

THE CHRISTIAN RACE

AND OTHER SERMONS

BY

THE RIGHT REVEREND J. C. RYLE, D.D.,

Lord Bishop of Liverpool

LONDON HODDER AND STOUGHTON
PATERNOSTER ROW

MCM

PREFATORY NOTE

ALTHOUGH the Bishop of Liverpool has published many books—Commentaries, Biographies, and Theological Dissertations—he has never published a volume of sermons.

When his many friends heard that he was about to resign the See of Liverpool, they urged him to publish a volume of his sermons as a “memorial” of his *sixty years*’ ministry. The Bishop kindly consented to do so, and invited me to make a selection from his MSS. and to prepare the sermons for the press. I need hardly say that I willingly undertook the task as a “labour of love” for my aged Bishop. The selection I have made for publication sets forth the great doctrines of our Faith—Sin, Redemption, Regeneration, and Sanctification. I have also added sermons which call attention to the *Practical* side of Christianity, and which especially emphasise the “DUTIES” of the Christian life. The closing sermons proclaim the coming of our Lord; the Reward of His Saints; and the Rest of Heaven.

Friends, who knew of the preparation of these sermons for the press, have been praying that the “message of God” which they contain may bring blessing to many thousands. In the sure and certain hope that His Word will not return unto Him void I have prepared this volume of sermons by the first Bishop of Liverpool—and in this hope it is sent forth.

T. J. MADDEN,

Archdeacon of Warrington,

LIVERPOOL, *March 1st, 1900.*

The Bishopric of Liverpool was declared vacant on March 3rd, 1900. [Bishop Ryle died 10th June 1900. (ET editor)]

VII

THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS

“This is His name whereby He shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.”—JER. xxiii. 6.

THE time is short. It is but a little while, and the Lord Jesus shall come in His glory. The judgment shall be set and the books shall be opened. “Before Him shall be gathered all nations,” “that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.” The inmost secrets of all hearts shall be revealed; “and the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every freeman,” will stand together on a level at the bar, and will see each other face to face, and one by one will have to give account of themselves to God before the whole world. Thus it is written, and therefore it is true and sure to come to pass.

And what does each of you intend to say in that hour? What is the defence you are prepared to set up? What is the answer you propose to give? What is the cause you mean to show why sentence should not be pronounced against you?

Verily, beloved, I do fear that some amongst you do not know. You have not thought about it yet—you have resolved to think about it some day soon; or you are not quite clear about it at present; or you have made out some ingenious, plausible scheme which will not stand the touchstone of the Bible. Oh, what a fearful case is yours! Life is indeed uncertain; the fairest or the strongest here may perchance be taken next—you cannot make an agreement with death—and yet you cannot tell us what you are resting upon for comfort. You do not know how soon the last trumpet may sound, and yet you are uncertain as to the ground of your hope. Surely these things ought not so to be.

Did any of you ever happen to visit a court of justice just before the prisoners are tried? Have you not remarked how anxiously each one is consulting with his friends and his lawyers as to the defence he shall make—how earnest they are, how careful to leave no stone unturned that may help to prove their innocence? And yet the greater part of them are liable to no more than a few months’ imprisonment, or a few years’ transportation; perhaps they may get off altogether by a quibble of the law, or through want of evidence. See now how differently you act in the matter of your souls. In the great day there will be no want of witnesses; your thoughts and words and actions will appear written in the book one after another. Your Judge is a searcher of hearts. And yet, in spite of all these facts, too many of you sleep

on as if the Bible were not true; too many of you know not how or why you are to escape God's wrath and condemnation.

Hearken then, if you love life, while I endeavour to give you some instruction from the words of my text. The great question to be made known is, "How shall man be just with God? wherewithal can I come before the Lord?" and I wish this morning, if the Lord will, to make you understand: I. That you must have *some* righteousness, or you will not be saved. II. That you have no righteousness of your own of any sort, and therefore by yourself you cannot be saved. III. That the Lord Himself must be your Righteousness, and so you shall be saved. May God the Holy Ghost, who can convert the most aged, the most careless, the most sinful (I speak that which I do know myself), accompany the words I am about to speak, and make them seasonable to all your souls!

I. First, then, I am to show you you must have *some* righteousness. The Bible says plainly, "The wrath of God is revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." "The unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God." "Let me die the death of the righteous," says Balaam, "and let my last end be like his." "The Lord loveth the righteous, but the way of the wicked He turneth upside down." "The righteous hath hope in His death." "Thy people," says Isaiah to his God, "shall be all righteous." "The cursed shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal." "Have on the breastplate of righteousness," says Paul to the Ephesians. And how shall anyone presume to say that he can enter into heaven without it!

But I wish here to expose the folly of all those who talk in a loose and general way about God's mercy. Men will often say, when urged to think about their salvation, "Indeed I know I am not what I should be; I have broken God's law very often, but He is very merciful, and I hope I shall be forgiven." Truly, I do believe that the religion of many goes no further than this. This is the only point they can lay hold of; this is the only rock on which they build: press them for a reason of their hope, and there is no answer; ask them to explain the ground of their confidence, and they cannot do it. "God is merciful" is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last, of all their Christianity. Now, I am bold to say, beloved, this is an immense delusion; a refuge of lies that will not stand being compared with Scripture, and, more than this, it will not last one instant in the fire of trial and affliction.

Have you not ever heard that God is a God of perfect holiness—holy in His character, holy in His laws, holy in His dwelling-place? "Speak unto the children of Israel," says the Book of Leviticus, and say unto them, "Ye shall be holy; for I the Lord your God am holy." "He is a holy God," says Joshua; "He is a jealous God; He will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins."

“Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evils, and canst not look on iniquity,” says Habakkuk. “Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.” And the book of Revelation, speaking of heaven, says, “There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth.” “It shall be called the way of holiness,” says Isaiah; “the unclean shall not pass over it.” And will you tell us, in the face of all these texts, that man, corrupt, impure, defiled—as the best of us most surely is—shall pass the fiery judgment of our God and enter into the heavenly Jerusalem by simply trusting in the mercy of his Maker, without one single rag to cover his iniquities and hide his natural uncleanness. It cannot be: God’s mercy and God’s holiness must needs be reconciled, and you have not done this yet.

And have you never heard that God is a God of perfect justice, whose laws may not be broken without punishment, whose commandments must be fulfilled on pain of death? “All His ways are judgment,” says the book of Deuteronomy; “a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is He.” “Justice and judgment are the habitation of Thy throne,” says David. “The just Lord is in the midst,” says Zephaniah; “He will not do iniquity: every morning doth He bring His judgment to light; He faileth not.” “Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets,” said Jesus: “I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled.” I cannot find that these verses have ever been declared useless; I cannot discover any place which says the law is now let down, and need not be fulfilled; and how, then, can I teach you that it is enough to look to God’s mercy? I read of only two ways in the Bible: One is, to do the whole law yourself; the other is, to do it by another. Show me, if you can, one single text which teaches that a man may be saved without the claims of the law having been satisfied. An earthly prince, indeed, may forgive and pass over men’s transgressions; but God never changes. “Hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?” I tell you, then, God’s mercy and God’s justice must be reconciled; and this you have not done yet.

You must have something to appear in at the marriage supper of the Lamb. You would not say a murderer should be acquitted, because he said he was sorry and hoped to be forgiven; you must make some amends to justice and to holiness; you cannot shut your eyes against the plain declarations of the Bible. You must have some good reason to give, why you should not be judged for all your sins and backslidings; you must show some cause why the punishment threatened for breaking God’s law is not to fall upon you; there must be satisfaction for your sins, or you will perish everlastingly.

You tell us fairly you are not what you should be, but you say that God is merciful. I answer you this will not stand before the Bible: the wages of sin

is death, he that offendeth in one point is guilty of all. God loves you, but He will have His demands paid in full: your debt must be discharged by yourself or by someone else; choose which you please, but one thing at least is certain—payment must be made. God is indeed all love: He willeth not the death of any sinner; but, however small your iniquities may be, they cannot possibly be put away until the claims of His law have been satisfied to the uttermost farthing. By some means, then, you must have righteousness, or else it is clear you cannot be saved.

II. I promised in the second place to show you that we have *no* righteousness of our own, and therefore by ourselves we cannot be saved. I trust I need not dwell upon this point long, and therefore I shall only say a few words to enforce it on your notice.

Look at the law of God, and measure its requirements. Does it not ask of every man a perfect, unsinning obedience from first to last, in thought and word and deed, without one single failure in the slightest jot or tittle? And where is the son or daughter of Adam who can say, “All this I have performed”? Who is not conscious of a daily falling short in everything he does? I do not speak so much of thieves and liars and adulterers and drunkards and the like, for these are walking towards their own place, leaning on Satan’s arm. I speak rather of those who do not live in gross vices; I would even take the case of the best Christian among ourselves, and ask him if he can name a single day on which he has not sinned in many things. Oh, how much he would tell you of wandering in his prayers, of defilement in his thoughts, of coldness toward God, of want of love, of pride, of evil tempers, of vanity, of worldly-mindedness!—and all, remember, in the heart of one of those few who are travelling in the narrow way which leadeth unto life. And how shall we then believe, though all the world persuade us to the contrary, that man can ever purchase his acceptance in the sight of God? So true are the words of that clear-sighted witness the apostle Paul, “By the deeds of the law shall no flesh living be justified.”

But here I take occasion to answer the reasoning of those Pharisees, who would have men believe they can assist in the work of salvation by their own performances. They cannot submit to the idea that we are naturally so helpless, and so they go about to establish their own righteousness, and this in a variety of ways.

Some tell us that repentance and amendment will enable us to stand in the great day, but the Bible does not warrant it. No doubt, without them none of you will enter into the kingdom of heaven; but they cannot put away your sins nor endure the severity of God’s judgment; they cannot open that strait gate which must be passed before you get into the narrow way, although they may lead you up to it; they cannot blot out one single page of

that black book in which your iniquities are written. John Baptist preached repentance, but he never told his hearers it would save them.

Some say they put their trust in well-spent lives: they never did anybody any harm; they have always done their best, and so they hope they shall be accounted righteous. Beloved, this is miserable trifling. Let them tell us of a single day in which they have not broken that spiritual law laid down in the Sermon on the Mount. What! never thought an unkind thought? never looked an unchaste look? never said an uncharitable thing? never coveted? Oh, that tenth commandment: how utterly it seems neglected!—and yet it goes along with murder and adultery. Or let them tell us of a single hour in which they have not left undone something it was in their power to do; and this must be accounted for. They cannot do it; they are silent; and yet these things are written plainly in the Bible. Is it not clear, then, that they do not read the Scriptures, or neglect their precepts if they do, and so, at any rate, they are not doing their best?

Some tell us that they hope sincerity will carry them safe through their trial. They may not perhaps have quite clear views, but still they have always meant well, and so they hope to be accepted. I cannot find there is any place for them in heaven. I read in the book of Kings that the priests of Baal called on their God for half a day, and cut themselves after their manner with knives, until the blood gushed out upon them. That was sincerity at any rate, and yet, a few hours after, Elijah commanded them to be put to death as soul-destroying idolaters. I read that Paul himself, before conversion, was zealous toward God: he thought within himself he ought to do many things contrary to Jesus of Nazareth, and shut up many of the saints in prison, and was exceedingly mad against them. Here was sincerity and earnestness; and yet we find him saying, when his eyes were opened: “I was a blasphemer and a persecutor, and injurious. . . I am the least of the apostles, the chief of sinners . . . I am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the Church of God.” And so it seems a man may be in earnest, and yet going towards the place of torment.

Lastly, some tell us that they go through all the forms and ordinances of religion, and build their claim to righteousness on that. “Hath not God commanded us,” they say, “to honour his word, His house, His ministers, His sacraments?” All this we do, and surely He will accept us. I cannot find it written. But I do remember that the Jews had ceremonies and observances in abundance; and I have found many passages which seem to show that men may pay attention to these things, and yet be abominable in the sight of God. Hear the judgment of Samuel: “Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry.” Listen

to the voice of Isaiah: "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks or of lambs or he-goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts, my soul hateth; they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. And when ye spread forth your hands I will hide mine eyes: yea, when ye make many prayers I will not hear: your hands are full of blood. Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment." "I spake not to your fathers," says the Lord by Jeremiah, "concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices: but this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people: and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well with you."

I trust it will not seem to you unprofitable to have taken up so much time in exposing these delusions. In one way it is very useful. They all show that conscience tells every man he must have something wherewith to appear before God. Now, I wish to show you plainly that we have nothing of our own; the doctrine may seem hard and disagreeable, and yet there are few who do not allow it at one important period in their lives, if they never did before. I mean the hour of death. Mark then how anxious almost every one becomes, whom God permits to keep possession of his senses. The judgment day appears then in its true light. Man feels naked and empty. He knows he is about to be asked that awful question, "What hast thou to say, why thou shouldst not perish for this long list of sins?" and if he has not furnished himself with the only answer that can be given, the view before his eyes cannot possibly look anything else than dreary, black, and hopeless. Ask those who have been brought to death's door by sickness, whether this be not true, and they will tell you. In short, both Scripture and your own experience prove most fully that nothing we can do will stand God's examination; repentance, works and services, all necessary and useful in themselves, are so tainted, so infected and imperfect, that they cannot justify us. We have no righteousness of our own, and therefore by ourselves we cannot be saved. "We are all as an unclean thing," says Isaiah, "and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away."

III. "But what are we to do?" perhaps you will ask. "You seem to have shut us up without hope. You told us first that we must have some righteousness, and now you have told us further that we have not any of our own. What are we to do? Which way are we to turn? What would you have us

say? To whom are we to look?" Praised be God, beloved, I am not obliged to leave you here. I will not lead you into the wilderness and terrify you, and then point out no path towards the heavenly Canaan. I promised in the third place to tell you how God can be a just God and yet show mercy and justify the most ungodly: and this is all contained in the words of my text—"The Lord" must be "our RIGHTEOUSNESS."

I show you here a mystery of wisdom and of love. The Lord Jesus Christ has done what we ought to have done, and suffered what we ought to have suffered; He has taken our place and become our substitute both in life and death, and all for the sake of miserable, corrupt, ungrateful beings like ourselves. Oh, is not His name then rightly called, "The Lord our Righteousness"?

Beloved, I ought to dwell upon this point. It is so highly important to have a clear view of it, and Satan does so much to prevent your seeing it distinctly, that I must try to unfold it before your eyes, that all of you may be able to understand what a minister means when he urges you to trust in the Lord Jesus as your righteousness.

Consider now: there were two things to be done before guilty man could be saved. The law was to be fulfilled, for we had all come short of it; justice was to be satisfied, for we had all deserved punishment. And how was this effected? Hearken! The Lord Jesus Christ, pitying our lost estate, covenanted and engaged to become our surety and substitute; and when the fulness of time was come, He left the bosom of His Father and took upon Him the form of a servant here on earth, being born of the Virgin Mary.

In that form, by a sinless obedience to the whole law, He wrought out and brought in a perfect and everlasting righteousness, and this He is both willing and ready to bestow on all who will put their trust in Him. And more than this: to complete the mighty work He consented to offer up Himself in our place as a victim to the wrath of God, to suffer instead of us, to bear that punishment which we had deserved,—and this He did by dying on the cross. It was there He satisfied the claims of justice. It was there He paid the heavy debt written against our names. It was there that God the Father laid upon Him the iniquity of us all, and made His soul a sacrifice for sin. It was there that He redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us. Here, then, you see the plan of salvation which is offered to all the world. The believing sinner's guilt is taken away and laid upon Christ, for He has carried our transgressions, and all the merit of Christ's life and death, and all the value of His sufferings, are then made over to the sinner.

But see how great and glorious is this exchange between Jesus and our souls: the Father sees us now as members of His dear Son, in whom He is well pleased; He deals with us as if we had never sinned, as if we had ourselves fulfilled all righteousness; He looks on us as one with Christ, and

acknowledges us as dear children and heirs of eternal glory. Do I say more than Scripture warrants? I think not. Listen to St. Paul: “God hath made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” Are not these words strong? But so it is. “Christ was accounted as a sinner, and therefore punished for us: we are accounted as righteous, and therefore glorified in Him. He was accounted as a sinner, and therefore He was condemned; we are accounted as righteous in Him, and therefore justified.”¹ God’s law has been satisfied, and now we may be saved. Sin has been punished, and now sinners may go free. God has shown Himself a just God, and yet He can be the Saviour of guilty men.

Beloved, are not these things wonderful? Are not these glad tidings to the labouring and heavy laden? The Lord Himself is our RIGHTEOUSNESS. Who is there among you that is groaning under the burden of sin, trembling under a sense of innumerable transgressions? Fear not, but come to Jesus; He has paid your debt in full; believe, and you shall be free. Who is there among you that is tried with manifold temptations—slipping, stumbling, walking in darkness and seeing no light, and often ready to say with David, “I shall one day perish”? Fear not, but look to Jesus; He has secured your entrance into heaven; He has fought and won the battle for you. The Lord is our righteousness. This shall be our defence and plea, when earth and its works are burned up, and the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and the Chief Shepherd shall appear to judge the sons of men. Who shall lay anything *then* to the charge of those who have laid hold on Christ? Shall anyone presume to say they have not done everything required? The Lord, we will answer, is our righteousness; He is our substitute; we have done nothing, but He hath done everything; He is our all in all. And who is he that can condemn us? shall death or hell or Satan lay a finger on us, and dare to say that justice has not been satisfied? The Lord, we will answer, is our righteousness; we have indeed sinned, but Christ hath suffered; we have deserved wrath, but Jesus hath died and shed His blood to make atonement in our stead. “Blessed,” says holy David, “is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.” “I will greatly rejoice in the Lord,” says Isaiah; “my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels.”

Now, I have preached to very little purpose, beloved, if you do not this very morning ask yourselves, “Is the Lord my righteousness, or is He not?” Remember this mighty gift is offered unto all, but it is only placed upon them that believe. “Faith is the only hand which putteth on Christ to justifi-

¹ Beveridge.

cation. Christ is the only garment which can cover your defiled nature, and present you blameless in the sight of God. Without this faith it is clear you have neither part nor portion in this righteousness.”² I know not that I can put into your heads a more important inquiry; and yet, I sadly fear too many of you will not think I am in earnest, or else you will suppose the question may be useful to your neighbours, but not so very necessary for yourself.

Indeed, I am persuaded there are many persons in every congregation who flatter themselves they are in a kind of middle path. They do not, to be sure, pretend they are in the number of the very good people, but they would be very sorry to be thought ungodly. They have a great respect for religion, and some time or other they intend to take it up more seriously—perhaps when they are married and have got a home of their own (so the young say), or when they have not so many cares or so much trouble about their families and their relations, or when they get on in years (so the middle-aged say), or by-and-by, or when they become ill (so the old and grey-headed say). But in the meantime, they live on and move forward in a comfortable state of mind, take all the promises of God and all the smooth parts of a sermon to themselves, and leave the addresses to the unconverted and the careless for others.

But, once for all, I say to such persons, if there are any such here, your middle path seems right in your own eyes; but I have searched the Scriptures, and I cannot find it. I cannot meet with more than two descriptions of character: I read of a broad way, and I read of a narrow way; I read of converted men, and unconverted men; I read of heaven, and I read of hell; I read of those that are in Christ, and I read of those that are not in Christ; but nowhere can I find that road in which you put your trust,—and I do not hesitate to say you will find it in the end to be nothing better than a piece of that broad way that leadeth to destruction. Think not I wish to hurt your feelings; but I do wish to awaken you, to convince you of the folly of this sleepy, half-and-half religion, and to show you the necessity of being decided and in earnest on the side of Christ, if you would not be lost for ever.

I say this much by way of warning, and I now repeat to every man, woman and child here present, the plain question: “Is the Lord your righteousness, or is He not? “I know that there are here, two parties. One would reply, if honest, “I fear He is not”; and the other would answer, “I trust He is.” I purpose, therefore, to conclude this sermon by a few words to each of these two classes.

First, then, I shall offer some counsel to those among you who are prepared to say: “The Lord Jesus is, we trust, our righteousness.” I say then, and I think it safe to do so, You have made a good profession; but I would

² Hooker.

have you daily search and see that you are not deceiving yourselves. See that your tongue does not lay claim to more than your heart has received and knows of; see that your life and lips are thoroughly agreed. Show all the world that He in whom you trust is your example no less than your righteousness, and while you wait for His second appearing endeavour daily to become more like Him. Study to be holy, even as He who has called you and washed you in His own blood is holy. Let not the righteousness of the Lord be evil-spoken of through you; let not Jesus be wounded in the house of His friends. Think of His love; let that constrain you to obedience—having much forgiven, love much. Beware that you give the Lord’s enemies no occasion to blaspheme. They are watching you much; you cannot be hid. Be always saying to yourself, “What shall I do, and how shall I behave, to show my gratitude to Him who hath carried my sins and given me His righteousness?” But know ye for a certainty, if the world says “What do these persons more than others?” if those who live with you cannot take knowledge of you that you are much with Jesus; if you have no fruit to show of any sort; if you are not habitually and daily sober, just, holy, temperate, humble, meek, loving, watchful, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord, hungering and thirsting after righteousness; if you have none of these things, you are little better than sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal, you are ruining your own soul, and in the day of Judgment you will plead in vain the name of Jesus. The Lord will say, “I know you not; you never really came to me; I cannot see my seal upon your forehead, of which my servant Paul spake—‘Let everyone that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.’” “There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

It only remains now to speak to all among you who cannot say “The Lord is our righteousness.” Indeed, beloved, I am distressed for your condition. I cannot understand, I never can, what arguments you use to quench the striving of God’s Spirit, to stop the prickings of your own conscience. In truth, I do suspect you never argue, you never reason; you shut your eyes and try to forget your own perishing souls. But know ye not that verse of the Bible which declares “the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the people that forget God,”—not ridicule, or insult, but simply all who forget. And know ye not the verse “How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?” It does not say abuse, or disbelieve, or deny, but simply “neglect,” and this, I fear, is a charge you cannot turn aside. Oh, think of death; it may be near at hand. Your careless indifference will alter then, but without Christ you will find a sting in that hour which no power of your own will ever remove. Think of eternity in hell: no merry companions, no comfortable gossiping, no noisy revelling at night, nothing but unchanging misery, unceasing torment, and unutterable woe. Think of thy judgment: your name will be called in turn, and you will stand in the sight of assembled millions—ministers,

father, mother, wife, children, relations, all will see you—you will have to give account of your actions, and you know you will be condemned. But who will then pass sentence? Not an angel, not even God the Father; but the Lord Himself (Oh! cutting and heartrending thought)—the Lord Jesus, whose blood and righteousness you now refuse, will pronounce your condemnation.

These things perhaps sound terrible; perhaps they may be treated with ridicule; but the day is at hand which will bring everyone to their senses, and make everybody sober, and you will then find that they are true. Knowing, therefore, the terrors of the Lord, let me persuade you to close with the gracious invitation of your Saviour, and never rest until you can say from your hearts, “The Lord is my righteousness.”

I know not anything that should prevent your salvation if you are willing and obedient. I cannot see in what respect your happiness on earth would be diminished. You are discontented with yourself, and I offer in the name of Christ, joy, pardon, and peace; you are poor, and I offer unsearchable riches; you are naked, and I offer you a spotless robe in which you shall sit down at the marriage supper of the Lamb, and none shall cast you out.

But mark, I will not promise you anything beyond today. “Now is the accepted time.” Thus far I can go, but one step further I cannot proceed upon sure ground. If you reject the counsel of God now, I cannot promise even the youngest of you another opportunity. Before tomorrow your last home may be fixed unalterably; tomorrow death may interfere, or Jesus may return to judgment, and it would be too late.

Go home, then, if you value your soul, and turn the words of the text into a prayer, and entreat the Lord to receive you and become your righteousness.

Even so, Lord Jesus, come quickly into every heart. Amen and Amen.