

"Righteousness not of us, but in us"  
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"Of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption; that, according as it is written, he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." 1 Cor. i. 30, 31.

1 [Note] ST. PAUL is engaged, in the chapter from which these words are taken, in  
2 humbling the self-conceit of the Corinthians. They had had gifts given them; they did not  
3 forget they had them; they used, they abused them; they forgot, not that they were  
4 theirs, but that they were given them. They seem to have thought that those gifts were  
5 theirs by a sort of right, because they were persons of more cultivation of mind than  
6 others, of more knowledge, more refinement. Corinth was a wealthy place; it was a  
7 place where all nations met, and where men saw much of the world; and it was a place  
8 of science and philosophy. It had indeed some good thing in it which Athens had not.  
9 The wise men of Athens heard the Apostle and despised him, but of Corinth it was said  
10 to him by Christ Himself; "I have much people in this City." [Acts xviii. 10.] Yet, though  
11 there were elect of God at Corinth, yet in a place of so much luxury and worldly wisdom,  
12 difficulties so great stood in the way of a simple, humble faith, as to seduce, if it were  
13 possible, even the elect,—as to bring it to pass that those who were saved were saved  
14 "as by fire." In spite of the clear views which the Apostle had doubtless given them on  
15 their conversion of their utter nothingness in themselves; in spite too of their confessing  
16 it (for we can hardly suppose that they said in so many words that their gifts were their  
17 own), yet they did not feel that they came from God. They seemed, as it were, to claim  
18 them, or at least to view their possession of them as a thing of course; they acted as if  
19 they were their own, not with humbleness and gratitude towards their Giver, not with a  
20 sense of responsibility, not with fear and trembling, but as if they were lords over them,  
21 as if they had sovereign power to do what they would with them, as if they might use  
22 them from themselves and for themselves.

23 Our bodily powers and limbs also come from God, but they are in such sense part of our  
24 original formation, or (if I may say so) of our essence, that though we ought ever to lift  
25 up our hearts in gratitude to God while we use them, yet we use them  
26 as *our* instruments, organs and ministers. They spring from us, and (as I may say) hold  
27 of us, and we use them for our own purposes. Well, this seems to have been the way in  
28 which the Corinthians used their supernatural gifts, viz. as if they were parts of  
29 themselves,—as natural faculties, instead of influences *in* them, but  
30 not *of* them, *from* the Giver of all good,—not with awe, not with reverence, not with  
31 worship. They considered themselves, not members of the Kingdom of saints, and  
32 dependent on an unseen Lord, but mere members of an earthly community, still rich  
33 men, still scribes, still philosophers, still disputants, who had the *addition* of certain gifts,  
34 who had aggrandized their existing position by the reception of Christianity. They  
35 became proud, when they should have been thankful. They had forgotten that to be  
36 members of the Church they must become as little children; that they must give up all,

37 that they might win Christ; that they must become poor in spirit to gain the true riches;  
38 that they must put off philosophy, if they would speak wisdom among the perfect. And,  
39 therefore, St. Paul reminds them that "not many wise men after the flesh, not many  
40 mighty, not many noble are called;" and that all true power, all true wisdom flows from  
41 Christ, who is "the power of God, and the wisdom of God;" and that all who are  
42 Christians indeed, renounce their own power and their own wisdom, and come to Him  
43 that He may be the Source and Principle of their power, and of their wisdom; that they  
44 may depend on Him, and hold of Him, not of themselves; that they may exist in Him, or  
45 have Him in them; that they may be (as it were) His members; that they may glory  
46 simply in Him, not in themselves. For, whereas the wisdom of the world is but  
47 foolishness in God's sight, and the power of the world but weakness, God had set forth  
48 His Only-begotten Son to be the First-born of creation, and the standard and original of  
49 true life; to be a wisdom of God and a power of God, and a "righteousness,  
50 sanctification, and redemption" of God, to all those who are found in Him. "Of Him,"  
51 says he, "are ye in Christ Jesus, who is made unto us a wisdom from God, namely,  
52 righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption; that according as it is written, He that  
53 glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."

54 In every age of the Church, not in the primitive age only, Christians have been tempted  
55 to pride themselves on their gifts, or at least to forget that they were gifts, and to take  
56 them for granted. Ever have they been tempted to forget their own responsibilities, their  
57 having received what they are bound to improve, and the duty of fear and trembling,  
58 while improving it. On the other hand, how they ought to behave under a sense of their  
59 own privileges, St. Paul points out when he says to the Philippians, "Work out your own  
60 salvation with fear and trembling, *for* it is God which worketh in you both to will and to  
61 do of His good pleasure." [Phil. ii. 13.] God is in you for righteousness, for sanctification,  
62 for redemption, through the Spirit of His Son, and you must use His influences, His  
63 operations, not as your own (God forbid!), not as you would use your own mind or your  
64 own limbs, irreverently, but as His presence in you. All your knowledge is from Him; all  
65 good thoughts are from Him; all power to pray is from Him; your Baptism is from Him;  
66 the consecrated elements are from Him; your growth in holiness is from Him. You are  
67 not your own, you have been bought with a price, and a mysterious power is working in  
68 you. Oh that we felt all this as well as were convinced of it!

69 This then is one of the first elements of Christian knowledge and a Christian spirit, to  
70 refer all that is good in us, all that we have of spiritual life and righteousness, to Christ  
71 our Saviour; to believe that He works in us, or, to put the same thing more pointedly, to  
72 believe that saving truth, life, light, and holiness are not *of* us, though they must  
73 be *in* us. I shall now enlarge on each of these two points.

74 1. Whatever we have, is not of us, but of God. This surely it will not take many words to  
75 prove. Our unassisted nature is represented in Scripture as the source of much that is  
76 evil, but not of anything that is good. We read much in Scripture of *evil* coming out of the  
77 natural heart, but nothing of good coming out of it. When did not the multitude of men  
78 turn away from Him who is their life? when was it that the holy were not the few, and the  
79 unholy the many? and what does this show but that the law of man's nature tends

80 towards evil, not towards good? As is the tree, so is its fruit; if the fruit be evil, therefore  
81 the tree must be evil. When was the face of human society, which is the fruit of human  
82 nature, other than evil? When was the power of the world an upholder of God's truth?  
83 When was its wisdom an interpreter of it? or its rank an image of it? Shall we look at the  
84 early age of the world? What fruit do we find there? "The earth was corrupt before God,  
85 and the earth was filled with violence." "God saw that the wickedness of man was great  
86 upon the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil  
87 continually. And it repented the Lord that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved  
88 Him at His heart." Shall we find good in man's nature after the flood more easily than  
89 before? "And the Lord said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language;  
90 and this they begin to do, and now nothing will be restrained from them which they have  
91 imagined to do ... So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all  
92 the earth." Shall we pass on to the days of David? "The Lord looked down from heaven  
93 upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand and seek God.  
94 They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy; there is none that doeth  
95 good, no not one." Thus three times did God look down from heaven, and three times  
96 was man the same, God's enemy, a rebel against his Maker. Let us see if Solomon will  
97 lighten this fearful testimony. He says, "The heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and  
98 madness is in their heart while they live, and after that they go to the dead." Shall we  
99 ask of the prophet Isaiah? He answers, "We are all as an unclean thing, and all our  
100 righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities as the  
101 wind have taken us away." Or Jeremiah? "The heart is deceitful above all things, and  
102 desperately wicked." Or what did our Lord Himself, when He came in the flesh, witness  
103 of the fruits of the heart? He said, "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders,  
104 adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witnesses, blasphemies." And will His coming have  
105 improved the world? How will it be, when He comes again? "When the Son of Man  
106 cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?" [Gen. vi. 11, 5, 6; xi. 6-8. Ps. xiv. 2, 3. Eccl. ix.  
107 3. Isa. lxiv. 6. Jer. xvii. 9. Matt. xv. 19. Luke xviii. 8.] What then human nature *tends* to,  
108 is very plain, and according to the end, so I say must be the beginning. If the end is evil,  
109 so is the beginning; if the termination is astray, the first direction is wrong. "Out of the  
110 abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh," and the hand worketh; and such as is the  
111 work and the word, such is the heart. Nothing then can be more certain, if we go by  
112 Scripture, not to speak of experience, than that the present nature of man is evil, and  
113 not good; that evil things come from it, and not good things. If good things come from it,  
114 they are the exception, and therefore not of it, but in it merely; first given to it, and then  
115 coming from it; not of it by nature, but in it by grace. Our Lord says expressly, "That  
116 which is born of the flesh, is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit, is spirit. Marvel  
117 not that I say unto thee, Ye must be born again." [John iii. 7.] And again, "Without Me ye  
118 can do nothing;" [John xv. 5.] and St. Paul, "I can do all things through Christ, that  
119 strengtheneth me." And again, in the Epistle before us, "Who maketh thee to differ from  
120 another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it,  
121 why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?" [1 Cor. iv. 7.]

122 This is that great truth which is at the foundation of all true doctrine as to the way of  
123 salvation. All teaching about duty and obedience, about attaining heaven, and about the  
124 office of Christ towards us, is hollow and unsubstantial, which is not built *here*, in the

125 doctrine of our original corruption and helplessness; and, in consequence, of original  
126 guilt and sin. Christ Himself indeed is the foundation, but a broken, self-abased, self-  
127 renouncing heart is (as it were) the ground and soil in which the foundation must be laid;  
128 and it is but building on the sand to profess to believe in Christ, yet not to acknowledge  
129 that without Him we can do nothing. It is what is called the Pelagian heresy, of which  
130 many of us perhaps have heard the name. I am not, indeed, formally stating what that  
131 heresy consists in, but I mean, that, speaking popularly, I may call it the belief, that "holy  
132 desires, good counsels, and just works," can come of *us*, can be *from* us, as well  
133 as *in* us: whereas they are from God only; from whom, and not from ourselves, is that  
134 righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, which is in us,—from whom is the  
135 washing away of our inward guilt, and the implanting in us of a new nature. But when  
136 men take it for granted that they are natural objects of God's favour,—when they view  
137 their privileges and powers as natural things,—when they look upon their Baptism as an  
138 ordinary work, bringing about its results as a matter of course,—when they come to  
139 Church without feeling that they are highly favoured in being allowed to come,—when  
140 they do not understand the necessity of prayer for God's grace,—when they refer  
141 everything to system, and subject the provisions of God's free bounty to the laws of  
142 cause and effect,—when they think that education will do everything, and that education  
143 is in their own power,—when, in short, they think little of the Church of God, which is the  
144 great channel of God's mercies, and look upon the Gospel as a sort of literature or  
145 philosophy, contained in certain documents, which they may use as they use the  
146 instruction of other books; then, not to mention other instances of the same error, are  
147 they practically Pelagians, for they make themselves their own centre, instead of  
148 depending on Almighty God and His ordinances.

149 2. And, secondly, while truth and righteousness are not of us, it is quite as certain that  
150 they are also in us if we be Christ's; not merely nominally given to us and imputed to us,  
151 but really implanted in us by the operation of the Blessed Spirit. Our Lord and Saviour  
152 Jesus Christ, when He came on earth in our flesh, made a perfect atonement, "sacrifice,  
153 oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world." He was born of a woman, He  
154 wrought miracles, He fasted and was tempted in the desert, He suffered and was  
155 crucified, He was dead and buried; He rose again from the dead, He ascended on high,  
156 and "liveth ever" with the Father,—all for our sakes. And as His incarnation and death  
157 were in order to our salvation, so also He really accomplished the end which that  
158 humiliation had in view. All was done that needed to be done, except what could not be  
159 done at a time, when they were not yet in existence on whom it was to be done. All was  
160 done for us except the actual grant of mercy made to us one by one. He saved us by  
161 anticipation, but we were not yet saved in fact, for as yet we were not. But everything  
162 short of this was then finished. Satan was vanquished; sin was atoned for; the penalty  
163 was paid; God was propitiated; righteousness, sanctification, redemption, life, all were  
164 provided for the sons of Adam, and all that remained to do was to dispense, to impart,  
165 these divine gifts to them one by one. This was not done, because it could not be done  
166 all at once; it could not be done forthwith to individuals, and salvation was designed in  
167 God's counsels to be an individual gift. He did not once for all restore the whole race,  
168 and change the condition of the world in His sight immediately on Christ's death. The  
169 sun on Easter-day did not rise, nor did He rise from the grave, on a new world, but on

170 the old world, the sinful rebellious outcast world as before. Men were just what they had  
171 been, both in themselves and in His sight. They were guilty and corrupt before His  
172 crucifixion, and so they were after it; so they remain to this day, except so far as He by  
173 His free bounty and at His absolute will, vouchsafes to impart the gift of His passion to  
174 this man or that. He provided, not gave salvation, when He suffered; and there must be  
175 a giving or applying in the case of all those who are to be saved. The gift of life is in us,  
176 as truly as it is not of us ; it is not only *from* Him but it is *unto* us. This must carefully be  
177 borne in mind, for as there are those who consider that life, righteousness, and  
178 salvation are of us, so there are others who hold that they are not in us; and as there  
179 are many who more or less forget that justification is of God, so there are quite as many  
180 who more or less forget that justification must be in man if it is to profit him. And it is  
181 hard to say which of the two errors is the greater.

182 But there is another ground for saying that Christ did not finish His gracious economy by  
183 His death; viz. because the Holy Spirit came in order to finish it. When He ascended, He  
184 did not leave us to ourselves, so far the work was not done. He sent His Spirit. Were all  
185 finished as regards individuals, why should the Holy Ghost have condescended to  
186 come? But the Spirit came to finish in us, what Christ had finished in Himself, but left  
187 unfinished as regards us. To Him it is committed to apply to us severally all that Christ  
188 had done for us. As then His mission proves on the one hand that salvation is not from  
189 ourselves, so does it on the other that it must be wrought in us. For if all gifts of grace  
190 are with the Spirit, and the presence of the Spirit is within us, it follows that these gifts  
191 are to be manifested and wrought in us. If Christ is our sole hope, and Christ is given to  
192 us by the Spirit, and the Spirit be an inward presence, our sole hope is in an inward  
193 change. As a light placed in a room pours out its rays on all sides, so the presence of  
194 the Holy Ghost imbues us with life, strength, holiness, love, acceptableness,  
195 righteousness. God looks on us in mercy, because He sees in us "the mind of the  
196 Spirit," for whoso has this mind has holiness and righteousness within him. Henceforth  
197 all his thoughts, words, and works as done in the Spirit, are acceptable, pleasing, just  
198 before God; and whatever remaining infirmity there be in him, that the presence of the  
199 Spirit hides. That divine influence, which has the fulness of Christ's grace to purify us,  
200 has also the power of Christ's blood to justify.

201 Let us never lose sight of this great and simple view, which the whole of Scripture sets  
202 before us. What was actually done by Christ in the flesh eighteen hundred years ago, is  
203 in type and resemblance really wrought in us one by one even to the end of time. He  
204 was born of the Spirit, and we too are born of the Spirit. He was justified by the Spirit,  
205 and so are we. He was pronounced the well-beloved Son, when the Holy Ghost  
206 descended on Him; and we too cry Abba, Father, through the Spirit sent into our hearts.  
207 He was led into the wilderness by the Spirit; He did great works by the Spirit; He offered  
208 Himself to death by the Eternal Spirit; He was raised from the dead by the Spirit; He  
209 was declared to be the Son of God by the Spirit of holiness on His resurrection: we too  
210 are led by the same Spirit into and through this world's temptations; we, too, do our  
211 works of obedience by the Spirit; we die from sin, we rise again unto righteousness  
212 through the Spirit; and we are declared to be God's sons,—declared, pronounced, dealt  
213 with as righteous,—through our resurrection unto holiness in the Spirit. Or, to express

214 the same great truth in other words; Christ Himself vouchsafes to repeat in each of us in  
215 figure and mystery all that He did and suffered in the flesh. He is formed in us, born in  
216 us, suffers in us, rises again in us, lives in us; and this not by a succession of events,  
217 but all at once: for He comes to us as a Spirit, all dying, all rising again, all living. We are  
218 ever receiving our birth, our justification, our renewal, ever dying to sin, ever rising to  
219 righteousness. His whole economy in all its parts is ever in us all at once; and this divine  
220 presence constitutes the title of each of us to heaven; this is what He will acknowledge  
221 and accept at the last day. He will acknowledge Himself,—His image in us,—as though  
222 we reflected Him, and He, on looking round about, discerned at once who were His;  
223 those, namely, who gave back to Him His image. He impresses us with the seal of the  
224 Spirit, in order to avouch that we are His. As the king's image appropriates the coin to  
225 him, so the likeness of Christ in us separates us from the world and assigns us over to  
226 the kingdom of heaven.

227 Scripture is full of texts to show that salvation is such an inward gift. For instance: What  
228 is it that rescues us from being reprobates? "Know ye not," says St. Paul, "that Jesus  
229 Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" What is our hope? "Christ in us, the hope of  
230 glory." What is it that hallows and justifies? "The Name of the Lord Jesus, and the Spirit  
231 of our God." What makes our offerings acceptable? "Being sanctified by the Holy  
232 Ghost." What is our life? "The Spirit is life because of righteousness." How are we  
233 enabled to fulfil the law? "The righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us who walk not  
234 after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Who is it makes us righteous? "The fruit of  
235 the *Spirit* is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth." [2 Cor. xiii. 5. Col. i. 27. 1  
236 Cor. vi. 11. Rom. xv. 16. Rom. viii. 10. Eph. v. 9.]

237 To conclude.—I have said that there are two opposite errors: one, the holding that  
238 salvation is not of God; the other, that it is not in ourselves. Now it is remarkable that the  
239 maintainers of both the one and the other error, whatever their differences in other  
240 respects, agree in this,—in depriving a Christian life of its mysteriousness. He who  
241 believes that he can please God of himself, or that obedience can be performed by his  
242 own powers, of course has nothing more of awe, reverence, and wonder in his personal  
243 religion, than when he moves his limbs and uses his reason, though he might well feel  
244 awe then also. And in like manner he also who considers that Christ's passion once  
245 undergone on the Cross absolutely secured his own personal salvation, may see  
246 mystery indeed in that Cross (as he ought), but he will see no mystery, and feel little  
247 solemnity, in prayer, in ordinances, or in his attempts at obedience. He will be free,  
248 familiar, and presuming, in God's presence. Neither will "work out their salvation with  
249 fear and trembling;" for neither will realize, though they use the words, that God is in  
250 them "to will and to do." Both the one and the other will be content with a low standard  
251 of duty: the one, because he does not believe that God requires much; the other,  
252 because he thinks that Christ in His own person has done all. Neither will honour and  
253 make much of God's Law: the one, because he brings down the Law to his own power  
254 of obeying it; the other, because he thinks that Christ has taken away the Law by  
255 obeying it in his stead. They only feel awe and true seriousness who think that the Law  
256 remains; that it claims to be fulfilled by them; and that it can be fulfilled in them through  
257 the power of God's grace. Not that any man alive arises up to that perfect fulfilment, but

258 that such fulfilment is not impossible; that it is begun in all true Christians; that they all  
259 are tending to it; are growing into it; and are pleasing to God because they are  
260 becoming, and in proportion as they are becoming like Him who, when He came on  
261 earth in our flesh, fulfilled the Law perfectly.

262 Note

263 Epiphany.