

The Righteousness of Faith

'The righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach' (Rom. 10:6-8).

The righteousness which is of faith is here represented as a person speaking, arguing, expostulating, advising. And this not by a mere figure of speech. It is not a mere 'personification' that sets the righteousness of faith a-speaking; though regarded even in that way, it casts an uncommonly beautiful light upon the passage. But it is more. There is more than personification here – there is a Person. Little wonder if the righteousness which is of faith can speak, and actually speaks, seeing it is none other than the Word – the Word which was in the beginning, which was with God, and was God. It is none other than the Second Person of the Godhead, God incarnate, the Christ of God. For Christ crucified is the righteousness of God to every one that believeth. Christ is of God made unto us righteousness. As is said in a preceding verse of this chapter, 'Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.' He is

‘the Lord our Righteousness’. And because he becomes ours by gift on God’s part, and by simple reception, or, in other words, by faith, on our part, he is ‘the righteousness which is by faith’.

What has he, in this capacity, to say? When he would act and speak as the righteousness of faith, what has he to say?

Right wisely, right powerfully, right tenderly he speaks. He speaks to sinners, who would be the better of him as the Lord their Righteousness, infinitely the better of him, and who never will be the better of anything till they have found and been pleased with him. And he speaks to them, first, in a double dissuasive; and, second, in a double persuasive.

FIRST, A DOUBLE DISSUASIVE.

i. Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above): for that would imply that no Saviour has as yet come down from heaven. But, behold! we bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all mankind, for to you is born a Saviour, which is Christ, and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. ‘This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.’ Never say anything ‘in thine heart’ that is at variance with this. Never be in any state of mind or frame of heart at variance with the blessed fact that, ‘when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.’

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ii. Say not in thine heart, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead): for he is risen again, in very truth. Death could have no permanent dominion over him, no dominion at all. He conquered death by dying. He was not made a victim. He became a conqueror. And his resurrection is the proof of it. Never think of him as an incomplete Redeemer. His redemption work is perfect. And his resurrection proves it. He died for our offences, and was raised again for our justification. He finished the work given him to do. He left none of it for his weak and weary people. Said he to his Father, 'I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.' And in token that the Father is of one mind with him on this, the very basis of his people's faith and joy, he raised him from the dead and gave him glory, that our faith and hope might be in God.

Say not anything in thine heart which it would be right and reasonable to say only on the supposition that Jesus was still the prisoner of death. He is risen. He is ascended. He is within the veil in glory – able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him. Let not thine heart ever for a moment be in a state or frame that would be reasonable only on the supposition that Christ were not raised from the dead.

Say not then, 'Who shall go down into the deep?' – any more than, 'Who shall go up into heaven?' Say neither the one thing nor the other. Speak neither of going up nor of going down, as little the one as the other. I bring near my salvation, and you have no journey to take to reach it – neither up nor down – neither to the right hand nor to the left. Your attitude is that of waiting, not working: waiting as those that watch for the morning, which, behold! how it dawneth, and cometh on, not a whit aided by any works or journeys of yours, but breaking in omnipotent glory in the

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east, being itself master of the day: yea, itself the day-spring from on high.

SECONDLY, A DOUBLE PERSUASIVE.

i. 'The word is nigh thee . . . that is, the word of faith.' Now this implies, O sinner, that, Christ's redemption-work being perfect, and sealed as such by his resurrection, your salvation-work is a work done at a 'word'. That is clearly implied in this persuasive. It has no meaning at all if it does not imply, first of all, and above all, that salvation is by grace, seeing all the redemptive work is done already. Ye are saved by grace, through faith. And it is of faith that it might be by grace. But faith needs a word to go upon. 'Be merciful unto me according to thy word.' 'Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope.' The promise, accordingly, is the word of faith, the word which faith receives, the word which the Spirit uses to generate faith. This is the word on God's part which answers to faith (or, rather, to which faith answers) on man's part, in that great transaction in which reconciliation between the offended God and the alienated sinner is effected by the word of the truth of the gospel.

Now this 'word', which is all that is needed to thy salvation-work (because redemption-work is a finished work) – this 'word' which is required to be taken home in faith in order to the taking home of a perfected redemption-work (unto the resulting work of our actual individual salvation) – this 'word', intended of God to be so received in faith unto our actual salvation, and, in point of fact, so received by every one that believeth, is therefore very properly called the 'word of faith'. It is the word which faith proceeds upon as true, the word which kindles and calls up faith itself, and then trusts itself to the faith

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which it has kindled: this word is nigh thee; even in thy mouth and in thine heart.

Such is the testimony of the 'Righteousness which is of faith'. And none can be so deeply interested in the word of faith as the Righteousness which is of faith. By the word of faith, he, the Righteousness which is of faith, puts himself into the possession of every one that believeth, and sees of the travail of his soul. And this word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart.

ii. Oh! says the sinner, I can understand how this word should be in my *mouth*. I can, of myself – alas! only too easily – take it in my *mouth* and utter it. But that it should be in my *heart*, that I should know and love the joyful sound, that I should willingly receive and be in actual possession by faith of the great redemption – this is another matter altogether, and not competent to this depraved and sinful heart of mine. How can it be true that the word is 'in my heart'?

Very good, dear fellow sinner. Very good and very true. Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Very true. But consider!

Who, indeed, if *he* cannot, who here speaketh? And is it not in and by *speaking* that he does it? He who here speaketh is the All-Powerful Word, who speaks and it is done. He said, 'Let light be', and light was. He 'calleth those things which be not as though they were.' He *brings* into being by *calling* into being. His call *gives* the being to which it *calls*. His people are a willing people in the day of his power. If he says that the word is not in your *mouth* only but in your *heart*, have you any interest to question and gainsay him? He can *make* it true, in *saying* it is true. Is it too wonderful, think you, to be true, though *he* say it who came to bear witness of

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the truth? He can *realise* that as the case in *describing* it as the case.

For he is acting here as a *prompter*. Yes, as a *prompter*. That's the edge and joy of it. And it is faith's part, and faith's nature, and faith's inward instinctive prompting, to act on *his* promptings, not to gainsay and resist them. 'When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, LORD, will I seek.'

If you were a pupil, and a trusted master was prompting you, you would 'out with' the word with which he was furnishing, urging, and prompting you at that moment. Just as you would, in such a case, 'out with it', from your *mouth*, so remember Christ's almighty power over the *heart* in prompting it – even as complete as that which an earthly master has over the mouth in prompting *it*. And see that you 'out with' the word from your heart, even the word of faith which is preached unto you. Be it yours at once to cry: 'My Lord, and my God', or 'Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.'

Yes, go not about to construct, or establish, or find a righteousness. Go not up to heaven. Go not down into the deep. Go neither up nor down. Go neither to the right hand nor to the left. But here, where you are, this moment – here and now – listen to another righteousness, the Lord your Righteousness, the Righteousness which is by faith, which comes by faith, which is yours by faith. Is there never to be a first time? If there is, let it be *now*. For what advantage is there to be *gained* by *loss* of time? And let it be *here*, for what advantage is there to be gained by change of place? This righteousness (and all the salvation that depends upon it) is yours here and now, because it is yours at a word. And 'the word is nigh thee' – nigher than you think. Let the Righteousness of faith itself tell you how nigh: 'even in thy mouth and in thy heart.' Oh! doubt not.

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Say not, 'It is too good to be true'. If that's the only style of objection you have to what Jesus Christ says, it's a very poor one. For grace is poured into his lips, and his words are so good that, just on that ground, the Father, in infinite admiration of him, hath done every thing possible to make him most blessed for ever more. Say not that anything is too good to be true, when Jesus Christ, the ever blessed 'delight' of the Godhead, hath said it. Rather, try and see if it be not thoroughly true indeed. Try and 'out with it': 'My Lord and my God.' 'Lord, I believe.'

In the rich full flow of his goodness, so great as to be telling the things to which thou canst have no objection, except that they are too good to be true, 'out with' the word from thy very heart, prompted by him, yet uttered by you – you, the travail of his soul. He, thy regenerating Lord and Saviour, making thee willing in the day of his power. 'Saved by grace through faith' – *his* grace. Grace on his part, faith on your part: *your* faith in the sense that it comes from your believing heart, but *his* gift in that it is wrought by his Spirit there and prompted by his Word there. Yet altogether such that this other glorious utterance may take place in terms of it, and because of it, sealing eternal espousals between him and you: 'My beloved is mine, and I am His'. 'My Lord and my God.'

Aye, truly: 'Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house; so shall the king greatly desire thy beauty: for he is thy Lord; and worship thou him.'

Yes, and then just proceed upon the truth of it. Try and see if those things be not true, which are and ought to be true because of this. 'Being justified by faith, you have peace with God' – have you not? – 'through Jesus Christ our Lord.' Yes, and have you not 'access by faith' into an estate of grace, not merely an occasional and fortuitous

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blessing, but an entire estate of grace, 'the grace wherein ye stand'? Are Christians always careful to do justice to this? This, at least, is what you have to do justice to. This is what you have to be thankful for. Try if you don't *get* access, just by *taking* access into 'this grace wherein ye stand', this gracious right and title to all blessings of the everlasting covenant. This 'grace wherein ye stand' is to you a 'status' and 'estate of salvation by a Redeemer', as truly as formerly you were in an 'estate of sin and misery'. 'And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also.' Do you not? Would you not rather suffer affliction with the people of God, than have all the pleasures of sin to all eternity? You 'glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.' Put all this to the proof by proceeding in faith upon the truth of it: and so you find it true. You get access into what of Christ's fulness you need just by taking access to it by faith, taking your way by faith to the very blessing that you need, asserting that in Christ it is yours, maintaining your assertion against all efforts of the enemy to deny it. Who, or what, is he? A damned and vanquished foe! And the Lord, in such case, gives his fainting, faithful soldier – fainting through the very efforts of his fidelity – to find that he is not fighting for the wind, for a fancy, for a shadow, but for the faithfulness of God, and thus he finds that the faithfulness of God is in the heavens, and is also a shield and buckler to himself upon the earth.

Oh, to bow the head of the soul, to bend the knees of the soul, to set the silent smiling face of the soul steadfastly towards heaven, and let God speak! Oh, to follow, fearless, where his Word leads the way! Oh, to follow, and

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to follow on, nothing doubting, cherishing neither a proud unbelief, nor, what is even worse, a humble unbelief, but cherishing just the Word itself, because it is 'the Word of faith'. Thus we would think nothing of our faith, but all things of the Word. Dwelling in a realm in which we had learned to silence every voice, save the voice of our heavenly Teacher, as he speaks, by his Word and Spirit, the will of God for our salvation, our joy and our duty, we should have the blessedness of the people who in that case truly know the joyful sound, and walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance!