

The Righteousness of God

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Date: 01 July 2012

Preacher: Dr Charles Price

[0 : 00] Thank you. Well, thank you so very much for that kind introduction. And it is a privilege and a joy to be here this evening.

And I hope you don't start to get hungry for pizza. Whether you're going to have the pizza delivery men arrive, they probably don't do that on the Sabbath day here anyway. But it is a great joy to be here.

It has been for this weekend. And I have never been to the island of Lewis before, though I've known of it for many years. In particular, I mentioned on Friday night at the opening meeting of the conference, which by the way finishes tomorrow night, and I mentioned then that when I was a teenager, a lady by the name of Mary Morrison, she later became Mary Peckham, came to speak in the area where I was.

And she came to speak about, well, I wanted to give her testimony of her conversion in the revival in Lewis in the years between 1949 and 1952.

And I have read a number of times, a number of accounts of that event, because my great-grandfather and then my grandfather were converted in the Welsh revival of 1904.

[1 : 18] And so I have been intrigued and interested in those occasions when God has moved in those unique ways. And I think the Celtic people in particular have been blessed by God in that way.

The Welsh revival was almost entirely amongst Welsh-speaking people. I understand much of the Hebridean revival, too, was amongst Gaelic-speaking people. And maybe we English-speaking and Scottish-speaking.

Is that a language? It sounds a little bit different to English sometimes. We're a little hard-hearted. I don't know. But it certainly has been a privilege to be here.

Now, I forgot to ask a very important question of you, which is, what time do I finish? Because if I don't ask that, and they'll all hear the answer. Oh, look at that. Look at that.

Total freedom. I do have to be somewhere else for a youth meeting. What time is that? 8.30, I think. So, we've got plenty of time. But I won't keep you here right up until the last minute.

[2 : 24] But we've had read to us verses I'm going to speak from in just a moment. But first, let me tell you a story. I'm not sure if it's an apocryphal story or a true one. But on one occasion, there was a multi-story building that had been constructed, something in excess of 60 floors.

And after it had been in operation for a number of years, somebody discovered a hairline crack that appeared on the wall of the 42nd floor. The managing director of the company that owned the building contacted the architect and said, I need you to come.

There is a crack on the 42nd floor of the building. The architect said, I'll be there just as soon as I can. And the managing director asked to be notified when the architect arrived.

After a while, he got the message, the architect is in the building. So, the managing director took the lift up to the 42nd floor and the architect was not there.

So, he waited. The architect didn't arrive. He waited. He waited. He waited. Eventually, he went back to his office and contacted the person at the entrance area and said, I want you to find out where the architect is.

[3 : 56] And eventually, he got the message, we found the architect, he's in the sixth basement. So, he took the lift down to the sixth basement, six layers below ground.

There was the architect. He said, what are you doing down here? I asked you to come and inspect a crack on the 42nd floor. What are you doing in the sixth basement? He said, you may well have a crack on the 42nd floor, but your problem is not on the 42nd floor.

Your problem is in the basement. And apparently, and this is the bit I'm not sure if it's true or apocryphal, but apparently, there was a security guard who worked in the building who wanted to build a garage at his home, hadn't got the money or the resources, and every night, he'd take the lift down to the sixth basement, chisel a brick out of the wall, put it in his holdall, and carry it home and add it to a growing pile in his garden.

And after taking enough bricks from the sixth basement, one day a crack appeared on the 42nd floor. The reason I tell you that story is because for those who have eyes to see it, there are cracks on the 42nd floor of our society, not just the 42nd floor, but on many of the floors.

We are confused as to what is right and what is wrong, what is good and what is bad. We are elevating things that once we condemned and we're condemning things that once we elevated.

[5 : 31] And we can take our time trying to plaster the 42nd floor, but these are only symptoms. The problem lies in the foundation.

Not only are there cracks on the upper stories of society, there are cracks on the upper stories of the Christian church. Again, we no longer are clear about what is right, what is good.

We're no longer clear about what is sin. In fact, we're embarrassed about the notion. But the problem is the foundations have been chiseled away.

The psalmist wrote in Psalm 11 verse 3, if the foundations be destroyed, what will the righteous do? And I checked in the psalm book and loved the rendering of it, where it says that the foundations are destroyed and all around there is decay.

Whatever can the righteous do surrounded by such disarray? That's a wonderful interpretation of that verse. And I want to talk about what the righteous do when the foundations are crumbling, which is what the psalmist asks.

[6 : 56] What can the righteous do? And I want to look at one of the key foundation stones on which life is to be built, on which society is to be built, certainly on which the church of Jesus Christ is to be built.

But what is true for the church of Jesus Christ is, of course, true for society at large. There's not one truth for Christians and another truth for those who are not. There is truth. And there is error.

And we believe the Word of God reveals to us truth that is applicable in all of life. And I want to read you again verse 16, which we had read before Romans chapter 1, where Paul says, For I am not ashamed of the Gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

Now let me pause there a moment. I'm going to read the next verse in a moment. But what exactly is the nature of this salvation that Paul says he is not ashamed of?

What exactly is the nature of this Gospel? What exactly is the power of God which he says that it is? Well, then in the next verse, he says this, For in the Gospel, what?

[8 : 24] If I were to ask you to close your Bible and to finish that sentence, I'm not ashamed of the Gospel, it's the power of God, for the salvation of everyone who believes, for in the Gospel, how would you finish the sentence?

Well, you probably would finish it correctly. But there would be those who may say, For in the Gospel, a means of being forgiven is proclaimed.

There are those who may say, For in the Gospel, a means of getting to heaven is made clear. Or for in the Gospel, there is power to live.

Now, of course, all that would contain truth. For those are all ingredients in the Gospel. But Paul sums it up in a statement that is fundamental for us to understand if those aspects of the Gospel are to become real and evident.

This is what he says, For in the Gospel, a righteousness from God is revealed. A righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written, the righteous will live by faith.

[9 : 58] Now, if you were to read to the rest of Romans, and Romans is the most systematic explanation of the Gospel that we have in the New Testament, because when Paul wrote this letter, he'd never been to Rome.

He intended to go on his way to Spain. Explains that at the end of the letter. And he said that I want you to know what my message will be when I come to you, because there'd been all kinds of rumors about the Apostle Paul that had circulated, not all to his credit, and so I want you to know exactly what my message will be.

And when you read through the book of Romans, the most systematic explanation of what salvation is, you discover that salvation, according to Romans, is not primarily a salvation from hell to heaven.

He never mentions heaven in the whole book, other than the wrath of God is being revealed from heaven. But he doesn't mention it as being the goal of the Gospel. Or that salvation is primarily a salvation from guilt to innocence, or even from death to life, but Paul's message is that salvation is primarily a salvation from unrighteousness to righteousness.

Now, as a cause, we need to be forgiven, so that is part of it. As a consequence, we will go to heaven, so that is a wonderful part of it. As a means, we receive life, spiritual life, in place of our condition of spiritual death.

[11 : 24] But the actual substance of the Gospel Paul teaches in this book is that the righteousness of God is restored into human experience.

So what do we mean by that? This word righteous and righteousness is a frequent word in Romans. It occurs about 44 times throughout this letter.

And so, we need to examine it, and I'm going to look at it under three headings. I want to talk about the expression of righteousness first of all.

What exactly is righteousness? Then I want to talk about the suppression of righteousness, which Paul also talks about. And then the restoration of righteousness, how it becomes restored to human experience.

Let me talk first about the expression of righteousness. What actually is this righteousness? Well, clearly in Romans, righteousness is defined first of all in relation to God.

[12 : 26] In this verse, he says, a righteousness from God is revealed. So whatever it is, it comes from God. In chapter 3, verse 5, he speaks of God's righteousness and also the righteousness of God.

Also in chapter 3, a righteousness from God. He repeats that again, a righteousness from God. So clearly, righteousness has to do with God.

But actually, in Romans, it also has to do with people. Because if you read in Romans 4, verse 22, for instance, it speaks of Abraham and his faith in God, and it says, it was credited to him as righteousness.

And later, he says, but also for us to whom God will credit righteousness. You know, a little bit like when you credit something to your bank account. Righteousness is something, he says, which is credited to us.

In Romans 5, he talks of those who receive God's gift of righteousness and they reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ. So righteousness is primarily about God, but it's also something that is about human beings as something to be received, credited with, and gifted with.

[13 : 44] righteousness. Well, righteousness is the moral character of God. It represents who God is and how God acts.

However, the reason why the righteousness of God is an important fundamental ingredient in the gospel is because it was not only to be a description of who God is and how God acts, it was also intended to be a description of how human beings act.

Because in the beginning, you remember, God said, let us make man in our image. What is the nature of that image? I referred to this a little bit on Friday night for those who may have been there.

Theologians have debated and still debate what exactly is the image of God. I think we can work it out fairly simply by deduction. There are certain things that are true of God that are not true of human beings.

There are attributes God has. He's not given to us. God is omnipotent, all-powerful, he's omniscient, he knows everything, he's omnipresent, he's in all places, at all times, he is immutable, he does not change, he is eternal, he has no beginning and no end.

[14 : 59] These things are true of God, but none of them are true of human beings. So clearly there are attributes of God in which we were not created in the image of those attributes.

But there are attributes of God which we were created to express and they are his moral attributes. The fact that God is love and we're created to be loving, that God is just, we're intended to act justly, God is merciful, we're intended to act mercifully, God is kind, God is all these moral characters behaviors that are intended to be displayed in human behavior.

Adam was created in his image to be a physical and visible expression of what God is like. So if you and I were a fly on the wall in the Garden of Eden, unless flies came after the fall, which they might have done, and we looked at the way Adam treated Eve, we would have seen what God was like.

He would have been kind because God is kind, loving because God is loving. If we saw the way Eve treated Adam, we would have seen what God was like. If we'd seen the way they handled the animals in the Garden, the way they went about their daily activity, we would have seen in them a perfect expression of what God is like in his moral character.

That's what image means. You look at the image and you see what the original is like. However, there's a problem.

[16 : 29] And the problem is most of us don't resemble what God is like. And so my second point is to talk about the suppression of righteousness. If the expression of righteousness is the moral character of God, then the basic problem with human beings is simple and straightforward.

In Romans 3 and verse 10, Paul writes this, there is no one righteous. Not even one. Let me try and illustrate this, if I may.

Just imagine that somewhere in outer space there was a planet that was inhabited by intelligent creatures who were at least equal to intelligence of human beings.

But God having created them had left them no revelation of what he was like. They'd be smart enough to know that it didn't just happen, that there is a creator behind their existence.

universe. But they became very sophisticated, imagine this, they became very sophisticated scientifically, technologically, and they learn to explore the universe, and in the course of time they discover that over in one side of the Milky Way there is a solar system, and one of the planets orbiting that solar system is a planet that has life on it.

[18 : 18] not only that, they discover that this planet called Earth has a creature on it that was created in the image of God. And they get very excited.

We have always wanted to know what God is like. At last we have the opportunity. Because there's a creature made in the image of God, if we could get to Earth and see this creature made in his image, we would know what God is like.

And so imagine they develop spacecraft and train their astronauts and they send them across the universe. Now, this is not going to be possible because the nearest star outside of our solar system is 4.3 light years away and light travels at 186,000 miles per second, which is about 7.75 times around the world every second.

And if somebody were to travel at a million miles per hour from the nearest star, it would take them, according to my arithmetic, 2,881 years to reach the Earth.

That's about 90 generations and then they'd have to go home again. So, of course, this is an impossible thing. I remember once being at a wedding and I sat next to an astrophysicist and he said the idea of space travel is a physical impossibility because of the distances.

[19 : 56] Well, supposing they found a few black holes to speed up the process and they got here and just supposing these men, remember what their purpose is, their purpose is to come to Earth to see what human beings are like in order to know what God is like because human beings were made to be in his image and supposing they arrived last night and they landed their spacecraft just outside Stonaway.

At last, we can find out what God is like and so maybe they pick up a newspaper and they read to their horror that in Syria the government is slaughtering hundreds of people who are rebelling against the totalitarian power that they exercise over them.

They discover that this morning in Kenya 15 people were killed in a church service when they were attacked and moan down by gunfire up in the northern part of Kenya.

They discover that the Royal Bank of Scotland announced today that they have sacked four men for manipulating the interest rates out of greed.

They discover that Barclays Bank have just been fined 290 million pounds for the same thing and they say to themselves is this what God is like?

[21 : 57] Does God murder and kill and cheat and rob? The latest statistic in Scotland about child birth is that 51% of babies born this last year were born outside of wedlock.

Does God not make commitments and keep them? And they get back into their spacecraft, they return back across the universe and the whole planet is waiting for them to come back with the answer to the question what is God like?

And when they land imagine that all the television news cameras are focused on their spacecraft as they step out of the spacecraft and they say what is God like?

You've been to that planet called Earth where there are people made, creatures made in the image of God. You've met those creatures, you've seen them, what is God like?

They'd notice that their faces are long and they say we wish we'd never found out.

God is selfish, God is greedy, God is destructive, God cheats, he reneges on his promises.

[23 : 28] is that true of God? Of course it isn't. Is it true of human beings? Yes it is. Because you see, this is the measure of our sin.

We were created to portray the truth about God and the measure of our sin is the measure to which the way we live fails to tell the truth about God.

The way we live tells lies about God. You see, if righteousness in human behavior is portraying the truth about God, unrighteousness is telling lies about God.

Now you say you picked the worst examples, you picked some of the newspaper headlines, or I went online this afternoon and checked the BBC News to pick up some of that information, you picked the worst.

But let me ask you a question. yes, I picked the worst to make my point. But just supposing somebody came to you and said to you, what is God like?

[24 : 41] Would you dare say to them, if you want to know what God is like, I'll tell you what to do. Follow me around for a week. just see the way I live, listen to the conversations I hold, sit at my table every meal, watch the way I drive my car, see how I spend my money, listen to how I talk to people, listen to how I talk about people, and I'll give you the ability to read my mind, to know what I'm thinking at any time, and if you follow me around for a week and you watch me closely for a week, at the end of that week you will know what God is like.

Would anybody here dare say that to anybody? No, of course you wouldn't. So what are you saying? You're saying I'm a sinner. You're saying my life does not portray what God is like in his moral character and love and kindness and beauty.

Because sin is not just running off with somebody's wife. It is failing to portray the truth about God.

And so Paul concludes and we haven't time to look at how he came to this conclusion in chapter 2, last part of chapter 1 and chapter 2, but in chapter 3 verse 10 he comes to this conclusion, there is no righteous not even one.

There is no one who does good not even one. And he defines good there as being that which expresses his character.

[26 : 40] So if the expression of righteousness is that it's a portrayal of the character of God, the suppression of righteousness is that men and women, boys and girls, designed to express his image, have failed to do so.

Okay. Okay. I'm just going to stop for a few moments. Somebody has fainted apparently and we just need to help them to be taken to a place that's comfortable.

Do you want me to sing? I'll just stand. And the Lord bless that person and restore them if there's any issue of health that.

Okay. Okay. Okay.

Thank you.

[28 : 27] I think we're now able to continue. But I've made those first two points.

The expression of righteousness, which is the moral character of God. The suppression of righteousness, which is the fact that all of us fail to show what God is like.

There is none righteous, not even one. But if the gospel is about restoring the righteousness of God into human experience, then my third point is about the restoration of righteousness.

But Paul says, for in the gospel in verse 17, a righteousness is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith. That is, that the goal of the gospel is to restore the moral character of God to human experience.

This has a definite beginning when we are, through the grace and incredible kindness of God, declared to be righteous on the grounds that Paul talks about in 2 Corinthians 5 verse 21, when he says, God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

[30 : 02] That is, that the Lord Jesus Christ was made what we are, as sinful as we are, as he stood before the Father, or in particular, as he hung on the cross before the Father.

His standing before the Father was that he was as sinful as I am in order that we might become the righteousness of God in Christ. This, of course, is the first priority of the gospel.

I'm not going to talk so much about that in these last few minutes, the imputed righteousness of God, though it is fundamental we understand that. That because Jesus Christ was made sin before the Father as my substitute, all that I am, he was declared to be in all my sin and failure, in order that all that he is, I might be declared to be in his beauty and righteousness, that is my standing.

But that is not just so that we are declared righteous and then begin to live any way we like, but that having been declared righteous, that we might experientially discover that transformation taking place in our lives, which is from one degree of glory to another, conforming us into his image and likeness.

Now, Paul says that this is something which is possible only by faith.

[31 : 53] Faith is sometimes a misunderstood word. Sometimes people have the idea that faith is some kind of almost metaphysical path, you really, really believe something, you somehow make it true.

I remember some years ago I was speaking at a conference in England and it was a residential conference and we lived in one building but the conference hall was another building and I was on my way down to the conference hall to speak one morning and it was a typical English summer's day, it was raining and I was running to avoid getting wet and I caught up with a man and his wife walking under a large umbrella I said, do you mind if I walk under your umbrella with you?

They said, not at all and then merely as a conversation piece I said, it's going to be a miserable day today, isn't it? And the lady of the couple turned to me and said, don't say that. I said, why not?

She said, you should say it's going to be a beautiful day today. I said, but it isn't. It's been raining all night, the sky is black, it's raining now, the forecast is it'll rain all day, if not all week, possibly all months, could be all summer.

She said, but you should say it's going to be a beautiful day, you should say the clouds are going to blow away, you should say the sun will come out and we'll all get a suntan. I said, why? She said, that's faith.

[33 : 26] That isn't faith, that's foolishness. You can stand in a rainstorm and believe what you like, the rain won't take any notice. But I know people having nervous breakdowns trying to believe things into being, that isn't the meaning of faith.

Other folks think that faith is something you need when you write out of facts. As long as you have facts, you're secure, get to the end of the facts, uh-oh, this is where you need faith. Faith is leaping into the dark, believing what you can't prove and hoping it's true and if it is, you're in luck and if it isn't, you're in trouble.

Well, that's not faith either. It is true, of course, we may be caught upon to believe things we can't prove in any objective or scientific way. We cannot prove God to our neighbours and say, there you are, there's the evidence, it's conclusive.

But as a definition of faith, that is not adequate. In fact, faith is not a substitute for facts. Facts are necessary to faith because faith has to be in something. You can't just have faith.

It has to have an object, it has to be in something. And, it's like love, you can't just have love, love has to have an object.

[34 : 34] If you met a teenage girl whose knees were knocking and her eyes were rolling and she was giddy and she was off her food and you said, excuse me, what's the matter with you? Supposing she said, oh, I'm all in love. Really?

Who are you in love with? Nobody, I'm just in love. Can you just be in love with nobody? Of course you can't. Love doesn't exist other than in relationship to an object. It might be a teddy bear, it might be a car, it might be a person.

But the all important thing about love is this object, so it is with faith. Faith does not exist other than in relationship to an object and it is the quality of the object that determines the validity of the faith.

Let me illustrate that. If you put a lot of faith in some thin ice and very nervously, oh, sorry, very confidently, you have a lot of faith in some thin ice and very confidently, you step onto the thin ice, what is going to happen?

I'll tell you what will happen. You will sink by faith. What's the problem? Is it your faith or is it the ice? Well, of course, it's the ice. All the faith in the world won't make up for thin ice. On the other hand, if you put a little bit of faith in some thick ice and very nervously, with a life belt around your waist and a rope tied to the nearest tree, having written a note to your wife saying, if I don't come home, I'll be under the ice, goodbye, it's been nice living with you.

[35 : 51] And very nervously, with a little bit of faith, you step onto the thick ice, what happens? I'll tell you what happens, you walk on the ice. Because you had more faith? No. The object in which you placed your faith was stronger.

Because faith, if you like, is a disposition of trust in an object that allows that object to work on your behalf.

You're exercising faith on the seat on which you're sitting right now. When you sat down after we sang that last song, as an act of faith, you allowed your body to come down and you're sitting right now, most of you, at this position and what's holding you in this position is the seat in which you placed your faith.

You sat as an act of faith in the pew, but what is holding you in position is not your faith, but the pew in which you put your faith. Does that make sense? If not, do an experiment at the endless service when nobody's looking.

Come back in, take away the pew if it's possible and sit on your face. Do you want your discovery? Your faith is totally meaningless. Unless it's placed in an object for the purpose of allowing that object to do something for you.

[37 : 00] Put faith in a chair, you let the chair do something for you. You put faith in a car, you let the car take you down the road. You put faith in an airplane, let the airplane fly you through the air. You put faith in God, you let God do something.

And you see what Paul says here is that this righteousness is possible not on the basis of anything that you or I can do, but on the basis only of the exercise of faith which is allowing God to do something that we cannot do.

You see, that's why if your Christian life or my Christian life can be explained in terms of what I am doing, it's not the real thing. It can be explained only in terms of what God is doing in me, through me, in you, through you.

And that's why Paul explains this later in this letter to Romans that the whole of the Christian life is a life of faith from beginning to end.

In fact, as you probably know, the scripture says that we are cleansed by faith and justified by faith and saved by faith.

[38 : 28] The grounds on which your salvation becomes experiential, grounds on which you become a participator in salvation is by faith, but having been saved by faith, the scripture then says we are to live by faith, we're to walk by faith, we're sanctified by faith, we fight the fight of faith, we take the shield of faith, we overcome the world by faith, we ask in faith, we draw near in full assurance of faith, we have access to God by faith.

Those are all quotations as you'll probably recognize. In other words, having become a Christian by faith, we are then to be the Christian we have become by faith. To the extent Hebrews 11, verse 6 says without faith it's impossible to please God, and Romans 14 says whatever is not of faith is sin.

And having become a Christian by placing our faith in Christ and we are declared righteous by God, we are then to live the Christian life and be the Christian we have become by faith.

That is saying every day, Lord, I cannot be the person you've called me to be. But thank you by your Holy Spirit you live in me.

And in that moment in which I am born again of the Holy Spirit, in which I become alive spiritually, in which I become regenerate, at that moment I have received everything I need for life and godliness, but in order to experience that is a moment by moment living by faith.

[40 : 03] you put faith in an airplane, the airplane flies you through the air.

You can't fly, you're being flown by the aircraft. We put faith in Christ every day and we live a life that displays something of his righteousness and glory, not perfectly in this life.

We are being transformed from one degree of glory into another into his image. One day we will be glorified and we will ultimately portray perfect likeness to the Lord Jesus Christ.

But in this life it is a moment by moment life of faith, which is why it is a life that is impossible to you, it's impossible to me, it's possible only as we daily trust and put our faith in him and say, Lord I can't but you can.

you know, Paul uses another word in Romans 3, 22 when he says this righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.

[41 : 17] Now he says it's to those who believe. Now we use that word two ways. we use that word believe and it's important, we understand the difference, we use it intellectually, I believe something, you believe something, but we also use it experientially.

Let me, let me illustrate what I mean. I'm going to ask you two questions, don't answer them, I'm going to ask you two questions about what you believe and you'll realize they're two very different questions.

First question I'll ask you is this, do you believe in the Loch Ness monster? The second question is, do you believe in aspirin?

Now when you think about it, those are two very different questions. When I say do you believe in the Loch Ness monster, what I mean is, do you believe in the existence of Nessie? That in Loch Ness there's a monster with a long neck and a couple of humps that disappears whenever people go looking for it and only reappears either on the very day you forgot the camera or when people are going home at night having left the pub and they kind of think, oh I think I saw Nessie out there.

What I'm asking you is a question about whether intellectually you believe that this monster exists now. Of course you're Scottish and it's very good for tourism so it's good to believe in it.

[42 : 47] I've only been to Loch Ness once and I couldn't believe the tourists and I was one of them but buses of Japanese that rolled up and German buses that rolled up to take pictures of where Nessie was last seen.

But if I say do you believe in aspirin, I'm not asking if you believe that if you go down to a local chemist and you go in very quietly and you go up to the drug section on the third shelf from the bottom there's some little boxes with little white pills in them and it says on the box, aspirin, do you believe in them?

Because I saw one there yesterday. I'm not meaning that, am I? I take for granted you know aspirin exists. When I say do you believe in aspirin, I mean do you let them work?

I believe in aspirin. I take a baby aspirin every day because I had a heart attack a while ago and this keeps my platelets from sticking together because that would threaten me with another one if they did stick together.

I believe in aspirin. What I mean by that is this, I take them. You see, you can have intellectual belief about God and that is necessary. He that comes to God must believe that he is. There is the Loch Ness monster belief that is necessary.

[44 : 12] Yes, he that comes to God must believe that he is but that in itself won't do you any good. Do you know how I know that? Because James says you believe in God? Well done.

The demons believe and they tremble. It's quite smart to believe in God but that doesn't save you. You might be here tonight and say well I believe in God, I've always believed in God, I would argue for the existence of God but you're not a Christian.

You're not born again of the Holy Spirit. You don't know the life of God in you creating appetites in you for that which is good and right and holy. Because there is the aspirin belief that says because I believe I'm going to let him work.

I'm going to respond to his working in my heart as he reveals to me my need, as he reveals to me the Lord Jesus Christ and the sufficiency of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I'm going to respond and say Lord I trust you. I look to you as my Lord, my Savior, my Master, my righteousness, my wisdom, all these things come from Christ.

[45 : 46] And belief in the New Testament definition of it is not simply intellectual but it's trusting.

Paul says with confidence, I'm not ashamed of this gospel for I know it is the power of God for the salvation of anyone who believes.

The Jew first, also the gentile, for in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed. A righteousness that portrays his character is made possible to me.

For in the gospel a righteousness is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith. He says from first to last, not just in becoming a Christian but in being the Christian I have become.

It is putting my faith every day and saying Lord Jesus Christ only you alone can live this life in me. See when I first became a Christian and I haven't had opportunity to share my testimony while I've been here this weekend.

[47 : 13] We all have a testimony if we know Christ of different things and ways in which he's brought us to himself. For the first years of my Christian life I tried my hardest to live the Christian life and I couldn't.

I knew that God had placed into my heart an appetite for righteousness because that's evidence of the Spirit of God in your heart. And I tried to live this Christian life.

I would dedicate myself to God one week and rededicate myself the next week and rededicate myself the week after that and promised God the week after that I'd try even harder. And I was sincere about it.

But one day after several years of trying my best through my tears before God I said God I love you.

I love your son. God I love you. I love you. I love you. But I'm so sorry I cannot live this life. I'm so sorry to disappoint you.

[48 : 19] And suddenly truths that read in the Word of God but never understood began to make sense. Without me you can do nothing.

Of course you can't live this life. I live yet not I but Christ lives in me. Paul wrote. You can't live this life but Jesus Christ can.

So how do you begin to experience his working in you? In the same way I'm going to get to Edinburgh on Tuesday.

I'm going to Edinburgh on Tuesday to speak at a convention there. I could go to the end of the island of Lewis.

I could get a compass and I could work out that Edinburgh is sort of southwest of here. So I go back.

[49 : 22] Is there a cliff on the edge of the island? I don't know if there are any cliffs around here but I go back about a hundred yards and I take a long run and I try and leap in the direction of Edinburgh.

Would I make it to Edinburgh? No. I'd make it a few feet into the water. Splash and say oh I must have landed in the fourth river. Oh no I haven't.

There's Lewis a few feet behind me. I didn't do very well. I can't jump my way to Edinburgh. It's impossible. But instead I'll go to the airport.

Put my faith in one of those little airplanes. A Saab 340. Looks as though you don't get in. Looks as though you put it on. They're not very big.

And we go to the end of the runway. And I cannot fly. But I put my faith in an aircraft that can.

[50 : 21] And we speed along the runway. And we lift off. And we lift up into the air. And in a few moments we're crossing the water and then the mainland. And after an hour and about ten minutes or so we'll land in Edinburgh.

And if somebody meets me at the airport and says how did you get here? I could say to them well I came by faith. What do you mean? Well I put my faith in an airplane.

The airplane brought me here. I can't fly. Only the aircraft can do this for me. And you see the Lord Jesus Christ is both the author and the finisher of our faith.

We trust him as the author of our faith. We trust him for our salvation. But equally we must trust him every day to be our life, our strength, our power to enable us to live this quality of life.

To portray something of his image and likeness. He who began the good work and you poor settlers Philippians were bringing to completion. Who began the good work?

[51 : 25] Christ began the good work. Who were bringing to completion? Christ. My problem was in the first years of my Christian life I knew Christ had begun the good work and I thought I had to bring it to completion. But no, he who begins the work will bring it to completion.

He who calls you is faithful, Paul said to Thessalonians, and he will do it. Talking there about your whole body, soul and spirit be sanctified. He says he who calls you is faithful.

He will do it. I thought he had called me. I must try to do it. But that is not possible. And I discovered a whole set of scriptures that I knew well that began to make new sense.

You know, Jesus said, if you're weary, and I was weary, come to me. I'll give you rest. You know, if you were digging a hole and the sweat was pouring off your brow and your muscles were weary, and I came along and said, I'll give you a rest, what would you expect me to do?

Would you expect me to give you a book on techniques for digging holes better? That wouldn't help much. Would you expect me to give you a new shovel? That wouldn't help much. Would you expect me to stand on the side of the hole and sing you some songs to cheer you up?

[52 : 41] That wouldn't help much. No, if you were digging a hole and I said, I'll give you a rest, you'd expect me to get into your hole and take your shovel and dig. Jesus said, if you're weary, come to me.

I'll give you rest. That's not a passivity. For he then said, take my yoke on you. Yoke is what you do when you bind a couple of oxen together.

My background is farming. When I left school, I went to farm in Zimbabwe in Southern Africa. And we used oxen some of the time. We had tractors too, but we used oxen as well. And you'd take a strong and a weak oxen.

You'd yoke them together. And you're just the yoke in such a way that my yoke is easy, said Jesus. My burden is light, even though you're pulling something heavy.

Why? Because the stronger one has taken the bulk of the weight. We don't become passive. We are active in our dependence, our obedience.

[53 : 37] But we discover that we rest in the sufficiency of Jesus Christ. Christ. And the gospel that restores us to the righteousness of God has a moment of beginning when we are made regenerate by the Holy Spirit, born again of the Holy Spirit, as standing before God is the one we share with Jesus Christ at that moment.

But then we begin to live by faith. We begin to walk by faith. Lord, I can't do this, but you can. And the measure to which we live in dependence on him and obedience to him and love for him.

He in us begins to display something of his righteousness, his likeness, his image. So as I said, I think on Friday night, the way we as husbands treat our wives becomes more godly.

Whereas wives we treat our husbands becomes more Christ-like. Where we go about our business, the way we spend our money, drive our cars, bring up our children, talk to our neighbors, or talk about our neighbors when they're not listening, begins to express the righteousness of God.

Not in perfection. That is not offered to us in this life. But we grow from one degree of glory to another until one day we will be fully restored and fully righteous.

[55 : 15] But in the meantime, this is the power of the gospel of which Paul is not ashamed. In this gospel, a righteousness is revealed and is experienced by faith.

I don't know where you are in your walk with God tonight. I don't know how God the Holy Spirit may have taken these truths and applied them in your life.

But I do know this, that if God is speaking to you, if you've never come into the assurance of salvation, you've never been able to say with confidence, I know that I am born again of the Holy Spirit because I have responded to his revelation to my heart and soul.

And I've said, Lord, I trust you. And you can do so tonight. You alone will save me. Thank you. I trust you completely.

There may be those of us who have been trying to live the Christian life and we've been trying by our own strength. And we need to say, Lord, I take your yoke on me.

[56 : 35] You are the one who enables me to live this life in such a way that the yoke is easy, the burden is light because you are my strength.

You are the one on whom I am trusting moment by moment. And yes, you will battle because the Christian life is warfare. But it will also be victory.

Other people will begin to see something of Jesus in you. And I'm going to lead us in prayer. And then I'll hand back. But as we pray, maybe in your own heart, there are those of us who need to respond very personally to God this evening.

Let's pray together. Lord, I trust you tonight.

Thank you, Lord Jesus, for dying on the cross as my substitute to take my sin upon yourself, to be made sin for me.

[57 : 47] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. It is sufficient. I confess my need of you and I trust you to save me.

Thank you, too, that you rose again from the dead. And as my living Savior and living Lord, you are sufficient to enable me in this broken world to live a life that expresses the character of God, the holiness of God, the righteousness of God.

Thank you. I will never be perfectly restored in this life. But thank you for the day.

I'll leave behind this body, this old nature, this sinful environment. And we'll be forever in your presence, fully glorified, fully restored.

But thank you in the meantime. I can trust you. So take your yoke upon me to find your strength made perfect in my weakness.

[59 : 07] I trust you. In Jesus' name. Amen.