

Christ Our Righteousness—Today's Message

There are some today who minimize the message of Christ our righteousness, believing there are other topics far more important, such as the second coming of Jesus, some of the prophecies, our personal needs in the Christian life, and the law and the Sabbath. Some even say that Christ our righteousness is a fad that will soon pass away; and it might be that, but not because God planned for it to be that way.

All of these comments demonstrate a terrible ignorance of the scope and meaning of the topic of Christ our righteousness. Such a depreciation of the message often causes many to not see its true worth, value, and importance in their lives; and therefore they fail to experience Christ as their righteousness.

The following quote is one of the most significant things Ellen White wrote regarding the third angel's message: "Several have written to me inquiring if the message of justification by faith is the third angel's message, and I have answered, 'It is the third angel's message in verity.'" COR 64. There are several other statements like this. "The Lord in His great mercy sent a most precious message to His people through Elders Waggoner and Jones....It presented justification through faith in the Surety; it invited the people to receive the righteousness of Christ, which is made manifest in obedience to all the commandments of God....This is the message that God commanded to be given to the world. It is the third angel's message, which is to be proclaimed with a loud voice, and attended with the outpouring of His Spirit in a large measure." TM 91,92. The terms "justification by faith" and "Christ our righteousness" are used interchangeably; therefore, Christ our righteousness is the third angel's message, which we know to be the final message from God to the world in the last days.

"The time of test is just upon us, for the Loud Cry of the third angel has already begun in the revelation of the righteousness of Christ, the sin pardoning Redeemer. This is the beginning of the light of the angel whose glory shall fill the whole earth." COR 56.

Throughout the Spirit of Prophecy we find that the terms third angel's message, the Loud Cry of the third angel, justification by faith, and Christ our righteousness are all closely interrelated, and in fact synonymous. This message is unique in that, even though you can apply Christ our righteousness to a personal experience at any time in the Christian era, it has a special quality in the last days. Most will agree that these are the last days. The Loud Cry of the third angel is the last message according to the book of Revelation. There will be no greater message sent from God than this precious truth—the message of Christ our righteousness. This final message will lighten the earth with the glory (character) of God, bringing to a close God's final work upon the earth.

There are so few people who understand anything about this subject. We who proclaim to be ready for the coming of Jesus, and to be preparing the world for that event, sometimes depreciate the message that will finish God's work; and therefore think that we are finishing His work without it. If there is any message today that is "present truth," it is the message of justification by faith in the righteousness of Christ. It is our terrible ignorance of the scope and meaning of this topic that perhaps has kept us here so many years, when we thought He would come a long time ago. If this is the third angel's message, it is not only timely, but extremely urgent; for the alternative is for millions to be lost. Some people object to that, but you can object all you want. That is the way it is according to the Scriptures. You can argue with God, but I doubt that you will win.

In the stream of time, we live in a day of extreme emergency; yet somehow many who used to sense that have forgotten all about it. We do not like to be pressured anymore, or pushed; but time is pressing us and urging us. To sleep in this day and time is as dire as Christ painted it where He said, “in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.” Matthew 24:44. This message is vital to our correct understanding of the issues of our day and age. Without Christ our righteousness, we will misunderstand those issues and pervert them, and they will not mean to us what they should.

Many understand last day events and the third angel’s message through a legalistic viewpoint, which brings about terrible misunderstandings for the third angel’s message is Christ our righteousness in verity. To look at this message through legalism is to corrupt the message that God intended would finish the work. When we see all the issues of our day through the eyes of Christ and His righteousness, suddenly we will understand where we are in time and how urgent these days are. We will also have a clearer vision of Christ and His righteousness

The teeth in the Sabbath that makes it very urgent is the mark of the beast; and the teeth in Christ our righteousness is the fact that it is the third angel’s message in verity—the Loud Cry. It is not something we can toy with like a cat with a mouse and say, “Well, I will decide later.” Later may be too late. The urgency of the times prods us on to make a choice now and not tomorrow!

There are many similarities between Christ our righteousness and the third angel’s message that we often do not see. The Loud Cry declares that “Babylon is fallen.” Revelation 18:2. You must study about Babel and Babylon. Babylon is the symbol of self-righteousness—do it yourself in your own efforts and your own strength. As Nebuchadnezzar said, “Is not this great Babylon, that I have built...by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?” Daniel 4:30. Babylon fell because that same spirit persisted in his grandson Belshazzar during the feast that night as described in Daniel chapter 5. Daniel reviews to Belshazzar the experience of his father, and he states there in verse 22, “And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this.” That is, you knew all the experience of your grandfather, how he was humbled down to be like an animal because of his terrible pride and because of his contesting with God; though you knew all of this, you have not humbled yourself. Babylon is like that, and the Bible declares its fall.

The third angel’s message has to do with commandment keeping, and Daniel 7:25 predicts a power that “thinks to change times and laws.” Babylon prefers to have man made laws. In addition to this, in Revelation chapter 13, it says that all will be caused to worship this power and its commands. This is accomplished first of all by deceiving the masses with its miracles, and then forced by a decree prohibiting buying or selling for all who do not submit to their commands.

In Revelation 14:12, we are told that God’s people keep His commandments. Why do they keep them? Are they forced to? Jesus said, “If ye love Me, keep My commandments.” John 14:15. What a difference there is between causing them to worship, and wooing or winning them so that they love and obey Him.

Jesus taught that the law was supreme love for God and to love our neighbors as ourselves. In Revelation 18:3, in the loud cry of the third angel, we are taught that Babylon has an intimate love affair, not with Christ, but with “the kings of the earth.” She loves, but not Jesus. In addition, she does not keep the second half of the Ten Commandments because she causes those that would not worship the beast to be killed, which is not exactly loving your neighbor as yourself. The mistreatment of human

beings, the unkindness to others, is a part of the activities of the enemy of Christ; and yet they claim to be commandment keepers. They claim to obey God and to rightly represent Him in the earth. This is just a little birds-eye view of some of the aspects of the third angel's message and the loud cry, and it helps us see how different it is from Christ our righteousness.

In opposition to this power will be those who will shine for Christ. Those who love God will truly obey Him; and they will also love their neighbors as themselves. This will be made manifest to the world.

We will be digging into the meaning of the third angel's message from the one viewpoint of Christ our righteousness (or justification by faith as we more often call it).

Here is the entire text of the message: "And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory. And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies. And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, My people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities." Revelation 18:1-5. This is what we call the "Loud Cry" of the third angel. It seems that as the third angel's message is going forth, another angel comes with power to make the message more effective.

Notice that "the earth was lightened with his glory." What is the glory that lights up the earth in this message? It is not literally the angel. In the Greek language, the word for "angel" means "messenger." This is a symbol of a message that sweeps the earth, like an angel encircling the globe. But it is not the glory of the angel. It is the glory of the message.

What is the glory that lights up the earth? "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and His glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising." Isaiah 60:1-3. This is a command to stand up and shine. Why should we shine? Because "thy light is come." Your light and my light; and the glory of the Lord is risen upon us just like the sun coming up in the morning. This is the prophecy of the light of Revelation 18:1 that something tremendous would happen to lighten the whole earth.

Jesus taught that "Ye are the light of the world." Matthew 5:14. You! In Isaiah it says you are to rise and shine for your light is come. Jesus also said, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." Matthew 5:16. Through good works light is to shine out to the world, and the result is that your Father will be glorified. The light spoken of here is good works, not just good words (although they might be pleasant, too). It is talking about good actions that the world will appreciate.

Literally, the people involved in the Loud Cry will shine. In the book *Early Writings*, there are several places where it mentions this. "The work of this angel comes in at the right time to join in the last great work of the third angel's message as it swells to a loud cry." "I saw a great light resting upon them [God's people], and they united to fearlessly proclaim the third angel's message." "The glory of God rested upon the patient, waiting saints, and they fearlessly gave the last solemn warning..." "The light that was shed

upon the waiting ones penetrated everywhere....” “Servants of God, endowed with power from on high with their faces lighted up, and shining with holy consecration, went forth to proclaim the message from heaven.” “God’s people were strengthened by the excellent glory which rested upon them in rich abundance and prepared them to endure the hour of temptation.” EW 277-279.

These quotations tell us that these people will literally shine in the radiance of God’s glory that rests upon them. When Jesus spoke about people seeing our good works and glorifying God, He was speaking about the light, or glory, streaming from the right kind of good works; and I hope you have not set your mind in a mold as to what those good works are. Too often our definitions are incorrect, compared to those Christ gives us.

How do the saints become so glorious that they shine like the sun? “So the followers of Christ are to shed light into the darkness of the world. Through the Holy Spirit, God’s word is a light as it becomes a transforming power in the life of the receiver. By implanting in their hearts the principles of His word, the Holy Spirit develops in men the attributes of God. The light of His glory—His character—is to shine forth in His followers. Thus they are to glorify God...” COL 414. In other words, the world is to see God in His saints by seeing God’s character in them. This is what it is talking about when it says the earth is lightened with His glory.

You can get some idea about God’s glory being His character in the story of when Moses asked to see God’s glory. “And he said, I beseech Thee, shew me Thy glory. And He said, I will make all My goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord...” Exodus 33:18,19. “And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin...” Exodus 34:6,7. This is the character of God; and His character is love. Our God is love. When He proclaimed His character, He proclaimed these attributes described here. Our God is love, and His love (His character) will be seen like glory; like the sun coming up in the morning, covering the whole earth.

The day when the earth will be lightened with His glory was prophesied in the Old and New Testaments. God will be seen as He really is, not as people suppose He is. There is a vast difference. Human beings will show the world what God is like.

This light is needed because Isaiah tells us that “darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and His glory shall be seen upon thee.” Isaiah 60:2. Into this darkness God’s glory will shine, and the world will see God as He is, manifested in His people.

“It is the darkness of misapprehension of God [we fear Him] that is enshrouding the world. Men are losing their knowledge of His character. It has been misunderstood and misinterpreted.” COL 415. That does not mean only the people in other churches. There are many of us that are fearful of God. We say, “But I have been sinning.” He knew that everyone had been sinning before He ever came to this world. “But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” Romans 5:8. He knows you are a sinner, but that does not chase Him away, or He would have never come in the first place. He takes the sins that separate God and man out of the way. He is the only one who could do that. He is the sin bearer who carries them all away. They have all been laid upon Him; therefore they no longer separate. Why? Because Christ took them out of the way. There is no wall of partition dividing God and man anymore, which is misunderstood Old Testament theology that causes people to fear

God. The Pharisees fled from Jesus in the temple, but the little children and the mothers stayed there. It is possible to become comfortable in the presence of God.

There is a gross misunderstanding about God. In fact, one of the largest tasks for the church to accomplish today is to gain a right understanding of God. Many of our students do not understand Him well. The same is true of many parents, church members, and pastors. We often present Him in a vastly different way than He really is. No wonder people are afraid of the God they imagine Him to be. Therefore people do not feel accepted because He seems to be so tyrannical, dictatorial, oppressive, and demanding. We always present Him as pointing the finger at us, so we cringe in our guilt. God is not like that. There is a darkness in the world, a misapprehension of God; and we must go back and present Him as Christ did when He walked this earth; for as Jesus said, "he that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." John 14:9.

The Bible says that into this darkness light will shine—the light of the glory of God. "At this time [when there is darkness in the earth] a message from God is to be proclaimed, a message illuminating in its influence and saving in its power. His character is to be made known [that is the message]. Into the darkness of the world is to be shed the light of His glory, the light of His goodness, mercy, and truth." COL 415. Someone must do more than just speak about this. It is more than a proclamation. It is a demonstration, a manifestation, so that the world sees God in His people. His character is to be demonstrated in our lives.

The quote on page 415 continues on: "The children of God are to manifest His glory. In their own life and character they are to reveal what the grace of God has done for them. The light of the Sun of Righteousness is to shine forth in good works—in words of truth and deeds of holiness." He is counting on us to manifest Him to the world, to demonstrate what God's true character is really like—that He is truly a God of love.

He will make us like that. His goal for you is to make you a light of His glory—of His character—so that you might glorify Him in your good works. He is able to accomplish that, is He not? That should be our goal.

Isaiah wrote about this in slightly different language: "O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!" Isaiah 40:9. Behold your God.

"Those who wait for the Bridegroom's coming are to say to the people, 'Behold your God.' The last rays of merciful light, the last message of mercy to be given to the world, is a revelation of His character of love." COL 415. The world has not yet, apart from Jesus, seen God. Jesus was the only One who has truly revealed Him to the world; and now we understand there will be a message that will lighten the whole earth that will say, "Behold God in His people; and God is love." They will see that. There will be no last plagues until the world sees that God is love. There will be no return of Jesus until the world sees that God is love. This is the last message—the revelation of God's character of love.

We preach that Christ is coming back soon. Too often we only present a Christ that will be taking vengeance on those who know Him not. We teach a Judgment going on, and you had better be ready or you will burn. Is that revealing a God of love? We are trying to frighten people into being ready, and that does not reveal God's love at all. God hates the sin, but He certainly loves the sinner. There is a great deal of difference between hating acts of sin and hating people. You and I might have some trouble

making distinctions, but God does not. He does not hate the sinner. He loves the sinner; although He despises some of the things we do. Your parents do not like some of the acts you do, but they love you. You may not like some of the actions of your spouse, but you love your spouse. God makes the same distinctions. God is love, but how often we present Him as threatening us if we do not line up. God is a God of love and He is not like that. He woos us to His side. He does not drive us as the beast power does.

How is it that God's people will be like God in character? "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." 2 Corinthians 4:6. God shines light that gives us knowledge and understanding about His character. As we behold Jesus, we behold our heavenly Father, and a light, an understanding, comes into us; and the glory of His character becomes a glory to us, just as to Moses in the mount when he beheld the glory of God in the law and the sacrifice. The face of Moses shined so brightly that the people could not look upon him. This was a human being who had walked so closely with God that he literally glorified God physically as well as spiritually; for he was a reflector of that brilliance, of that light that he had beheld there in the mount.

This is a creative act. God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness hath shined in our hearts. As He created light and darkness, so He creates light in the darkened minds of His people and the people of the world. He shines into their hearts.

Paul said that when the old man is put off, you are to be "renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." Ephesians 4:24. That new creature, or creation, is a creative act. God makes a new person. And just like He caused the light to shine out of darkness back in the beginning, so He does now in you and in me. He wants to do this in the whole world in the last days.

Paul wrote about beholding His glory. "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord [His character], are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." 2 Corinthians 3:18. As we fall in love with Him and become enraptured with Him, as we adore Him, as we are devoted to Him, we see His glory—His character—and we are changed into the same image; even from glory to glory, or from one degree to another, until we shall shine as the stars in their beauty.

Paul wrote that "we have this treasure [this glory, this character, this beauty] in earthen vessels [in corrupt human bodies], that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." 2 Corinthians 4:7. Everyone knows that fallen human beings are not like God. Everyone knows that in our corrupt bodies we cannot possibly produce a character like His. The entire world knows that for we have demonstrated it for six thousand years. Therefore, all the praise is to Him if men become like Him. When He shines into our hearts and changes us, and by beholding His glory we are changed from glory to glory, everyone will know that *God* has brought this about, and not man. The world will praise Him and not us, because the message is *Christ* our righteousness, not *we* our righteousness.

The first angel's message says that we are to "worship Him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters." Revelation 14:7. Worship the Creator. He is the only One who can make light shine out of darkness; and the minds of many today are darkened. That is why the Bible does not make sense to many people. That is why God's commands seem unreasonable. That is why we have so many frustrations and so many problems. Our minds are beclouded and dead in trespasses and sins. They must

be “quickened by the Spirit.” 1 Peter 3:18. He says He will shine into our minds, so that the darkness and mystery would be taken away; and you will say, “Oh, now I see!”

Just as God accomplishes the rising of the sun every day, He accomplishes the rising of the Sun of Righteousness in our lives. He accomplishes the glory of God in human beings—earthen vessels—in all their weakness and sinfulness. He accomplishes this until we are changed into vessels of beauty and of honor.

We become like Him while the others worship the beast and his image, which are man-made powers, and obeyed in man’s strength; not transformed by the Divine One. What a difference. And so many of us, as we attempt to make ourselves better in our own strength, are joining with those who worship the beast and his image. It is all man made unless it is Christ our righteousness.

The distinctions have become wide between those who love Him and those who are being forced, or who are trying to force themselves, to love Him. One group trusts only Him and His righteousness, and not their own. They are recreated by His power and not their own. They are transformed by His glory until all praise is to Him and not to themselves. The other group will take the praise to themselves for their own efforts to satisfy God’s laws.

God’s goal for you and for me is not to be good enough to be saved. This is one misunderstanding that must be taken away. Our goal is not to be good enough to be saved. It never has been that. God’s goal for every human being is to be like Him. He wants to be seen in the world through us. The world understands us but they do not understand Him. It is that darkness that must be taken away. The world will see God in human beings before Jesus comes back. Christ our righteousness tells us that His glory is to be seen, and not ours. Ours is all contaminated, corrupt, and vile.

The goal of Christ our righteousness and justification by faith is not simply just to be good enough to get to heaven. That is an erroneous concept. It is not striving to be obedient. It is to be like Him. God does not want to come and pat us on the back and say, “You have done a good job.” He wants to say, “You have honored Me; I will honor you. You have glorified Me, I will glorify you.” The world cannot be saved by seeing us become better and better and better. It does not matter how good we become because the world will not be saved by our becoming good. The world will be saved by God. They must see Him, they must love Him, they must adore Him, they must receive His Person; but they do not know Him until they see Him in us. We will be a revelation of God to a dying world.

John told us in very simple words that “when He shall appear, we shall be like Him.” 1 John 3:2. Some people listen to this and become very discouraged. They say, “I can never become like Him.” But the One who made something out of nothing, the One who made light to shine out of darkness, can make something out of nothing in you, too. If you understand the Creator, and the power of God unto salvation, which Paul defines as the gospel, it is not what you can do, but rather what He will do with you when He is permitted to do that.

“It is His glory to pardon the chief of sinners.” MH 161. And His glory is His character. He says, “I don’t care how bad you are. That doesn’t bother Me or prevent Me from doing something for you. My character is manifested when I pardon the chief of sinners and transform them. Then the world truly sees that I am God; and a God of love and of might and power who loves humans so much that He can change the vilest of sinners.” Then God is seen! Yet all the time we keep saying, “I am too bad!” So what! That is no problem to Him. He has been working with the bad for six thousand years. It

is His glory to take care of the worst sinners. It does not bring praise to Him to take care only of fine, upstanding citizens who never had a sin in their lives; although there are not any like that—they just think they are. The ones who really bless Him are the ones that everyone thinks is lost—the hopeless cases. They really honor His name when He converts them, do they not?

The Lord is capable. What do you think of God? Is He too small to accomplish His plans? We are everlastingly looking at weak self and becoming discouraged. He tells us to look to Him and be saved and to be transformed. It is His glory that is to be seen in our transformation, not ours.

When does the light of the angel come to lighten the earth? It is made clear in the Old Testament by the gospel prophet Isaiah. “Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the Lord shall be thy reward [rear guard].” Isaiah 58:6. This verse begins with “Then.” When is “then”? It is referring back to two previous verses. “Is not this the fast that I have chosen? To loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? When thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?” Verses 6,7. When this happens, “Then shall thy light break forth as the morning: and thy righteousness shall go before thee.” Then God will be seen.

“Thus in the night of spiritual darkness God’s glory is to shine forth through His church in lifting up the bowed down and comforting those that mourn. All around us are heard the wails of a world’s sorrow. On every hand are the needy and distressed. It is ours to aid in relieving and softening life’s hardships and misery. Practical work will have far more effect than mere sermonizing. We are to give food to the hungry, clothing to the naked, and shelter to the homeless. And we are called to do more than this. The wants of the soul, only the love of Christ can satisfy. If Christ is abiding in us, our hearts will be full of divine sympathy. The sealed fountains of earnest, Christlike love will be unsealed.” COL 417.

Christ wants to give each of us a tender heart that sympathizes with people, that has compassion as He had, that is sensitive to the needs of those around us. He will supply all their needs according to His riches in glory, no matter what those needs are. This goodness of God will be reflected and manifested in humanity. God will be seen in the person of His saints. This is what He is waiting for.

The Bible says the result of this light is that “the Gentiles [or unbelievers] shall come to thy light, and the kings to the brightness of thy rising.” Isaiah 60:3. A tremendous ingathering, or harvest of souls will take place. Multitudes came in at Pentecost. We are told that the Latter Rain will be even greater.

An Old Testament writer prophesied that “the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.” Habakkuk 2:14. Here is Ellen White’s comment on this Bible text: “Another angel comes down from heaven having great power, and the earth is to be lightened with his glory. The Spirit of the Lord will so graciously bless consecrated human instrumentalities that men, women, and children will open their lips in praise and thanksgiving, filling the earth with the knowledge of God, and with His unsurpassed glory as the waters cover the sea.” 7BC 984. It will be so extensive there will be millions of people shining for God, filled with His glory and manifesting His character, and the whole earth will be full of His glory.

Human beings, multitudes in every land, will shine for God, saying, "Behold your God. He is like us, and we are like Him."

We are to proclaim His glory and grace, not by sermons, but every moment and every hour of every day, wherever we live, wherever we go. We cannot preach the Loud Cry in words. We will live the Loud Cry.

It is God's glory to pardon the chiefest of sinners. It does not matter how vile you have been or how far you have gone. God will manifest Himself in you, He will glorify Himself in you, and the world will be amazed as they behold God in humanity. And then Jesus will come.

How He longs to come into your heart. How He longs to rise like the sun in the morning with light, warming us on the inside and the outside; and glowing in us, shining in us, until the whole life is so transformed that our very lips, our every act, manifests His love and His goodness; until we cannot contain and constrain ourselves. We must shine for Him. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." Matthew 5:16.

It is our privilege to have that transformation, not tomorrow but this very day. God has been waiting many years to shine out into the darkness of this world through our lives. May His will be done for you and for me is my prayer in His precious name.