

The Righteousness of Christ

By A.T. Jones

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Matt. 6:33--"Seek ye first . . . his righteousness," is the subject today. We notice first whose righteousness we are to seek. It is God's. We must seek and find it or we will not be saved. Nothing else will avail. We must know, however, where to seek for it and how, because we often seek for it in the wrong place; for instance, as many do, in the law of God, and through keeping it. We will never find it there. That is not the place to seek for it. This is not saying that the righteousness of God is not there. The commandments are the righteousness of God, but we will never find it there. In Rom. 2:17-18, we see that the law is clearly pointed out, through which, if we are instructed, we are called of God. Then they, being the will of God, it would be impossible for the Lord himself to be better than the ten commandments require us to be. The Lord's will, must be the expression of what he is himself; hence it is impossible he should be better than his law. To keep his commandments, then, means that we shall be as good as God is, so we read in 1 John 3:7: "He that doeth righteousness, is righteous even as he is righteous." Now see Psalms 119:138, Deuteronomy 6:35, Isaiah 59:7--the people who do the law of God are righteous, even as God is righteous, then to keep them means that man must be like God in character. Then the righteousness of God is in his law, but it is not revealed to men by the law. Romans 1:16-17, the righteousness of God is revealed in the gospel to men, and not in the law. It is in the law, but it is not revealed there to us because we are sinners, and sin has so darkened our mind that we can not see it there, and therefore our vision has to

been lightened by some other means, which is the gospel, where we must seek for it, Romans 3:21. The righteousness of God is made known without the law. How? By faith in Jesus Christ, through the gospel, and not by the law. Now read again Romans 1:16-17, and this will be clear. To show this further, Romans 10:4. Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth. Does not this say the same as the others? We have lost often the real point in this text to use it against those who claim the commandments are abolished, who claim Christ ended the law, and we claiming it means "the purpose of" the law, but the point in this text is that Christ is the purpose of the law "for righteousness" to us, as we can not get it by the law, Romans 8:3. The law was ordained to life, righteousness, holiness, justification, but because of sin it cannot be this to us, so what it cannot do Christ does for us. Then, if we seek it in the wrong place we lose the righteousness of Christ. Now, righteousness must come from the same source as does life; they are inseparable. Romans 8:3. Moses uses the terms here interchangeably, so also Gal. 3:21 showing that righteousness must come to us from the same source as life, and that is Christ. Romans 6:23: this we have always preached, but he said before this the wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life, and so we have always claimed eternal life to be a gift, but we have not claimed the same for righteousness as being a gift through Jesus Christ. Why was it necessary that something was given to have life? Because the wages of sin was death. If a law could give life, it would be by the law. If the law was a secondary form and God could have made another, and better, it would not suffice because if men could not keep an inferior law they could not keep a superior, consequently no law could give the life. Therefore Christ came to be the purpose of the law

to everyone that believeth. Now we want to see what righteousness there is in the law for us, and we will become convinced it is our own, which is the very best we can ever get out of the law. If I take the highest and most comprehensive view of the law I can, and live up to it, is that a satisfying of the law? No, because it is not a high enough view of it, because the mind is all darkened by sin, and man's comprehension is not broad enough to grasp the height and breadth of it, and so does not meet the requirements of the law. It is our own righteousness then, and not God's we see in the law and we see ourselves (the extent of our vision) and not the face of God. Often we think we do right and afterwards see it was not so. If it was God's righteousness at that time, God would be imperfect. It is only in Christ that we can ever see the righteousness of God. But God is the gospel and the gospel is Christ, and so by the law can no man be accounted righteous. We must then have something more than the law to enable us to understand God's righteousness and to comprehend the law. That something "is Christ Jesus in whom is the fullness of the Godhead bodily." I read now Romans 10:13; here we have a people seeking earnestly for righteousness. Where? Their own. Did they find it? No. Romans 9:31-32, being ignorant of Christ's righteousness. They would not believe Christ or Paul, but sought it by the works of the law. Now read verse 30; the Gentiles found it having faith, and not being satisfied with their own righteousness, as did the Pharisees who trusted in themselves that they were righteous. This, too, is where the law will bring us if we try to obtain righteousness through it, but when having faith in Christ, a man sees his sins and longs for the righteousness of God, knowing that it is the goodness, purity and righteousness of Christ that makes him so, he will become righteous.

Philippians 3:4-9: here was a Pharisee who lived up to the broadest view of the law of God he could obtain and was blameless, yet he gave it all up for Christ. Galatians 2:2; if "righteousness come by the law then Christ is dead in vain," our own righteousness is all then we can get out of the law, and that the righteousness of God can come only by Jesus Christ. What is our own righteousness? Isaiah 64:5 Our righteousness is as filthy rags. We have all sinned and come short of the glory of God. What is sin? When Israel came out of Egypt, they knew not God, remembering only that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had a God, but knew nothing more. To make them understand their condition and what sin was he took one of their own words and applied it to his purpose. He took a word meaning "missed its mark" and used it to express sin. Now we have all sinned and come short--that is what Paul means--we have "missed the mark." Then the more righteousness of the law a man has the worse he is off--the more ragged is he. Now turn to Zech. 3:1-8. Mrs. White declares this chapter to be a prophecy of this present time. Here we have Joshua standing clothed in his own righteousness and Christ takes it off and clothes him with the righteousness of God. Now Joshua had been doing the best he could, but would he have been saved? No. How often we hear people say "I do the best I can," and believe they will be saved. Joshua was re-clothed and was to stand with the angels. If then our righteousness is all taken away and Christ clothes us with God's righteousness, then to walk in his law, we will stand with the angels. So then read Isa. 54:17, first part. Christ, in all his references in the New Testament, repeats only what God had already spoken. Now Isa. 61:10, that is the song we are to sing, therefore righteousness is the gift of God as surely as is life, and if we try to get it in any other way we shall fail. In Rom.

5:12-18, we read that as sin came by one, the righteousness of one brought the free gift of life upon men. So also Rom. 3:21-26, it was to declare God's righteousness that Christ came. Now taking Rom. 5:13-17 we find here a free gift and notice particularly verse 17. Righteousness is the gift of life to everyone who believeth, and Jesus Christ will ever be the purpose of the law to everyone who believeth. It is Christ's obedience that avails and not ours that brings righteousness to us. Well then let us stop trying to do the will of God in our own strength. Stop it all. Put it away from you forever. Let Christ's obedience do it all for you and gain the strength to pull the bow so that you can hit the mark. Why did the Saviour come as an infant instead of a man? To die on the cross would have met the penalty. Because he lived a child and met all the temptations a child meets and never sinned--so that any child can stand in his place and resist in his strength; and he lived also as a youth, a man full grown, weaving for us a robe of righteousness to cover us (not to cover our filthy garments as that would be a mixture), takes the filthy garment away and puts his own in their place, so that all may have it if they will. Now if the righteousness is the gift of God, and comes by the gospel, then what is the use of the law? There are several, but they may be used wrongfully. The law entered that the offense might abound, Rom. 3:19--the law speaks to sinners that all may become guilty before God to show people their guilt. Now verse 20, the law is to reveal sin to us unrighteousness, not righteousness--Christ reveals the latter, the law the former. The law of God cannot allow a single sin in any degree whatever. If it did and condoned even a single thought that was not perfect it would sink a soul into perdition. The law is perfect. If it accepts imperfection the Lord must accept it and admit that he is

imperfect, because the law is the representation of his character. In the fact that the law demands perfection lies the hope of all mankind, because if it could overlook a sin to a single degree, no one could ever be free from sin, as the law would never make that sin known and it could never be forgiven, by which alone man can be saved. The day is coming when the law will have revealed the last sin and we will stand perfect before him and be saved with an eternal salvation. The perfection of the law of God is that it will show us all our sins, and then a perfect Saviour stands ready to take them all away. When God makes known all our sins it is not to condemn us, but to save us, so it is a token of his love for us, therefore, whenever a sin is made known to you, it is a token of God's love for you because the Saviour stands ready to take it away. That is why God has given us a Saviour and the gospel. He wants us all to believe in him, come to him and be saved. Read Matthew 5:6. Are there not many here who hunger and thirst for righteousness? Do you want to be filled? Look not then at the law, but the cross of Christ. Read Ephesians 3:14-19: rooted and grounded in faith through his love in our heart. Colossians 2:9-10, for we will be complete in Christ. There is a completeness, joy, peace, goodness, and righteousness forever.

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