



The LORD Our *Righteousness*

GEORGE WHITEFIELD (1714-1770)

THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS

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THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS

“THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.”

—Jeremiah 23:6

Introduction

Whoever is acquainted with the nature of mankind in general, or the propensity of his own heart in particular, must acknowledge that self-righteousness is the last idol that is rooted out of the heart. Being once born under a covenant of works, it is natural for us all to have recourse to a covenant of works for our everlasting salvation. And we have contracted such a devilish pride by our Fall from God, that we would, if not wholly, yet in part at least, glory in being the cause of our own salvation. We cry out against Popery, and that very justly; but we are all Papists. At least I am sure we are all Arminians by nature; and therefore, no wonder so many natural men embrace that scheme. It is true, we disclaim the doctrine of merit, are ashamed directly to say we deserve any good at the hands of God; therefore as the apostle excellently well observes, we go about, we fetch a circuit, to establish a righteousness of our own, and, like the Pharisees of old, will not wholly submit to that righteousness which is of God through Jesus Christ our Lord (see Rom 10:3).

This is the sorest, though, alas, the most common evil that was ever yet seen under the sun. An evil that

in any age, especially in these dregs of time wherein we live, cannot sufficiently be inveighed against.¹ For as it is with the people, so it is with the priests; and it is to be feared even in those places where once the truth as it is in Jesus was eminently preached, many ministers are so sadly degenerated from their pious ancestors that the doctrine of grace, especially the personal, all-sufficient righteousness of Jesus, is but too seldom, too slightly mentioned. Hence the love of many waxeth cold; and I have often thought, was it possible, that this single consideration would be sufficient to raise our venerable forefathers again from their graves; who would thunder in their ears their fatal error. The righteousness of Jesus Christ is one of those great mysteries which the angels desire to look into and seems to be one of the first lessons that God taught men after the Fall. For what were the coats that God made to put on our first parents, but types of the application of the merits or righteousness of Jesus Christ to believer's hearts? We are told that those coats were made of skins of beasts, and as beasts were not then food for men, we may fairly infer that those beasts were slain in sacrifice, in commemoration of the great sacrifice, Jesus Christ, thereafter to be offered. And the skins of those beasts thus slain, being put on Adam and Eve, they were thereby taught how their nakedness was to be covered with the righteousness of the Lamb of God.

This is it which is meant, when we are told Abraham "believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness" (Gen 15:6). In short, this is it of which both the law and all the prophets have

¹ **inveighed against** – violently denounced.

spoken, especially Jeremiah in the words of the text: "THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS." I propose through divine grace, 1) To consider who we are to understand by the word *Lord*. 2) How the Lord is man's righteousness. 3) I will consider some of the chief objections that are generally urged against this doctrine. 4) I shall show some very ill consequences that flow naturally from denying this doctrine. 5) Shall conclude with an exhortation to all to come to Christ by faith, that they may be enabled to say with the prophet in the text, "THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS."

1. Who Is "the Lord"?

I am to consider who we are to understand by the word *Lord*: "THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS."

If any Arians or Socinians are drawn by curiosity to hear what the babbler has to say, let them be ashamed of denying the divinity of that Lord that has bought poor sinners with His precious blood. For the person mentioned in the text under the character of Lord is Jesus Christ. "Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS" (Jer 23:5-6). By the *righteous Branch*, all agree that we are to understand Jesus Christ. He it is that is called "the Lord" in our text. If so, if there were no other text in the Bible to prove the divinity of Christ, that is sufficient. For if the word *Lord* may properly belong to Jesus Christ, He must be

God. For as you have it in the margins of your Bibles, the word *Lord* is in the original *Jehovah*, which is the essential title of God Himself. Come then, ye Arians, kiss the Son of God, bow down before Him, and honor Him, even as you honor the Father. Learn of the angels, those morning stars, and worship Him as truly God. For otherwise you are as much idolaters as those that worship the Virgin Mary. And as for you Socinians, who say Christ was a mere man and yet profess that He was your Savior, according to your own principles you are accursed. For, if Christ be a mere man, then He is only an arm of flesh. And it is written, “Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm” (Jer 17:5). But I would hope there are no such monsters here. At least, that after these considerations, they would be ashamed of broaching such monstrous absurdities anymore. For it is plain, that by the word *Lord*, we are to understand the Lord Jesus Christ, Who here takes to Himself the title of *Jehovah*, and therefore must be very God of very God, or, as the apostle devoutly expresses it, “God blessed for ever” (Rom 9:5).

2. How Is He Man’s Righteousness?

How the Lord is to be man’s righteousness comes next to be considered. And that is, in one word, by *imputation*. For it pleased God, after He had made all things by the word of His power, to create man after His own image. And so infinite was the condescension of the high and lofty One, Who inhabiteth eternity, that although He might have insisted, on the everlasting obedience of him and his posterity, yet he was pleased to oblige himself, by a covenant or

agreement made with his own creature, upon condition of an unsinning obedience, to give them immortality and eternal life. For when it is said, "The day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Gen 2:17), we may fairly infer [that] so long as he continued obedient and did not eat thereof, he should surely live. The 3rd [chapter] of Genesis gives us a full but mournful account, how our first parents broke this covenant, and thereby stood in need of a better righteousness than their own, in order to procure their future acceptance with God. For what must they do? They were as much under a covenant of works as ever. And, though after their disobedience they were without strength, yet they were obliged not only to do, but continue to do all things, and that too in the most perfect manner which the Lord had required of them. And not only so, but to make satisfaction to God's infinitely offended justice, for the breach they had already been guilty of. Here then opens the amazing scene of *divine philanthropy*: I mean, God's love to man. For behold, what man could not do, Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father's love, undertakes to do for him. And that God might be just in justifying the ungodly, though He was "in the form of God," and therefore "thought it not robbery to be equal with God," yet He "took upon him the form of a servant," even human nature (Phi 2:6-7). In that nature He obeyed, and thereby fulfilled the whole moral law in our stead. And also died a painful death upon the cross, and thereby became a curse for, or instead of, those whom the Father had given to Him. As God, He satisfied at the same time that He obeyed and suffered as man; and being God and man in one person, He wrought out a

full, perfect, and sufficient righteousness for all to whom it was to be imputed.

Here then we see the meaning of the word *righteousness*. It implies the active as well as passive obedience of the Lord Jesus Christ. We generally, when talking of the merits of Christ, only mention the latter, namely His death; whereas the former, namely His life and active obedience, is equally necessary. Christ is not such a Savior as becomes us, unless we join both together. Christ not only died, but lived; not only suffered, but obeyed for, or instead of poor sinners. And both of these jointly make up that complete righteousness which is to be imputed to us, as the disobedience of our first parents was made ours by imputation. In this sense, and no other, are we to understand that parallel which St. Paul draws in the 5th [chapter] of the Romans, between the first and second Adam. This is what he elsewhere terms our being “made the righteousness of God in him” (2Co 5:21). This is the sense wherein the prophet would have us to understand the words of the text; therefore Jeremiah 33:16 [says], “She, [that is the church itself] shall be called, [having this righteousness imputed to her] the LORD our righteousness”—a passage, I think, worthy of the profoundest meditation of all the sons and daughters of Abraham. Many are the objections which the proud hearts of fallen men are continually urging against this wholesome, this divine, this soul-saving doctrine.

3. Objections Addressed

I come now to answer some few of those which I think the most considerable.

a. Destroys good works

And first, they say, because they would appear friends to morality, “That the doctrine of an imputed righteousness is destructive of good works and leads to licentiousness.”

And who, pray, are the persons that generally urge this objection? Are they men full of faith, and men really concerned for good works? No, whatever few exceptions there may be, if there be any at all, it is notorious,² they are generally “men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith” (2Ti 3:8). The best title I can give them is that of *profane moralists*, or moralists falsely so called. For I appeal to the experience of the present, as well as past ages, if iniquity did and does not most abound where the doctrine of Christ’s whole personal righteousness is most cried down, and most seldom mentioned: Arminian, being antichristian, principles, always did, and always will, lead to antichristian practices. And never was there a reformation brought about in the church, but by preaching the doctrine of Christ’s imputed righteousness. This, as that man of God, Luther, calls it, is *articulus stantis aut cadentis Ecclesiae*, the article upon which the church stands or falls. And though the preachers of this doctrine are generally branded by those on the other side with the opprobrious names of antinomians, deceivers, and what not; yet, I believe if the truth of the doctrine on both sides was to be judged of by the lives of the preachers and professors of it, those on our side the question would have the advantage every way.

² **notorious** – publicly known; evident; manifest to the world (almost always in an ill sense).

It is true, this, as well as every other doctrine of grace, may be abused. And perhaps the unchristian walk of some, who have talked of Christ's imputed righteousness, justification by faith, and the like, and yet never felt it imputed to their own souls, has given the enemies of the Lord thus cause to blaspheme. But this is a very unsafe, as well as very unfair way of arguing. The only question should be, whether or not this doctrine of an imputed righteousness does, in itself, cut off the occasion of good works, or lead to licentiousness? To this we may boldly answer, In no wise. It excludes works, indeed, from being any cause of our justification in the sight of God; but it requires good works as a proof of our having this righteousness imputed to us, and as a declarative evidence of our justification in the sight of men. And then, how can the doctrine of an imputed righteousness be a doctrine leading to licentiousness?

It is all calumny.³ St. Paul introduces an infidel making this objection, in his epistle to the Romans. And none but infidels that never felt the power of Christ's resurrection upon their souls will urge it over again. And therefore, notwithstanding this objection, with the prophet in the text we may boldly say, "The Lord our righteousness."

b. Christ did not preach it

But Satan, (and no wonder that his servants imitate him) often transforms himself into an angel of light. And therefore, (such perverse things will infidelity and Arminianism make men speak) in order

³ **calumny** – slander; false accusation; false report.

to dress their objections in the best colors, some urge, "That *our Savior preached no such doctrine*; that in His sermon upon the mount, He mentions only morality, and consequently the doctrine of an imputed righteousness falls wholly to the ground."

But surely the men who urge this objection either never read or never understood our blessed Lord's discourse, wherein the doctrine of an imputed righteousness is so plainly taught that he who runs, if he has eyes that see, may read.

Indeed our Lord does recommend morality and good works, (as all faithful ministers will do) and clears the moral law from the many corrupt glosses put upon it by the letter-learned Pharisees. But then, before He comes to this, it is remarkable, He talks of inward piety, such as poverty of spirit, meekness, holy mourning, purity of heart, especially hungering and thirsting after righteousness, and then recommends good works as an evidence of our having His righteousness imputed to us and these graces and divine tempers wrought in our hearts. "Let your light, [that is, the divine light I before have been mentioning] shine before men in a holy life; that they, seeing your good works, may glorify your Father which is in heaven" (see Mat 5:16). And then He immediately adds, "Think not that I am come to destroy the [moral] law...I am not come to destroy, [to take away the force of it as a rule of life,] but to fulfill [to obey it in its whole latitude, and give the complete sense of it]" (Mat 5:17). And then He goes on to show how exceeding broad the moral law is. So that our Lord, instead of disannulling an imputed righteousness in His sermon upon the mount, not

only confirms it, but also answers the foregoing objection urged against it, by making good works a proof and evidence of its being imputed to our souls. He, therefore, that hath ears to hear, let him hear what the prophet says in the words of the text "THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS."

c. Christ preached works righteousness

But as Satan not only quoted Scripture, but also backed one temptation after another with it, when he attacked Christ's person in the wilderness, so his children generally take the same method in treating this doctrine. And therefore they urge another objection against the doctrine of an imputed righteousness, from the example of the young man in the gospel.

We may state it thus: "The evangelist, St. Mark," say they, "[in] chapter 10, mentions a young man that came to Christ, running and asking Him what he should do to inherit eternal life? (Mar 10:17). *Christ referred him to the commandments*, to know what he must do to inherit eternal life. It is plain, therefore, works were to be partly, at least, the cause of his justification; and consequently the doctrine of an imputed righteousness is unscriptural." This is the objection in its full strength; and little strength in all its fullness. For was I to prove the necessity of an imputed righteousness, I scarce know how I could bring a better instance to make good.

Let us take a more intimate view of this young man, and our Lord's behavior toward him. In Mark 10:17, the evangelist tells us, that when Christ was gone forth into the way, there came one running (it

should seem it was some nobleman, a rarity indeed, to see such an one running to Christ!); and not only so, but he kneeled to Him, (though many of his rank scarce know the time when they kneeled to Him) and asked him, saying, “Good Master what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?” Then Jesus, to see whether or not he believed Him to be what He really was, truly and properly God, said unto him, “Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God” (Mar 10:18). And that He might directly answer his question, says He, “Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery...Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother” (v. 19). This, I say, was a direct answer to his question: namely, that eternal life was not to be obtained by his doings. For our Lord, by referring him to the commandments, did not (as the objectors insinuate) in the least hint that his morality would recommend him to the favor and mercy of God. But he intended thereby to make the Law his schoolmaster to bring him to himself; that the young man, seeing how he had broken every one of these commandments, might thereby be convinced of the insufficiency of his own, and consequently of the absolute necessity of looking out for a better righteousness, whereon he might depend for eternal life.

This is what our Lord designed. The young man, being self-righteous, and willing to justify himself, said, “All these have I observed from my youth.” But had he known himself, he would have confessed, “All these have I broken from my youth” (v. 20). For supposing he had not actually committed adultery,

had he never lusted after a woman in his heart? What if he had not really killed another; had he never been angry without a cause, or spoken unadvisedly with his lips? If so, by breaking one of the least commandments in the least degree, he became liable to the curse of God: for “cursed is every one [saith the law] that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them” (Gal 3:10). And therefore, as I observed before, our Lord was so far from speaking against, that He treated the young man in that manner, on purpose to convince him of the necessity of an imputed righteousness.

But perhaps they will reply, it is said, Jesus beholding him, loved him. And what then? This He might do with a human love, and at the same time this young man have no interest in His blood. Thus Christ is said to wonder; to weep over Jerusalem, and say, “If thou hadst known,” etc (Luk 19:41-44). But such like passages are to be referred only to His human nature. And there is a great deal of difference between the love wherewith Christ loved this young man, and that wherewith He loved Mary, Lazarus, and their sister Martha. To illustrate this by a comparison: A minister of the Lord Jesus Christ, seeing many amiable dispositions, such as a readiness to hear the Word, a decent behavior at public worship, a life outwardly spotless in many, cannot but so far love them. But then there is much difference betwixt that love which a minister feels for such, and that divine love, that union and sympathy of soul, which he feels for those that he is satisfied are really born again of God. Apply this to our Lord’s case, as a faint illustration of it. Consider what has been said upon the young man’s

case in general; and then, if before you were fond of this objection, instead of triumphing, like him you will go sorrowful away. Our Savior's reply to him more and more convinces us of the truth of the prophet's assertion in the text, viz.⁴ that the Lord is our righteousness.

D. Good works will be rewarded with eternal life

But there is a fourth and grand objection yet behind, and that is taken from the 25th chapter of St. Matthew, where our Lord is described as rewarding people with eternal life, because they fed the hungry, clothed the naked, and such like. [It is objected that] their works therefore were a cause of their justification, [and thus] consequently, the doctrine of imputed righteousness is not agreeable to scripture.

This, I confess is the most plausible objection that is brought against the doctrine insisted on from the text. And in order that we may answer it in as clear and as brief a manner as may be, we confess, with the article of the church of England, "That albeit good works do not justify us, yet they will follow after justification, as fruits of it; and though they can claim no reward in themselves, yet forasmuch as they spring from faith in Christ, and a renewed soul, they shall receive a reward of grace, though not of debt; and consequently, the more we abound in such good works, the greater will be our reward when Jesus Christ shall come to judgment."

Take these considerations, along with us, and they will help us much to answer the objection now before

⁴ viz. – from Latin *videlicet*: that is to say; namely.

us. For thus St. Matthew says: "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me" (Mat 25:34-36); I will therefore reward you, because you have done these things out of love to Me, and hereby have evidenced yourselves to be My true disciples. And that the people did not depend on these good actions for their justification in the sight of God is evident. For "when saw we thee an hungred [say they], and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?" (Mat 25:37-39). [These are] language and questions quite improper for persons relying on their own righteousness for acceptance in the sight of God.

But then they reply against this. In the latter part of the chapter, say they, it is plain that Jesus Christ rejects and damns the others for not doing these things. And therefore, if He damns those for not doing, He saves those for doing; and consequently the doctrine of an imputed righteousness is good for nothing.

But that is no consequence at all. For God may justly damn any man for omitting the least duty of the Moral Law, and yet in Himself is not obliged to give anyone any reward, supposing he has done all that he can. "We are unprofitable servants" (Luk 17:10); we

have done not near so much as it was our duty to do, must be the language of the most holy souls living; and therefore from, or in ourselves, we cannot be justified in the sight of God. This was the frame of the devout souls just referred to. Sensible of this, they were so far from depending on their works for justification in the sight of God, that they were filled, as it were with a holy blushing, to think our Lord should condescend to mention, much more to reward them for their poor works of faith and labors of love. I am persuaded their hearts would rise with a holy indignation against those who urge this passage as an objection against the assertion of the prophet in the words of the text, that the Lord is our righteousness.

Thus I think we have fairly answered these grand objections, which are generally urged against the doctrine of an *imputed righteousness*. Was I to stop here, I think I might say, “We are [made] more than conquerors through him that loved us” (Rom 8:37). But there is a way of arguing which I have always admired, because I have thought always very convincing, viz. by showing the *absurdities* that will follow from denying any particular proposition in dispute.

4. Some Ill Consequences of Rejecting This Truth

This is the next thing that was proposed: And never did greater or more absurdities flow from the denying any doctrine, than will flow from denying the doctrine of Christ’s imputed righteousness.

And *first*, if we deny this doctrine, we turn the truth, I mean the Word of God, as much as we can, into a lie, and utterly subvert all those places of Scripture, which say that we are saved by grace (Eph 2:5, 8); that it is “not of works, lest any man should boast” (Eph 2:9); that salvation is God’s free gift, and that he that glorieth, must glory only in the Lord (2Co 10:17). For, if the whole personal righteousness of Jesus Christ be not the sole cause of my acceptance with God, if any work done by or foreseen in me, was in the least to be joined with it, or looked upon by God as an inducing, impulsive cause of acquitting my soul from guilt, then I have somewhat whereof I may glory in myself. Now, boasting is excluded in the great work of our redemption. But that cannot be, if we are enemies to the doctrine of an imputed righteousness.

It would be endless to enumerate how many texts of scripture must be false, if this doctrine be not true. Let it suffice to affirm in the general, that if we deny an imputed righteousness, we may as well deny a divine revelation all at once. For it is the alpha and omega, the beginning and the end of the book of God. We must either disbelieve that, or believe what the prophet has spoken in the text, that the Lord is our righteousness.

But further, I observed at the beginning of this discourse, that we are all Arminians and Papists by nature, for, as one observes, “Arminianism is the back way to Popery.” And here I venture further to affirm that if we deny the doctrine of an imputed righteousness, whatever we may style ourselves, we are really Papists in our hearts, and deserve no other title from men.

Sirs, what think you? Suppose I was to come and tell you that you must intercede with saints, for them to intercede with God for you, would you not then say I was justly reputed a Popish missionary by some and deservedly thrust out of the synagogues by others? I suppose you would. And why? Because you would say the intercession of Jesus Christ was sufficient of itself, without the intercession of saints, and that it was blasphemous to join theirs with His, as though it was not sufficient.

Suppose I went a little more round about and told you that the death of Christ was not sufficient without our death being added to it; that you must die as well as Christ, join your death with His, and then it would be sufficient. Might you not then, with a holy indignation, throw dust in the air, and justly call me a setter forth of strange doctrines? And now then, if it be not only absurd, but blasphemous, to join the intercession of saints with the intercession of Christ, as though His intercession was not sufficient, or our death with the death of Christ, as though His death was not sufficient, judge ye, if it be not equally absurd, equally blasphemous, to join our obedience, either wholly or in part with the obedience of Christ, as if that was not sufficient. And if so, what absurdities will follow the denying that the Lord, both as to His active and passive obedience, is our righteousness!

One more absurdity I shall mention that will follow from the denying this doctrine, and I have done.

I remember a story of a certain prelate,⁵ who, after many arguments in vain urged to convince the Earl of Rochester of the invisible realities of another world, took leave of his lordship with some such words as these: "Well, my lord," says he, "if there be no hell, I am safe; but if there be such a thing as hell, what will become of you?" I apply this to those that oppose the doctrine now insisted on. If there be no such thing as the doctrine of an imputed righteousness, those that hold it and bring forth fruit unto holiness are safe. But if there be such a thing (as there certainly is), what will become of you that deny it? It is no difficult matter to determine. Your portion must be in the lake of fire and brimstone for ever and ever; since you will rely upon your works, by your works you shall be judged. They shall be weighed in the balances of the sanctuary. They will be found wanting. By your works, therefore, shall you be condemned; and you, being out of Christ, shall find God, to your poor, wretched souls, a consuming fire.

The great Stoddard of Northampton, in New England, has therefore well entitled a book which he wrote (and which I would take this opportunity to recommend), *The Safety of Appearing in the Righteousness of Christ*. For why should I lean upon a broken reed, when I can have the Rock of ages to stand upon, that never can be moved?

And now, before I come to a more particular application, give me leave, in the apostle's language, triumphantly to cry out, "Where is the scribe? where the disputer?" (1Co 1:20); where is the reasoning

⁵ **prelate** – an ecclesiastic of the higher order, as an archbishop or bishop; a dignitary of the church.

infidel of this generation? Can anything appear more reasonable, even according to your own way of arguing, than the doctrine here laid down? Have you not felt a convincing power go along with the Word? Why then will you not believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, that so He may become the Lord *your* righteousness.

5. Conclusion and Application

But it is time for me to come a little closer to your consciences.

Brethren, though some may be offended at this doctrine, and may account it foolishness, yet to many of you I doubt not but it is precious, it being agreeable to the form of sound words, which from your infancy has been delivered to you, and coming from a quarter you would least have expected, may be received with more pleasure and satisfaction. But give me leave to ask you one question, Can you say, the Lord *our* righteousness? I say, the Lord *our* righteousness. For entertaining this doctrine in your heads without receiving the Lord Jesus Christ savingly by a lively faith into your hearts will but increase your damnation. As I have often told you, so I tell you again, an unapplied Christ is no Christ at all. Can you then, with believing Thomas, cry out, “My Lord, and my God” (Joh 20:28)? Is Christ your sanctification as well as your outward righteousness? For the word *righteousness* in the text, not only implies Christ’s personal righteousness imputed to us, but also holiness of heart wrought in us. These two God hath joined together. He never did, He never does, He never will put them asunder. If you are justified by the

blood, you are also sanctified by the Spirit of our Lord. Can you then in this sense say, the Lord our righteousness. Were you never made to abhor yourselves for your actual and original sins, and to loathe your own righteousness (or, as the prophet beautifully expresses it, your “righteousnesses”) “as filthy rags”? Were you never made to see and admire the all-sufficiency of Christ’s righteousness, and excited by the Spirit of God to hunger and thirst after it? Could you ever say, My soul is athirst for Christ, yea, even for the righteousness of Christ? Oh, when shall I come to appear before the presence of my God in the righteousness of Christ! Oh, nothing but Christ! Nothing but Christ! Give me Christ, O God, and I am satisfied! My soul shall praise thee forever. Was this, I say, ever the language of your hearts? And after these inward conflicts, were you ever enabled to reach out the arm of faith and embrace the blessed Jesus in your souls, so that you could say, “My beloved is mine, and I am his” (Song 2:16)? If so, fear not, whoever you are. Hail, all hail, you happy souls! The Lord, the Lord Christ, the everlasting God is your righteousness. Christ has justified you, who is he that condemneth you? Christ has died for you, nay rather is risen again, and ever liveth to make intercession for you (Rom 8:33-34). Being now justified by His grace, you have peace with God (Rom 5:1), and shall ere long be with Jesus in glory, reaping everlasting and unspeakable redemption both in body and soul. For there is no condemnation to those that are really in Christ Jesus (Rom 8:1). “Whether Paul, or Apollos...or life, or death...all are yours” (1Co 3:22), if you are Christ’s, for Christ is God’s! O my brethren, my heart is enlarged towards you! Oh, think on the love of Christ

in dying for you! If the Lord be your righteousness, let the righteousness of your Lord be continually in your mouth. Talk of, oh talk of and recommend the righteousness of Christ, when you lie down and when you rise up, at your going out and coming in! Think of the greatness of the gift, as well as of the giver! Show to all the world in Whom you have believed! Let all, by your fruits, know that the Lord is your righteousness, and that you are waiting for your Lord from heaven! Oh, study to be holy, even as He Who has called you, and washed you in His own blood, is holy! Let not the righteousness of the Lord be evil spoken of through you. Let not Jesus be wounded in the house of His friends; "but grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" day by day (2Pe 3:18). Oh, think of His dying love! Let that love constrain you to obedience. Having much forgiven, love much. Be always asking, What shall I do to express my gratitude to the Lord, for giving me His righteousness? Let that self-abasing, God-exalting question be always in your mouths. Oh, be always lisping out, Why me, Lord? Why me? Why am I taken, and others left? Why is the Lord my righteousness? Why is He become my salvation, who have so often deserved damnation at His hands?

Oh, my friends, I trust I feel somewhat of a sense of God's distinguishing love upon my heart! Therefore, I must divert a little from congratulating you, to invite poor Christless sinners to come to Him, and accept of His righteousness, that they may have life.

Alas, my heart almost bleeds! What a multitude of precious souls are now before me! How shortly must all be ushered into eternity: and yet, O cutting

thought! was God now to require all your souls, how few, comparatively speaking, could really say, the Lord *our* righteousness.

And think you, O *sinners*, that you will be able to stand in the day of judgment, if Christ be not your righteousness? No, that alone is the wedding garment in which you must appear. O Christless sinners, I am distressed for you! The desires of my soul are enlarged! Oh, that this may be an accepted time! Oh, that the Lord may be your righteousness!

For whither would you flee, if death should find you naked? Indeed there is no hiding yourselves from His presence. The pitiful fig leaves of your own righteousness will not cover your nakedness when God shall call you to stand before Him. Adam found them ineffectual, and so will you. Oh, think of death! Oh, think of judgment! Yet a little while, and time shall be no more; and then what will become of you, if the Lord be not your righteousness? Think you, that Christ will spare you? No, He that formed you, will have no mercy on you. If you are out of Christ, if Christ be not your righteousness, Christ Himself will pronounce you damned. And can you bear to think of being damned by Christ? Can you bear to hear the Lord Jesus say unto you, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (Mat 25:41)? Can you live, think you, in everlasting burnings? Is your flesh brass, and your bones iron? What if they are? Hellfire, that fire prepared for the devil and his angels, will heat them through and through! And can you bear to depart from Christ? Oh, that heart-piercing thought! Ask those holy souls, who are at any time bewailing an

absent God, who walk in darkness, and see no light, though but a few days or hours; ask them, what it is to lose a sight and presence of Christ? See how they seek Him sorrowing and go mourning after Him all the day long! And if it is so dreadful to lose the sensible presence of Christ only for a day, what must it be to be banished from Him to all eternity?

But thus it must be, if Christ be not your righteousness. For God's justice must be satisfied; and unless Christ's righteousness is imputed and applied to you here, you must be satisfying the divine justice in hell-torments eternally, hereafter. Nay, as I said before, Christ Himself, the God of love, shall condemn you to that place of torment. And oh, how cutting is that thought! Methinks I see poor, trembling, Christless wretches, standing before the bar of God, crying out, "Lord, if we must be damned, let some angel, or some archangel, pronounce the damnatory sentence." But all in vain. Christ Himself shall pronounce the irrevocable sentence. Knowing, therefore, the terrors of the Lord, let me persuade you to close with Christ, and never rest, till you can say, the Lord our righteousness. Who knows, but the Lord may have mercy on, nay, abundantly pardon you? Beg of God to give you faith; and if the Lord give you that, you will by it receive Christ, with His righteousness, and His all. You need not fear the greatness or number of your sins. For are you sinners? So am I. Are you the chief of sinners? So am I. Are you backsliding sinners? So am I. And yet the Lord (forever adored be His rich, free, and sovereign grace!), the Lord is my righteousness. Come, then, O *young men*, who (as I acted once myself) are playing the prodigal and

wandering away afar off from your heavenly Father's house, come home, come home, and leave your swine's trough. Feed no longer on the husks of sensual delights. For Christ's sake, arise and come home! Your heavenly Father now calls you. See, yonder the best robe, even the righteousness of His dear Son awaits you. See it, view it again and again. Consider at how dear a rate it was purchased, even by the blood of God. Consider what great need you have of it. You are lost, undone, damned forever, without it.

Come then, poor, guilty prodigals, come home. Indeed, I will not, like the elder brother, be angry. No, I will rejoice with the angels in heaven. And oh, that God would now bow the heavens, and come down! Descend, O Son of God, descend; and as Thou hast shown in me such mercy, oh, let the blessed Spirit apply Thy righteousness to some prodigals now before Thee, and clothe their naked souls with Thy best robe!

But I must speak a word to you, *young maidens*, as well as young men. I see many of you adorned, as to your bodies. But are not your souls naked! Which of you can say, the Lord is my righteousness? Which of you was ever solicitous to be dressed in this robe of invaluable price, and without which, you are no better than whited sepulchers in the sight of God? Let not then so many of you, young maidens, any longer forget your only ornament. Oh, seek for the Lord to be your righteousness or otherwise "burning" will soon be upon you "instead of beauty" (Isa 3:24)!

And what shall I say to you of *middle age*, you *busy merchants*, you *cumbered Marthas*, who with all your gettings, have not yet gotten the Lord to be your righteousness? Alas! What profit will there be of all

your labor under the sun, if you do not secure this pearl of invaluable price? This one thing, so absolutely needful, that it only can stand you in stead⁶ when all other things shall be taken from you. Labor therefore no longer so anxiously for the meat which perisheth, but henceforward seek for the Lord to be your righteousness—a righteousness that will entitle you to life everlasting.

I see also many *hoary heads* here, and perhaps the most of them cannot say, the Lord is my righteousness. O grey-headed sinners, I could weep over you! Your grey hairs, which ought to be your crown, and in which perhaps you glory, are now your shame. You know not that the Lord is your righteousness. Oh, haste then, haste, ye aged sinners, and seek an interest in redeeming love! Alas, you have one foot already in the grave. Your glass is just run out. Your sun is just going down, and it will set and leave you in an eternal darkness, unless the Lord be your righteousness! Flee then, oh flee for your lives! Be not afraid. All things are possible with God. If you come, though it be at the eleventh hour, Christ Jesus will in no wise cast you out. Oh, seek then for the Lord to be your righteousness, and beseech Him to let you know how it is that a man may be born again when he is old!

But I must not forget the *lambs* of the flock. To feed them was one of my Lord's last commands. I know He will be angry with me if I do not tell them that the Lord may be *their* righteousness, and that "of such is the kingdom of heaven" (Mat 19:14). Come then, ye little children, come to Christ; the Lord Christ shall be your righteousness. Do not think, that

⁶ **stand you in stead** – be of use or advantage to you.

you are too young to be converted. Perhaps many of you may be nine or ten years old, and yet cannot say the Lord is our righteousness, which many have said, though younger than you. Come then, while you are young. Perhaps you may not live to be old. Do not stay for other people. If your fathers and mothers will not come to Christ, do you come without them. Let children lead them and show them how the Lord may be *their* righteousness. Our Lord Jesus loved little children. You are His lambs. He bids me feed you. I pray God make you willing betimes⁷ to take the Lord for your righteousness.

Here then I could conclude, but I must not forget the poor African slaves. No, I must not. Jesus Christ has died for them, as well as others. Nor do I mention you last, because I despise your souls, but because I would wish what I have to say, to make the deeper impression upon your hearts. Oh, that you would seek the Lord to be your righteousness! Who knows but He may be found of you. For in Jesus Christ there is neither male nor female, bond nor free; even you may be the children of God, if you believe in Jesus. Did you never read of the eunuch belonging to the queen of Ethiopia, an African like yourselves. He believed. The Lord was His righteousness. He was baptized. Do you also believe, and you shall be saved. Christ Jesus is the same now, as He was yesterday, and will wash you in His own blood. Go home then, turn the words of the text into a prayer, and entreat the Lord to be *your* righteousness. Even so, come Lord Jesus, come quickly, into all our souls! Amen, Lord Jesus, *Amen* and *Amen*. ❧

⁷ **betimes** – early.