

## Jesus Christ the Righteous

Ellet J. Waggoner

The Present Truth | November 2, 1893

“If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (1 John 2:1).

Of all the beings that have lived on this earth, Christ alone “did no sin.” He is the only one of whom it can be said; “There is no unrighteousness in Him” (Ps. 92:15). He Himself without egotism declared Himself to be sinless. And the reason why He could do this was that He was indeed God. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us” (John 1:1, 14). Christ was God manifest in the flesh, so that His name was Emmanuel, —“God with us” (Matt. 1:23).

Because “in Him is no sin,” “He was manifested to take away our sins” (1 John 3:5). “This is His name whereby He shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.” (Jer. 23:6). Note that He is our righteousness, and not simply a substitute for righteousness that we have not. Men are not, as a Roman Catholic work charges justification by faith with teaching, “reputed or considered wholly on account of the merits of Christ, without really being so.” The Bible teaches that they are actually to be righteous, through the merits of Jesus Christ.

More and more it is getting to be held by professed teachers of Christianity, that there is in man at least as much good as evil, and that the good in men will eventually gain the complete victory over the evil. But the Bible teaches that “There is none righteous, no, not one.” Christ, who “knew what was in man,” declared that “out of the heart of men proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness” (Mark 7:21, 22). He also declared that “an evil man, out of the evil treasure of his heart, brings forth evil,” and that good cannot come from a bad source. (Luke 4:43, 45). Therefore it is plain that from man of himself “no good thing” can come. “Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one” (Job 14:4).

God does not propose to try to bring goodness out of evil, and He never will call evil good. What He proposes to do is to create a new heart in man, so that good can come from it. “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained, that we should walk in them” (Eph. 2:10).

No man can understand how Christ can dwell in a man’s heart, so that righteousness will flow from it, instead of sin, any more than we can understand how Christ the Word who was before all things, and who created all things, could come to earth and be born as a man. But as surely as He dwelt in the flesh once, He can do it again, and whosoever confesses, “Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God.”

“If we walk in the light as He is in the light, . . . the blood of Jesus Christ His Son

cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). "We walk by faith, and not by sight." By faith we receive Christ, and to those who thus receive Him He gives the right and power to be called the sons of God. (John 1:12). Then the exhortation is, "As you therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him" (Col. 2:6). This is walking in the light.

As the physical life is sustained by breathing and eating, so the spiritual life is sustained by faith; and as we cannot today breathe enough for tomorrow, but must keep breathing all the time, so we cannot today have faith for the future, but must continue to have faith, if we would continue to live a spiritual life.

While we thus by faith walk in the light, we are continually receiving a divine life into our souls, for the light is life. And the life continually received, continually cleanses the soul from sin. The cleansing is an ever-present work, showing an ever-present need. Thus it is that we can never say that we have no sin. It is always only "Jesus Christ the righteous."

It is by the obedience of One that many are made righteous. What a wonder! Only one—Christ—obeys, but many are made really righteous. The apostle Paul said: "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives 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" (Gal. 2:20). So then, if anyone asks a Christian, "Are you without sin?" he can only reply, "Not I, but Christ." "Do you keep the commandments?" "Not I, but Christ." Imperfect and sinful in ourselves, and yet "complete in Him."

With God is the "fountain of life" (Ps. 36:9). Christ is the manifestation of God, and so the fountain of life is in Him. "He ever lives," and so the fountain ever flows. It is said of the river of life that, "everything will live wherever the river goes" (Eze. 47:9); so of the life of Christ, wherever it goes it cleanses from all defilement. And so, while confessing ourselves to be sinful and helpless, we are constrained to place all dependence on Him who "knew no sin . . . that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. 5:21).