

# IMPUTED RIGHTEOUSNESS.

## WHAT DO THE SCRIPTURES TEACH ON THE SUBJECT?

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Romans iii. 19—26.

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It is very remarkable that the Scriptures never use the expression, "the imputed righteousness of Christ," or even "the righteousness of Christ;" but always, as in the above passage, "*the righteousness of God.*" The Holy Ghost must have an object in this; and surely it is to direct our attention, first of all, to God Himself, to shew His own character and attributes in perfect consistency and harmony, that He is just in justifying the sinner. The way He is so will be found to be through the atoning death of Christ.

How full the Psalms are of this subject: the righteousness of God. Take one—the seventy-first. "Deliver me in thy righteousness." (Ver. 2.) "My mouth shall shew forth thy righteousness and thy salvation all the day." (Ver. 15.) "I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only." (Ver. 16.) "Thy righteousness also, O God, is very high; who hast done great things: O God, who is like unto thee." (Ver. 19.) "My tongue also shall talk of thy righteousness all the day long." (Ver. 24.) Indeed the spirit of Christ, in the Psalms, is constantly breaking out in praise at the bright prospect of the righteousness of God being exalted above the

heavens, and His glory filling the whole earth. Surely then it is of the first importance that God should be seen to be perfectly consistent with Himself, in the *relation* in which he stands to all created beings: and this is righteousness.

Daniel vi. very strikingly illustrates this. There was this peculiarity about the law of the Medes and Persians—it could not be altered. The king must enforce its full execution. Daniel had broken this law, a very unjust law; but this does not affect the illustration. Now it so happened that Darius the king had an intense affection for Daniel. But the law of the Medes demanded that Daniel should die—should be cast into the den of lions. If Darius cast Daniel into this horrible den, where was his love? If he spare him, where was his consistency as king of the Medes and Persians? This was the difficulty. The king set his heart on Daniel to deliver him: and he laboured till the going down of the sun to deliver him. But mere love could not deliver. Daniel must be, and was, cast into the den of lions. The king's seal was put on the great stone that covered the den. This was the end of the law of the Medes and Persians. But the living God stopped the mouth of the lions. That night was a night of sorrow; but the next morn was a morning of joy. Daniel arose from the den. Beautiful figure of death and resurrection. Daniel is alive and highly exalted, and Darius is consistent as king of the Medes.

Now if the word of a man, even respecting a wicked decree, could not be altered—if the law of men could not be changed—can the sentence of the Most Holy God be changed or set aside? “God is not a man that he should lie, neither the son of man that he should repent” [or change]. (Numb. xxiii. 19.) He is holy, and His sentence on sin is death. But O! blessed to know and tell—God loved the sinner. Now **HERE IS THE GREAT QUESTION.** If God in love spares

the sinner, how is His righteousness to be maintained? The love of Darius could not spare Daniel. The love of God cannot spare or save the sinner at the expense of His righteousness. Words cannot describe the intensity of God's love to the sinner; but He must be consistent as the moral Governor of the universe.

That other question in the old Book of Job also needs answering: "How then can man be justified with God?" (Job xxv. 4.) I am not aware that this question is answered anywhere in the Scriptures, until we come to the Epistle to the Romans. The subject of the first eight chapters of this epistle is the unfolding the righteous character of God in condemning sin, yet justifying the believing sinner.

God's love had been fully shewn in *so loving* as to give His only begotten Son. But the love of God alone, is not the good news that gives settled peace to a guilty sinner. Paul was separated unto the gospel or good news of God. Of this good news he was not ashamed: "For it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." (Rom. i. 16.) Now what is the great point in this wondrous good news? Why the very point we are looking at. "For therein *is the righteousness of God revealed* from faith [or on the principle of faith] to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith." (Rom. i. 17.)

This, then, is the great subject of the epistle, the very thing the sinner needs above all things to know, the righteousness of God on the principle of faith. The first thing, then, the Spirit does in this epistle to clear the way, is to prove there neither is nor can be righteousness for man on any other principle but *faith*.

In the first chapter of Romans, *man without law* became thoroughly lawless; abandoned himself to the deepest degradation. Witness the state of the heathen world in Romans i. 21—32. Man under law broke

it and became if possible worse than the heathen. Witness Israel in Romans ii. 17—29.

By works of law there could not be righteousness; for the whole world stands guilty before God. (Rom. iii. 19.) The law only makes known sin. The more man tries to keep it the more it shews his utter sinfulness. It was given for this purpose, that the offence might abound. O! marvel of all marvels, that this deep universal unrighteousness should thus commend the righteousness of God. That is, when man's condition could not be worse, God's grace shines forth in meeting him, saving him, and justifying, yea in glorifying him with Himself for ever, and that in perfect righteousness. Thus it is, when man has no righteousness—and it is most certain, both from Scripture and experience, on the principle of law, he never in any way can have—then it is we read, “BUT NOW THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD, without law, is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; *even the righteousness of God*, by faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all them that believe.” Mark well, it is the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Yes, it is the death, the propitiation, through faith in His blood, that God hath set forth to declare *His, that is, God's, righteousness*, both in passing over the sins of all believers during past ages; and also, “To declare (I say) at this time His [that is, God's] righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.” (Rom. iii. 26.) The next five chapters explain how this is done. Before we enter upon them, mark, God's conclusion of the matter is this, “That a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.” (Rom. iii. 28.)

Is there any wonder, then, that the person vainly trying to be righteous by works of law, on the principle of ‘do and live,’ should never be able to find peace and rest to his troubled soul?

Two cases are now cited, to shew that justification

has always been on the principle of faith, and never on the principle of works—a plain proof of man's *fallen condition*, which some are so impiously denying.

First Abraham. To the Jew this must have been shocking. It might be true that he was quite consistent or righteous as a man before men; but before God, righteousness was counted, reckoned, or imputed to him on the principle of faith. "For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." (Rom. iv. 3.)

Now as to this word "imputed." The word "*Logizomai*" occurs forty-one times in the New Testament. Nine times it is translated "*thinkest*" (Rom. ii. 3; 1 Cor. xiii. 5, 11; 2 Cor. iii. 5; x. 2, 7, 11; xii. 6; Phil. iv. 8); nine times, "*counted*" (Rom. ii. 26; iv. 3, 5; viii. 36; ix. 8; 1 Cor. iv. 1; Gal. iii. 6; Phil. iii. 13; Heb. iii. 3); eight times, "*imputed*" (Rom. iv. 6, 8, 11, 22, 23, 24; 2 Cor. v. 19; James ii. 23); six times, "*reckoned*" (Luke xxii. 37; Rom. iv. 4, 9, 10; vi. 11; viii. 18). There are a few other places, as in Mark xi. 31, "*reasoned*;" and Mark xv. 28, "*was numbered*." But a careful comparison of all these passages, where the word is used, shews that the simple meaning of the word is "*reckoned*," or "*considered to be*;" just as we should say of a boy at school whom we knew to be heir of an estate, though not actually as yet in possession; yet, on the veracity of the will, on the genuineness of the document, we should look upon the boy as heir. On the principle of faith, we should reckon the estate of the father to him. He is not yet in possession, but we should impute it to him—treat him as though he were in possession.

Let it not be supposed that the Scriptures teach, that the blessed obedience of Christ under law is imputed to the sinner, like a piece of new leather is put on an old bottle; or, what would be more familiar to us, as a man who, finding in his garment a slit here

and a hole there, puts a piece of new cloth on, or a piece of new leather on his shoes here and another there. Righteousness is not thus imputed to mend the sinner. It is not the mending of the old shoe by a piece of leather here and there; neither is it by covering the old rotten leather all over. It is not mending at all, but setting aside as worthless and the giving an entirely new thing. I should not speak so plainly if I did not really believe it needful. (See Mark ii. 21, 22.)

The thought of Christ having kept the law for me and that this is imputed to me for righteousness, even supposing I had been a Jew under law, would be utterly wrong, for this would only be making me righteous on the principle of law-keeping, which God says is impossible. (Rom. iii. 20.) Nor does the Scripture anywhere teach the whole life of Christ as keeping the law, imputed to, or put upon, the law-breaker to enable him to stand in law-kept righteousness before God. A far deeper thing was needed. It was not possible for a holy Christ to be attached to a sinful creature. Had he lived for ever on earth in spotless righteousness, He must have remained alone. If you turn to the following passage, you will see this most clearly: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." The blessed Lord explains all this as meaning His own death. He must die, or eternal life never could be ours.

The great error of this day is, discussing how the old man is to be mended, instead of seeing God's truth in the old thing being set aside as unmendable, and an entirely new thing set in its place.

Let us now proceed with the inquiry in Romans iv. It has been remarked, that nine times out of the eleven, where imputed righteousness is spoken of in the Scriptures, faith is said to be imputed, or counted for righteousness. How very strikingly this carries

out the thought of the epistle, the righteousness of God on the principle of faith.\* They are Romans iv. 3, 5, 9, 10, 22, 23, 24; Gal. iii. 6; James ii. 23. All these speak of faith, or the faith counted or reckoned for righteousness. The other two put righteousness itself reckoned. These are "God imputeth righteousness without works" and "That righteousness might be imputed to them also." (Rom. iv. 6, 11.)

To return: "Abraham believed God." Now, what did he believe? Plainly, he believed what God said, *because God said it*. This is the great point as to true faith. If I do not believe the bare word of God, unless the church or man says it is so, this is not believing God at all. Abraham had only God's word; there was no church to say it was so; the world was full of idolatry. He could not look to his own feelings. He considered not his own body now dead. And what did God say to him? Say to him! why, in the promise of the seed, or the principle of resurrection, He opened up to faith the day of Christ in resurrection. "As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations, before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which are not as though they were." Thus Abraham believed in the God of resurrection, on the very same principle as we do, only we more clearly, since now Christ has died and is risen again.

One word as to the other case—David. Now without controversy, this man could not possibly be justified by, or on the principle of, law keeping. He had shamefully broken it before the whole world. On

\* I would just observe, the words "The righteousness of God" do not mean the righteousness of Christ, as when it says the love of God, or God so loved. It is distinctly what it says, Righteousness of God. Not that either the love or spotless righteousness of Christ should be doubted, only it is not the subject in the numerous passages that speak of the righteousness of God.

what principle, then, was he justified? On the principle of faith. But on what did his faith rest, or how far did it reach? Most clearly to the God of resurrection, as Peter declares. (Acts ii. 24—34.) Paul also says the same thing. (Acts xiii. 34—36.) So bright was the certainty of resurrection to David that he says, "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness." (Ps. xvii. 15.) It was not that faith had merit, and that merit reckoned for righteousness. Faith may be compared to eyesight. Eyesight without light would be nothing; and both without an object would be useless. Faith is the gift of God: and it is God who says, Let there be light; and it is God, by the Holy Spirit, who reveals the glorious object to faith. So the faith of Abraham and David saw Christ in resurrection; and this, even Christ in resurrection, was imputed, or reckoned, for righteousness. A blessed justified state, in which God not only forgave sins, but to whom, in such state, the Lord *will not* impute sin. Doubly blest.

Let us now see how Abraham's believing in the God of resurrection is applied to us. "Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him, but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." (Chap. iv. 23—25.)

Is it not most sad that this bright half of the gospel—the resurrection half of it—should have been lost? How can the righteousness of God be understood where this is the case? Impossible. And on the contrary, where the justification by resurrection is understood, every shadow of a difficulty as to imputed righteousness vanishes at once.

The statement that justification merely means pardon of sin, betrays at once entire ignorance of the resurrection half of the gospel. Besides, to limit the



meaning of justification to pardon of sin, if compared with its use in the scriptures, will be seen to be absurd. David, speaking to God, says, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight; that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest." (Ps. li. 4.) To apply the limited meaning of pardon to the word justified here, would make David say he had sinned that God might be pardoned. Many other passages, such as the justification of Christ, in Isaiah l.; and the sinners who justified God, being baptized of John in the gospel, might be pointed out; but the above is sufficient to shew it must be in sad ignorance of Scripture, that such a statement can be made, as that justification means only pardon of sin. I would not make these remarks were it not that the right understanding of the double character of justification is of such immense importance, both as to the righteousness of God, and the enjoyment of peace with Him.

We shall find that double character most clearly presented in the next chapter. (Rom. v.) I mean JUSTIFICATION BY BLOOD (ver. 9.), and JUSTIFICATION OF LIFE. (Ver. 18.) Justification from all that I was, complete clearance from all sins; and justification of that life and existence which the person has when thus cleared. The death of our adorable Substitute meets the former—His blood. The resurrection of Christ is the source and justification of the latter. "Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification."

Let it be distinctly understood that the precious death of Christ on the cross, for our sins, is the foundation of everything. To deny this is not a matter of opinion. In the face of such passages as the following, could anything be more impiously wicked, than to deny the vicarious sufferings of Christ? God says to us, "Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put

to death in the flesh," &c. "Who, his own self, bare our sins in his own body on the tree." "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many." "Who gave himself for our sins." "He was wounded for our transgressions." "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquities of us all." "Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures." If any man denies this, he will find in the day of judgment, that this is not a matter of opinion. To believe God in what He thus so plainly speaks, is saving faith: to deny it, is damning unbelief. There is no middle place. This blessed work is accomplished. Christ has died, the just for the unjust. Let the eye now rest on Him as the Surety, taking the place of the sinner—delivered for our offences—and in that place He could not be spared. The love of God, if He must be righteous in saving us, could not spare His Son. The cup could not pass from Him, and it did not. If Darius laboured to deliver Daniel until the going down of the sun, what did it cost the Father, when He beheld His beloved Son prostrate in sad Gethsemane, and on the cross? Oh! well might the Holy One cry out, "*My God, my God! why hast thou forsaken me?*" Oh who can fathom the love of God to us poor sinners, when He spared not His beloved Son? He died the accursed death of the cross; he was buried; a great stone was laid on the mouth of His sepulchre; it, like Daniel's den, was also sealed with a seal. And there was the end of the law's utmost claim on the sin Christ was bearing—fulfilled to the last jot or tittle. To redeem them that were under the law, He thus bore its curse. To save us Gentiles, who were sinners without law, He was made sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God *in Him*.

The law could go no further than death, but God could go further. Where the law ended, God began; God raised Him from the dead; and thus, beyond law altogether, Christ is the beginning, the firstborn from

the dead. (Col. i. 18.) Thus, by His blessed death, Christ is the end of the law, for righteousness, to them that believe. (Rom. x. 4.)

If king Darius was exceeding glad when he came early in the morning to the mouth of the den, when Daniel arose from among the lions, as it were arose from the dead, what must have been the joy of God on that morn when the women came very early to the sepulchre, and Jesus was risen from among the dead? Darius proclaimed peace to all peoples; for Daniel was alive, who had been in the den of death, and that he was exalted and his enemies destroyed in the very den. Surely it is a striking figure, or illustration, how God has triumphed through the cross of Christ. Daniel was alive, and Darius had fully carried out in righteousness, that is, in kingly consistency, the law of the Medes.

Now, Christ was the only one who had life in Himself, who could lay it down for the sheep and take it up again. He was dead, but is alive again—He died for our sins, *our substitute*—He arose for our justification, *our surety and representative* head. “Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” For our comfort, we must have peace, for we must have what our Surety has, on the very ground of the righteousness of God. For God made Him to be our substitute, made Him sin for us. And God has made Him to be our surety and representative; for, *as man*, God hath raised Him from the dead, and that for the very purpose of justifying us. If we would enjoy this blessed peace, we must not stop at Christ’s death. This alone would not help us in the least. “If Christ be not risen, your faith is vain, ye are yet in your sins.” (1 Cor. xv. 17.) But He is risen from the dead and become the first fruits of them that slept. Now, if God could not spare our substitute, and be righteous in doing so, how can He be righteous and condemn

us, since our substitute has made atonement to the full for all our sins? and *much more*, since God has raised Him, as our justified surety from the dead. Christ for us is ever in that justified or perfectly righteous *state*; and herein, as we shall see presently, justification is much more than pardon.

Suppose a prisoner before the bar, proved guilty, say, of stealing a sheep. He might be forgiven, but could the judge justify him? Clearly not; unless he could justify sheep stealing. Could he rise in court and say, I justify this person from every charge; and as a proof that there is not a stain on his character, I take him by the hand, and receive him to my home and table, *in proof* that he is clear from every stain or charge. No man could do this and be just himself in doing it. That little boy who, the other day, had stolen money from the till, and was forgiven because it was the first offence, was he justified? Would there be no difference betwixt pardon and justification here? Take another case. The proprietor of a large shop makes a rule, that the first person in his employ found stealing shall be discharged. A young man is found guilty. The employer loves the young man—he forbears; but *can he* spare that young man, and be consistent as the proprietor, and the maker of that rule?

Now this was just the position in which God stood to man. Man sinned—was guilty—God forebore in mercy 4000 years. But could He spare the life of man, forfeited through sin, and be righteous, that is, consistent as the Creator? Impossible, unless He denied HIMSELF. And thus, when Jesus took our sins, as really took and bore their curse as though He had committed them every one, God laid them on Him, the substitute, as really as though they had been His own; I say, He, having borne them, having died for them, God was righteous in raising Him from the dead, cleared from them; and thus God is just in clearing us from them, through faith in His blood.

Once more: a man owes £15. Very well, then, it cannot be justly said he owes nothing. But, if another becomes surety, and does pay the full amount, £15, can it not be said that he, the man who did owe it, is now clear of debt? I do not see how it would be just to say anything else. Now, if I see then, that Christ has paid the debt of my guilt, the full count of all my sins, past, present, and future, and that, *much more*, God hath raised Him up from among the dead for my justification, is not, then, God perfectly righteous in reckoning me justified in Christ? I mean, plainly, that God is just in justifying the believer, and therefore would not be just in condemning him. What perfect peace this gives. It may be said, This is all very well for such as have a measure of righteousness of their own. Nay; "but God commendeth His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. *Much more, then*, being justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, *much more*, being reconciled, *we shall be saved by his life*." (Rom. v. 8—10.) What can this twice repeated "*much more*" be? Something much more than being justified by His blood—much more than being reconciled by His death. Yes, all this being done, *much more* "*we shall be saved by his life*."

There is a remarkable turn in the epistle at this point. The question of life is now fully brought out. First, man being a sinner, his life is forfeited. Death is passed upon the whole race of Adam, for all have sinned, whether under law or not. And if sin did not come in by Adam, and death by sin, let the sceptic find me a city, a town, or even a village, or even a person in that village, on the face of the whole earth, that is not a sinner, and a sinner on whom death is written. Well, if death has thus reigned over the whole race of Adam, how can any have life? This, the apostle shews,

is on another principle—even life flowing from another source altogether—it is the life of the risen Christ. It is not the recovery of that life which was forfeited by sin—it is far beyond it—cannot be compared with it. “For if by one offence death reigned by one, *much more* they which receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign *in life* by one, Jesus Christ.” (Rom. v. 17.) Yes, the life that the believer has now is the gift of righteousness. God is perfectly justified in giving this life, even to the sinner who has forfeited his own, because the life of the spotless Substitute has been freely given up. First, justified by His blood from all sin; then justified, yea, *much more* justified, in the life which is the gift of righteousness.

“Therefore as [it was] by one offence, towards all men to condemnation, even so by one righteousness, towards all men for justification of life.” (Rom. v. 18.) Scholars tell us this is the literal translation of this verse. Observe, it is not here the justification by blood, but *justification of life*. To take once more the illustration of the den of lions, a person might have said, How can this Daniel *live*? is he not condemned to be cast into the den of lions? Darius could have replied, This is the Daniel who has been cast into the den of death, and has risen out of it! He could be condemned no more. Just so the blessed One who stood in our place. He has been condemned, He has died, He has been buried; but He is risen, and death has no more claim on Him, even on our account. It had once, and He freely met its claims. If Adam, then, was the beginning of a race of sinners, condemned to death, Christ having died for His own, is the beginning of a new race. So that, as a believer, the life I have is not *my* life spared, or restored; but the very life of the risen Christ, and therefore a justified life. Thus, my fellow-believers, are we justified by the blood of Christ from all that we were as children of Adam; and we are justified *in all that we are as children of God in Christ*. Thus are we

*much more saved by His life. Yes, and shall be saved by His life.* This is a very different thing from that uncertain half-gospel, that only sees justification to be pardon of sin, and then leaves the future all dark and uncertain, really depending on self-righteousness after pardon.

“For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.” (Rom. v. 19.) I believe the words “shall be made righteous,” go even beyond the present state, right on to our literal change or resurrection, when we shall see Him and be like Him. It was this that was before the blessed One when He endured the cross and despised the shame. For this He now sits at the right hand of God. His precious obedience unto death has secured all.

If you ask what is the righteousness we shall be made, and which is now imputed to us? I reply, look up at that glorified man, Christ Jesus, in whose face shines the glory of God. That is what we shall be, my fellow-believer; we shall be exactly like Him. He says, “The glory that thou hast given me I have given them.” Now, mark, there can be no uncertainty as to this, for God hath raised Him from the dead as our Surety; and He is gone up on high, and holds possession of this glory, as Son of man, for us. Is it possible for God to give His Son to bear our sins on the cross, to raise Him from the dead for our justification, and then, after all, not bring us there? I say, it is not possible. His very accomplished righteousness demands that we should live eternally with His Son. Nothing can possibly hinder God from the joy of His heart in our everlasting salvation. Because, do not you see? “For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.” (Rom. viii. 29, 30.) The fact is, the

whole thing is so put together of God, and is so wholly of God, that the believer will not be more sure of this glory when in it than he is now if he believes what God says. Now just dwell on this, think of this, "that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign *through* righteousness unto *eternal life* by Jesus Christ our Lord." (Rom. v. 21.) What a prospect, to gaze on the face of God in perfect righteousness—God perfectly righteous in bringing us there; we, righteous without spot or stain, in being there; and all this accomplished by the death and resurrection of Christ. The words of Daniel are fulfilled—He hath brought in everlasting righteousness.

Now, because all this is sure, throughout the countless ages of a bright coming eternity, therefore it is reckoned to the believer now, during this little moment that intervenes before we enter upon the glad fruition. The doctrine, then, of imputation, or of being reckoned righteous, seems as simple as possible. First, on the ground that the Surety is risen, in perfect righteousness, having glorified God. The payment in blood by that Surety is reckoned to all who believe. What is done by a surety is reckoned to the one for whom it is done. And, secondly, on the ground of what our Representative is in glory; for what is done to a representative is reckoned done to those whom he represents. O ! what joy this gives the heart, that thus knows Jesus in the presence of God. In a word, it is identification in the sight of God; we are dead with Him and risen with Him. And this is the truth of Romans vi. Do read these wondrous verses, Romans vi. 3—11. Not our old man saved by Christ, but crucified with Him—buried with Him. There is no compromise—the sentence of death fully executed. Not my life, as to my old self, spared or helped, but crucified. But is this all ? Oh, no; we are also risen with Him. This is how God reckons us, and this is how we are to reckon. "Likewise reckon ye yourselves to be dead



indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." This word "reckon" is the very same as "impute" elsewhere. Then, what does it mean in plain words? Just this: suppose a friend sends you a letter to say an estate has been left you: if you believe him, you would from that moment reckon it to be yours. Of course, when you are in possession you will not need to reckon then; it will no longer be faith in your friend's letter, but the actual sight of your estate. Just so I believe God's word, applied by the Holy Ghost. I adore the blessed One who gave His heart's blood for me. I believe, an eternity of purity and righteousness is mine in Him. Yes, is mine, on the certainty of the righteousness of God. I reckon, during this little while of sorrow and conflict, that all this future glory is mine. God also reckons it all to me. He reckons me dead, risen, justified, glorified, *with Christ*. And this is God's salvation.

Thus death and resurrection are seen to be the end of my old self in relationship to two things, sin and law. In chapter vi. we are dead to sin, as dead and risen with Christ; and in chapter vii. dead to law—that is, if we had been under it. And all this to bring out still further the blessed, eternal life we have in Him.

Far be the thought that all this should be, that we may continue in sin. "How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein?" If any man desires to live in sin, it is because there is not this life in him. That which is born of God must be like Him. Now God is not only righteous, but He is holy. That is, not only relatively consistent with Himself, in the blessed relationship in which He stands as God, but his very nature is inherent purity, and this is holiness. And such is that new nature which is born of God. Yea, such is *he* that is born of God. That which is of God must be pure. Now how truly blessed this is! While our old being, or nature, as of fallen Adam, had neither righteousness nor holiness, but was altogether

sinful, yet now that nature, that existence, being set aside in the death of Christ, the new nature, or life, or existence we have in the risen Christ *is of God*, and delights in holiness. Is it not so, believer? Dost thou not long for that blessed state, where all shall be unsullied righteousness and unchanging holiness? Oh! how soon shall this be thine in actual enjoyment for ever! And now, *in Christ*, it is reckoned to thee.

Righteousness of God, then, was reckoned to Abraham on the principle of faith: he believing that God was able to perform His promise. How much more clearly, then, is it reckoned to us who believe that God *hath* fulfilled His promise, in that *He hath* raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead. All is done: God is divinely righteous in justifying us from all sin, and in raising us from among the dead, and giving us the life of the eternal Son—therefore, eternal life. That is imperishable.

Thus justification *is a standing* of perfect clearance from sin, and everlasting life—all the result of God's righteousness revealed in the death and resurrection of Christ. We are no longer looked at in our old Adam standing, but dead to it, and now looked at as *in Christ, alive from the dead*.

There can be no mistake. This *was*—whatever mistakes men make now—this was the way the apostles preached the good news of God, through Jesus the resurrection from among the dead. No patching and mending humanity in the Scriptures. Fallen, sinful humanity cannot live in the presence of divine holiness. It is wholly set aside, and the law that was adapted to it also. And thus, being dead, there is an end of my old self in relationship to sin and death and law. Sin shall not have dominion over us therefore, because we are not under law, but under grace. Mark, in chapter vii., we cannot be married to two husbands at the same time. If we are still alive under law, or if we take that ground, we cannot be married to Christ. To the

believing Jews at Rome the apostle could say, "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ, that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God." (Chap. vii. 4.) Thus the power also for fruit-bearing is in our union with the risen Christ. The apostle then shews that all that the law can do for the old man when under it is to bring him into the captivity of sin—the very opposite of the position of the person delivered by death and resurrection. It is utterly useless seeking righteousness in old self, under or on the principle of law-keeping. All is in Christ, whether as to freedom from guilt and condemnation, or for everlasting righteousness before God, or as to fruit-bearing before men. Thus the believer is reckoned dead and risen with Christ; no longer in the first Adam, but in Christ. And if in Christ, condemnation there is none. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." (Rom. viii. 1.)

This is, indeed, far more than mere forgiveness of past sins. To be in Christ is a state in which *there is not such a thing as condemnation*. There could be no justification of our Adam life; there can be no condemnation of our justified life in the risen Christ. "The law of the Spirit of [our] life in Christ Jesus," is, then, fully explained. (Rom. viii. 2—17.) Read these verses carefully. What perfect freedom from the law of sin and death! And the righteousness of the law fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. And, now, not only is all this reckoned to us, but we have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. Thus the Holy Ghost seals our sonship. And while Christ on high is the living witness of accomplished righteousness, the Spirit also bears witness here below.

Now, if God be for us, and for us poor sinners, in perfect righteousness, who can be against us? It is

most important to see clearly that *God is for us*. The thought that God was against the sinner, and that Christ died to reconcile Him to the sinner, in the sense of turning His heart towards the sinner; I say this thought is horrible. If Darius yearned over Daniel—not only loved him, but looked on him as an injured man—much more did God yearn for the sinner. Yea, God has come to man's rescue—God is the sinner's friend. Was it not because He loved us, when sinners, that He gave His Son, whose precious blood puts away the sin? Do not mistake me here: surely the untold agonies of Calvary tell how exceeding horrible sin is to God. Yet, behold the glory of the cross! Infinite love to the sinner, infinite wrath on sin. "He spared not his own Son." The work of justifying the sinner by the gift of His Son, is the brightest display of the unalterable righteousness of God. What a justification! "It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? Christ that died, *yea rather*, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."

There is no condemnation; there is no separation. Who can condemn? who can separate? How can there be condemnation? the old child of Adam no longer exists before God. Whilst a criminal is alive he may be tried, condemned, and executed; when he is dead and buried you cannot then find him to condemn him again. It is so with the believer; he has been executed in the person of his Substitute; he is buried with Him. He does not any longer exist, as a child of Adam, before God, and therefore cannot be condemned again. The apostle says, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live: yet not I [not the old I], but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain." (Gal. ii.

20, 21.) If my old self could have been righteous on the principle of law, or further, if God could have been righteous in sparing the old nature, then Christ would not have needed to die and rise again that I might be made righteous through death and resurrection. My Adam life is forfeited through sin; my Christ life is everlasting.

How does all this bear on experience? Let the apostle answer. Read carefully in that epistle of true christian experience, Philippians. In chapter iii. the apostle has no confidence in the flesh under law, however blameless. The things that were gain he counts loss, "yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them dung that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." He had seen the risen Christ in brightness above the sun. Compared with Him all was dung and dross. This risen Christ was the only object before his soul at the end of the journey of this weary world. I say this is experience, not imputation, here; hence he looks at the final triumph in glory, "*and be found in him.*" This is the object of his heart; for this he pressed on. "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection." Clearly, in this passage, the righteousness which is of God by faith is Christ in resurrection. What was the mark toward which he pressed? Christ in resurrection. Short of Christ in resurrection, there was not a shadow of a hope to Paul. There was no righteousness without this or on any other principle. Without this he knew no news worth telling. Besides this he had no object worth living for.

O that this doctrine may be revived again in this our day! What a contrast to the man-mending doctrines they preach who are ignorant of this resurrection

side of the gospel. What is the faith of the gospel as preached by the apostle? Christ in resurrection. He is, as risen from the dead, our righteousness. Only in Him, as it is written, "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is [not was] made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." (1 Cor. i. 30.) It is not what we have made Him to be unto ourselves. No, God hath raised Him from the dead. He hath made Him to be our life, our righteousness, our all. The whole thing is of God, and therefore it is called righteousness of God, or righteousness which is of God. What perfect consistency; what divine harmony! God infinitely just, yet my justifier. Oh! look at it! God can now take the vilest sinner, translate him from the kingdom of darkness, sin, and death, into the kingdom of His own risen Son, in unchanging justification. For, whilst forgiveness is repeated in the scriptures, there can be no repetition of justification. How can there? The death and resurrection of Christ is the justification of the believer, and does not need, nay, cannot be repeated.

There is one more expression, quite different from any we have yet examined: "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that *we* might be made the righteousness of God in him." (2 Cor. v. 21.) *We made the righteousness of God.* This is a very peculiar expression. The context will make it plain. Christ dying for all proved that all were dead, and that therefore nothing short of His death could meet them. The object of His death was, that the saved should live to God; that they who were dead should live. (Chap. v. 14, 15.) All being dead, Christ's life in the flesh could not save them. "Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh, yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more. Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new; and all things are of God," &c. Nothing could be

more striking and clear than this. Christ made sin—dying, the sacrifice for sin on the cross; this is the end of the old things, the end of all that belonged to me as a dead, lost sinner. On that cross, by faith, I see the end of old I, and all that belongs to old I. Christ raised from the dead is the beginning of the new creation, as it is written in that remarkable verse Colossians i. 18, “Who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead.” This is most fully shewn out in Ephesians i. and ii. As God raised Christ (the beginning) up from the dead, in Ephesians i., so He hath raised up us also in Christ, who were dead in trespasses and sins. (Chap. ii.) Surely He hath not only pardoned us, but made us sit in Christ in heavenly places. This new creation is so entirely of God, that we are God’s workmanship, or, as in this 2 Corinthians v., “That we might be made the righteousness of God *in him*.” That is, in the risen Christ, the beginning, the firstborn from the dead. We were lost in sin and death; God has given us a new life, a new existence, a new creation in Christ, in which new creation there is no sin, there can be none; all is absolute holiness, perfect righteousness. *As seen* in that new creation, we are what God has made us; for all things are new, and all things of God, and therefore the believer is, as risen in Christ, the righteousness of God—all, all of God.

It is thus, on the ground of the accomplished righteousness of God also, that the gospel is proclaimed—God having raised up Christ from the dead. “Be it known unto you, therefore, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe are justified from all things.” (Acts xiii. 38.)

This paper may fall into the hands of the scoffing infidel. These are solemn words for such, “Behold, ye despisers, and wonder and perish; for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in nowise believe, though a man declare it unto you.” (Acts xiii. 41.)

Fellow child of God, this is but a feeble glance at the lovely landscape of the new creation. Regions of holy delight stretch far beyond. May the Lamb lead thee by the side of still waters, and the green pastures of His precious truth: soon, soon thou wilt awake in His likeness. O to be like Him, and this so certain! As surely as Jesus died and rose again, so surely is it all reckoned to thee now. The righteousness of God is thine now on the principle of faith. To enjoy it in its full result in blessed fruition will soon be thine everlasting portion. Blessed hope of righteousness, as says the apostle, "For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith." (Gal. v. 5.) Ours now by imputation; then, for ever ours in the full enjoyment of sight. Blessed Lord, increase our faith.

C. S.

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\* \* Should any wish to see this subject more fully examined, I would commend to them a most valuable pamphlet lately published, "The Righteousness of God," by J. N. D. May be had of the same publisher.

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