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2

Righteousness in Christ

3

My Experience

4

5

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6

There are times when the relating of personal
7 experience may be helpful, and part of the time allotted
8 to this morning's service I desire to use in giving just a
9 bit of personal experience.

10

**I have been a believer in our church's message for
11 about a quarter of a century. I started out to preach
12 it nearly twenty-one years ago, and I have been
13 preaching it without a break ever since. My work
14 has been the public presentation of the teachings of
15 the message in various cities of the East and the
16 South.** I accepted the message with a very earnest,
17 fervent sincerity. I believed in it, as I do now, with all
18 my heart, and I gave to it all the energies of my life. I
19 studied for a number of years what seemed to me to be
20 the best method of presentation with convincing
21 speech. In my ministry I was able, by the help of God,
22 to convince people of the truth of the great message
23 that I believe. And many of them were persuaded to
24 unite with our churches and join us in this movement.

25

**In those years of activity and of preaching the
26 message here and there, I felt that the most**

27 **important thing I could learn would be how to make**
28 **convincing presentation of the message of God. I**
29 **studied, therefore, not only to familiarize myself**
30 **with all the teachings of the prophecies and the**
31 **great doctrines, but also to learn how to meet**
32 **objections, how to answer questions, and how to**
33 **remove from the minds of others anything that would**
34 **hinder them from accepting this message as the truth.**

35 During those years of ministry, at least during the
36 earlier part, **my standing with God never concerned**
37 **me very much. There were times when I would**
38 **think of it, but not in any seriousness or for any**
39 **length of time. I believed, when I thought of it at all,**
40 **that everything must be all right between God and**
41 **me because I was engaged in His service—I was**
42 **doing His work, I was preaching His message and**
43 **bringing people to believe it and accept it. Those were**
44 **years of great activity, and the activity itself crowded**
45 **out of my mind any conscious sense of my own**
46 **personal need. I found that I had a degree of**
47 **convincing speech and an earnestness of**
48 **presentation that persuaded men to believe what**
49 **they were told. It seemed to me that God accepted**
50 **me and that my hope of eternal life was based on**
51 **absolute assurance. I was preaching the second**
52 **coming of Christ to others; I thoroughly expected to**
53 **meet Christ in peace when He came.**

54 **Some eight or ten years ago I became concerned**
55 **regarding my own experience in Christ. I found that**
56 **explaining the prophecies of Daniel, the 1260 days,**

57 **the 2300 days, the truth of the Sabbath, signs of**
58 **Christ's coming, and the preaching of the**
59 **unconscious state of the dead had nothing in it—at**
60 **least, the way I was doing it—that could enable me**
61 **to conquer my own rebellious will or bring into my**
62 **life the power to overcome temptation and sin. I**
63 **became concerned, and there was pressed into my**
64 **conscience the question as to whether I really was**
65 **accepted of God.**

66 I reviewed my seeming success. I looked back over the
67 experiences that God had given me, and I was inclined
68 to conclude again that because of what I had done
69 and was doing, I was safe. I tried to dismiss the
70 questions that pressed themselves upon me in
71 connection with my defeat when sin overcame me.
72 But I could not avoid these questions. They pressed
73 upon me harder and harder. I then felt that the
74 thing to do was to throw myself with new energy
75 and more ardent endeavor into the preaching of the
76 message. I became more rigid in my adherence to
77 the faith. I straightened up some things in
78 connection with my observance of the Sabbath.
79 Some things that I had allowed myself to do on the
80 Sabbath I quit doing. I was a little more scrupulous in
81 my obedience to God. I preached with greater
82 energy. I threw myself into all the activities of the
83 ministry, hoping that by so doing I would find the
84 peace that I had once had, and dismiss and drive out
85 of my heart the fears that were taking possession of
86 me with regard to my own standing before the Lord.

87 **But the harder I worked, the more this thing**
88 **troubled me.**

89 I do thank God today that there is a Holy Spirit that
90 pours light into a darkened heart and darkened mind!

91 **My activities did not help me in any way. They only**
92 **brought me into greater difficulty, for I found that I**
93 **had no power in my life to oppose all the**
94 **temptations of the devil, and that again and again**
95 **and again I was defeated.** That question of personal
96 victory—the lack of it in my life, and the need for it—
97 began to burn in my soul, and there was a time when I
98 questioned whether there was power in the threefold
99 message to enable a man to live a victorious experience
100 in Christ Jesus. And **I came into great trouble—so**
101 **great that I cannot describe it to you adequately.**
102 **But I was finally brought by this spiritual distress to**
103 **a place where it was good for me to be, but where I**
104 **hope I shall never be again—face to face with the**
105 **profound conviction that, preacher as I was, and**
106 **had been for fifteen years, I was lost—completely**
107 **lost.** I shall never forget my distress of mind and heart.
108 I did not know what to do. I was doing everything I
109 knew how to do. I had made a supreme effort to live as
110 I thought God wanted me to live; I was not doing
111 anything consciously or intentionally wrong; but in
112 spite of it all the conviction came that I was lost in
113 God's sight. And very nearly I felt that there was no
114 way of salvation.

115 But through the mercy of God and the blessing of the
116 Spirit that never brings us to such a place but that He

117 desires to carry us beyond that place, **I was suddenly**
118 **awakened to the fact that in all my association with**
119 **God and His work, I had neglected the first simple**
120 **childlike step of coming to Jesus Christ for myself**
121 **and, by faith in Him, receiving pardon for my own**
122 **sins.** All through those years I had hoped that my sins
123 were forgiven, but I never could feel sure of it. God
124 brought me back, after fifteen years of preaching this
125 message, to the foot of the cross, and **there came to me**
126 **the realization of the awful fact that I had been**
127 **preaching for fifteen years and yet was an**
128 **unconverted man.** I hope you don't have such an
129 experience. But if you need it, oh, I hope you get it!

130 **I made up my mind that I could take no further risk**
131 **in a matter of such supreme importance. I came to**
132 **Christ just as if I had never known Him before, as**
133 **though I were just beginning to learn the way to**
134 **Christ—as I was, in reality. I surrendered my sins**
135 **to Jesus Christ, and by faith I received His**
136 **forgiveness.** And I am not in any confusion about that
137 matter now!

138 **I found that something else was necessary. I had the**
139 **same old problems: the same passions, appetites,**
140 **lusts, desires, inclinations, and dispositions— the**
141 **same old will. I found it necessary to abandon**
142 **myself—my life, my body, my will, all my plans and**
143 **ambitions—to the Lord Jesus and receive Him**
144 **altogether. Not merely as the forgiver of my sins,**
145 **not merely to receive His pardon, but to receive *Him***
146 **as my Lord, my righteousness, and my very life.**

147 **I learned the lesson that the Christian life is not any**
148 **modification of the old life. It is not any**
149 **qualification of it, any development of it, not any**
150 **progression of it, any culture or refinement or**
151 **education of it. It is not built on the old life at all. It**
152 **does not grow from it. It is another life entirely—a**
153 **new life altogether. It is the actual life of Jesus**
154 **Christ Himself in my flesh.** And God has been
155 teaching me that lesson. I don't think I have learned it
156 altogether yet, but there is nothing on earth I want to
157 learn so much as that. Years ago I used to browse
158 around in old bookstores and seize upon dusty old
159 historical books as supreme treasures, trying to find
160 something that would throw light on some dark
161 prophecy. Today, while I am no less interested in the
162 prophecies, I am much more interested in my union
163 with Jesus Christ and in the development and growth
164 and progress of His life in me.

165 **And now I am going to do something that I don't**
166 **usually do. God has enabled me to express myself,**
167 **not merely by word of mouth, but by writing as**
168 **well.** There are some things I can express most
169 effectively verbally; there are other things I can express
170 most effectively in writing. Somehow, as I have
171 thought of what I wanted to present to you, knowing
172 the weakness of my preaching, fearing I may wander
173 and repeat, I have not dared to attempt to set forth the
174 principles that I want to bring to your attention this
175 morning except in writing. I will read to you some
176 paragraphs that I have prepared covering the principles
177 of righteousness in Christ. I trust that my reading them

178 will not divert your interest. I would like to have you
179 catch the thought in every sentence.

180

181 **Man Cannot Attain to Righteousness**

182 **The true purpose of man's existence and the source**
183 **of his true happiness is in enjoying the favor of God.**
184 **Aside from God's favor, there can be no true life for**
185 **man.**

186 **God's favor is attained through righteousness. The**
187 **righteous alone can be at peace with God and enjoy**
188 **His favor. Therefore, the chief purpose of man must**
189 **be to obtain righteousness.**

190 **But man is not righteous. And man has a nature out**
191 **of which righteousness cannot grow. A corrupt and**
192 **fallen nature cannot produce righteousness, nor can**
193 **it ever, by any development, or refinement, or**
194 **education, or evolution, attain to righteousness. In**
195 **Adam the whole race fell, and from him all**
196 **inherited a nature too feeble for the gigantic task of**
197 **attaining righteousness.** Human nature is carnal, not
198 spiritual, and is, therefore, not equal to this supreme
199 spiritual achievement.

200 **God gave man the law, but the law could not alter**
201 **man's nature or impart any righteousness.** It has no
202 creative power to change carnal into spiritual. Rather it
203 aggravates the evil. It multi plies offenses. And this
204 was God's intention in giving it—to make sin

205 exceedingly sinful, and to demonstrate man's
206 helplessness and doom.

207 **So man cannot attain to righteousness. He cannot**
208 **lift himself into God's favor.** He is lost.

209

210 **God Reveals the Secret of Righteousness**

211 Man's extremity is God's opportunity. When the
212 demonstration of man's helplessness is complete, God
213 brings forth His method. **When man has proved that**
214 **he can never attain to righteousness by his own**
215 **efforts, and when man's righteousness has**
216 **demonstrated itself to be a failure, God reveals His**
217 **secret—the righteousness of God in Christ.**

218 **This is Christianity. This is the whole purpose, the**
219 **fullness, and the blessed result of the coming of**
220 **Christ into the world—the conferring upon man,**
221 **the sinner, as a free gift, that which is altogether**
222 **indispensable to man's blessedness, but which he**
223 **could not attain to himself.**

224 This was solely and altogether God's work. It is of
225 grace, entirely unmerited. **And the sinner obtains it by**
226 **recognition and acknowledgment of his failure to**
227 **attain it, and by accepting it from God.** He does this
228 solely by faith. It is "the righteousness of God which is
229 by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that
230 believe" (Rom. 3:22).

231

232 **Man's Double Heritage**

233 **Adam's children derive from him a double heritage,**
234 **or curse: the debt of guilt, which, instead of being**
235 **able to reduce, they are constantly increasing; plus a**
236 **fallen, corrupt, carnal nature that is utterly**
237 **incapable of righteousness. Out of these grow all the**
238 **woes of humanity.**

239 **Christ is the second Adam, the new head of the**
240 **human race. Those who by faith are united to Him**
241 **become heirs of a double heritage of an exactly**
242 **opposite kind. Born of the flesh, we are entangled in**
243 **Adam's guilt. Born of Christ, we become involved in**
244 **an illimitable heritage of merit that Christ has made**
245 **the common property of all the members of the**
246 **family of which He is head. This extinguishes the debt**
247 **of our guilt, cancels the record of our sins, brings**
248 **pardon for all our transgressions, removes the sentence**
249 **of death hanging over us, and makes us rich in the**
250 **righteousness of Christ (chap. 5:19).**

251 **More than that, as Adam conveyed to his posterity a**
252 **carnal, fallen, corrupt nature, separated from God**
253 **and inherently unfit for righteousness, so the second**
254 **Adam transmits to the race, of which He is the head,**
255 **an entirely new nature, a spiritual nature, akin to**
256 **God, partaking of and delighting in righteousness.**

257 **When, therefore, a man turns away from his own**
258 **works and looks alone to Christ for salvation, God**

259 **declares that man just.** This declaration of God is
260 grounded on the finished work of our Lord. This is the
261 very heart of Paul's argument in Romans. The **passage**
262 **that makes this most clear is Romans 3:21-26.**
263 Analyzing this passage gives us this result: **1. All**
264 **people, without exception, are sinners. 2. All stand**
265 **in need of a justification that they cannot of**
266 **themselves provide. 3. God has set forth Christ to be**
267 **the propitiation for the sins of all. 4. On the ground**
268 **of this propitiatory work of Christ, we are declared**
269 **to be just, or reckoned as just. 5. This act of God in**
270 **declaring us just is entirely by grace and on**
271 **condition of our faith in Christ. 6. Last, this work of**
272 **Christ is necessary in order that God might Himself**
273 **be just, as well as being able to justify him who**
274 **believes in Christ.**

275 The gospel, then, is God's arrangement by which He
276 brings sinners into a new relation to Himself by faith in
277 Christ. In this new relation God justifies the ungodly
278 without effort on their part (chap. 4:4, 5). The sole
279 basis of this justifying act of God is the atonement of
280 Jesus Christ.

281

282 **Faith the Condition of Justification**

283 This **declarative act of God in justifying the sinner is**
284 **on condition of faith.** This is not merely stated many
285 times in the New Testament, but the Old Testament is
286 appealed to as proof of the fact that faith has always
287 been the condition of justification. The great typical

288 illustration of this is Abraham's faith. (See verse 3;
289 Gen. 15:6.) A long list of Old Testament saints is given
290 in Hebrews 11, all of whom lived by faith. A terse but
291 comprehensive statement of this principle is found in
292 Habakkuk 2:4. The idea of faith as contrasted with the
293 works of the law as a ground of justification is clearly
294 set forth in Galatians 2:16, 20. Justification is never on
295 the ground of works (see Eph. 2:8; Rom. 4:3, 9). If a
296 man seeks to earn salvation by works, the fundamental
297 principle of the gospel is destroyed (Rom. 4:4). To him
298 who believes in Christ and renounces works as a
299 ground of salvation, his faith is imputed to him for
300 righteousness (see chaps. 4, 5).

301 **When God pronounces us just, we are freed from**
302 **condemnation and restored to His favor. A new**
303 **standing before God is bestowed upon us. We are**
304 **pardoned.** The penalty of death for the transgression of
305 the law is remitted. We are received into God's favor.
306 His grace now flows out actively to us and imparts
307 every spiritual blessing. And the basis of all this is
308 Jesus Christ and His finished work.

309 In comprehensive terms Paul sets it forth in Romans
310 5:1, 2. Here is the ground of justification—"through
311 our Lord Jesus Christ." Here is the condition of
312 justification—"therefore being justified by faith." Here
313 is the remission of the penalty—"we have peace with
314 God," which means the broken law no longer menaces
315 us with death. And here is the new standing in the
316 divine favor—"by whom also we have access by faith
317 into this grace wherein we stand."

318

319 **A New Nature Imparted**

320 **Standing in this new relation to God, God imparts a**
321 **new nature to us and builds an entirely new**
322 **character in us. The old nature is crucified, a new**
323 **life is implanted by virtue of a new birth. And this**
324 **too, equally with justification, is entirely on the**
325 **ground of the finished work of Christ, solely by**
326 **grace without works, and on the one condition of**
327 **faith.** Indeed, all that God does for us in salvation,
328 every development of character, all progress in
329 holiness, every step of growth, is God's work through
330 Christ, and is all of grace, on the condition of faith.

331 **The life of the Christian, therefore, may be summed**
332 **up in one phrase, *union with Christ*. In repentance**
333 **we turned away from sin and turned toward Christ.**
334 **Then we trusted Christ as Redeemer and Lord.**
335 **Then we assumed the life and duties of a follower of**
336 **Christ. God's regenerating power then reproduced**
337 **in our souls the image of Christ. The new life thus**
338 **implanted is the life of Christ Himself.**

339

340 **What is Christianity?**

341 **Becoming a Christian, then, is not the acceptance of**
342 **a body of teachings, or a mental assent to a set of**
343 **doctrines, or believing the truth of the Bible in a**
344 **merely intellectual way. It is not joining the church**

345 **and partaking of the ordinances. It is entering into a**
346 **new personal relation to Christ.**

347 "As many as received *him*," to them God gave power to
348 become sons. "He that hath the Son hath life." "As ye ...
349 received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in *him*."
350 Barnabas exhorted the saints to "cleave unto *the Lord*."

351 **The central glory of the gospel, therefore, is not a**
352 **great truth, or a great message, or a great movement,**
353 **but a great Person. It is Jesus Christ Himself.**

354 **Without Him there could be no gospel. He came, not**
355 **so much to proclaim a message, but rather that**
356 **there might be a message to proclaim.** He Himself
357 was and is the Message. Not His teachings, but
358 Himself, constituted Christianity.

359 And in this is the great difference between Christianity
360 and all other religions. Buddha, when he was about to
361 die, said to his disciples, "Never mind what happens to
362 me; you have my teachings." But Jesus did not say to
363 His disciples, "My teachings are the way." He said, "I
364 am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6).

365 He came to a lost world, a sick world, a dying world, a
366 doomed world. And **He set forth a remedy. That**
367 **remedy was Himself. Not a system of teaching, but**
368 **Himself. Not a code of laws, but Himself. Not a body**
369 **of doctrine, but Himself. Not a message, or a**
370 **blessing, or a truth, or an experience, but Himself.**
371 Jesus Christ, the meek, the gentle, the humble, the
372 unselfish, the self-denying, the self-renouncing, not

373 only revealed Himself as the pattern of life, but also set
374 Himself forth as the object of faith, hope, love,
375 obedience, loyalty, devotion, adoration, and worship.

376 **Christianity, then, is not a set of doctrines, a body of**
377 **teachings, or a statement of creedal expressions. It is**
378 **a Person, and that Person is Christ. He is**
379 **Christianity.**

380

381 **What is the Gospel?**

382 The gospel is many things: It is **a revelation of the**
383 **redemption of men by the work of Christ.**

384 It is a **message of unutterable mercy** regarding the
385 pardon of human sins.

386 It is a **proclamation of the amnesty** of the Holy One
387 for the guilty sinner.

388 It is the **good tidings of the death of the Just One for**
389 **the unjust**, His becoming the propitiation for our sins.

390 It is the bringing of life and immortality out from the
391 shadows into the light and a revelation of the glorious
392 possibilities of benefit and blessing for this present life
393 as well as for the life to come. But the gospel is
394 infinitely more than all of this. **It is God giving**
395 **Himself to men. It is man's union, and then**
396 **communion, with God in Christ.**

397 It was for this that prophecy was given, that preparation
398 was made, that patriarchs, priests, and kings witnessed
399 and wrought. It was for this that Bethlehem, and
400 Nazareth, and Calvary, and Golgotha, and Joseph's
401 tomb, and the hill of the ascension, and the fiery
402 tongues of Pentecost entered scriptural history. It was
403 for this that He has imputed His righteousness,
404 imparted His holiness, and revealed the coming
405 glorification of the body. **All the saving process, the**
406 **entire scheme of salvation, centers here. That God**
407 **might give Himself to man, dwell in man, walk in**
408 **man, manifest His glory in him, shine out from him,**
409 **and bring him at last to Himself—for this was the**
410 **gospel instituted. All this God does—in Christ.**

411

412 **Condition of Receiving Salvation**

413 Jesus bids us, "Believe ... in me," "Learn of me,"
414 "Come unto me," "Follow me," "Abide in me."
415 **Personal acceptance of Him as a personal Saviour is**
416 **the condition of salvation, and the only condition.**
417 **Surrender to Him, repentance toward Him,**
418 **confession to Him, acceptance of Him, believing**
419 **Him, faith in Him, following Him, learning of Him,**
420 **trusting Him, knowing Him, abiding in Him, resting**
421 **in Him— these are the indications and blessed**
422 **privileges of Christian experience.**

423 **To be a Christian, then, is to enter into relationship**
424 **with a Person—a Person who loves you, cherishes**
425 **your friendship, deals tenderly and gently with you;**

426 **who guides you in the way of righteousness and**
427 **obedience, teaches you the truth; who has strength**
428 **for all your needs and supplies it to you; who walks**
429 **with you as a friend and communes with you; who**
430 **shares His own eternal life with you; who comforts**
431 **you in trouble, solves all your problems and**
432 **perplexities, meets every crisis of life with you; who**
433 **stands by your side always, smooths your pillow in**
434 **sickness, goes down into the dark valley of death**
435 **with you, and with whom you are safe. Knowing**
436 **Him as a friend and a Saviour, you feel assured in**
437 **leaving all the future in His hands, just as you**
438 **commit all the present to Him.**

439 **Imparting His own life to you, He will fulfill all His**
440 **commandments in you. Yours will be a**
441 **commandment-keeping life because it is His life.**
442 **There will be no failure in obedience, because He is**
443 **our obedience. Trusting Him, relying on Him,**
444 **abandoning ourselves to Him, giving ourselves clear**
445 **away to Him, we will be brought into full harmony**
446 **with every requirement of God because of His life in**
447 **us.**

448

449

450

451 **Preaching Christ**

452 **This is the glorious message to be taken to all the**
453 **world** in this generation.

454 **Christ only, Christ crucified, Christ risen, Christ**
455 **ascended, Christ interceding, Christ coming again,**
456 **Christ the only Saviour from sin, Christ our**
457 **righteousness, Christ our obedience, Christ our**
458 **coming king.** Let us not cease "to teach and preach
459 *Jesus Christ*"—"the chiefest among ten thousand," and
460 the One "altogether lovely" (Acts 5:42; S. of Sol. 5:10,
461 16).

462 *A sermon given at the General Conference of 1926.*

463 <https://www.ministrymagazine.org/archive/1986/05/righteousness-in-christ-my-experience>
464