

Righteousness in Christ

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

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

21 **In those years of activity and of preaching the message**
22 **here and there, I felt that the most important thing I**
23 **could learn would be how to make convincing**
24 **presentation of the message of God. I studied, therefore,**
25 **not only to familiarize myself with all the teachings of the**
26 **prophecies and the great doctrines, but also to learn how**
27 **to meet objections,** how to answer questions, and how to
28 remove from the minds of others anything that would hinder
29 them from accepting this message as the truth.

30 During those years of ministry, at least during the earlier
31 part, **my standing with God never concerned me very**
32 **much. There were times when I would think of it, but not**
33 **in any seriousness or for any length of time. I believed,**

34 **when I thought of it at all, that everything must be all**
35 **right between God and me because I was engaged in His**
36 **service—I was doing His work, I was preaching His**
37 **message and bringing people to believe it and accept it.**
38 **Those were years of great activity, and the activity itself**
39 **crowded out of my mind any conscious sense of my own**
40 **personal need. I found that I had a degree of convincing**
41 **speech and an earnestness of presentation that persuaded**
42 **men to believe what they were told. It seemed to me that**
43 **God accepted me and that my hope of eternal life was**
44 **based on absolute assurance.** I was preaching the second
45 coming of Christ to others; I thoroughly expected to meet
46 Christ in peace when He came.

47 **Some eight or ten years ago I became concerned**
48 **regarding my own experience in Christ. I found that**
49 **explaining the prophecies of Daniel, the 1260 days, the**
50 **2300 days, the truth of the Sabbath, signs of Christ's**
51 **coming, and the preaching of the unconscious state of the**
52 **dead had nothing in it—at least, the way I was doing it—**
53 **that could enable me to conquer my own rebellious will**
54 **or bring into my life the power to overcome temptation**
55 **and sin. I became concerned, and there was pressed into**
56 **my conscience the question as to whether I really was**
57 **accepted of God.**

58 I reviewed my seeming success. I looked back over the
59 experiences that God had given me, and I was inclined to
60 **conclude again that because of what I had done and was**
61 **doing, I was safe. I tried to dismiss the questions that**
62 **pressed themselves upon me in connection with my**
63 **defeat when sin overcame me. But I could not avoid these**
64 **questions. They pressed upon me harder and harder. I**
65 **then felt that the thing to do was to throw myself with**
66 **new energy and more ardent endeavor into the**
67 **preaching of the message. I became more rigid in my**
68 **adherence to the faith. I straightened up some things in**
69 **connection with my observance of the Sabbath. Some**
70 **things that I had allowed myself to do on the Sabbath I quit**
71 **doing. I was a little more scrupulous in my obedience to**

72 **God. I preached with greater energy. I threw myself into**
73 **all the activities of the ministry, hoping that by so doing I**
74 **would find the peace that I had once had, and dismiss**
75 **and drive out of my heart the fears that were taking**
76 **possession of me with regard to my own standing before**
77 **the Lord. But the harder I worked, the more this thing**
78 **troubled me.**

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

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

103 But through the mercy of God and the blessing of the Spirit
104 that never brings us to such a place but that He desires to
105 carry us beyond that place, **I was suddenly awakened to**
106 **the fact that in all my association with God and His**
107 **work, I had neglected the first simple childlike step of**
108 **coming to Jesus Christ for myself and, by faith in Him,**
109 **receiving pardon for my own sins.** All through those years

110 I had hoped that my sins were forgiven, but I never could
111 feel sure of it. God brought me back, after fifteen years of
112 preaching this message, to the foot of the cross, and **there**
113 **came to me the realization of the awful fact that I had**
114 **been preaching for fifteen years and yet was an**
115 **unconverted man.** I hope you don't have such an
116 experience. But if you need it, oh, I hope you get it!

117 **I made up my mind that I could take no further risk in a**
118 **matter of such supreme importance. I came to Christ**
119 **just as if I had never known Him before, as though I**
120 **were just beginning to learn the way to Christ—as I was,**
121 **in reality. I surrendered my sins to Jesus Christ, and by**
122 **faith I received His forgiveness.** And I am not in any
123 confusion about that matter now!

124 **I found that something else was necessary. I had the**
125 **same old problems: the same passions, appetites, lusts,**
126 **desires, inclinations, and dispositions—the same old will.**
127 **I found it necessary to abandon myself—my life, my**
128 **body, my will, all my plans and ambitions—to the Lord**
129 **Jesus and receive Him altogether. Not merely as the**
130 **forgiver of my sins, not merely to receive His pardon, but**
131 **to receive *Him* as my Lord, my righteousness, and my**
132 **very life.**

133 **I learned the lesson that the Christian life is not any**
134 **modification of the old life. It is not any qualification of**
135 **it, any development of it, not any progression of it, any**
136 **culture or refinement or education of it. It is not built on**
137 **the old life at all. It does not grow from it. It is another**
138 **life entirely—a new life altogether. It is the actual life of**
139 **Jesus Christ Himself in my flesh.** And God has been
140 teaching me that lesson. I don't think I have learned it
141 altogether yet, but there is nothing on earth I want to learn so
142 much as that. Years ago I used to browse around in old
143 bookstores and seize upon dusty old historical books as
144 supreme treasures, trying to find something that would throw
145 light on some dark prophecy. Today, while I am no less
146 interested in the prophecies, I am much more interested in

147 my union with Jesus Christ and in the development and
148 growth and progress of His life in me.

149 **And now I am going to do something that I don't usually**
150 **do. God has enabled me to express myself, not merely by**
151 **word of mouth, but by writing as well.** There are some
152 things I can express most effectively verbally; there are other
153 things I can express most effectively in writing. Somehow,
154 as I have thought of what I wanted to present to you,
155 knowing the weakness of my preaching, fearing I may
156 wander and repeat, I have not dared to attempt to set forth
157 the principles that I want to bring to your attention this
158 morning except in writing. I will read to you some
159 paragraphs that I have prepared covering the principles of
160 righteousness in Christ. I trust that my reading them will not
161 divert your interest. I would like to have you catch the
162 thought in every sentence.

163

164 **Man Cannot Attain to Righteousness**

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

168 **God's favor is attained through righteousness. The**
169 **righteous alone can be at peace with God and enjoy His**
170 **favor. Therefore, the chief purpose of man must be to**
171 **obtain righteousness.**

172 **But man is not righteous. And man has a nature out of**
173 **which righteousness cannot grow. A corrupt and fallen**
174 **nature cannot produce righteousness, nor can it ever, by**
175 **any development, or refinement, or education, or**
176 **evolution, attain to righteousness. In Adam the whole**
177 **race fell, and from him all inherited a nature too feeble**
178 **for the gigantic task of attaining righteousness.** Human
179 nature is carnal, not spiritual, and is, therefore, not equal to
180 this supreme spiritual achievement.

181 **God gave man the law, but the law could not alter man's**
182 **nature or impart any righteousness.** It has no creative

183 power to change carnal into spiritual. Rather it aggravates
184 the evil. It multi plies offenses. And this was God's intention
185 in giving it—to make sin exceedingly sinful, and to
186 demonstrate man's helplessness and doom.

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

189

190 **God Reveals the Secret of Righteousness**

191 Man's extremity is God's opportunity. When the
192 demonstration of man's helplessness is complete, God brings
193 forth His method. **When man has proved that he can**
194 **never attain to righteousness by his own efforts, and**
195 **when man's righteousness has demonstrated itself to be a**
196 **failure, God reveals His secret—the righteousness of God**
197 **in Christ.**

198 **This is Christianity. This is the whole purpose, the**
199 **fullness, and the blessed result of the coming of Christ**
200 **into the world—the conferring upon man, the sinner, as**
201 **a free gift, that which is altogether indispensable to**
202 **man's blessedness, but which he could not attain to**
203 **himself.**

204 This was solely and altogether God's work. It is of grace,
205 entirely unmerited. **And the sinner obtains it by**
206 **recognition and acknowledgment of his failure to attain**
207 **it, and by accepting it from God.** He does this solely by
208 faith. It is "the righteousness of God which is by faith of
209 Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe" (Rom.
210 3:22).

211

212 **Man's Double Heritage**

213 **Adam's children derive from him a double heritage, or**
214 **curse: the debt of guilt, which, instead of being able to**
215 **reduce, they are constantly increasing; plus a fallen,**
216 **corrupt, carnal nature that is utterly incapable of**

217 **righteousness. Out of these grow all the woes of**
218 **humanity.**

219 **Christ is the second Adam, the new head of the human**
220 **race. Those who by faith are united to Him become heirs**
221 **of a double heritage of an exactly opposite kind. Born of**
222 **the flesh, we are entangled in Adam's guilt. Born of**
223 **Christ, we become involved in an illimitable heritage of**
224 **merit that Christ has made the common property of all**
225 **the members of the family of which He is head. This**
226 **extinguishes the debt of our guilt, cancels the record of our**
227 **sins, brings pardon for all our transgressions, removes the**
228 **sentence of death hanging over us, and makes us rich in the**
229 **righteousness of Christ (chap. 5:19).**

230 **More than that, as Adam conveyed to his posterity a**
231 **carnal, fallen, corrupt nature, separated from God and**
232 **inherently unfit for righteousness, so the second Adam**
233 **transmits to the race, of which He is the head, an entirely**
234 **new nature, a spiritual nature, akin to God, partaking of**
235 **and delighting in righteousness.**

236 **When, therefore, a man turns away from his own works**
237 **and looks alone to Christ for salvation, God declares that**
238 **man just.** This declaration of God is grounded on the
239 finished work of our Lord. This is the very heart of Paul's
240 argument in Romans. The **passage that makes this most**
241 **clear is Romans 3:21-26.** Analyzing this passage gives us
242 this result: **1. All people, without exception, are sinners. 2.**
243 **All stand in need of a justification that they cannot of**
244 **themselves provide. 3. God has set forth Christ to be the**
245 **propitiation for the sins of all. 4. On the ground of this**
246 **propitiatory work of Christ, we are declared to be just,**
247 **or reckoned as just. 5. This act of God in declaring us**
248 **just is entirely by grace and on condition of our faith in**
249 **Christ. 6. Last, this work of Christ is necessary in order**
250 **that God might Himself be just, as well as being able to**
251 **justify him who believes in Christ.**

252 The gospel, then, is God's arrangement by which He brings
253 sinners into a new relation to Himself by faith in Christ. In

254 this new relation God justifies the ungodly without effort on
255 their part (chap. 4:4, 5). The sole basis of this justifying act
256 of God is the atonement of Jesus Christ.

257

258 **Faith the Condition of Justification**

259 This **declarative act of God in justifying the sinner is on**
260 **condition of faith.** This is not merely stated many times in
261 the New Testament, but the Old Testament is appealed to as
262 proof of the fact that faith has always been the condition of
263 justification. The great typical illustration of this is
264 Abraham's faith. (See verse 3; Gen. 15:6.) A long list of Old
265 Testament saints is given in Hebrews 11, all of whom lived
266 by faith. A terse but comprehensive statement of this
267 principle is found in Habakkuk 2:4. The idea of faith as
268 contrasted with the works of the law as a ground of
269 justification is clearly set forth in Galatians 2:16, 20.
270 Justification is never on the ground of works (see Eph. 2:8;
271 Rom. 4:3, 9). If a man seeks to earn salvation by works, the
272 fundamental principle of the gospel is destroyed (Rom. 4:4).
273 To him who believes in Christ and renounces works as a
274 ground of salvation, his faith is imputed to him for
275 righteousness (see chaps. 4, 5).

276 **When God pronounces us just, we are freed from**
277 **condemnation and restored to His favor. A new standing**
278 **before God is bestowed upon us. We are pardoned.** The
279 penalty of death for the transgression of the law is remitted.
280 We are received into God's favor. His grace now flows out
281 actively to us and imparts every spiritual blessing. And the
282 basis of all this is Jesus Christ and His finished work.

283 In comprehensive terms Paul sets it forth in Romans 5:1, 2.
284 Here is the ground of justification—"through our Lord Jesus
285 Christ." Here is the condition of justification—"therefore
286 being justified by faith." Here is the remission of the
287 penalty—"we have peace with God," which means the
288 broken law no longer menaces us with death. And here is the
289 new standing in the divine favor—"by whom also we have
290 access by faith into this grace wherein we stand."

291

292 **A New Nature Imparted**

293 **Standing in this new relation to God, God imparts a new**
294 **nature to us and builds an entirely new character in us.**
295 **The old nature is crucified, a new life is implanted by**
296 **virtue of a new birth. And this too, equally with**
297 **justification, is entirely on the ground of the finished**
298 **work of Christ, solely by grace without works, and on the**
299 **one condition of faith.** Indeed, all that God does for us in
300 salvation, every development of character, all progress in
301 holiness, every step of growth, is God's work through Christ,
302 and is all of grace, on the condition of faith.

303 **The life of the Christian, therefore, may be summed up**
304 **in one phrase, *union with Christ*. In repentance we turned**
305 **away from sin and turned toward Christ. Then we**
306 **trusted Christ as Redeemer and Lord. Then we assumed**
307 **the life and duties of a follower of Christ. God's**
308 **regenerating power then reproduced in our souls the**
309 **image of Christ. The new life thus implanted is the life of**
310 **Christ Himself.**

311

312 **What is Christianity?**

313 **Becoming a Christian, then, is not the acceptance of a**
314 **body of teachings, or a mental assent to a set of doctrines,**
315 **or believing the truth of the Bible in a merely intellectual**
316 **way. It is not joining the church and partaking of the**
317 **ordinances. It is entering into a new personal relation to**
318 **Christ.**

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

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

326 **Without Him there could be no gospel. He came, not so**
327 **much to proclaim a message, but rather that there might**
328 **be a message to proclaim.** He Himself was and is the
329 Message. Not His teachings, but Himself, constituted
330 Christianity.

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

337 He came to a lost world, a sick world, a dying world, a
338 doomed world. And **He set forth a remedy. That remedy**
339 **was Himself. Not a system of teaching, but Himself. Not a**
340 **code of laws, but Himself. Not a body of doctrine, but**
341 **Himself. Not a message, or a blessing, or a truth, or an**
342 **experience, but Himself.** Jesus Christ, the meek, the gentle,
343 the humble, the unselfish, the self-denying, the self-
344 renouncing, not only revealed Himself as the pattern of life,
345 but also set Himself forth as the object of faith, hope, love,
346 obedience, loyalty, devotion, adoration, and worship.

347 **Christianity, then, is not a set of doctrines, a body of**
348 **teachings, or a statement of creedal expressions. It is a**
349 **Person, and that Person is Christ. He is Christianity.**

350

351 **What is the Gospel?**

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

354 It is a **message of unutterable mercy** regarding the pardon
355 of human sins.

356 It is a **proclamation of the amnesty** of the Holy One for the
357 guilty sinner.

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

360 It is the bringing of life and immortality out from the
361 shadows into the light and a revelation of the glorious
362 possibilities of benefit and blessing for this present life as
363 well as for the life to come. But the gospel is infinitely more
364 than all of this. **It is God giving Himself to men. It is**
365 **man's union, and then communion, with God in Christ.**

366 It was for this that prophecy was given, that preparation was
367 made, that patriarchs, priests, and kings witnessed and
368 wrought. It was for this that Bethlehem, and Nazareth, and
369 Calvary, and Golgotha, and Joseph's tomb, and the hill of the
370 ascension, and the fiery tongues of Pentecost entered
371 scriptural history. It was for this that He has imputed His
372 righteousness, imparted His holiness, and revealed the
373 coming glorification of the body. **All the saving process,**
374 **the entire scheme of salvation, centers here. That God**
375 **might give Himself to man, dwell in man, walk in man,**
376 **manifest His glory in him, shine out from him, and bring**
377 **him at last to Himself—for this was the gospel instituted.**
378 **All this God does—in Christ.**

379

380 **Condition of Receiving Salvation**

381 Jesus bids us, "Believe ... in me," "Learn of me," "Come
382 unto me," "Follow me," "Abide in me." **Personal**
383 **acceptance of Him as a personal Saviour is the condition**
384 **of salvation, and the only condition. Surrender to Him,**
385 **repentance toward Him, confession to Him, acceptance**
386 **of Him, believing Him, faith in Him, following Him,**
387 **learning of Him, trusting Him, knowing Him, abiding in**
388 **Him, resting in Him— these are the indications and**
389 **blessed privileges of Christian experience.**

390 **To be a Christian, then, is to enter into relationship with**
391 **a Person—a Person who loves you, cherishes your**
392 **friendship, deals tenderly and gently with you; who**
393 **guides you in the way of righteousness and obedience,**
394 **teaches you the truth; who has strength for all your**
395 **needs and supplies it to you; who walks with you as a**
396 **friend and communes with you; who shares His own**

397 **eternal life with you; who comforts you in trouble, solves**
398 **all your problems and perplexities, meets every crisis of**
399 **life with you; who stands by your side always, smooths**
400 **your pillow in sickness, goes down into the dark valley of**
401 **death with you, and with whom you are safe. Knowing**
402 **Him as a friend and a Saviour, you feel assured in**
403 **leaving all the future in His hands, just as you commit all**
404 **the present to Him.**

405 **Imparting His own life to you, He will fulfill all His**
406 **commandments in you. Yours will be a commandment-**
407 **keeping life because it is His life. There will be no failure**
408 **in obedience,** because He is our obedience. Trusting Him,
409 relying on Him, abandoning ourselves to Him, giving
410 ourselves clear away to Him, we will be brought into full
411 harmony with every requirement of God because of His life
412 in us.

413

414 **Preaching Christ**

415 **This is the glorious message to be taken to all the world**
416 **in this generation.**

417 **Christ only, Christ crucified, Christ risen, Christ**
418 **ascended, Christ interceding, Christ coming again,**
419 **Christ the only Saviour from sin, Christ our**
420 **righteousness, Christ our obedience, Christ our coming**
421 **king.** Let us not cease "to teach and preach *Jesus Christ*"—
422 "the chiefest among ten thousand," and the One "altogether
423 lovely" (Acts 5:42; S. of Sol. 5:10, 16).

424 <https://www.ministrymagazine.org/archive/1986/05/righteousness-in-christ-my-experience>
425

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