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OUR DANGER.

Lord, with what care hast Thou begirt us round !
Parents first season us ; then schoolmasters
Deliver us to laws ; they send us bound
To rules of reason, holy messengers ;
Pulpits and Sundays ; sorrow dogging sin ;
Afflictions sorted ; anguish of all sizes ;
Fine nets and stratagems to catch us in ;
Bibles laid open ; millions of surprises ;
Blessings beforehand ; ties of gratefulness ;
The sound of glory ringing in our ears ;
Without, our shame ; within, our consciences ;
Angels and grace, eternal hopes and fears.
Yet all these fences and their whole array
One cunning bosom sin quite blows away.
—George Herbert.

ABIDE IN CHRIST, AS YOUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

'Of God are ye in Christ Jesus, who was made unto us wisdom from God, both RIGHTEOUSNESS and sanctification, and redemption.'—I COR. i. 30 (R. V. marg.).

The first of the great blessings which Christ our wisdom reveals to us as prepared in Himself, is—Righteousness. It is not difficult to see why this must be first.

There can be no real prosperity or progress in a nation, a home, or a soul, unless there be peace. As not even a machine can do its work unless it be in rest, secured on a good founda-

tion, quietness and assurance are indispensable to our moral and spiritual well-being. Sin had disturbed all our relations ; we were out of harmony with ourselves, with men, and with God. The first requirement of a salvation that should really bring blessedness to us was peace. And peace can only come with right. Where everything is as God would have it, in God's order and in harmony with His will, there alone can peace reign. Jesus Christ came to restore peace on earth, and peace in the soul, by restoring righteousness. Because He is Melchizedek, King of Righteousness, He reigns as King of Salem, King of Peace (Heb. vii. 2). He so fulfils the promise the prophets held out: 'A King shall reign in righteousness : and the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever' (Isa. xxxii. 1, 17). Christ is made of God unto us righteousness ; of God we are in Him as our righteousness ; we are made the righteousness of God in Him. Let us try and understand what this means.

When first the sinner is led to trust in Christ for salvation, he, as a rule, looks more to His work than His person.

As he looks at the Cross, and Christ suffering there, the Righteous One for the unrighteous, he sees in that atoning death the only but sufficient foundation for his faith in God's pardoning mercy. The substitution, and the curse-bearing, and the atonement of Christ dying in the stead of sinners, are what give him peace. And he understands how the righteousness which Christ brings becomes his very own, and how, in the strength of that, he is counted righteous before God, he feels that he has what he needs to restore him to God's favor: 'Being justified by faith, we have peace with God.' He seeks to wear this robe of righteousness in the ever renewed faith in the glorious gift of righteousness which has been bestowed upon him.

But as time goes on, and he seeks to grow in the Christian life, new needs arise. He wants to understand more fully how it is that God can thus justify the ungodly on the strength of the righteousness of another. He finds the answer in the wonderful teaching of Scripture as to the true union of the believer with Christ as the second Adam. He sees that it is because Christ had made Himself one with His people, and they were one with Him ; that it was in perfect accordance with all law in the kingdom of nature and of heaven, that each member of the body should have the full benefit of the doing and the suffering as of the life of the head. And so he is led to feel that it can only be in fully realizing his personal union with Christ as the head, that he can fully experience the power of His righteousness to bring the soul into the full favour and fellowship of the Holy One. The work of Christ does not become less precious, but the person of Christ more so ; the work leads up into the very heart, the love and life of the God-man.

And this experience sheds its light again upon Scripture. It leads him to notice, what he had scarce remarked before, how distinctly the righteousness of God, as it becomes ours, is connected with the person of the Redeemer. 'This is His name whereby He shall be called, JEHOVAH OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.' 'IN JEHOVAH have I righteousness and strength' 'Of God is He made unto us

righteousness.' 'That we might be made the righteousness of God IN HIM.' 'That I may be found IN HIM, having the righteousness of God.' He sees how inseparable righteousness and life in Christ are from each other : the righteousness of one comes upon all unto justification of life.' 'They which receive the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.' And he understands what deep meaning there is in the key-word of the Epistle to the Romans: 'The righteous shall live by faith.' He is not now content with only thinking of the imputed righteousness as his robe ; but, putting on Jesus Christ, and seeking to be wrapped up in, to be clothed upon with *Himself and His life*, he feels how completely the righteousness of God is his, because the Lord our righteousness is his. Before he understood this, he too often felt it difficult to wear his white robe all the day : it was as if he specially had to put it on when he came into God's presence to confess his sins, and seek new grace. But now the living Christ Himself is his righteousness,—that Christ who watches over, and keeps and loves us as His own ; it is no longer an impossibility to walk all the day enrobed in the loving presence with which He covers His people.

Such an experience leads still further. The life and the righteousness are inseparably linked, and the believer becomes more conscious than before of a righteous nature planted within him. The new man created in Christ Jesus, is 'created in righteousness and true holiness.' 'He that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous.' The union to Jesus has effected a change not only in the relation to God, but in the personal state before God. And as the intimate fellowship to which the union has opened up the way is maintained, the growing renewal of the whole being makes righteousness to be his very nature.

To a Christian who begins to see the deep meaning of the truth, 'He is made to us righteousness,' it is hardly necessary to say, 'Abide in Him.' As long as he only thought of the righteousness of the substitute, and our being counted judicially righteous for His sake, the absolute necessity of *abiding in Him* was not apparent. But as the glory of 'Jehovah our righteousness' unfolds to the view, he sees that abiding in Him personally is the only way to stand, at all times, complete and accepted before God, as it is the only way to realize how the new and righteous nature can be strengthened from Jesus our Head. To the penitent sinner the chief thought was the righteousness which comes through Jesus dying for sin ; to the intelligent and advancing believer, Jesus, the Living One, through whom the righteousness comes, is everything, because having Him he has the righteousness too.

Believer, abide in Christ as your righteousness. You hear about with you a nature altogether corrupt and vile, ever seeking to rise up and darken your sense of acceptance, and of access to unbroken fellowship with the Father. Nothing can enable you to dwell and walk in the light of God, without even the shadow of a cloud between, but the habitual abiding in Christ as your righteousness. To this you are called. Seek to walk worthy of that calling. Yield yourself to the Holy Spirit to reveal to you the wonderful