

Righteousness Imputed and Imparted

by Bill McLeod

The sermon emphasizes the importance of imputed righteousness, which is the gift of God's righteousness to us through faith in Christ, and how it should filter down into our personal lives, transforming us to be like Jesus Christ.

Duration: 40:38

Scripture: Numbers 32:23, Psalm 90:8, Psalm 139:23-24, Proverbs 5:22, Proverbs 14:14, Isaiah 30:1, Romans 5:17

Topics: "Righteousness"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares a personal story about a woman who felt restless and missed her husband when he was gone. She couldn't sleep and in her desperation, she knelt by the bed and surrendered herself to God. The speaker emphasizes the power of seeing the hands of Jesus, which can break a person and lead them to surrender their all to Him. The sermon also highlights the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross and how God could not look upon Him because of the sin He bore. The speaker encourages listeners to fully commit their lives to God and seek Him with all their hearts.

Transcript

In Saskatoon, Canada, where I live, there is a professor of psychology in our university, a Christian man from the church where I attend, and it must be, I suppose, maybe six months ago, I recommended to him that he buy and read the two new books on the life of George Whitfield. Now, they are hardcovers, they are big books, they are expensive, they cost about twenty dollars each, a work done by a Canadian pastor, I think it was Dr. Sherwood Word, who said it was the greatest Christian literary achievement of the century, and that's saying a lot. Anyway, he got the books, he read them, he experienced such a profound revival in his heart, he began rising every morning, still is, for prayer, for Bible study, spending four hours every morning, if possible, studying the Bible, praying, and he's been transformed totally.

I talked to him just a few days ago in Saskatoon at our prayer meeting, and I shared with him the rally here, so I had several weeks in a row, either myself or someone else, asking people back home to pray for the rally here. And the other day he told me that God had put such a tremendous burden on his heart for this particular rally that he found himself sometimes praying two hours a day for the rally here. Now, that's unusual, I'm sure you'll agree, but at the same time I trust it will challenge your heart.

All of us, if we expect God to really bless in this weekend, need to put ourselves out. It's not our thing, that is my thing, the workers, the preachers, it's yours as well, and it's together as we have input that God will

answer and bless. So God may lead some of us to fast as well as pray.

Why not ask God tonight, to waken you through the night hours for prayer? And God will do that if you ask him and believe him, and spend time in prayer calling on God. I'm sure I know what God wants to do. God can't always do what he wants to do because often we're not really concerned.

We don't want this to be a Christian circus this weekend, an entertainment, but a time when the Spirit of God does a deep work in all of our hearts. Harold Kelm was the professor, he's praying, might be praying right now, I don't know. Let's each of us take a responsibility on our own hearts to pray and to believe God.

Will you specifically pray for all the speakers, the singers, for Ralph and Lou as they chair the meetings, that all of us might be extremely sensitive to what God is saying, that we'll know what God wants shared, we'll know how to order the meetings. Because that's very, very important too. I wouldn't ask for a show of hands, but I hope your heart is saying amen.

Thank you, some said it out loud. Well God bless you. Well I want to talk tonight on the subject of righteousness imputed and imparted, or personal.

Righteousness imputed and imparted. Someone said that faulty theology always results in corrupt living. That doesn't necessarily mean faulty theology concerning the person or the work of Jesus Christ, because that would be abhorrent to most evangelicals.

But sometimes our grasp of the Christian life, what it really is, what God expects in us and from us, sometimes our idea here is very faulty. Wasn't it Paul who said in 1 Corinthians chapter 15 that evil communications corrupt good manners? That's saying it in a little different way. All right, what is the problem? Oh the problem, that's me.

That's you. We are God's problem. But really what is the problem? The problem is, as the Bible says in the Psalms, that the wicked are estranged from the womb.

They go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies. That's the problem. And then to make it worse, we have this truth in Isaiah 64, that all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.

That is to God. So as Paul tells us, it's not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy. He saved us.

We did not save ourselves. He saved us because of His mercy. So it's not by works of righteousness which we have done because all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags.

And the Hebrew language here is stronger than that. The translators, they tamed it, toned it down so it would not be offensive to polite ears. What they really said was this, that all our righteousnesses are as a menstruous cloth.

That's what they said. And we need to look at things the way God looks at them. The problem is made worse because of something else.

Isaiah chapter 30. The Lord was speaking to what He called rebellious children who take counsel, He said, but not of Me, who cover with a covering but not of My Spirit, that they may add sin to sin. So they heal, as Jeremiah said, the hurt of a daughter of My people slightly.

They cover with a cover that's not of God's Spirit. In other words, they hide their sin. Put differently in Isaiah chapter 57, God accused these people in that chapter of going to the king with ointments and of increasing their perfumes.

And in the same verse He said, you have debased yourself even unto hell. The adulterous woman in Proverbs, when she talked to that clunker on the streets and tried to get him to sleep with her, she told him, I have perfumed my bed. I have vows on me.

I'm a religious person. You can use all the perfume you want. It stinks to God if it's sin.

Don't try to cover it. The reason, as Isaiah points out in chapter 30, is that they may add sin to sin. I don't know if you heard of the perfumer scandal involving some politicians in England some years ago, and there was a scandal involving call girls.

And the newspapers in Canada were full of it for some while, and then of course it phased out. But a non-Christian woman reporter in London, England, said something that I enjoy. She said, we could take the glamour out of this kind of corrupt living if we stopped calling them call girls and call them by the old-fashioned Anglo-Saxon word whore.

You know, in Saskatoon, they're trying to do away with street prostitutes, so they have a little crusade on now, and they're making it very hot for the gals on the streets. But you know what they're doing at the same time? They're legalizing and licensing what they call escort services. Now it's the same rotten sin, but it has a different name.

Matter of fact, they're glamorizing this escort service thing. It makes me sick, and if it makes me sick, I wonder how God feels. So, like God says, they ask counsel but not of me.

They don't go to the Bible to get their ideas. They get their ideas from the world, and lots of Christians are doing that today. They, it says in the Bible, measuring themselves by themselves and comparing themselves among themselves are not wise, and if you're not wise, you're a fool.

If you measure yourself by somebody else, God says you're a fool. But we do it all the time, perhaps because we're ignorant of what God has said. So they take counsel but not of me, and they cover with a covering but not of my spirit.

Is the covering you have for your sin acceptable to the Spirit of God? You see, that's the question. Because it says in Psalm 90, Thou hast said our iniquities before thee are secret sins in the light of your countenance. And you know what happens.

If I have secret sin in my life, unconfessed, then when I pray, that sin stands between me and God, and my prayers, they hit. My own sins then bounce back into my faith, and God can't listen, and God won't. Thou hast said our iniquities before thee are secret sins in the light of thy countenance.

Make sure that the covering you have for your sin is acceptable to the Spirit of God. Don't talk yourself into something less than this. Don't let anybody else talk you into anything less than this.

Because chapter 30 of Isaiah begins with the word, Woe to the rebellious children that take counsel but not of me, and that cover with a covering but not of my spirit, that they may add sin to sin. Here is the problem, and aggravated, I am the problem. We go astray as soon as we're born.

Speaking lies, you don't have to teach a child how to lie. They all know that. You have to teach them to tell the truth.

You don't have to teach a child how to steal. He knows that. That comes natural.

You have to teach him not to steal. So this is the problem. And then God dealt with it.

The Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world. How did He deal with it? Since all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags, how did God deal with it? Oh, we have thoughts like this, some in the book of Isaiah. No weapon is formed against you shall prosper, and every tongue that shall rise against you in judgment thou shalt condemn.

This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord. And, listen, their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord. It's not of you, it's of God, righteousness is.

Their righteousness is of me. Again in Isaiah. In the Lord I have righteousness and strength.

Well, in the Lord, Isaiah 61, the writer says, I will be joyful in my God. In the Lord my soul shall be joyful in my God, for He has covered me with the garments of salvation. He has clothed me with the robe of righteousness.

So even in Old Testament times they understood something of the righteousness that God gave. Because ours is not there, God can't accept it. In the New Testament, particularly in the book of Romans, this truth is brought out again and again.

For example, in chapter 3, he says, He says the righteousness of God, apart from the law, is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets. That is what we're talking about now. It's found in the Old Testament.

It's witnessed by the law and the prophets both. And what is it? He calls it the righteousness of God, which is unto all and upon all them that believe. For there's no difference.

For all have sinned and come short of the righteousness of God. So it's a gift unto all and upon all them that believe. The reason being, all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

We can never make it on our own. It's only by the righteousness of Christ that you and I can make it to heaven. That was God's plan.

Now Peter says in 1 Peter chapter 4, that it is, well actually in the King James Version, it says that the righteous scarcely are saved. That doesn't really accurately convey the meaning of the original to people today. It actually means with great difficulty.

Not that we're scarcely saved and just barely going to make it to heaven. That's not the idea. With great difficulty.

It cost Jesus, the author of life, his life, to provide this perfect righteousness for you and I. In Matthew chapter 22 we have a parable. Jesus told it about a king who made a marriage for his son. And skipping over the first part of the story, which is not particularly relevant to what we're talking about tonight, we come to the point where the king came in to see the guests.

And it says he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment. Now in some eastern countries even today, when you go to a wedding as an invited guest, you'll be met at the door by a person who will give you a wedding garment which you are expected to wear. And that's what we're looking at here.

The king, God himself, came in to see the guests. And he found a man who did not have on a wedding garment. What an insult.

What an insult. And he said, Friend, how did you come in here not having a wedding garment? You know what it says? He was speechless. He had nothing to say.

And he called the servants the king did and said, Bind them hand and foot and throw them out. You don't belong in God's house if you're not clothed with the righteousness of Jesus Christ. It's perfect.

It's called the gift of righteousness in Romans 5. It's mentioned eight times in Romans 4. They who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one Jesus Christ. That's in Romans 5. The gift of righteousness. Have you ever thanked God for that? His is perfect.

Mine is corrupt. I cast mine away. I receive His.

Remember, unto all and upon all them that believe. I was talking to a Jew back in Canada. His first name was Hymen.

And he said to me, Bill, he said, Supposing there's a guy... And I knew he was talking about himself. I just instinctively knew it. Because he'd had a number of relatives, you know, who'd had heart attacks.

Men about his own age in the previous 12 months. And Hymen thought he might be next on the list. So he said, Now here's a man which has been a good citizen.

He's been a good husband to his wife. A good father to his children. He has given thousands of dollars to good community projects.

Mr. McLeod, When it comes time to die, Don't you think God will be easier on him? I said, Hymen, What does the Bible say? I said, What does the Old Testament say? And he said, So what does it say? I said, It says that Abraham believed God. And it was counted to him for righteousness. His faith was counted for righteousness.

His faith took the place of righteousness. And Hymen stood there staring at me and said, You mean it's fake? Fake? I can still see him. And I tried to explain it to him.

I wish I could say he found Christ. I can't say that and he's dead now. But it's faith.

Romans 4, if it makes anything clear, it's that. It's by faith we receive the righteousness of Christ. It's imputed to us.

It's put to our account. You might liken it to money in the bank that somebody else put to your account. Wouldn't that be nice? Well, it is nice.

Especially nice if you understand that you didn't have any money in the bank at all to start with. And all of a sudden you've got something worth over a million dollars put to your account by Jesus. But remember, it was with great difficulty.

Our sins, your sins, take it personally. My sins. Like a gigantic wasp, they stung Jesus to death on the cross.

Your sins. The sting of death is sin. That's why people are afraid to die.

Because the sin question has not been settled. The sting of death is sin. And if you do not accept this great truth that your sins stung Christ to death on the cross, then I'll tell you something, your sins will sting you forever and ever and ever in a living experience called the second death.

Jesus paid it all. All to Him I owe. Sin had left a crimson stain.

He washed it white as snow. And then He gave us the gift of righteousness. But notice, righteousness is not, this gift of righteousness idea, is not a theological contrivance to cover up a wicked heart.

Now some people, they've got a hold of it that way. I can sin, I'm a Christian, but I've got a ticket to heaven, so I don't have to worry. I can do anything I want.

I can go anywhere I want. I can think what I want. The Bible says that everyone that names the name of Christ depart from iniquity.

Someone said, it's not enough to hate the darkness. You have to love the light. It's not enough to hate weeds.

You have to love flowers. Abstain from every appearance of evil, all appearance of evil. Cleave to that which is good.

Abhor that which is evil, Romans 12 says. Cleave to that which is good. It's not a contrivance to cover up a wicked heart.

Then he was one of the greatest evangelists in the history of the world. Indeed, I suppose if he lived today and had the TV and the other mediums, you know, available that people have now, he probably would be the greatest evangelist in the history of the world, if you're thinking in terms of effectiveness. But he said something with which I could not agree.

He once said, and I don't know at what point in his life this was because he grew in his experience in theology and so on as he lived. He admitted that candidly. But he said, the idea of imputed righteousness is a theological fiction.

That's what he said. Now, I don't agree with him at all because I think the Bible is very clear. But I know why he said it.

Because back in his day in the churches in America, there were thousands of people that were hiding behind the teaching of imputed righteousness, but they'd never been born again. You see, this was the problem. They didn't know Christ personally and there had never been a change in their life.

They had not been regenerated, born again, converted, saved. Use whatever word or term you want. And so Finney, being a pragmatist, he just couldn't accept this and threw it out the window.

But there's no way that we can get to heaven apart from the righteousness of God which is put to our account through the Lord Jesus Christ. But remember, it's not something to cover up a sinful, corrupt

heart. Don't ever get a hold of that word or you'll be terribly disappointed.

God expects that this righteousness will filter down. It will percolate down and do something in my life. For example, in Psalm 23, He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His namesake.

That's not imputed righteousness. That's personal, imparted righteousness. And that's how the Spirit of God leads me in paths of righteousness for His namesake.

You remember it says we're to adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things. I've sometimes said that if Jesus Christ and His gospel, if that's the picture, then the Christian is the picture frame. And if the picture frame is dirty, cheap, worm-eaten, cockeyed, it surely is not going to enhance the picture.

For some people it may totally destroy the picture because all they can see is the frame. Dear people, we are to adorn, adorn. I understand the Greek word there is the word from which we get the word cosmetic.

We are to adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things, in every way we live. Not just in our church life, in our business life, our social life, with our neighbors. God expects that.

All right, then it has to filter down. If it doesn't have an effect in my life, a dynamic effect in my life, it can't be true. Well, maybe it's true, but I haven't seen it rightly.

And I don't have that living faith that makes all the difference between a doctrine being just a doctrine and a doctrine becoming something vibrant and living in my life. Bill sang for us a few moments ago, Oh, to be like thee, blessed Redeemer. You know, in the meetings in Saskatoon back in 1971, fourteen hundred people there one night and a girl came, sixteen years of age, and she politely inquired, it was sharing time, she politely inquired if she could sing her testimony without accompaniment.

I'm not sure if it was Ralph or Lou, but whoever it was said, Yes, go ahead. And she sang that song, Oh, to be like thee. And heaven came down over that place.

I asked my wife afterwards, Honey, how did that affect you? She said, I never ever expect to get as close to heaven again till I get there. That's how all of us felt. The glory of God.

Oh, to be like thee. Are you born again? Do you have a burning desire to be like Jesus Christ? There's something wrong if you don't have. Christ said, Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.

God loves to fill people's hearts. He wants to make us like Jesus Christ. We were predestinated, remember, not to be carried to heaven in a bed, but to be conformed to the image of God's Son, chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world.

Why? That we should be holy and without blame before Him in love. Peter cries, Elect unto what? Elect, he says, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. Oh, to be like thee.

That's the cry, I think, of every heart that understands imputed righteousness in a truly biblical, God-honoring way. It cost Christ His life. He died, remember? He suffered physically.

He suffered in a far deeper sense. In a way that we cannot really understand because He was an infinite person. He was God.

And 2 Corinthians 5, verse 21 says, He, that is God, has made Him, that is Christ, to be sin for us. I am told it really means God regarded Christ as sin. It might be made the righteousness of God in Him.

That's why. Or Peter, 1 Peter chapter 2, 24 and 5, Christ, through His own self, bare our sins in His own body to the tree. Why? In order that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness.

That's why. How is it in your heart? Are you living a godly life? Hosea chapter 10 says, Sow to yourselves in righteousness. Now that's imparted or personal righteousness.

Reap in mercy. Break up your fallow ground. It's time to seek the Lord until He come and reign righteousness upon you.

That's revival. That's personal imparted righteousness. If I have a godly desire to be right with God and man, to glorify Christ for no other reason than that, God will come to me and God will reign power, righteousness upon my life.

That's what it says. And I believe it. But Christ died.

God blotted our sins out. Yes, He did. He said He wouldn't remember them anymore.

He cast them behind His back, Isaiah. Hezekiah said in the book of Isaiah. He cast them into the depths of the sea, the Bible says.

The Bible talks about Him subduing our iniquities. The Hebrew there actually means He stamps upon them. He breaks them.

God breaks them. But God only breaks them when I'm willing with all my heart to have them broken. A lot of us, you know, we itch a little bit because we've got some sins we have no victory over.

But we don't weep over our sins. We don't really want victory. Somehow we want to enjoy them without recrimination.

You can't. What does the Bible say? It says be sure. That means be positive.

Your sin will find you out. His own iniquity shall take the wicked himself and he shall be held with the cords of his own sins. The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own way.

So the least we can do, the wisest thing we can do is to ask for the complete cooperation of the Spirit of God. Search me, O God, and know my heart. The other day I was working at the front of my house and the bus was going by.

I told Pastor Allen about this yesterday. The bus was going by and it stopped. The driver, a young fellow about 21 or 22, I'd known him for several years, he saw me there, stopped the bus, came tearing over and said, Pastor Bill, can I have an appointment with you? My Christian life is lousy.

I've got to get it straightened up. I said, sure. Tomorrow afternoon, be okay.

Three o'clock, fine. He tore back the bus and away he went. That's different.

I don't know what the people in the bus thought. So Wednesday he came, told me the story. Oh, he'd been social drinking, he'd been doing a lot of things, fooling around in the Christian life.

And God met him and changed his life. And with such force and conviction, he said before he left the room, I will never, as long as I live, I will never touch a drop of liquor again. But that wasn't all the problem we had, that he had.

But thank God, he sought and sought help. He prayed the prayer, Search me, O God, and God searched him. God responded.

In Jeremiah, God said, You'll seek me and you'll find me when you search for me with all your heart. Some of us haven't gotten that far yet. We're a little bit miserable in our sins, but not quite enough to do anything about it.

You want your life to count for God. I can't ever listen to that song, Oh, to be like thee, of praying in my heart, O God. Whatever isn't like you, deal with it, take it out.

One of the Puritans prayed, O God, he said, if there's one drop of blood in my veins that doesn't belong to Jesus Christ, please let it bleed away. That speaks to my heart too. All right.

God made Christ to be sin for us. We were saying he blotted them out, he forgave them, he justified me, he cleansed me, he cast them into the sea, he cast them behind his back. All these things the Bible says God did with my sins.

But in order to do that, he withdrew from Christ. He looked on Christ as being the sum total of human wickedness, if you can feature that. And as it were, he took and drowned Christ in that ocean of sinful human wickedness.

That's why Christ cried, My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me? All his disciples forsook him and fled. But now God had forsaken him because Habakkuk said God was of pure eyes meant to behold evil and God could not look on iniquity, therefore he could not look on Christ when he hung on the cross and died there for your sins. One of our crusades in the Maritimes, a fellow drove 400 miles to be there with a man from his church.

This was a pastor. A fellow from his church, I remember, was a storekeeper. And this pastor said, I'm just absolutely desperate.

God is to meet my need. And God did. And later on he told me what happened.

He could hardly wait to get home to tell his wife what God had done. He said, that last mile to my house, I just, I broke every speed limit in the country. He got in the house and went running.

Honey, where are you? She said, I'm here. He says, honey, let me tell you what God did for me. She said, let me tell you what God did for me when you were gone.

And you know what happened? Her husband was gone and she felt restless and she missed him. She couldn't sleep. Fell asleep.

Woke up at 2 o'clock in the morning. Couldn't sleep. Got out of bed.

Knelt by the bed. And she said, the Lord came and He demanded that I surrender my all to Him. And I said, Lord, I can't do that.

And she said, He showed me His hands and He broke them. That's all she needed to see was the hands of Jesus and it broke her. And if that won't break you, no argument in the world ever will.

God has graven us on the palms of His hands, it says. That's a reference by Isaiah to Calvary, the cross. He showed me His hands.

And the Lord Jesus Christ is here tonight. He's trying to show us His hands. Would you let that speak to your heart? He gave His all.

Now He wants all of you. Maybe you've received Christ. Thank God if you have.

And you understand the righteousness of Christ put to your account. Wonderful. But has that perfect righteousness of God been percolating down into your life? Does it affect the way you think? The way you do business? The way you relate to your unconverted neighbor? The way you relate to your husband and your wife? Does it? You see, that's the question.

That we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. Never forget the cry of Christ on the cross. Why have you forsaken Me? And do you know what happened there? Jesus Christ, in those few hours of time hanging on the cross, He experienced in Himself what the sinner experiences in an eternity in hell.

He experienced that in Himself. Forsaken of God. And there are millions of people also who've never heard who need to hear.

And they need you to tell them. And the major reason why Christians don't share Christ is not because they don't know the gospel. It's because they know something.

They know their life is not right. And that's why we don't share Christ. When my life is right, I bubble over.

I want to share Christ. I find myself praying about it all the time, seeking for opportunities, and God gives them to me. He died for all, that they who live should not, henceforth, live unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them and rose again.

Are you violating that precept? Who are you living for? Your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost who is in you, who you have of God. And you are not your own. You are bought with a price.

Therefore, glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's. And elsewhere, Paul says, you're bought with a price. Be not you the servants of men.

Don't let them put you in their showcase as a credit to their teaching. Be God's man, God's woman. We haven't got long to live.

When I was a very young Christian, and I'll close in a moment, I heard Torrey Johnson in Winnipeg. Five hundred people in this meeting. Suddenly, in the middle of his sermon, he stopped and he said, Young man, and God said, He's talking to you.

Young man, quit fooling around. Give your life to God. Give your life to me.

God was saying. Torrey said to God, Those words still ring in my heart. Don't fool around.

Are you sixty years old? Don't fool around. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age. Oh, to be like the blessed Redeemer.

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