

THE AMERICAN

# NATIONAL PREACHER:

OR

ORIGINAL MONTHLY SERMONS

FROM

LIVING MINISTERS OF THE UNITED STATES.

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EDITED BY

REV. AUSTIN DICKINSON,

NEW-YORK.

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"The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day."—*John*, xii, 49.

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VOL. XI.

FOR THE YEAR ENDING MAY, 1837.

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NEW YORK  
PUBLIC

NEW-YORK: :

PRINTED BY JOHN F. TROW, 36 ANN STREET.

1836—7.

G. W. H.

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THE AMERICAN  
NATIONAL PREACHER.

No. 7. VOL. XI.]

DECEMBER, 1836.

[WHOLE No. 127.

SERMON CCXX.

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CHRIST OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

JEREMIAH, xxiii. 6. *And this is his name whereby he shall be called,*

THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

NAMES are intended to distinguish persons and things. They have been classed as either *descriptive* or *arbitrary*. Most of the names borne by men are of the latter kind. They are entirely arbitrary. That is, they have no particular meaning. They convey no expression of the characteristics, or qualities of those who bear them. At least, whatever might have been the case in the original application of those names, it is certainly so now. And, accordingly, they are transmitted from generation to generation to the successive members of the same families, whatever characters their respective individuals may possess. But, it has been remarked, that a large portion of the names employed in sacred Scripture, are descriptive, or expressive. They have a *sense* as well as a *sound*. This remark may be said to apply with peculiar force to the titles given in Scripture to our blessed Redeemer. He is exactly what his *names* describe and import. These names were designed to convey a knowledge of his glorious perfections and offices. But, among all the names given to this glorious Personage,—for that He is really the Person spoken of in this passage, it is impossible to doubt—I say, among all the names given to our divine Redeemer—we may confidently affirm there is none more expressive of his Mediatorial benefits, or more rich in important meaning, than that in our text. And this is the name,—the name by way of eminence, by which He shall be called—THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

The word here translated *Lord*, is, in the original, JEHOVAH. So that the passage might, and, perhaps ought to have been rendered, JE-  
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**HOVAH OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.** This is one of the many passages, my friends, which plainly and unequivocally teach the real and proper Divinity of Christ. That he is "very God," and "very man" in the same mysterious Person. A doctrine which lies at the foundation of the Gospel, and of all the hopes and confidence of believers. Sublime and glorious doctrine! The eternal Son of God condescended to become incarnate! The Creator of all worlds appearing in the form of a servant! *Great, great indeed is the mystery of godliness; God manifest in the flesh!* It is true, both the heretic and the sceptic agree in seeing nothing in this doctrine but repelling difficulty. They find it ground for incessant objection and cavil. And even many a theoretical believer in this doctrine, who has never seen the evil, or felt the burden of sin, while he confesses that it is found in Scripture, can never appreciate its fundamental importance. But those who have been enlightened to understand and embrace the Gospel; those who have been made to see themselves miserable sinners; and who have *fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them*—all such perceive that the true and proper Divinity of our blessed Redeemer is the corner stone of the whole fabric of Redemption; that it is absolutely essential to his character as a Saviour; a Saviour able and willing to "save to the uttermost." The humble believer pretends not, indeed, to comprehend the mystery of "Immanuel, God with us." He sees in it length and breadth, and depth and height which pass knowledge. But he believes it on the simple authority of God's own word; and he sees in it a ground of hope, consolation and joy which must all totally vanish if this precious doctrine were expunged from the sacred volume.

This Jehovah, the Saviour, is declared to be "our righteousness." As the former part of this name is expressive of his Divinity; so the latter is expressive of his mediatorial character, and of his gracious relation to his people in that character. It refers to his atoning sacrifice, and to the benefits resulting from that sacrifice to the members of his spiritual body. The word *OUR*, in the text, is especially emphatical. That Christ is Jehovah, is indeed, as one well observes, a glorious fact, in which all holy beings, whether in heaven or on earth, will cordially rejoice. That he is Jehovah the righteous one, or who has brought in everlasting righteousness, is undoubtedly to all who are right-minded, also a precious fact, and a further illustration of his glory. But, blessed be his name! his people can go a step further, and claim him as *their own*. They can say, "He is Jehovah our righteousness." Each individual believer has a right, though he may not always be in a frame with confidence to claim the privilege—yet each individual believer has a right, to address the Saviour as Thomas did, *My Lord, and my God!* Or, in the endearing language of the Church—*My Beloved is mine and I am his*. This is the name by which He shall be called—the grand, the endearing relation in which both He and his people shall rejoice, and rejoice forever.

Let us inquire in **WHAT RESPECTS**, and in **WHAT SENSE** Jehovah the Saviour is the righteousness of his people.

Righteousness is conformity to a right standard. In this case, it is conformity to the only perfect standard, the will of God. Righteousness, so far as it may be attributed to redeemed man, is contemplated by

systematic writers in a three-fold sense;—as **IMPUTED, INHERENT, and PRACTICAL.** Now in each of these senses the Lord Jesus Christ may be called “the righteousness” of his people.

I. Jehovah the Saviour is the righteousness of his people, *because his submission to the penalty, and his obedience to the precept of the law of God, as their representative, being imputed to them, forms the sole ground of their justification before God.*

The doctrine of our pardon and acceptance with God, in virtue of a righteousness not our own, but rendered by Christ, as our Surety, and placed to our account, is laid down in Scripture so frequently, so distinctly, and with such a clearness and force of evidence, that I see not how it can be regarded in any other light than as a fundamental doctrine of the Gospel. If this great truth be not taught in the word of God, we may despair of finding any other truth there established.

God made man upright, in full possession of all the faculties necessary to perfect moral agency, and with all the dispositions which prompted to perfect obedience. But man fell. He transgressed the holy law under which he was placed; he became liable to the dreadful penalty which it denounced against transgression; and had no plea to make, why its righteous sentence should not be executed upon him. In this fall of our first parents we are all criminal sharers. “In Adam,” says the Apostle, “all die.” 1. Cor. xv. 22. “By one man’s disobedience,” he again declares, “many were made sinners.” Rom. v. 19. We have all totally lost our original righteousness; so that there is now, by nature, “none righteous, no not one.” We have all become guilty before God. And yet the same Apostle, inspired by the Spirit of the living God, declares that the “unrighteous cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither can corruption inherit incorruption. Thus awfully, then, are we situated. It is an unalterable maxim of Jehovah’s government, that without a perfect righteousness to justify him before God, no man can be saved. But it is manifest, both from Scripture and observation, that we are all totally destitute of such a righteousness; having transgressed times and ways without number. A perfect righteousness, therefore, must be provided for us by another, or we perish. There is no alternative. The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. Man must die, or divine justice be dishonored and prostrated, or another, able and willing, must pay the mighty debt on his behalf;—“pay the rigid satisfaction, death for death.”

This amazing alternative—an alternative which, however coldly it may be received by millions on earth, has filled all heaven with astonishment and praise ever since the hour in which it was proclaimed; this amazing alternative has actually been adopted in the counsels of eternal wisdom and love. A glorious Personage, able and willing; mighty to save, and disposed to save, was provided and sent forth, to obey the precept, and suffer the penalty of the law, as our Substitute; and, in this wonderful character, to bring in an everlasting righteousness for our justification. Yes, be astonished, O heavens! and be filled with grateful, adoring admiration, thou earth! the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, in the likeness of sinful flesh, condescended, in his amazing love, to take the place of the guilty and the perishing, and to become the victim of divine justice in their stead. His language, in the eternal

counsels of peace, was—" Let me suffer instead of the guilty. Let me die to save him. Deliver him from going down to the pit ; I will be his ransom." This wonderful, this unparalleled offer was accepted. The Father was well pleased for the righteousness' sake of his Son. He accepted it as the price of our pardon ; as that on account of which alone all who believe in his Son's name should be justified. So that Jehovah, the Saviour, may now with propriety be styled *the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth*. Or, as the text expresses it, *He is the Lord our righteousness. As by the offence of one, many were made sinners ; so by the obedience of One, many were made righteous*. Mark, I entreat you, the pointed and unequivocal language of the Holy Spirit—*by the obedience of One, many are, not only pardoned, but made righteous*. Rom. v. 19.

But it will, perhaps, be asked, How can the righteousness of another be made *ours*? How can the righteousness of Christ become *our* righteousness? I answer; precisely in the same way in which we became sinners in consequence of Adam's sin ; and in which Christ was *made sin for us* ; that is, BY IMPUTATION. The posterity of the first man did not personally commit that sin which "brought death into the world with all our woes." But, in consequence of their covenant relation to him, the guilt of his sin was imputed to them ; in other words, they were treated *as if* they had committed it ; and the dreadful penalty of the loss of the divine image, and exposure to God's wrath and curse, followed to them all. In like manner, the blessed Redeemer, though he suffered so deeply, and died so ignominiously, had no sin of his own. He was a *Lamb without blemish, and without spot. He did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth*. Yet the Scriptures tell us, *He was made sin for us*. This expression cannot mean that he was made a sinner, or that he really became personally a criminal, so as either to be regarded in that light by his Father ; or in such a sense as to deserve punishment on his own account. To suppose either would be impious. But the expression, doubtless, means, that He, though perfectly innocent and holy in himself, was, in virtue of his covenant undertaking in our behalf, treated on our account, *as if* he had been a sinner. Having undertaken, in the eternal counsels of peace, to stand in the law-place of his people, and to bear the stroke of divine justice in their stead, so that the really guilty might escape, it pleased the Father to admit the substitution, and to accept the ransom. He, therefore, *laid upon him the iniquities* of his people, that is, he treated him, though really innocent, *as if* he had committed them, and exacted from him the uttermost farthing of the penalty. Certainly nothing less than this can be considered as the import of those emphatic passages—*He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities*.—Isaiah, liii. 5. *He bare our sins, (not his own.) He bare our sins in his own body on the tree*.—1 Peter, ii. 24. *He delivered us from the curse of the law by being made a curse for us*.—Galatians, iii. 13. *He died, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God*.—1 Peter, iii. 18.

Now the fact of Christ having been "made sin," or "a sin offering" for us, in the sense just explained, is calculated to pour a flood of light on the doctrine of imputed righteousness. The cases are exactly analogous. Precisely in the same manner, and upon the same principle, that



our sin was made his, does his righteousness become ours, by—that is, imputation. *Imputation* means *placing any thing to the account of another*. What the Apostle Paul says to Philemon, concerning Onesimus, exemplifies the principle. *If he owe thee aught, says the Apostle, place it to my account, I will repay thee.* This is precisely the idea intended in the case before us. What Christ did and suffered as Mediator, was not personally done and suffered by us. There is no transfer of moral character in the case. This would be inconsistent with personal identity. Nay, it might be regarded as a moral absurdity. But, in virtue of the covenant of redemption, his righteousness, or what he did and suffered, as Mediator, is placed to the account of his people, *as if they had performed it in their own persons.* Though ungodly and undeserving in themselves, God is pleased to pardon, and to accept them as righteous in his sight, only for the righteousness' sake of his beloved Son. What else can be meant, when we speak of being accepted of God and saved through the *merit of Christ?* What else can be meant when we read of such declarations as these?—*He is made unto us righteousness. He is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth; Rom. x. 4. By the obedience of One many are made righteous; Rom. v. 19. He was made sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him; 2 Cor. v. 21.*

This righteousness of Jehovah, the Saviour, is said to be *to all, and upon all them that believe.* That is, it is imputed to none—set to the account of none but those who receive Christ by faith. Faith is that great master grace by which we become united to the Saviour, and interested in his righteousness. This righteousness, therefore, is called *the righteousness of faith, and the righteousness of God by faith.* Hence also we are said to be *justified by faith, and to be saved by faith.* Not that faith, as an act of ours, is, in any degree, the meritorious ground of our acceptance with God. But all these expressions imply, that there is an inseparable connection, in the economy of grace, between believing in Christ and being justified by him, or having his righteousness imputed to us. Happy, thrice happy they, who can thus call the Saviour *theirs*, and who have thus “received the atonement.” Though unworthy in themselves, they are graciously pronounced righteous by their heavenly Judge, on account of what the Mediator has done. Their sins, though many, are, for his sake, forgiven them. They are *freely justified from all things from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses.* They are *accepted in the Beloved.* Though most defective and unworthy in themselves, they are *complete in Him.* There is “no condemnation” to them now; and in the day of judgment they shall find, to their eternal joy, that there is both safety and happiness in appearing in the righteousness of Him who “loved sinners and gave himself for them,” in “robes which have been washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb.”

Such is the doctrine of our justification by the imputed righteousness of Christ. A doctrine which some profess to despise, as absurd; and others to abhor, as licentious. But it is neither absurd nor licentious. It is clearly taught in holy Scripture; and it is the glory of the Gospel. I repeat; it is the great vital principle of our holy religion—that we live by the death of another in our stead, and are accepted of God, not on account

of any thing that we have done, or can do; but solely on account of the perfect obedience unto death of Him who, *though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich.* Well did the great reformer, *Luther*, pronounce this the grand doctrine of a standing or falling Church. If this be abandoned, all is abandoned. Many other doctrines are important in their place; but this is all-important. If this be rejected, the life and soul of the evangelical system is gone;—the glory is departed. I feel myself to be a miserable sinner. I know that the God with whom I have to do is a Being of infinite holiness, who cannot, without denying himself, “clear the guilty.” My first anxious inquiry, of course, is, How shall I come before God, my Maker, with any hope of acceptance? How shall I, a polluted, unworthy rebel, though deserving of eternal death, draw near to him with confidence? How can his justice be satisfied, and the dignity of his moral government maintained, and yet mercy extended to the guilty and vile? In a word, how can he be a just God and yet a merciful Saviour? This is what I need. Nothing less than this can reach my miserable case. But when I read in his own word, that *there is redemption through the blood of Christ, even the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace*; Ephes. i. 7: when I read that *Christ hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God*; 1 Peter, iii. 18: when I read that *the law is magnified and made honorable*, and all its demands fully satisfied by his obedience and sufferings as our Surety; so that now Jehovah can be *just, and yet the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus*;—this gives me light and life. This lifts up my sinking head. This leads me to the rock of hope. This kindles holy confidence and joy in my heart. This enables me, in the prospect of death and judgment, to *rejoice in the Lord, and to joy in the God of my salvation.*

To this doctrine of justification by the imputed righteousness of another, many objections have been confidently urged. To several of these it will be proper to advert, before we proceed to consider the other branches of the subject.

1. The first objection often urged against this doctrine is, that it contradicts reason, and is revolting to our sense of moral equity. Righteousness and sin being personal qualities, how, we are asked, is it possible that they should, in any case, be transferred to a Surety? This objection is founded in entire ignorance of the doctrine opposed. No such transfer is maintained by the friends of the doctrine in question. Such a transfer, if admitted, would not only involve the most obvious moral absurdity, as before suggested, but would also be fatal to the essential principles of the doctrine for which we contend. Neither personal qualities nor personal acts can be transferred; but the *consequences* of them can be and are transferred every day. Neither the holiness nor the sin of another can by any possibility become personally mine. No one believes or maintains such a doctrine.\* But the *legal connection* of that which is done by another may attach to me. And if we, as a race, incur *any penalty* in consequence of the sin of Adam, or derive *any benefit* from

\* “If my personal sin could be taken from me, and made the personal sin of another, he must then suffer for himself, and not for me, as I should be personally inno-

the undertaking and work of the Redeemer, the principle of imputation, as held by the orthodox, is strictly exemplified in each case, however it may be denied in words. In short, in contending for the imputation of Christ's righteousness to the penitent believer, we do not teach that the personal righteousness of the Surety is *infused into the sinner*, making him *worthy* of the divine approbation; but that the believer, though most unworthy in himself, both in the divine estimation and his own, and remaining altogether unworthy, is, nevertheless, treated, for the sake of the Redeemer's righteousness, *as if* he had rendered it in his own person. Surely in this there is nothing either unreasonable or revolting.

2 Another objection, often urged, to the doctrine that we are justified in the sight of God **SOLELY** on account of the righteousness of Christ, is, that the Scriptures declare, *that every one shall be judged according to his works*. Now, if this is true, it has been asked, how can it be reconciled with the idea that Christ's righteousness imputed to us, is the *only* ground of our reward? This is a most extraordinary objection to be made by a professed adherent to evangelical truth. Can any thing be clearer than the declarations with which the word of God abounds, that our own works form no part of the ground of our justification before God? *By the deeds of the law*, it is expressly declared, *shall no living flesh be justified*. Rom. iii. 20. And again, we are told; *By grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; NOT OF WORKS, LEST ANY MAN SHOULD BOAST*. Ephes. ii. 8, 9. Now if our justification were, even *in part*, or in however *small a degree*, founded on our own works, it would contradict these plain Scriptures. How, then, are we to reconcile with these scriptures the declarations found in other scriptures, that in the great day, every man "shall be judged *according to his works*?" There is no inconsistency between them. It does not follow, because every believer is pardoned, and accepted as righteous *solely* on account of the merit of Christ; that, therefore, there can be no difference in the *measure* of the future happiness and glory of the redeemed. Though the merit of the Redeemer is of infinite value, would it not be a most unreasonable and unwise application of philosophical principles, to undertake thence to infer that the reward of all those who are saved by his blood, is also infinite in degree, and in all cases equal? Their degrees of conformity to God are different. Of course their capacities for enjoying the bliss and glory of heaven are different. Consequently their future reward, though not *for* their works, will be *according to* them, or, as to its degree, *measured* by them. The ground of their acceptance with God is the same; but those who

cent. He would not be under the imputation of my sin, because I should have none to impute; and I could not enjoy the benefit of his righteousness; because, on the one hand, I should require none; and, on the other, he, as suffering for himself, would have none to offer. So that there would be no representation, neither the substance nor the shadow of a vicarious atonement. Therefore, while my personal demerit must for ever remain my own, the *consequences* of it are borne by my glorious Surety. It is this which renders the imputation of sin to the Lord Jesus a doctrine so acceptable to the conscience, and so consoling to the heart, of a convicted sinner. And this simple distinction between a transfer of personal acts to a substitute, and the transfer of their legal connection, which is properly imputation, relieves the friends of truth from the embarrassment in which an incautious manner of speaking has sometimes involved them; and blows into air the quibbles and cavils of its enemies." DR. MASON'S SERMON ON PARDON OF SIN IN THE BLOOD OF JESUS.

have loved most will enjoy most; and that without in the least degree impugning the doctrine, that we are equally indebted for all blessings, temporal and eternal, to the atoning sacrifice and merits of Him who died to purchase everlasting life for all who believe in his name.

3. A third objection to the doctrine of our justification solely by the imputed righteousness of Christ, is, that it takes away all excitement to a life of distinguished virtue and holiness. Does a sense of infinite obligation to the grace and love of Christ furnish no excitement to holiness? Does a view of the evil of sin, as seen in the sufferings and death of our ever-blessed Surety, furnish no motive to hate and avoid it? Does a view of the beauty of holiness, as seen in the perfect obedience of the Saviour for our sake, furnish no excitement to "go and do likewise?" Does the hope of living and reigning with Him to whom we are thus indebted, and beholding and sharing his glory forever, furnish no excitement to the highest attainments in obedience to his will, and in preparation for the holy joys of his presence? The Apostle Paul did not think so. In his most vivid representations of our indebtedness to Christ for every hope of mercy, he seldom fails to connect with them the most solemn exhortations, and the most tender and powerful motives to growing sanctification. See especially that animated declaration, 2 Cor. v. 14, 15. *For the love of Christ constraineth us: because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.* But is it true, that his best righteousness ever did or can entitle any believer to the least reward—which the objection seems to suppose? Truly no son or daughter of apostate Adam ever performed a perfectly pure and unspotted act of obedience; of course, none have lived that did not need pardon, instead of meriting a reward. And yet a gracious God has been pleased to promise that every act of sincere obedience, on the part of his children, however imperfect, shall be rewarded *for Christ's sake*; and in the hope of this reward, his people are commanded to rejoice.

4. Finally, it is objected to the doctrine of justification by imputed righteousness, that, if it be true, there is no GRACE in our justification. If we are pardoned and accepted by God solely on account of a perfect equivalent, a full satisfaction to his law and justice, a complete meritorious payment of all dues, on the part of Christ, then, say objectors, we may claim the rewards of eternity, not as a *free gift*, but as our *right*—they cannot be justly withheld from us. True, the bestowment of eternal life with all its blessedness, upon the disciples of Christ, is an act of strict *justice to Him*, but of rich and wonderful *grace to them*. Was it no grace in the counsels of eternity to devise a plan of a substituted righteousness, instead of our own which had utterly failed? Was it no grace to provide a righteousness perfect and entire, wanting nothing, when we were perfect bankrupts before God, and had nothing to pay? What though the gift provided be a perfect compliance with all the demands of law and justice? is it, on that account, less an act of grace to those who needed and must have perished without it? No, it is the great glory of the Gospel, that, in the plan of salvation which it presents, righteousness and peace meet together, and justice and mercy have embraced each other: that, with the most wonderful stoop of mer-

cy that ever men or angels knew, there is combined the most awful manifestation of unbending justice that was ever presented in the annals of the universe. Hence the Apostle speaks of it as a glorious attribute of gospel grace, that it *reigns through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord.* Rom. v. 21. Surely, instead of cavilling that it is no grace because its exercise is connected with the most rigorous maintenance of the majesty of Jehovah's law, we ought rather, on that account, to regard it as a grace, the more unsearchably rich and glorious.

Thus, then, is Christ the righteousness of his people in their justification. Though they are most unworthy in themselves, yet Jehovah, by an act of wonderful grace, "freely pardoneth all their sins, and accepteth them as righteous in his sight, only for the righteousness' sake of Christ, imputed to them, and received by faith alone." Thus He is said to "justify the ungodly;"—not to pronounce them *innocent*; not to make them personally *worthy* or *deserving* of his acceptance; for the whole gospel plan proceeds upon a directly opposite assumption. When, therefore, we are said, as we are, every where in Scripture, said, to be justified by the righteousness of Christ, the meaning is, not that his righteousness becomes personally and inherently ours, or that his holiness is in any way transfused into us, as the ground of our title to God's acceptance, which no one ever taught, and which it is a slander on the evangelical system to represent as making any part of it;—but, simply, that Christ's satisfaction to the penalty, and obedience to the precept of the law, are so placed to our account, in a moral or legal sense, that we are treated for his sake as if we had performed them in our own persons. We are not contemplated by infinite Holiness as personally innocent and pure; but for the sake of what our covenanted Surety has done and suffered, are accepted and treated as if we were. This is the Rock of Christian hope. On this ground the penitent and believing sinner, though conscious of numberless and aggravated sins, which render him utterly unworthy of the divine favor, may yet say, with humble confidence—*Nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day.*

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## SERMON CCXXXI.

JEREMIAH, xxiii. 6. *And this is his name whereby he shall be called, The Lord our Righteousness.*

WE have seen that Christ is the righteousness of his people in regard to their justification, inasmuch as his sufferings and obedience are placed to their account as the sole ground of their acceptance with God. But there is also another, and no less important sense in which he is their righteousness, viz.

II. All the **INHERENT RIGHTEOUSNESS, OF HOLINESS OF HEART**

which they possess, is the purchase of his blood, and the gift of his Holy Spirit.

It is a plain dictate of reason, as well as of the word of God, that if we would see his face in peace, we must have not only a **TITLE** to heaven, but also a **PREPARATION** for heaven. It is just as essential to our eternal well-being, that we be restored to the *image* of God, as that we be restored to his *favor*. *Without holiness no man shall see the Lord*. Now, of this preparation for the joys of his presence, we are as entirely destitute, by nature, as we are of a title to his favor. "The carnal mind is enmity against God. And although our blessed Redeemer, by his sufferings and obedience, has "made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in everlasting righteousness," yet we are by nature disposed to reject the message of his love. We need to have a "new heart and a right spirit" given to us; a heart willing to accept the provided and offered mercy. We need not only to be delivered from the condemning sentence of a violated law, by a gracious justification; but also to be sanctified by the power of the Holy Spirit, and "made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light." The imputation of the Saviour's righteousness, of which we have spoken, takes away the *guilt* of sin, but not its *power*. Its power must be broken, and the love of it destroyed, or a most important part of the purpose for which the Saviour died would be unaccomplished. Accordingly, whom he justifies, them he also sanctifies. True, he is said to "justify the ungodly;" that is, he justifies those who are by nature ungodly, and have nothing in themselves to recommend them to his favor. But although our heavenly Father *finds* the subjects of his blessing ungodly, he does not *leave* them so. He makes them "all righteous"—inherently righteous; restores to them that image which they had lost; and thus prepares them for holy communion with himself here and hereafter.

The sanctification, indeed, which characterizes all the disciples of Christ, is not complete in the present life, nor does it exist in the same degree in all its happy subjects. Yet they all in some measure partake of it. For "if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his." There is in them all "some good thing toward the Lord their God." Their eyes have been opened; their hearts have been changed; the image of God has been in some measure restored to their souls; his love has been in some degree "shed abroad in their hearts, by the Holy Spirit given unto them." Though sin still exists in them, it no longer reigns. Its power is destroyed. They hunger and thirst after the knowledge of God, and conformity to God. They desire, they strive, they pray to be made "holy in all manner of conversation." Yet this personal, inherent righteousness the Scriptures assure us, in almost every possible variety of form, forms no part of the ground of our justification before God. *Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy doth he save us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost*. Titus, iii. 5. Still this moral purity is indispensable both as an evidence of our acceptance with God, and as a preparation for the holy society and joys of his kingdom.

But how is Christ, in this sense "the righteousness" of his people? It is the immediate and appropriate office of the Holy Spirit to sanctify the soul. It is his work to enlighten the mind, to convince of sin; to

“take of the things that are Christ’s, and show them to us;” to purify the affections; to “turn us away from all our iniquities;” and to make us a holy and “peculiar people.” For the commencement of the reign of grace in the heart in regeneration, and for every progressive attainment that is made in holiness; in “crucifying the flesh with the affections and lusts; in dying to sin, and living to righteousness,” we are indebted to the Holy Spirit of God. He “takes away the hard and stony heart out of our flesh, and gives a heart of flesh.” He imparts that faith which purifies the heart, which works by love, and which overcomes the world. It is by his sovereign energy that the power of sin is gradually weakened in his people; and that they are “transformed more and more into the divine image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”

But it is only in virtue of the atoning sacrifice of Christ, that the Holy Spirit of sanctification is given. This is one of the great benefits which the Redeemer died to purchase for his people. Had He not suffered and died, and risen again, and ascended to glory, the Holy Spirit had never been given for the purification and comfort of his disciples. “If I go not away,” said he, “the Holy Ghost will not come unto you; but if I go away, I will send him unto you.” Not only so; but one great purpose for which the Son of God became incarnate, was that he might “sanctify the people with his own blood.” Accordingly we are told, “His blood cleanseth from all sin.” He “loved the Church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word; that he might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.” And again it is said, “He gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” We may confidently say, then, that the sanctification of his people is as much a part of the purchase of the Saviour’s blood as any one of the benefits which they receive. He laid down his life by covenant; a covenant which did not leave the salvation of believers imperfect or uncertain; but which secured as firmly their deliverance from the dominion and pollution of sin, as from its condemnation; and which ensured to every child of God conformity to his image, and preparation for the society and employments of a holy heaven.

Nor is this all. Every sincere disciple of Christ, being united to him by faith, receives from him, in virtue of this union, spiritual nourishment and growth in grace. As all the members of the natural body enjoy life, and health, and strength, in consequence of their connection with the head, so we are told that all the members of the body of Christ *grow up in all things in him who is the Head, even Christ, unto a meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light.* Accordingly the Saviour, when he was about to leave his disciples and ascend to his heavenly throne, thus addressed them: *I am the vine; ye are the branches. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, so no more can ye, except ye abide in me. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing.*—John, xv. 5, 6.

Thus is Christ “our righteousness,” in reference to our personal, inherent sanctification. The gift of the Holy Spirit, for our cleansing

from the pollution of sin, was secured by Him as our Surety, in the covenant of redemption; was purchased by his atoning blood; and is imparted to every subject of his grace, when he sends forth the Holy Spirit, according to his promise, into the hearts of his people, for all the purposes of their sanctification and comfort; by whose agency they are more and more delivered from the power of indwelling sin, and finally prepared for the sinless and perfect enjoyment of God to all eternity. Thus is our great High Priest "made unto us sanctification." All the springs of our holiness are in him; and accordingly, the progress of the Christian in the divine life is represented by the Holy Spirit as a *growing up in all things in him who is the Head, even Christ, unto a holy temple in the Lord.*—Ephes. ii. 21; iv. 15.

Once more,

III. Jehovah, the Saviour, is "the righteousness" of his people, because all the PRACTICAL RIGHTEOUSNESS which essentially belongs to their character, and which they exhibit in their temper and lives, is wrought in his strength, and is the product of his grace.

Holiness of life is inseparably connected with holiness of heart. Genuine religion, indeed, always begins in the heart. There it is enthroned with governing power. But it is not *confined* to the heart. It shines forth in the life and conversation. "Show me thy faith by thy works," is a reasonable as well as a scriptural demand. Accordingly the word of God declares, that those who really believe in Christ are "careful to maintain good works." It represents them as *abounding in those works of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God.* Philip. i. 2.

But by what means is this practical righteousness begun and maintained in the disciples of Christ? By their own strength? In virtue of any power or resources of their own? By no means. It is all given them; and given through the undertaking and work of the blessed Redeemer. Left to themselves, they would never perform a single holy act. Left to themselves, no "fruits of righteousness would ever adorn their character. If they are strong, it is "in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." From the living Vine is derived all that vital support and nourishment by which the branches, as so many grafts, live and grow, and bring forth fruit. From the Head is derived all that virtue by which life, and motion, and holy activity are imparted to all the genuine members. For all that they do to "adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour," they are indebted to his grace. And for all the Scriptural hopes of persevering to the end, they have no other dependence than the promise and the faithfulness of their almighty Saviour. So the inspired apostle Paul evidently thought. *I live, said he, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life that I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.* Galatians, ii. 20.

Such, then, is the import of the all-comprehensive and all-important title of the Saviour in our text. He is "the righteousness" of his people in every sense in which redeemed sinners are or can be righteous in the sight of God. The righteousness by which they are justified before God is not their own, but wrought out by their almighty Substitute, and reckoned to their account by a gracious covenant arrangement. The righte-



ousness by which they are personally sanctified and made meet for communion with God, is not the product of their own wisdom or strength ; but given them through the atoning sacrifice, and by the Spirit of Christ. And all that righteousness of life, by which their discipleship is manifested and advanced, is also the fruit of what has been done by the redeeming Saviour, and is daily sustained by his power and grace. "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners;" not to help them to save themselves; not to do *something* toward saving them; not to save them *in part*; but by his blood and Spirit to do all that was necessary to their salvation, and all that is involved in their salvation. Christ came not to make up the deficiencies of our righteousness, but to make out a complete righteousness for us; not to supply what is wanting in human merit; but himself alone to merit for us all we need, or shall need, through eternity. He and he alone must be depended on. His and his only must be all the glory.\* Well may the Apostle say to Christians—"Ye are complete in him." Well may he speak of "the unsearchable riches of Christ," as reaching to all our wants and miseries. Well may he say of all boasting then, on the part of the redeemed sinner, that "*it is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay; but by the law of faith: for Christ is made unto us of God wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.*" Rom. iii. 27- 1 Cor. 1. 30.

In reviewing this subject a variety of practical reflections and inferences crowd upon the mind.

1. The representation which has been given, it is humbly hoped, will show the real nature of the *Gospel*, and how it is distinguished from the *Law*. Multitudes appear to labor under an entire mistake, not to say a radical error of conception, as to this point. They imagine that the Gospel is a kind of new and mitigated law: or, in other words, that it brings us information that God has repealed the old and rigorous law, (as they call it,) under which man was originally placed; and that it has revealed to us a lower and more indulgent law; a law making allowance for infirmity, and accepting of imperfect obedience, instead of a perfect, as the price of our justification. And, accordingly, some, when they speak of the atonement of Christ, and the merits of Christ, as contributing to our acceptance with God, mean nothing more than this, viz. That man, in the state in which he was placed, before the revelation of a Saviour, was bound to pay the uttermost demands of perfect obedience to the whole law, but, that Christ, by his sufferings and obedience, has prevailed on the Father to repeal, if I may so express it, the old and strict law, and to accept of obedience of a lower character. In short, their doctrine seems to be that the Gospel consists of a new law, much more indulgent and accommodating in its demands than the old; so that, now, perfect obedience is not even required by the law of God; that still our own obedience is the price of our acceptance; but that the *grace* of the Gospel consists in Jehovah having proclaimed, that *now*, for Christ's sake, he will accept of an imperfect obedience, and, on account of it, confer the joys and glories of heaven. Brethren, "we have not so learned Christ." This representation is not only incorrect, but when traced out

\* NEVINS' REMAINS, page 107.

to its legitimate connections and consequences, is replete not only with error, but with error of the most dangerous tendency. Others appear to teach, that, although the *pardon of sin* is granted entirely on the ground of the atoning sacrifice of Christ, the *rewards of heaven* are not conferred on that account, but are strictly, and in every sense of the term, *gratuitous*. This also is undoubtedly an error, and by no means an innocent one; for it denies to Christ a large part of his Mediatorial glory. Is He the purchaser of our *pardon*, but not of our *eternal life*? Surely this is not the doctrine of the Bible. The Gospel, as the inspired Paul teaches it, consists in this.—That it proclaims salvation from the curse of the law; and yet in such a wonderful way, that the law is not thereby repealed or dishonored; but, on the contrary, magnified, and made even more honorable than it could have been by the most rigorous infliction of its penalty on the transgressor. The Gospel represents all the blessings conferred on sinful men, including the pardon of their sins, the sanctification of their nature, and the eternal rewards of heaven, as granted solely, on account of the covenanted sufferings and obedience of the blessed Redeemer, as their Surety; and, of course, while purely gratuitous, and a wonderful display of grace to sinners themselves, as a dispensation of strict justice to the Redeemer. In short, it represents all spiritual good as coming to believers solely for the sake, and through the channel of Christ's atoning blood, and all as purchased by "the travail of his soul." This plan makes Christ, as the Bible makes him—**ALL IN ALL**. This is that "simplicity that is in Christ," which the Apostle Paul so highly commends, and from which he represents the carnal mind as so prone to deviate. This plan of Gospel truth is indeed, gloriously one and "simple." It ascribes all to the Saviour, and nothing to ourselves.

2. We may see, from the view which has been given of this subject, *how much, how unspeakably, we are indebted to Christ!* Every part of the economy of salvation, in all its stages, illustrates this. It is all a mere sovereign gift of grace to an undeserving lost creature, flowing through the undertaking and work of Christ. For its original contrivance in the eternal counsels of peace; for its execution in the fullness of time, by the appearance, and the obedience, and the infinitely meritorious sacrifice of the Son of God; for all the benefits which it includes, whether in soul or body, whether in time or eternity, whether taking away sin, inspiring hope, bringing effectual consolation, or conferring eternal reward;—all, all is the purchase of the Saviour's blood, and applied to the heart by the power of the Saviour's Spirit. Are we not, then, deeply indebted to him; immeasurably indebted? O, my Christian friends! truly we are indebted to him for *every thing*. Our own merit has purchased nothing; our power has accomplished nothing; wrought nothing. It is all a most costly purchase by *him*, but a free gift to *us*. Tell us not that there is no *grace* in all this, because the majesty of Jehovah's law and government was maintained without relaxation,—nay, magnified in its accomplishment by the payment of an immensely expensive ransom. Who does not see that it was unspeakably the *greater and more glorious grace* on this account? And I will add, we may measure our religious character by the degree in which we take pleasure in this view of the Gospel. So far as we possess the spirit of Christ, we shall be willing

to be in the dust of abasement, and to unite in that memorable song of the redeemed—"Unto Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and our Father, unto Him be glory forever and ever."

3. We may see, from the foregoing discussion, what is implied in **SUBMITTING TO GOD**, in the Gospel sense of that expression. Many seem to speak of submission to God as an exercise which has no connection with a Mediator. They exhort to it, without any reference to this medium of return; and they describe it without any hint of the appointed method of return to God. It is not denied, indeed, that all the revolted creatures of God are bound immediately to submit to him as their moral Governor. Even the devils, in their dark abodes, are under obligations instantly to lay aside their rebellion, and submit to the rightful authority of their Creator and Sovereign. But the question is, how do the Scriptures represent redeemed sinners as laying aside the weapons of their rebellion, and returning to the allegiance of their rightful Sovereign? Is it not always through a Mediator? Can sinful beings come, or really submit, in any other way? The Gospel knows of no other. To submit to God, then, according to the Bible account of this great matter, is to return to him in the humbling and self-denying way proclaimed in his method of reconciliation. It implies not only yielding our hearts and lives to Christ as our *King*; but also submitting our entire confidence to his righteousness, as our great *High Priest*; and giving up every power of the soul to him as our *Prophet* and *Teacher*. This seems to have been the Apostle's estimate. "*For they,*" says he, "*being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.*"—Rom. x, 3, 4.

4. It is evident from the spirit of our text, that *all reliance on our own righteousness for acceptance with God, is direct opposition to the spirit and glory of the Gospel*. If the doctrine which has been delivered be just, then a spirit of self-righteousness is as directly hostile to the whole genius and economy of the plan of salvation by grace, as a course of the most enormous crimes can be. Yes, the proud self-justifier, who goes about to establish a righteousness of his own, cherishes a spirit and acts a part as directly anti-christian as the thief or the murderer. He is not, indeed, so offensive to his fellow-men, or so mischievous a member of society; but his real enmity to the Gospel is quite as essential and irreconcilable. He frustrates the grace of God. He sets at naught atoning blood. He makes God a liar. He attacks Christianity, if I may so express it, in its most vital part. He rejects its most precious character, Yes, brethren, whether you are aware of it or not; whether you think of it or not, all self-righteousness really speaks this horrid language, betrays this anti-christian spirit. It is practically saying, that the mission of the Saviour was unnecessary, and that his atoning blood is of no value. Nay, if a man hold that we are justified *partly* by the righteousness of Christ, and *partly* by our own obedience—he virtually denies Christ. He is "fallen from grace." Dear fellow-sinner! are you willing to do this? Are you willing to be found resting on such a foundation? Have you not sinned against God in ten thousand aggravated

instances? Is not your best righteousness so miserably defective and mingled with corruption, as to need pardon, instead of meriting reward? How then will you appear before a holy God without some better ground of hope than your own merit? You cannot safely appear with any other covering than the Saviour's righteousness. If you make the attempt, you die. No other covering can hide and cancel all your sins. It is freely offered. If you reject it, you are undone. If you are willing humbly and gratefully to accept it, it is yours for ever.

5. Finally, if the doctrine of our text be admitted, it is evident that *a consciousness of the deepest unworthiness, is consistent with the most confident and joyful hope toward God.* If our hope of divine acceptance were founded, either in whole or in part, on the merit of our own obedience, how could any reflecting mind, conscious of so much imperfection as attends our best services, cherish any thing approaching to a joyful assurance of the favor of God? Especially, if we were called to the dying bed of a penitent sinner, who had devoted his whole life to folly and sin, and was made willing to take refuge in the mercy of the Gospel at the last hour; what consolation could we administer to him, what hope could we encourage him to cherish, when he looked back on a life marked with so much defect and disobedience? Truly none. Doubt, anxiety, and fearful apprehension must reign in the purest minds. The most deeply spiritual minds would be most distressingly conscious of delinquency and corruption. But open to an awakened and anxious sinner the plan of mercy through a Redeemer. Unfold to his view the wonderful method by which *righteousness and peace meet together, and justice and mercy embrace each other.* Proclaim to him, that Jesus is a present and almighty Saviour, from the guilt of sin, by his most precious atoning blood; and from the power of sin, by his Holy Spirit. Show him that, although his own righteousness is but as "filthy rags," the Divine Mediator has *finished transgression, made an end of sin, made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in everlasting righteousness*; so that God can now be rigorously just and yet save sinners; that in his infinite wisdom and love he has devised a plan by which, while the mightiest testimony of Jehovah's throne is borne against sin, the sinner is pardoned; by which justice is perfectly satisfied, while mercy is extended to the most guilty and polluted:—in a word, show him how all the rights of God's government are fully maintained, and even gloriously magnified, and yet a method devised of securing pardoning mercy and sanctifying grace, even to the chief of sinners; of providing a righteousness "perfect and entire, wanting nothing," to justify us before the face of our Heavenly Father, and to secure a title to eternal blessedness at his right hand,—tell the convinced sinner of all this, and light breaks in upon his mind. His drooping head is lifted up. His heart is filled with confidence and joy. He sees the darkness all cleared away, and an eternal Rock on which he can rest his soul. The way of acceptance appears adequate to all his wants and desires, and worthy of the infinite wisdom and love which devised it. From the fullness of a believing and grateful heart he can say—"This is all my salvation and all my desire. My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit doth rejoice in God my Saviour. Surely in the Lord Jesus have I righteousness and strength. Thanks be unto God who giveth me the victory through my Lord Jesus Christ." Amen.