

## Devotional Service

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(These topics harmonize with the chapters of our Bible Study text-book, "Studies in the Apostolic Church," which is advertised in this paper.)

### JUNE 18.—"THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF FAITH."

(STUDY II. APOSTOLIC CHURCH.)

In their Christian culture young people should seek to be "rooted and built up in him and established in the faith," and, in order to do so, they must give careful thought to the great doctrines of the Scriptures, and clearly comprehend their meaning. We have for our topic this week one of the great doctrines, the righteousness of faith. It is not as easy to understand as some doctrines, and will therefore require all the more careful study. But the results of close investigation will amply repay the time and effort expended. How shall man be justified before God? Wherein shall I come before the Lord? Such questions have presented themselves to man ever since sin had an entrance into this world. Such questions demand an answer now. Let us not shrink from considering them.

1. The very nature of God's nature is holiness. The outcome of holiness in effect and action is righteousness, hence God, perfectly righteous himself, requires righteousness in his rational creatures. To come before God with acceptance we must have righteousness; and righteousness is having righteousness; and obeying God's law—and obeying it perfectly—for God admits of no imperfections.

2. What then is our condition as regards the law of God. The law condemns us, for we have not perfectly obeyed it. Our very best actions are so mixed with imperfections that they come short of what God's holiness requires. Everyone who thinks with any seriousness of God and of himself—God in his holiness, I in my sins—must necessarily ask, What must I do? Shall we then turn again to God's law, try to keep it more perfectly, leave off sinning, seek righteousness by our own doings? Vain efforts! The more we try, the more plainly we shall see our failures. By the law is the knowledge of sin, but no righteousness for man. Man, left to deal with God's law with his own efforts alone, either falls into spiritual blindness and deadness of heart, or betakes him to some vain superstitions to bring peace to his conscience which they never can bestow.

3. The Gospel of Jesus Christ proclaims the way in which man can be justified, accounted righteous before God. This is not by the law. God cannot forego the claims of his law, cannot clear the guilty. But the Gospel does for us what the law cannot do. The Lord Jesus, made man for us, standing in our place, bearing our sins, rendering a perfect obedience to the law as man, has redeemed us from the just condemnation of the law. He is declared in the language of prophecy to be "Jehovah, our righteousness" (Jer. xxiii. 6). All that believe in him are justified; they have a righteousness given to them by God. They are even said to "be made the righteousness of God" in Christ. (2 Cor. v. 21.)

4. By this marvellous work of God wrought out for us in and by the Lord Jesus, the most blessed results ensue.

All God's glorious attributes shine forth. His holiness is vindicated, his justice satisfied, his law honored, his love triumphant.

The glorious contradiction of Exod. xxxiv. 6, finds its blessed solution: "Forpiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty," Christ taking the place of the guilty, the believer's

sins are forgiven. Hence God can be just, and yet justify the faithful. Hence he is not only merciful, but "faithful and just to forgive us our sins."

5. This great Gospel truth of justification by faith in Christ, almost lost in the visible church in the times of mediæval darkness, but recovered and proclaimed anew in the Reformation, is now in the opened Scriptures set full in view of us. Let us receive it, hold it fast, rejoice in it, and let us prove in our own life that it is a doctrine according to godliness. "Even the righteousness of God which is by faith in Jesus Christ is to all and upon all those that believe, for there is no difference." The apostle means to say by this expression that it is a righteousness which comes to us by believing in Jesus Christ. It is not our faith that is our righteousness; it is not our act of believing that justifies. If your faith were your righteousness, then faith would be just reduced to the level of all other works, and would be itself a work. If it were our faith, our act of faith that justified, then should we be justified by our own acts, by our own deeds. The expression then "the righteousness of God, which is by faith in Jesus Christ," means simply that it is a righteousness which passes over to us, and becomes available for us, by believing in him whose righteousness it is—that is, by believing the Father's testimony concerning Jesus Christ. Or it is just as if we were saying, "I have no righteousness, seeing I am wholly a sinner;" but I take this righteousness of the Son of God, and draw near, expecting to be treated by God, just as if I and not He were the righteous person. I cannot present my sufferings to Him in payment of penalty; but I take this suffering of the Son of God, and I claim to have it reckoned to me. Thus it is "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." And the faith by which this righteousness is enjoyed is not a momentary act once for all. It is a confidence held fast to the end.

#### POINTS FOR THE PRESIDENT.

The logical unfolding of this fundamental Protestant doctrine will be found in the foregoing. If your Pastor could come and give a quarter of an hour's talk on this rather difficult subject, it would be profitable. If not, appoint one or two in advance to expand the points given in this exposition. Prepare yourself as President, by careful study, to add clearness and impressiveness to the topic study.

### JUNE 25.—"MORE RECENT YEARS."

"THE HEART OF JAPAN," Chap. 5.)

At the commencement of the third decade of the work of the mission in Japan (1893-1903), the field was occupied by seven foreign missionaries engaged in evangelistic work, and engaged in educational work, and there were assisting them twenty-one native ministers and probationers. The total membership reported was 1,987, being fifty-nine over the returns of the previous year. Fields were opening up in a most promising manner, new opportunities were presenting themselves, and those on the field were pleading for reinforcements.

#### A SERIES OF FIRES.

The old church in Shizuoka was burned on Jan. 8th, 1892, but on Nov. 12th, with most commendable energy, a new church was finished and dedicated with a series of services extending over eight days. Many of the most influential persons of the city, who had never before been persuaded to attend a church service, were present, and heard the gospel earnestly and lovingly set forth. This beautiful new church was destroyed by fire,

which swept over the central part of the city on the 14th of December. Another church, on the same place as the one reduced to ashes, was commenced, and on Nov. 25th, 1893, the new building, the third church built in Shizuoka, was dedicated to the service of God. Such was the pluck, the indomitable perseverance, the unbounded faith of the Methodist Church in Canada and the Christian workers on the Japan field.

#### GREATER REVIVAL.

These more recent years have witnessed a wonderful outpouring of the Spirit of God. In Japan there has been a Twentieth Century Evangelistic Movement, which stirred the country. The movement originated in the Japan Evangelical Alliance, a society of Japanese Christian churches. From April, 1900, to May 12, 1901, there was a period of preparation, of prayer, and of heart-searching. The central committee met weekly for prayer and business. Union prayer meetings, to pray for the success of the movement, were held in most of the churches. Twenty different denominations threw themselves into this work. The cost of the movement, some \$10,000, was met by the Christians of the country, the larger part being paid by the Japanese. In the work there was no "native" and "foreign," but all were Christian brethren.

On the streets, by preaching, in house-to-house visitation, by conversation with strangers and with friends, these Christians showed their love by their service. Those who could do nothing else invited people to the meetings and distributed Christian literature, over two and a half million tracts being scattered in this way during the campaign. The presence and power of God were evident throughout, and "the Lord added to them day by day those who were being saved." It is estimated that the number of Christians in Japan at the commencement of this campaign was 40,000, and that at least 20,000 to 25,000 were added to this number during the year through these special evangelistic efforts.

#### NOTABLE FEATURES.

Rev. Mr. Borden, writing from Tokyo, says: "Among the notable features of this revival are the following: It is under Japanese leadership and was initiated by them, and while missionaries have co-operated, the management has been in Japanese hands. Not only have such men as Revs. Kozaki, Tamura, Ukai, Urumata, and others been active, but prominent laymen, such as Hon. Taro Ando, Hon. Shio Nemoto, and Mr. Kataoka, President of the Imperial Diet, have been most active. Mr. Kataoka, I think, has been on the platform almost every night, and is usually present at the afternoon meeting. I have attended the evening services and have been deeply impressed with the close, reverent attention that has been given to the Gospel. It will not take long to convert Japan when the Japanese awake fully to a sense of their own responsibility. Then the preaching has been evangelical. Nothing is heard of Christian civilization, or morals, or apologies, but the Gospel has been preached in such a way as to reach the heart."

#### POINTS FOR THE PRESIDENT.

As it is a matter of historical facts, you might arrange to have the above sketch read before the League. Then have three persons appointed in advance as usual for the following:

1. What encouragements in our Japan work during this period?

2. What discouragements in the same?

3. What may we learn from this period as to the best way of taking encouragements and bearing discouragements in Christian work?

Let the hymns you select refer to Christian toil and achievement.