

Looking unto Jesus

5. “The LORD our righteousness”

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BEFORE THE BIRTH of the Lord Jesus Christ it was prophesied that “*righteousness* shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins” (Isa. 11:5). The Lord God pronounced that he indeed would be special—“My *righteous* servant” (53:11)—and would blossom and bear spiritual fruit all the days of his life as “a *righteous* Branch” (Jer. 23:5). Moreover, Jesus is described as “The LORD our *righteousness*” (v. 6), besides “the Sun of *righteousness*” (Mal. 4:2). For the Lord Jesus loved righteousness and was righteous throughout his life.

Not surprisingly, this theme of the Lord Jesus being “righteous” is also picked up and lovingly embraced in the New Testament record. Luke in his Gospel record quotes the centurion at the cross as saying that our Lord was “a *righteous* man” (23:47); the Apostle Paul refers to his Lord as “the *righteous* judge” (2 Tim. 4:8); the writer to the Hebrews speaks of Christ as the antitypical Melchizedek, the “King of *righteousness*” (7:2), and the Apostle John goes on to say that our Lord is our “advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the *righteous*” (1 Jno. 2:1).

It was Christ, as “The LORD our *righteousness*”, who wrought perfect righteousness and redeemed his people. The sternness and severity of the Law was not relaxed one iota for the Son of Man. Indeed, he did “magnify the law, and make it honourable” (Isa. 42:21). His ear was open to receive instructions from his Father, “morning by morning” (50:4), and he was always subject to his heavenly Father. Though his character was morally perfect—for his words, works and ways were all faultless—his office as Saviour was perfected through the things he suffered (Heb. 5:8,9).

As we ourselves are unable to attain to the righteous requirement demanded by the Law, God sent forth His Son, that His holy and righteous requirements could be finally met and fully satisfied. Concerning His Son, the Lord God declared, “I bring near My *righteousness*” (Isa. 46:13), or, according to the RSV, “I bring near My deliverance”. Deliverance from sin and death was therefore to be brought about by the obedience and sacrifice of His faithful Son. “For”, Paul testifies, “He [God] hath made him [Jesus]

to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the *righteousness* of God in him” (2 Cor. 5:21). Importantly, this expression is closely analogous to that in Galatians 3:13, where Paul says that Christ was “made a curse for us”. In other words, though Jesus knew no sin, yet God made him to be “sin” for us, in that He sent him “in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin” (Rom. 8:3). Therefore, in his righteous blood, there is a means by which the righteousness of God becomes the righteousness of man (1 Cor. 1:30), so that man is justified by God.

It is by the teachings of Christ—the gospel message—that righteousness can be imputed to the believer if he or she is prepared to believe “the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ” (Acts 8:12), is baptized, and then follows the Lord for evermore. The Apostle Paul declared, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the *righteousness* of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith” (Rom. 1:16,17). This is the righteousness of God; He has provided, through Christ, forgiveness for all who believe.

The Lord Jesus executed God’s plan of redemption to perfection. Everything the Law claimed was satisfied in his life and death. The Master rendered the Law obsolete through his perfect obedience, even unto the death on the cross. Through the offering of his body once for all, his offering declared the righteousness of God—as a basis for the remission of sins—through the condemnation of sin in the flesh. And he fulfilled all its demands and requirements with a glad-some heart, for his attitude was, “I delight to do Thy will, O my God: yea, Thy law is within my heart” (Ps. 40:8). In this faithful act the Master abrogated the law of condemnation for himself, and for all those who believe and obey him. He is “The LORD our *righteousness*”, having fulfilled God’s way to perfection and provided the only means of salvation. For he is the “firstfruits of them that slept” (1 Cor. 15:20), and now a great harvest awaits its final gathering.