

**Righte-
ousness.**

CHRISTIAN RIGHTEOUSNESS.

This word is the centre of a number of terms which refer to the Spirit's administration of the atoning work as affecting the believer's relation to immutable right. It may be viewed objectively; and in this sense is used to describe God's method of restoring man to a state of conformity with His law: the righteousness of God, as the originating and regulative and essential principle of that method; exhibited in the work of Christ, the meritorious ground of the sinner's acceptance, or in Christ our Righteousness, and, as such, proclaimed in the Gospel, to which it gives a name. Viewed subjectively, it is the righteousness of the believer under two aspects: first, it is Justification by faith, or the declaratory imputation of righteousness without works; and then it is Justification by faith as working through love and fulfilling the law; these however constituting one and the same Righteousness of Faith as the free gift of grace in Christ.

**The
Righte-
ousness
of God.**

THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD.

The Gospel is a revelation of God's righteous method of constituting sinners righteous through the atonement of Christ by faith: hence it is termed the Righteousness of God. Viewed in relation to the propitiatory sacrifice, it is a manifestation of God's essential righteousness in the remission of sins; viewed in relation to the Evangelical institute, it is the Divine method of justifying the ungodly. Generally, it defines the full application of the Gospel in the mediatorial court of law, with all its effects as renewing the human spirit into perfect conformity with the Holy

The mediatorial propitiation of Christ is a display of the essential righteousness of God ; or, in other words, this method of providing for human justification is proved to be in harmony with the Divine perfections. The Evangelical plan of conferring righteousness rests upon the plenary satisfaction of the Divine justice in the death of man's Representative ; it is the just honour put upon the merit of the Redeemer and the virtue of His work ; and, uniting these, it is the promulgation of a righteous economy of gracious government exercised over mankind for His sake and by Him. The doctrine of the Atonement has exhibited this threefold truth under a more general aspect ; it needs now only a brief re-statement with special reference to the judicial acceptance of the believer.

1. The only instance in which our justification is immediately connected with the death of Christ is the classical passage in the Romans where St. Paul expressly declares the harmony between righteousness as a Divine attribute and righteousness as proclaimed freely for man in the Gospel. So close is the connection that it is hard to determine to which thought the Apostle gave prominence ; to the declaration of God's method of making sinners righteous, or to the vindication of His own character as just. The emphasis of the whole is laid upon the words, *to declare His righteousness*. This phrase has two variations : first, *ἐκ δεξιῶν τῆς δικαιοσύνης αὐτοῦ*, with respect to the Divine forbearance in past ages, which required explanation ; secondly, *πρὸς τὴν ἐκ δεξιῶν τῆς δικαιοσύνης αὐτοῦ*, with respect to the present time, after the Atonement had been offered. But both rest upon the supreme fact underlying the entire history of God's dealings with a world of transgressors : JESUS, *Whom God hath set forth*, *προέθετο*, in His own eternal mind and on the scene of history, *a propitiation in His blood through faith*. With this must be connected St. Paul's word : *Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification*. The faith through which alone the objective atoning oblation of Jesus is subjectively appropriated requires the resurrection of its Object : not only as proving that we have a living and faithful Saviour, but as demonstrating that His sacrifice, not

Vindication of Justice.

Rom. iii.
21—26.

Rom. iv
25.

for Himself but for us, was righteously honoured in His being raised to confer its benefit. The substitutionary expiation of Christ as the representative Man at once exhibits the justice of God in His dealing with human sin and His righteousness in imparting forgiveness to the sinner: *that He might be Just, and the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus*. This unique expression—the supreme Evangelical paradox—must be carefully noted. It is not *Just and yet the Justifier*, though that meaning is not far off; but it signifies that through the manifested sacrifice of Christ God is declared to be Himself just, having required that propitiation, and the Justifier, through the virtue of that propitiation.

- Merit of Christ.** 2. The perfect obedience of Christ constitutes what in theology is called MERIT, and this is regarded under various aspects in the New Testament. It is rewarded in that Christ is *highly exalted*; on the ground of it the Father has perfect complacency in His Son and all who are His; and in consequence of it God is *faithful and just to forgive us our sins*. This is the truth with which we here have to do. God is faithful to the Atonement which has been faithfully offered to Him. He is righteous to Christ as well as IN Christ. All forms of Christian theology agree with Scripture in assigning to the Redeemer's work an unlimited desert or merit. And it is this which is expressed by the universal language of dogmatic and practical theology when it pleads FOR CHRIST'S SAKE. The original of the only instance of this expression, *forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you*, is ἐν Χριστῷ, in Christ. The additional idea of forgiveness for the sake of Christ is more suitable to St. John: *if any man sin we have an Advocate with the Father*.
- Phil. ii. 8, 9.**
- 1 John i. 9.**
- For Christ's Sake.**
- Eph. iv. 32.**
- 1 John ii. 1.**

IN THE GOSPEL

- The Divine Method.** But the term δικαιοσύνη when specifically connected with faith refers to its exhibition in the Gospel as offering and imparting the grace of a declaratory and imputed righteousness, and at the same time the power of a righteousness internal and inherent.
- Matt. vi. 33.** 1. The phrase is fully developed in St. Paul's writings. But the Lord Himself gave the word when He said above: *seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness*. Here both the kingdom

and the righteousness are terms left to be afterwards explained throughout the New Testament. The Apostle lays down the text of his Epistle when he says to the Romans: *I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ . . . for therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, The just shall live by faith: a righteousness of faith offered to faith, or, rather, which has its individual origination in faith, and in faith has also its consummation: whether as declaratory or as inwrought it is altogether of faith. And again: but now the righteousness of God, without the law, is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets, even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ.* The essential rectoral justice is manifested in the new method of Divine administration: *to declare at this time His righteousness, that He might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth [in Jesus.]* It is opposed to man's method: *for they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.* So the righteousness of the law is opposed to that which is of God by faith. All this signifies a new relation of righteousness, which is *ἐκ θεοῦ* as it is *ἐκ πίστεως εἰς πίστιν*. It is the righteousness which God provides, on the one hand, and which, on the other, avails before God: both in one. As such it must not be limited to the establishment of a righteous relation through the imputation of righteousness: it includes God's method of making men righteous also. It is the Gospel grace generally, with all its effects, specifically viewed as bringing men to the state of *δικαιοσύνη*, or conformity with law. But throughout, from beginning to end, it is absolutely of grace, without any merit on the part of man.

2. Though this Method of righteousness is as it were new, it is also the same which was from the beginning. Abel obtained witness that he was righteous only by faith. Noah also became heir of the righteousness which is by faith. But Abraham was the great exemplar. His faith was counted unto him for righteousness; it was faith in a promise, not given through the law, but through the righteousness of faith; and therefore a righteousness which was not reckoned because of the virtue of the faith in itself, or as the substitute of works. The faith rested on the early promise of justification by faith through a Saviour as yet unrevealed. The LAW intervening

Rom. 16,

Rom. 21, 26.

Rom. 2

Phil. ii

Biblic
Devel
ment
Heb. x
4, 7.

Rom. i
3, 13

Rom. iii.
21.

Heb. iii.
19.

Deut. vi.
25.

Phil. iii. 9.

Isa. li.
5, 6.

Ps. lxxxv.
10.

Hab. ii.
3, 4.

Fully
Revealed.

1 Cor. i.
18.

Col. i. 5.
2 Cor. v.

19.
Acts. xv.

7.
Heb. v. 13.

Col. iii. 16.
Acts xx.

32.
Heb. vii.

2.
Rom. xiv.

17.
2 Cor. iii.

9.

did not affect the unity of this one great revelation of the only righteousness. It is the *righteousness of God without the law*, in one sense ; but, in another, *witnessed by the law and the prophets*. It was and is WITHOUT THE LAW, inasmuch as it is for ever independent of perfect obedience. But it was witnessed BY THE LAW ; which was a perpetual remembrancer of the impossibility of that obedience, which silently promised the Redeemer by the very fact that shortcomings were not visited, which made faith in the Covenant God and love to Him supreme, and indeed summed up all disobedience as unbelief. *It shall be our righteousness if we observe to do all these commandments* : but none ever attained to that righteousness ; OUR righteousness and MINE OWN righteousness were ever inapplicable words, save on the ground of the deeper foundation of the unrevealed righteousness of faith in Christ. The Psalms and Prophets proclaim this Divine method more fully. God's righteousness pervades both ; and sometimes in terms which anticipate the New Testament. *My righteousness is near ! My salvation is gone forth, and My righteousness shall not be abolished. Righteousness and peace have kissed each other.* THE JUST SHALL LIVE BY HIS FAITH. As the full revelation of Christ and of His kingdom waited for the New Testament, so also the full revelation of the mediatorial method of constituting men righteous : *though it tarry, wait for it.*

3. But now is this Gospel revealed. And the term Righteousness is one of its many denominations as embracing its whole design : As it is the *Word*, λόγος, or *preaching of the Cross* ; of the *truth* ; of *reconciliation* ; of the *Gospel* ; so it is also the *word of righteousness* : λόγος δικαιοσύνης. It is the entire system of doctrine concerning the Divine method of conferring upon man righteousness. The whole revelation is the *word of Christ*, and of the *grace of God*. In it our Lord is the *King of righteousness* as He is the *King of peace* ; and His *kingdom is righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost*. It reveals the *Lord our righteousness* ; as the meritorious procuring cause, the perfect example, and the Author by His Spirit of all in man that God requires and accepts as finished conformity to His law. Hence it is in all its processes the *Gospel of the ministration of righteousness*. We do injustice to this all-comprehending name of the new economy if we do not regard it as embracing the whole sum of its effects in human salvation. Viewed

in our relation to the will and law of God—and that view embraces, in a sense, all our relations for time and eternity—we are altogether saved by the Gospel revelation of righteousness. The solemn question asked in the Old Testament is answered in the New:

How should man be just with God?

Jcb ix. 2