correct doctrines; he was called righteous because he trusted YHWH enough to obey Him (Genesis 15:6). Noah was not considered righteous because he signed a statement of faith; he was righteous because he “walked with God” (Genesis 6:9). That is a pattern we see again and again: righteousness in the Bible means walking faithfully in covenant, not simply believing something in your head (Brueggemann, 1997).

This is where we run into a problem. Western theology, heavily influenced by Paul’s letters, imported Greek and Roman categories into the discussion. In Greek thought, “justice” (*dikaioσynē*) was a philosophical ideal, an abstract virtue. In Roman law, righteousness was a legal status indicating whether one was guilty or not guilty. Paul’s writings often reflect these frameworks, especially when he talks about “justification by faith” as a courtroom declaration (Wright, 2015). Over time, the church developed its theology around these categories.

This caused the meaning of righteousness to shift away from its Hebraic connotation of faithful obedience and transformed it into a legal fiction: “imputed righteousness.” Over time, Western Christianity increasingly interpreted righteousness primarily as a declared legal status, rather than a lived covenant reality. This doctrine—later termed “imputed righteousness”—treated righteousness as a transfer of legal standing before God, often disconnected from faithful obedience.

However, if you zoom back into the Hebrew worldview, you see something far more tangible. The Torah lays out righteousness in everyday life, emphasizing the

importance of using honest weights and measures, releasing debts in the Sabbath year, leaving food for the poor at the edges of the field, showing kindness to strangers, and worshipping YHVH alone (Deuteronomy 24:17–22). The prophets railed against Israel not because they failed to believe the right things, but because they oppressed the poor, shed innocent blood, and turned covenant loyalty into empty ritual (Isaiah 1:16–17; Micah 6:8). Righteousness was never private—it was always relational, communal, and embodied (Heschel, 1962).

Here is something beautiful: Hebrew words do not just convey meaning; they reveal things. In their earliest form—Paleo-Hebrew pictographs—the letters themselves tell a story.

The word *tzedek* (צדק), usually translated “righteousness” or “justice,” is made up of three letters:

- tsade (צ), shaped like a trail or fishhook, meaning “to pursue or hunt”
- dalet (ד), a door, meaning “pathway or entrance”
- qof (ק), the sun on the horizon, symbolizing “what follows” or “a cycle continuing.”

Put together, it paints a picture: righteousness is pursuing the right path through the doorway into what follows.

That is not an abstract doctrine. That is a journey. Righteousness is walked, step by step, like a traveler following a trail into the future. Already in the letters themselves, the Hebrews understood what we have forgotten: righteousness is not about sitting in a courtroom waiting to be declared innocent. It is about moving faithfully on the path YHVH has laid before us.

So, when we ask, “What is righteousness?” we are not just quibbling over definitions. We are asking whether our faith is aligned with YHVH’s covenant or with centuries of theological reinterpretation. If righteousness is merely a legal status, then faith is reduced to mental assent, and salvation becomes transactional: believe the right thing, pray the proper prayer, and you are in. However, if righteousness is covenantal faithfulness, then faith is lived out daily in honesty, compassion, justice, and loyalty to YHVH. It is not a doctrine—it is a walk.

That is why this book matters. Because when we reduce righteousness to a status, we strip it of its power to shape lives and communities. However, when we recover the Hebraic vision, righteousness becomes a living path—a way of wholeness, justice,

and intimacy with our Creator. It is not about striving for perfection. It is about aligning our lives, step by step, with YHVVH's covenant love. And honestly? That feels a lot more real, a lot more human, and a lot more like the Jesus we meet in the Gospels.

Righteousness is not a courtroom verdict but a lived covenant path. Now, let us zoom in closer and see how the Hebrew words themselves paint this picture.

Continue the Story

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