

## The Work of Righteousness

Isaiah 32

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TV Broadcast

I'd like to welcome you to our program today. I'm glad you could join us. And if you'd like to follow along in your Bibles, I'll be preaching from Isaiah, the book of Isaiah in the Old Testament, Isaiah the prophet, chapter 32. And the title of the message is "The Work of Righteousness." And of course, what I'll be talking about is the work of Christ as the surety, the substitute and redeemer of his people in bringing forth in his obedience unto death by the cross, by his blood, a righteousness that enables God to justify sinners like us. And remember what it means to be justified. It means to be forgiven of all our sins on a just ground. Not just forgiven, somebody says, well, I'll just forgive you. No, God does forgive, but he must do so on a just ground. And then justified means to be made right with God, righteous before God: stand before God not guilty and righteous in his sight. And so we're going to talk about the work of righteousness.

But here in Isaiah 32, the prophet Isaiah was inspired by God the Holy Spirit to write of the prophecy, the future coming of the Messiah, to make all things right for his people. And his people, which are God's elect out of every tribe, kindred, tongue, and nation, known as they are brought by God to faith in Christ. And this was to be an encouragement for Israel, the nation Israel, which was so rebellious. You see, Israel, the history of Israel is a history of disobedience and rebellion. But understand this about Israel. I think some people just have a problem here. The history of Israel and its disobedience and its rebellion and idolatry, sinfulness and depravity, is a microcosmic picture of the whole human race as fallen in Adam and born dead in trespasses and sins. I think a lot of people when they read the Old Testament, they act as if they would have done better under the Old Covenant than the nation Israel did. And my friend, that's just self-righteousness. The Old Covenant, the law of Moses, the law that was given on Mount Sinai, was not a covenant of salvation. It was a covenant of conviction. It was a covenant that was given, a law given, to show them their sinfulness, their depravity, and their need to totally depend upon God and Him alone for all salvation. Well, that's us too. You see, the Bible says there's none righteous, no not one. There's none that doeth good, no not one, in God's sight. If any of us are going to be saved, whether we're Jew or Gentile, it's going to be by grace, through the righteousness, the work of righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. That's what Isaiah is telling them.

You see, he starts off prophesying of a king. Look at verse one of Isaiah 32. Now, we won't be able to go through all these verses verbatim, but I'm going to go through the first part and the last part, and I'll fill in just with a summary, the middle, because, and you read the whole chapter. I'm not taking it out of context. But look at verse one of Isaiah 32. He says, ***Behold, a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment.*** Now, who's he talking about? Who is this king? After Israel was conquered by the Babylonians, which was a few hundred years later than Isaiah, or about a hundred years maybe, some say, they never had a king that had sovereign rule in Israel or Judah, because they were always under captivity. But the king here shall reign in righteousness. He's talking about Christ, the king of kings. And he will reign in righteousness. His reign will be a just reign. Now, we have to understand that at the forefront of the gospel of salvation is this word righteousness, which is justice. God's justice. If you were to ask most people today, what is the leading attribute of God that comes through in the gospel, they would say love. Well, my friend, God's love does come through in the true gospel, but that's not the leading attribute. The leading attribute is God's justice, his

righteousness. What I'm saying is this, the gospel tells us that God must be just when He saves sinners. He cannot save me, forgive me, He cannot love me, or He cannot have mercy upon me or be gracious to me, except on a just ground. He must be just when He justifies. So God is a loving Father, but He also must be a righteous judge. God is a gracious forgiver, but He must be righteous in Himself. He cannot do one without the other. So this King who's coming, who is Christ the Lord, He'll reign in righteousness, and it says, **and princes shall rule in judgment.** Now, who are they? I'll tell you exactly who they are. He's talking about gospel preachers. You see, we rule in judgment as we preach Christ, the savior of His people. We preach the love of God, not to all without exception. That's an unjust love. You say, if I just look at you and say, well, God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life. I'm not ruling in judgment there. I'm telling you a lie. God does love His people, but not outside of Christ. The Bible says God hates all workers of iniquity. Now God's hatred is not a temper tantrum. It's not a selfish sinful hatred. It's His righteous indignation, His righteous judgment and wrath upon sinners where sin is imputed. And here's what I'm telling you. Listen to me very carefully. If you want to experience the love of God, look to Christ. There is no love from God to sinners outside of Christ. If you die without Christ, without being washed in His blood and clothed in His righteousness, you'll die under the hatred of God, the just hatred of God. You'll get exactly what you deserve. You say, well, I don't deserve that. Well, you don't know yourself and you don't believe the Bible. If God ever were to give me what I deserve and what I've earned, it would be hatred, it would be wrath, it would be hell. But God loves His people in Christ. He told Jeremiah, I've loved you with an everlasting love. Well, how could He do that? Jeremiah was a sinner in Christ.

In 1 John 4:10, **Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation**, the sin bearing sacrifice who brought justice through His blood. who brought in righteousness, **a propitiation for our sins.** That's love. **For God so loved the world.** That's not everybody in the world. That's the world of His people, **that He gave His only begotten Son** on a just ground, **that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.** Believe in Him, believe in the one who justifies the ungodly.

Well, look at verse two of Isaiah 32. It says, **and a man**, now that could be translated the man, **shall be as a hiding place from the wind.** Who is this man? This is the God-man, the Lord Jesus Christ. And He'll be a hiding place from the wind. He'll hide us in the cleft of the rock, hide His people in the cleft of the rock, which is Christ, from the wind, the wind of God's wrath, and a cover from the tempest, cover us from the storm. Christ is the hiding place of His people. In Christ, the storm of God's just wrath cannot touch God's people, because **who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies. Who can condemn us? It is Christ that died. Yea, rather, is risen again, seated at the right hand of the Father, ever living to make intercession for us.** And He says in verse two, He says, **as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.** Christ is the water of life, rivers of water, the fountain of living waters, welling up inside of His people through His word and His spirit, quenching their thirst with the word of God. **In a dry place**, that's what we are, in this world, in ourselves. We're in a dry place, but He's the water of life, and He's a great rock. Remember the rock that followed the children of Israel through the wilderness, and Moses struck it, and water came from the rock? That's Christ.

Verse three it says, Listen to this, it said, **and the eyes of them that see shall not be dim and the ears of them that hear shall hearken.** That is those who see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ and who hear and heed the word of God. Now remember what Christ said in John chapter three, talking to Nicodemus. He said, **you must be born again or you cannot see the kingdom of God**, kingdom of heaven. He says, you must be born again or you cannot enter. Remember He told His disciples, **blessed are your eyes for they see, blessed are your ears for they hear.** What He's talking about is spiritual life. You have physical eyes to

see, physical ears to hear, but do you have spiritual eyes to see the value, the glory, the worth, the importance, the life and death issues of the Word of God and hear them? It means to obey them, to heed them. We ought to give the more earnest heed, the writer of Hebrews said, to the things which we've heard. This is life and death, you see. This is not just religion. Religion on the whole is sickening. This is not just human morality and efforts. This is not the dignity of man. This is salvation by the King of righteousness, the Lord of glory, the Lord Jesus Christ.

And he says in verse four, ***the heart also of the rash***, that means those who act too quickly, ***shall understand knowledge and the tongue of the stammerer shall be ready to speak plainly***. Preaching the gospel, the heart, the new heart, that God gives in the new birth. Now, from verse five down to verse around 14, what he's talking about is the desolation of Israel, the sin of Israel, and how that Israel is a sinful nation. That's how Isaiah started out his prophecy, in talking about the sinfulness and the depravity of Israel. But as I said earlier, Don't get the impression that that lets us off the hook, because the Bible teaches that what Israel was as a nation under the old covenant, which was rebellious, sinful, stout-hearted, stiff-necked, all of that, unbending, that's a picture of you and I, all of us, by nature. As I said, some people think they could have done better. You know, I've heard people say, well, I wish I could have been born back in the days of Moses. Are you kidding me? That law being burdened down upon Israel and they broke it? Jeremiah prophesied of that. He said the new covenant's not going to be like that, that covenant that they broke. And the reason the new covenant's not like that is the new covenant is salvation conditioned on Christ and not on me or not on you or not on the Israelites. So they were rebellious, but look at what's happening here. Isaiah points them to Christ.

Look at verse 15 of Isaiah 32. He said, ***until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest***. That's images, symbols of God bringing in the fruit of the harvest, his people, Jew and Gentile, into the kingdom. We see a picture of that, you might say an inauguration of it at Pentecost in Acts chapter two, when Peter stood and preached the gospel. And I think of 3,000 were converted, and then later on 5,000. And then the gospel was shot out all over the world, mainly through the apostle Paul, but through others. And God began to raise up people out of the Gentiles. And that's the fruitful field. Christ spoke of that in John chapter 12 when he talked about his death. He said, ***except a seed of wheat fall into the ground and die, it won't bear fruit, but if it die, it'll bring forth much fruit***. And that's the fruit of his death, the fruit of his righteousness, which is the salvation of his people, God's elect all over the world. That's the fruit of the harvest.

And he says here in verse 16, ***Then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field***. There's the preaching of the gospel. Judgment shall dwell there. Right judgment, righteousness. Now, to whom is that addressed? It's to the people whom God loves. It's to the people whom God has shown mercy. It's to the people to whom God has been gracious. And he says in that love and that mercy and that grace, there will be judgment and righteousness, and it'll remain in the fruitful field. Now listen, remember the gospel, what the Bible says about the gospel. It's not just love, love, love, and you love everybody. And God loves everybody and wants to do this for you and wants to do that for you. If you'll do this, oh, just please accept it. That's not the gospel. Romans 1:16 and 17. Paul said, ***I'm not ashamed of the gospel of Christ for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth, to the Jew first and the Greek also*** or the Gentile. Verse 17, ***for therein in that gospel is the righteousness of God revealed. From faith to faith, as it is written, the justified***, that's who the saved are, the justified ***shall live by faith***, shall live by looking to Christ as their righteousness.

And that's what he says in verse 17. Look at it. ***And the work of righteousness shall be peace.*** Now there's the work of righteousness. Now what is this work of righteousness? It's the work of the Lord Jesus Christ as the surety, the substitute, and the redeemer of his people. Remember those three things. It's the work of Christ as our surety, the surety of his people. Now who is, what is a surety? A surety is one who takes responsibility for the debt of another. And in the everlasting covenant of grace, all the sins of God's elect were accounted to Christ. He was made surety of a better covenant. His righteousness was imputed to them. And in order for him to make that good and to set that in motion, he had to come and substitute himself. That's the second word, surety, substitute. He had to take our place. He was bruised for our transgressions. Bruised for our iniquities. All the iniquities of His sheep were laid upon Him. He stood in the place. He suffered the just for the unjust. He died for his people. He died for sinners. And so he substituted. And in order to, as a substitute, he had to shed his blood. He had to die because the wages of sin is death. Sin imputed to him brought death, and that satisfied the justice of God, redeeming his people. He bought us back, bought his people back. That's the work of righteousness. In doing that, he brought forth an everlasting righteousness that enables God to be just and yet show mercy, to be just and be gracious, to be just and to be a loving God. And whose work is it? Well, it's the work of Christ. It's not your work for Christ. It's not what I do for him. It's all what he did for me.

The Bible says in Hebrews 10 and verse 14, ***for by one offering, he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified.*** It's the work of Christ. By his one sacrifice for sin, he put away all the sins of his people. And what is the effect of it? The effect of righteousness, that work of righteousness, the effect of Christ, quietness and assurance forever. What is that quietness? That's the peace that only God can give through His Son that passes all understanding. It's peace with God by the blood of the cross of Christ. He made peace. He is the prince of peace. He is the one who reconciled God to us and us to God. It's on that ground. You see, God's been reconciled to his people through the blood of his son. Now the command of the gospel is be ye reconciled to God. See, we're born dead in trespasses and sins. We're born as enemies of God. And the gospel command for us is be ye reconciled to God on the same ground upon which God is reconciled to us. And what is that ground? It's the imputed righteousness of Christ.

2 Corinthians 5.21, ***for God made Christ to be sin, Christ who knew no sin, for us, that God, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.*** That's the ground. And that peace comes on the ground of what Christ accomplished in His death on the cross. And assurance forever. The assurance comes from His being our surety. We have an assurance of salvation because it's not conditioned on ourselves. It's conditioned on Christ, who is my surety. And I know this. He died, He was buried, He arose again, He ascended unto the Father, He's seated at the right hand of the Father. And I know He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day, because He ever lives to make intercession for me. Now, what have I committed unto Him? I'll tell you exactly what I've committed unto Him. My whole salvation is committed to Christ. None of it's committed to me. If any of it were committed to me, there'd be no assurance, no real godly assurance. There'd be self-righteousness, but no assurance. But because of the work of righteousness, there's peace. ***And the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever.***

And look at verse 18. He says, ***and my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation and in sure dwellings and in quiet resting places.*** That's the state of God's people when they look to Christ as the author and finisher of their faith. And he says in verse 19, ***when it shall hail, coming down on the forest; and the city shall be low in a low place.*** We're still going to be in that peaceable habitation, those sure dwellings and in quiet resting places. That's the work of righteousness. Verse 20, ***blessed are you that sow beside all waters, that send forth***

**thither the feet of the ox and the ass.** In other words, as you go on about your daily life, this is the work of righteousness that brings that peace, that quietness, that assurance forever and ever. And whatever we face, I mean, this is true. You know, the Lord said to His disciples, He said, in the world you shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer for I have overcome the world. That's real truth. It's not just some kind of a false claim or some kind of a goal to be reached. No, what he's saying is that when we look at Jesus Christ, who is the same today, yesterday, today, and forever, and rest in Him. That's what the Sabbath is all about. It's not about a day. The Sabbath is about Christ resting in Him who did and finished all the work, the work of righteousness. Hebrews chapter four teaches that. The Christian Sabbath is not a day. We meet on Sunday, the Lord's Day, the first day of the week, as it is our time to meet together to worship. But Sunday's not our Sabbath. Christ is our Sabbath. Because Christ performed, accomplished, and finished the work of righteousness. And that word "finished" is the key word.

John 19:30, Christ said, it is finished. In Romans 10:4, it says, **Christ is the end**, that's the same word, finishing, the finish **of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth**. So that if you believe the gospel and you rest in Christ, you see that he is all the righteousness that you need in order to attain or maintain salvation, in order to be right with God. It's his righteousness imputed. And that's the work of righteousness. That's the only thing that'll save people from their sins and give them the godly assurance and peace, quietness, rest that God has for his people in Christ. Nothing else will do it. Nothing else will accomplish it. Even when it shall hail. See, all these are pictures. These are symbols. When it hails, coming down on the forest, the city shall be low or withered away in a low place. All the things of this earth, they're passing away. They're going away. Death, physical death, the body says, or the book of Romans says, in Romans 8:10, that this body, this human body that we inhabit, is dead because of sin. But the Holy Spirit is life because of righteousness. Whose righteousness? Christ, the King who shall reign in righteousness. Christ who did the work of righteousness. So eternal life. The Bible says, Romans 5:21, **as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.**