

Christ, the End of the Law for Righteousness

Preached At Galeed Chapel, Brighton, on Lord's day
Morning June 24th, 1900

by J. K. POPHAM

*"For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth."
(Romans 10:4)*

Real religion has a foundation. A religion without a foundation is like a house built upon the sand, like a ship without a keel, like a piece of India-rubber. God has made us religious creatures. He laid the principle of religion in our nature and then He gave, in a revelation of His will, the form of that religion, prescribed its duties, and set forth its last great end, namely Himself. The will of God as revealed is the only right rule and foundation of all things that He has made, and the revelation of His will respecting what He will have His creatures do and what He will not have them do that is, I say, the bottom and root and end of all natural religion. He gave this to pure man, and it holds still. The law is the measure and rule of all our duties, obligations, and ends. Every person here is under that rule. Every person here has to be judged by that law, by that revelation of God's will. While compliance with this law continued death was nowhere in existence; that is to say, it had no place in our nature. It is very probable that we have no proper conception in this our fallen state of what we were as from the hand of our Creator placed in Eden; what our understanding was in its grasp, its pure light, its apprehension of the Creator; what our will was in lying absolutely straight with the revealed will of God; what our affections were with no taint in them, no disposition to irregular objects that we are forbidden. I think it probable we have no proper conception of all this. Now because we are absolutely ruined, laid in the dust, as when one cutteth wood chips fly about, our nature is sent flying into bits all about, and no part, no piece is sound or complete, rottenness has entered into our bones. And yet that law is as absolute, its requirements as broad, its penetration to the depth of our nature as deep, its obligations as binding, though we have lost all ability to comply with it, and there we are!

Well now, natural religion having a place in us and not being wholly destroyed, sends men about with this conviction, that something is wrong, we are not as we ought to be; sends men hither and thither therefore to help themselves to that which is good. In the Jewish religion it took that particular form, that their hearts were wholly set on the externals that God gave them to teach other things. Having done them they were satisfied. They went about to establish a righteousness of their own, and this was not submitting themselves unto the righteousness of God. And now there are some people here who are doing the same thing. We all of us did. When God laid His hand upon us we went about strenuously doing that, and should have been doing it today if the Lord had not put an end to it. And there are others who feel they have not quite done their duty. What do they do? They go about to establish their own righteousness and to be very busy. Now that belongs to all of us, and I would that God if it should please Him would press it on the consciences of those who have never felt it. It would be a blessing for you to be brought to consider what your obligations, duties, and debts are, and that you cannot meet any of them.

Ah my young friends, many of you were the children of Christian parents! I was not born in religion. You were, and you cannot be thankful enough for it in a sense, that you were born under the sound of the truth. But O if God would do something more for you, that would be a blessing added to what you now have! O it would be a blessing!

This being the case that we are all born with the bottom completely knocked out of us, that we have got such a twist as nothing can put straight, the whole creation must wholly die, what will the Lord do? I will tell you what He has done made "a new heaven and new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness," (2 Pet. 3:13) made a new covenant because the old covenant could not give life; made a new one that does give life, and in this new covenant put a bottom that never can be moved. He has bottomed it on His sovereign eternal love, and laid at the bottom of it and as the ground of all His covenant purposes the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, and has constituted Him as the Head and Saviour of the body. Then in the fullness of time He sent this Jesus Christ, and that Lord Almighty, that eternal Son of God, took our nature and in that nature obeyed the law perfectly, He took when He assumed our nature, every debt, every duty, every obligation, and every liability His people have on them He took them all. O what a heart He has! O what strength He had, what love!

He began at the beginning where we turned aside. There Christ took His first step. We stepped aside in our conception, and I wish to draw your attention to that vital truth, that we were born in sin. Whether you believe it or not, that is the truth. Christ was born holy that is the truth. "That holy thing," said the angel to the virgin; spotless humanity, impeccable holiness, Jesus Christ born of a woman, made under the law. (Gal. 4:4) That was the beginning, my friends; you think of it! Religion without doctrine is like jelly, nothing in it, no consistency, no form. O this blessed doctrine of our Lord Jesus Christ has a bottom! It gives form and substance to religion.

Well I will show you, as God helps me, a little how this comes to pass, that man is brought to submit to this righteousness of Christ as being the end of the law. Now the law one day will enter an action against every subject of it, no matter who he is. I tell you my hearers, you are born under the law, and that law will one day enter an action and demand satisfaction, and it will depend on what answer there is to it as to how you will be for eternity. Now when the Holy Spirit begins the work of grace He puts the law to a man's heart and life; often to his life first, so that external excrescences and inconsistencies are rectified. You could not lie, be a drunkard, live in open sin, transact business as a worldly man does, with the holy straight law of God in your conscience. When these external matters are put straight it shows a man where his affections should be set, what his duties to his fellow-creature are. It shows him he has never done one single thing right heart wrong, lip wrong, eyes wrong. God jostles out the world set in his heart. Now he is before God's bar. Some of us have been there, and I wish others might be brought there. Our mouths stopped, we become guilty before God, our rags discovered, indwelling corruptions made known. There was a straight line put to us that showed us all our irregularities, our crookedness. It is not enough to discover some crooks. It is as if sometimes God will put a glass, His Word, and focus as it were the glass of His truth in the law and set it right upon us. What does the man do? He falls on his knees and begs God to forgive him, promises never to do so again. What is the effect? He falls the more. What is the result? He becomes worse; this troubles him, affects him, he is wholly wrong. Some can remember this time, how we went to bed troubled and feared opening our eyes in the morning; how we prayed for mercy, promised

amendment, stumbled during the day; how we lived in terror of the Almighty, feared the flaming sword of that bright burning justice, the law we had broken, the hand that was on us, the power we could not escape. Those were days some of us will never forget. Jeremiah said: "Remembering the wormwood and the gall, my soul hath them still in remembrance." (Jer. 3:19,20) So long as this goes on in a sinner's conscience and no Christ in view, so long is he distressed.

Now Christ brought home, opened, made known, revealed by the Spirit, becomes the end of this law. Your foes cannot be resisted, your accusations cannot be met or denied, but Christ is the end of the law. He is the end in some remarkable respects. For instance, He is the end of its condemning power. Condemnation, O terrible word when that condemnation is just! In heart, lip, and life depraved, how can man be other than condemned in conscience, in the Scripture, condemned everywhere. He is a poor miserable wretch, a forlorn creature. Then Christ appears, then hope appears like the breaking of the day, like the Morning Star that bids the sinner believe the day is approaching. This view of Christ sets the sinner longing, praying in a new way as it were, opens to him a way of escape. It is like the fresh morning air that plays upon the face, gives some vigour and promise of the sun and a good day. Withdrawn, the sinner sinks again, but he does not forget it, though he may doubt whether God gave it to him. You never will forget it if you have once felt it, it is so wholly different from every operation of the law, every feeling you had under the law. You believe with the heart that there is a way of escape, with the heart that there is a way of salvation; whether for you or not, that is not settled.

When Christ comes He takes the law away and puts in its place the gospel. Christ said: "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God! He taketh away the first that He may establish the second." (Heb. 10:9) The first is the law. He takes it away in its condemnation and establishes the gospel in its power. The apostle said: "Our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Ghost and in much assurance." (1 Thess. 1:5) When Christ is fully manifested and received by faith, then condemnation is gone. The man is no more under that law. The man who has been standing at the bar before the Judge expecting to hear his condemnation, to his astonishment is acquitted. He goes out of the court free, no more under the law. O what a change, what a wonder! Heaven to dawn on a hell-deserving sinner! God to smile on a self-condemned wretch! Christ by His Spirit to breathe peace to a guilty conscience, where the man has felt, "Peace, why that is not possible!" For he has met that Scripture, and that Scripture may have met him: "There is no peace to the wicked;" (Isa. 48:22; Isa. 57:21) and he said, "That is my case." Then to his utter amazement and he cannot believe it he feels peace breathed into his soul. Where is his sin? It is gone.

Now he may not have very distinct apprehensions as to how all this came about. Now God has put the pardon of sin, the peace of Christ into his heart, he has got to the end of his troubles as he thinks, and he has in a sense. He has got no law to fulfil, no righteousness to work out, no straight line by which to walk as God gave to Abraham, no law to judge him, no fire to burn, no sword to cut him off, that being dead wherein he was held. He is dead to the law, its mauling, cutting, condemning power in the conscience; now he is dead to it through the revelation of Christ to his soul. Christ is the end of the law to him.

Why, you know my friends, if any Englishman go over to France and become naturalized, the laws of England would not affect him. A Frenchman would be subject to the French laws, no writ could reach him through any breach of English law. If God has put you under that terrible law of Sinai and killed you, and then in His rich mercy taken hold of you and put you into Christ, planted you in the gospel, put faith into your soul, Sinai's law cannot reign there. Christ is the end of the law, the particular end of its rule, the end of it in respect of its condemnation. You may say: "That is strange preaching for one who should tell people to do what is right." I am not afraid of that objection. Whoever loved as the man who is under the gospel? What wife or husband would be as tender as those under the gospel? Every relationship in life, every matter is borne, every trial carried, every cross taken up under the gospel, as it could not possibly be under the law. Right? Why, you wish to be right in every step of your life! You won't be afraid while the power is upon you, and yet every minute your cry is: "Hold Thou me up and I shall be safe."

I say this it is not done in every case with the same distinctness, with the same measure of power; but every man who comes under the law will be dead in his feelings until he is brought under the gospel by the manifestations of Christ in his soul in some measure. O how sweet it is to find the doctrine of Christ's obedient life in your soul! How good it is to find that what Christ laboured for on earth when He was a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief bears fruit in your experience! O to think He laboured all His life to make this open way for your sinful soul to the Almighty; opened this blessed fountain for your guilty conscience that it might be made pure; worked out this blessed robe of righteousness that you might wear it! All the joys of saints cost Jesus a groan, all the righteousness cost Jesus stripes. I wish I knew this better. I know enough to make me hate myself and love Christ. I love His obedience, His sufferings, and His death. By them I was made nigh, by them I escape in soul experience from the wrath to come. Sinner, thou must come here or be lost! Your soul must embrace this or be lost!

Now if the Holy Ghost bring thee here, lost in sin, condemned by the law, and then that blessed Spirit, the Revealer of Jesus, should bring thee near enough, thy faith will embrace Him. You will close in with Christ and embrace Him in your arms, the Antidote of sin and death. God is then your Friend for ever, never more to forsake, never more to give a legal frown on your spirit. You may have a stroke, many a rod, all from the Father's hand, all in infinite love.

Well now, He is the end of legal repentance. You notice this piece of experience, because it is very wonderful. Legal repentance all the saints know more or less under the law. Everyone will know that sooner or later. Legal repentance has respect to the consequence of sin. Any thief can wish he had not committed the theft with the prison doors shut on him. Legal repentance does not make the sinner love the Judge and hate the sin. It does not fix his eye on the sufferings of Christ. No; he may be filled with legal repentance and yet filled with enmity and bitterness. Let the Lord but come in His gracious Person, love, and blood to your soul, and the law will then be gone as to that effect of it, for Christ will bring His repentance. O that evangelical repentance, how sweet it is! Aye, the nearer you are to the cross, the stronger your repentance will be! The more mercy operates, the sweeter your tears. The more God's love flows in through Christ, the more you will hate the sins that broke that guiltless heart in Gethsemane and at the cross. The more the light of His countenance shines on your soul to reconcile you to God, the more you will be sorry you were ever alienated from Him and that your alienation brought such grief to Christ,

such making His heart and bowels like wax. If you have known this, it is such a clean thing in religion.

"A sinner may repent and sing,
Rejoice and be ashamed."

Blessed be God, some of us have lived here, and we know it! You may hear plenty of talk about a cheerful religion. There is the greatest cheerfulness, where divine love is the strongest; and where divine love is the strongest, I am sure in this mortal state we shall find repentance the strongest.

Some of you parents may have broken the hearts of your children when you have been kind and they expected the rod. They might have said: "We will never give in." But you look with a look of love and say: "You will break my heart if you continue this waywardness." That is how the Lord manages us stupid, stubborn, wayward creatures; and when He manages us like that and shows us we broke the guiltless heart of Christ, that always breaks our hearts. Christ is the end of legal repentance and the beginning of gospel repentance.

Then He is the end of the law in respect of sin's power. Now this is true. The more the law works in a man's heart, the more his sin works. It stirs up his sin, provokes it: "The law worketh wrath." (Rom. 4:15) The more a man strives against it under the law, the worse he becomes. But if Christ comes and faith embraces Him, that dear Redeemer, look at the change. Who can give up idols under the law? God might break them, but you love them for all that. You may have been pulled out of some fire of sin, yet loved it all the while and looked back at it again and again under the law. But how was it when Christ came? "He shall subdue our iniquities." (Micah 7:19) That is how it was, was it not? I can appeal to every Christian here in this matter. A soul blessed with the gospel, who has had it brought in with power, who has not felt this? "Quick," says Berridge, "my idols all depart, Jesus gets and holds my heart." And under the sweet influence and power of the grace He has brought with Him, what do you say? "Here's my heart, Lord, take and seal it; tread every idol beneath Thy feet; take this heart and put it right; clear it of idols and keep it clear of them." That is the gospel. When Christ comes He is the end of the law that provokes sin, and the beginning of all true worship.

Ah my friends, as I have often said to you, the true form of worship is lain in the soul when Christ is made known! You know how to worship then, and whom to worship. "God is Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." (John 4:24) If you embrace by precious faith the Lord Jesus as brought and revealed to you, then you have known the death of that sin, the weakening of that corruption, the pulling up of every evil, the taking of the heart, the will, and the judgment, and setting them wholly on the Lord. I wish it lasted! It will one day; some of you have had the prospect of it. We do not continue long in one state of mind here, but the eternal day is coming when "unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation." (Heb. 9:28)

And sinner, mark this you must have this perfect righteousness, this perfect justness, or be lost! If you have been perfectly lost in your apprehension by the work of the law, when Christ comes you will understand what this perfection of His is. Talk of the power of sin being prevalent! Is

there a sin you would live in, is there a lust you would indulge then wilfully, persistently? Let conscience answer where Christ's blood has been. Your plague is that sin will live in you, though blessed be God, you do not live in sin!

Then in the next place, He is the end of the law in respect of all sacrifice. O what a good thing! What a mercy! You must bring perfect sacrifices you know, perfect obedience without flaw. It must be perfect in measure; that is to say, it must be perfect always, for measure is a measure of time as well as every other thing. Hence perfect obedience is everlasting obedience. Well then, there is no hope for us. No, not there, not there. Hence God has brought His Son into some of our souls, and so it is written: "He shall purify the sons of Levi...that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness. Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord." (Mal. 3:3,4) "When Thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand." (Isa. 53:10) What is that offering in righteousness? When they bring Christ in the hand of faith. One of the highest attainments of faith, and faith's greatest wisdom in the soul as wrought and standing in the power of the Spirit, is this to acknowledge every accusation that is brought against the soul and then mention the Person and work of Jesus Christ. If you have that faith and that wisdom and skill, you are a blessed person. "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth."

And the end of the law is the end of trouble, the end of the curse, the end of hard duties. That is what it is the end of. Then the beginning of Christ in the soul is the beginning of peace, love, and mercy; the beginning of the reign of grace never to end; the beginning of conquest over hell and sin till the last great victory is obtained. Dr. Owen said this I must say it with immeasurably more reason: "I cannot preach a good sermon, but I can preach a good gospel." I wish in my measure to say the same. I know it is in my measure, but I am certain of it, I am at a point about it, that what I have preached to you this morning is a good gospel. Whether you know it or not, whether I know it or not, it is a good gospel and there is nothing good outside the Person and work of Christ. If Christ be brought in, death goes, sin is subdued, guilt is purged, and the peace of God brought in. If we never know this Christ we shall never be right. If He be never brought in we shall be filled with death for ever, be under the law for ever; and being under the law we must finally be where it sends all rebels for ever in hell.

The longer I live, the more I live to feel two things. One is my emptiness of the gospel, and the other is that when that gospel is brought with some degree of power to my soul it is a remedy that heals, suits, fits, comforts me, and lifts Christ up in my judgment. Then I wish more and more that I knew Him better. May you know Him, may I know Him whom to know is life eternal. Paul's desire was, "That I may win Christ and be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ." (Phil. 3:9) May He graciously look upon us. We are poor creatures. Do fear this if you can, fear innovations, fear everything that tarnishes the Person, perfect work, and saving grace of the Son of God. Everything is wrong that has that effect on the spirit. And cleave as well as you can, poor condemned creature, condemned in your conscience cleave to every sound concerning Christ that makes Him everything in your eyes, though you may fear He is not everything in your soul. The day will come when He will be everything in your soul, for "then shall we know if we follow on to know the Lord."

