

Imputed righteousness

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Preacher: Rev Hugh M.Ferrier

[0 : 00] 5 verse 6 Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.

We are going through these Beatitudes and we come now to the fourth. And this is another mark of the Christian, his yearning after righteousness.

This is what the old Scottish commentator David Dixon says. He says, Christians long to be more Christ-like, to have their sinful nature changed, to be made holy and righteous by the Spirit of God. And this is precisely the desire of every Christian man, to be righteous. And Jesus says, blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness.

Blessed, superlatively happy, says Jesus, is that man or that woman who has the yearning, the strong desire to be righteous.

[1 : 20] Because, says Jesus, that man will be satisfied. He will be filled. But we ask ourselves this question, what did Jesus mean by righteousness?

We can do no better than turn to John Stott, the modern biblical commentator, who says this, that righteousness in the Bible has at least three aspects.

Legal, moral and social. Or, as John Trapp, the Puritan, puts it, a Christian wants imputed righteousness.

He also wants imparted righteousness. And we add this, he also longs for social righteousness. And these are the three things that we want to look at just for a little while together this morning. Blessed, said Jesus, is the man who yearns for imputed righteousness, who longs for imparted righteousness, and who desires social righteousness, because that man will be satisfied.

[2 : 38] Imputed righteousness. What does it mean? Well, they used to spell the word righteousness in the old days like this.

They said that it was right-wiseness. That was righteousness. Right-wiseness.

In fact, the Greek word is dikaiosone. And if you were to examine that word in its Greek context, you would discover that it really brings out this, the character, or the quality, of being just, and of being right.

And that is what a Christian wants, isn't it? He wants to be right in his standing with God. He wants to be just in his standing with God.

But then we know this, that when we look back upon our past life of sin and of shame, we know how impossible then it is to be in a right standing with God.

[3 : 53] To be just with God. And so you see, we've got to look beyond ourselves, and this is what we mean by imputed righteousness. We've got to look beyond ourselves to God, who only himself can constitute us and make us righteous.

I can't make myself righteous before God. I can't turn myself into a just man and say to God, here I am, a just man.

It's quite impossible for me to do that. As I've already said, my past life of sin and shame prevents me from doing that.

I can't go over, back my past life and wipe it all out. It's impossible. I just can't do it. What's done, as Shakespeare says, is done.

It can't be undone. And so then, how can I make myself just before God? How can I make myself into a righteous man?

[5 : 00] I can't do it. And so I have to turn to God. And when we speak about imputed righteousness, this word imputation is a theological word which means to attribute vicariously.

And this is precisely what God does. He attributes vicariously to a sinful man or to a sinful woman a righteousness which they don't have and which they could never procure for themselves.

And what is that righteousness that God attributes to them? Well, it's the righteousness of his own son. Here is his own son who is perfect, who is just.

And God takes this righteousness of perfection, of justice, and he attributes it to the sinner and he says, there, that is yours. I give it to you vicariously.

You have no right to it. You cannot enter into any negotiation with me for it. But, says God, I give it to you.

[6 : 23] Willingly, lovingly, wholeheartedly, I give it to you. And this is why Christ, you see, died.

This is why he came into the world to procure, to purchase this righteousness for us. and the first thing that Christ had to do, perhaps I shouldn't put it by saying it's the first thing, but it's the main thing that he had to do.

And that was this, he had to put away our sin. sin. And to put away our sin, he had to do what they speak of in the legal profession, he had to experience or suffer condign punishment.

And so the Lord Jesus came down into this world to take our place and to suffer condign punishment for us.

Every sin that we had committed, every sin that you commit, every sin that I commit, Jesus had to take that if we are his people and he had to take it onto himself and suffer for that sin.

[7 : 42] And as Paul tells us in due time, Christ died for the ungodly. He died for the ungodly.

He didn't die for himself. He didn't die for any other reason. He didn't die because he had to die at the hands of evil men.

He died because he laid down his life. He laid it down for the ungodly. And so, as Paul says, being justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.

And here we are brought to this point which we have to notice and that is that here is the blood of Jesus Christ which was shed on Calvary's cross.

And this blood of Jesus Christ has got cleansing efficacy. And because it has got cleansing efficacy, it cleanses away sin.

[9 : 01] Every sin. All kinds of sin. The blood of Jesus Christ, God's son, cleanses from all sin.

Isn't that a wonderful thing to know? I don't care what it is your sin this morning. What type of sin it is.

How peculiar to you that sin may be. How grievous or how heinous that sin may be. And you may come and discuss it with me and say to me, you know, this sin of mine that I committed so many years back, you don't understand it, but you know, it's a terrible sin I did.

How could God possibly take that sin of mine out of the way? I don't see any forgiveness, you say to me, for that sort of sin.

I don't care what the sin is. I know this, that the blood of Christ has got the efficacy it's got the efficacy to cleanse away all sin.

[10 : 20] And you see, once your sin has been cleansed, once your sin has been put out of the way, it means that you now are able, it's possible for you, to be put in a right standing with God.

And this is your righteousness. you might have said, how can I possibly be made righteous in the sight of God, a man who has been all his days an unrighteous man?

A sinful man. How is it possible? When your sin is dealt with, when your sin is put out of the way, that is when God is able to say to you now, you're in a right standing with me.

Now you are justified. Now legally, in a forensic sense, before me, you are placed in a right relationship.

But it's not only that Christ Jesus has cleansed away sin, and made it possible for us to be right with God, but he has done something more than that.

[11 : 39] He has fulfilled the law that we fail to do. We sang together at the opening of this service, the words from Psalm 42, as the heart pants after the water brooks, so pants my soul after thee.

And if we were to go back to Psalm 40, we would discover there how the psalmist says, and it's really Christ who is able to say this, I delight to do thy will, O my God, yea, thy laws within my heart. Ah, yes, Christ Jesus came down here to do the will of God. Christ Jesus is the only one who pants after God as the heart pants after the water brooks.

And this is how it ought to have been with God's ideal man. The ideal man of God is the man who longs after God, whose heart pants after God, who wants to do the will of God.

But this is precisely what we've never done. We've never panted after God. We've never wanted to do the will of God. But here is Christ and he did want to do the will of God.

[13:10] And he did pant after God. And you remember how at the commencement of our Lord's ministry, Jesus came to the waters of Jordan where the famous Baptist stood.

John the Baptist calling upon men and women of his day to repent because the kingdom of God was at hand. And as all these people came to him for baptism, suddenly Christ appeared among them.

baptism. And what is baptism? It is a cleansing ceremony, a washing ceremony.

It symbolizes the washing of regeneration. regeneration. But then, here is Jesus. He didn't need to be washed.

He didn't need to be cleansed. He didn't need to pass through this process, this ceremony of the washing of regeneration because he was sinless.

[14:24] He was God's son. Which of you convinces me of sin? said Jesus. And when the Baptist recognized the Savior and when he withdrew from Jesus and said, No, this is not for you, Jesus said, Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness.

If my people says Jesus are going to be saved, I must take their place. I must suffer in their room. I must place myself under God's law for them. I must fulfill that law in every jot, in every tittle. and so he submitted to the ordinance of baptism.

And in Christ God sees me baptized in him. And in Christ God sees me having fulfilled every jot and tittle of the law in him.

and as I think of all these precepts of the law which I have broken, thank God for Christ and that when God sees me in Christ he sees me as having fulfilled every precept of that law in my Lord and in my Saviour and that's my righteousness.

[16:12] righteousness. And that is what we mean by imputed righteousness. That God takes this righteousness of his son and he accredits it to us.

And so he says now I see you righteous. I see you complete. I see you as having fulfilled my law in my son.

Isn't that sufficient for us? As the Shorter Catechism puts it justification is an act of God's free grace wherein he pardoneth all our sins and accepteth us as righteous in his sight only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us and received by faith alone.

Ah but there have you received it by faith and that alone? Have you received this righteousness? Have you taken it as yours? Are you saying today thank God for the righteousness of Christ? And that's what I'm standing on for my salvation?

[17:42] Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness. Is that your yearning? Ah you'll be satisfied.

But then it's also isn't it imparted righteousness or moral righteousness. And if we look at these beatitudes we will see here in the teaching of Jesus this progression.

He began first of all by saying blessed are the poor in spirit. Oh says Jesus happy is that man who has come to a realization of his spiritual bankruptcy.

he'll get the kingdom. And then moving on from spiritual bankruptcy Jesus goes on to say blessed are they that mourn.

Because that's what you do after you realize your spiritual bankruptcy. You begin to mourn. You grieve over the reason that has caused your spiritual bankruptcy.

[18:54] And what is the reason? the reason is your sin. And you grieve over it. Ah well says Jesus. Blessed are they that mourn. For they shall be comforted.

And after you've been mourning like that you begin to yearn. You begin to long for meekness.

Because once you've realized your spiritual bankruptcy and the cause of your spiritual bankruptcy which is your sin.

Then you realize your meekness. And as we saw last sabbath morning what is your meekness? Well your meekness is your humility. And you can only be a self-effacing man when you realize your spiritual bankruptcy and your reason for it, your sin.

And so you're a self-effacing man. You're a humble man. And now says Jesus after that you're a man who yearns. you're a man who longs for righteousness.

And you will be satisfied says Jesus. You see we've been speaking about imputed righteousness that is justification by faith.

[20:13] But justification is always followed by sanctification. Christian. And a Christian is never just satisfied with being made legally righteous before God.

A Christian man is never satisfied just by receiving from God imputed righteousness. a Christian is a man who wants more than that.

And what does he want? Well he wants to see his life develop God works. He wants to see an improvement in his life.

he wants to see his life being sanctified being made holy. He wants to see a maturity developing in him or Christian maturity developing so that he becomes spiritually matured.

And because of that there is always a discontentment in the heart of the Christian. He's never content with the way he is.

[21 : 28] Never. You won't find any real Christian who is saying today ah well here I am I've arrived. No no no you've not arrived.

There's a long way to go. You've only started and now there must be this development in your life and you are longing for righteousness.

longing for development longing for holiness. And so you're discontented with your ungodlike behavior.

Ah Christian friend isn't that what gets you. Your ungodlike behavior. behavior. Yes you may go on in ungodlike behavior for some time and then there comes a day when you stop and say this is no use.

This is not Christianity the way I'm behaving. This is not what God intends me to be like. And then there is this surge that develops within you.

[22 : 42] Oh to be righteous. to be a real Christian. Ah you're well aware enough of the temptations in the world in which you find yourself.

There in that world the devil wields his power. And there is always the temptation and isn't this true and I speak to you who are Christians here today. Isn't there sometimes the temptation to give up your Christian commitment?

It's too restrictive. This is what the children of Israel wanted to do. They wanted to go back to the flesh pots of Egypt.

And we are all tending, we all have that tendency to go back, to go back to the flesh pots. Or like Demas, to forsake the truths of the gospel in the interest of this present world.

to give up, to enjoy life minus God, to take the path of least resistance, to follow our sinful inclinations.

[23 : 59] Well, we may do that, but there comes a time when we've said enough is enough, this is no use. this is not Christianity.

And maybe it is we have our moments of denial. When we have to come to terms with our denials, like Peter, and weep our bitter tears, or sometimes we feel like the Apostle Paul and we discover that the law of sin in our members is bringing us into captivity.

The law in our members is bringing us into captivity to the law of sin, which is in our members. And in our frustration, like the Apostle, we cry out, O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death.

What am I trying to say, my friend? I'm trying to say this. that as well as a Christian wanting to be justified legally before God through Christ, he also wants something more.

He wants to be sanctified through Christ and made into a better man, into a better woman, into a God-like man, into a God-like woman.

[25 : 32] and like the Apostle, the Christian reaches forth to those things that are before and presses toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

And so today, if you're like that, Jesus says to you, blessed are they which hunger and thirst after righteousness.

are you hungry? Are you thirsting? After this righteousness, you will be satisfied. Another thing that is social righteousness.

righteousness, what does the Christian want to see as well as seeing himself develop in a God-ward direction? He wants to see society becoming God-like.

God-like. And that is why the Christian is outraged by the injustices that he sees in the world of today.

[26 : 45] Why the Christian must be and cannot but be outraged outraged because of the unfair inequality that goes on.

And he must feel outraged at man's inhumanity to man. And like the Old Testament prophets, the Christian protests.

Do you remember Jesus' prayer? That famous prayer that he taught his disciple? And among the requests?

Jesus said we are to pray like this. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven. My Christian friend, is that what you are praying for?

Are you praying for a better society? This is Jesus' command to you. Pray, thy kingdom come, God's kingdom to come, and God's will to be done on earth as it is done in heaven.

[27 : 56] As Campbell Morgan, and it's not all was that we believe what Campbell Morgan has to say, but as he says, the Christian has a passion for setting up the kingdom of God among men.

Or as Martin Luther puts it, if you cannot make the world completely pious, then do what you can. And so the Christian longs for a righteous society. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness.

just a word more. What is their reward? They shall be filled.

In other words, says Jesus, those who hunger and thirst like this, their heart's desire will be realized. Spurgeon foots it, they look forward, Christians, with joyful confidence to a heaven of holiness with which they shall be satisfied eternally.

[29 : 19] Now, we read together in Psalm 17. Do you remember what we read together in Psalm 17? And in that Psalm, here is the psalmist and he is speaking about all the enemies of God who surround him.

And he prays like this to God, oh, he prays keep me as the apple of your eye, hide me under the shadow of your wings.

And then he goes on to say this, no matter he says how I may be surrounded by enemies who are trying to destroy me and destroy my soul. Yet he says at the end of that psalm, I will behold thy face in righteousness.

I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness. You see, he is looking beyond space, beyond time, to the eternal world.

And in that eternal world, he sees that he is going to be satisfied. When he wakes up in that eternal heaven of God, he says, I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness.

[30 : 41] Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, they shall be satisfied. Then you remember how the apostle John puts it, Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, we shall see him as he is.

Ah, my friend, in heaven, that's when we will realize the righteousness that we've been yearning for. That is when our Adamic nature controls us so often, this Adamic nature which has a down drag even in the life of the Christian and takes him down, ah, that Adamic nature will be eradicated and we shall be righteous.

Ah, but there is something more to, you know, the earth that we are living on just now, it's going to pass away. And when it does eventually pass away, as the Bible tells us, there will come into being a new heaven and a new earth, and in that new heaven and new earth dwelleth righteousness, happiness.

What does it mean? It means perfect harmony in the new world order that God is going to introduce.

peace. You see, the harmony of God in this present world has been disrupted by sin. And because the harmony has been disrupted by sin, we have poverty, we have pain, we have illness, we have distress, we have death.

[32 : 49] death. But in the new heaven and new earth, it will be different. The harmony will be restored.

That's God's whole purpose in salvation. This is the crux of God's great plan, this is the ultimate rather, the climax in God's great plan to bring about a new heaven and a new earth.

where harmony is restored. And there shall in no wise enter into it, as it tells us in the book of Revelation, anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination or maketh a lie, but they that are written in the Lamb's book of life.

The new world that God is preparing is for new people, new men, new women, and this is what salvation is about.

We become new creatures in Christ Jesus. We become God's new society, and God is fitting us, God is preparing us for that new world order where there will be perfect harmony.

[34 : 08] is that your desire? Do you long for imputed righteousness to be made right before God?

Do you long for imparted righteousness to be developed into a perfect man in Christ? Do you long for a new social order where there will be perfect harmony and righteousness in it?

Well, says Jesus, blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, they shall be filled.

You'll be satisfied. You'll get it if your trust is in Christ. Christ, and I say to you, put it in Christ. Let us pray.

O Lord, our God, may this mark of the Christian life adorn us. May, O Lord, men and women see that we are among those who hunger and who thirst after righteousness.

[35 : 32] And blessed be thy name, thou hast promised that we shall be satisfied. In this imperfect world, in these imperfect bodies, we are longing for the completion of redemption and we thank thee, O God, that it will be realized in the new world order.

Be with us now forgive our sins for Christ's sake. Amen.