

The Main Thing

A Publication of
MAIN STREET PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
March 2018

Christ Our Righteousness

God's holy law requires perfect conformity to its every precept. Failure to live up to the Divine standard of even the least of the commandments results in the breaking of the whole law (Gal. 3:10). It is this law, in all its severity, that will be used to judge every man, woman and child at Christ's return. What confidence do we have that we will pass judgment and be declared righteous before the Holy One? Can we receive a positive verdict and escape condemnation?

The doctrine of justification by faith alone in Christ alone has been a constant source of security and comfort for Christians in the face of God's law. It is the foundation upon which assurance of salvation is built. When this doctrine is corrupted or only partly taught all manner of problems arise. Of all the aspects of justification, the imputation of Christ's righteousness continues to attract the most criticism. According to John Owen, "there is nothing in the whole doctrine of justification which meets with a more fierce and various opposition."ⁱ Even within the Reformed tradition, surprisingly, the imputation of Christ's righteousness to believing sinners has received its share of critics.

It is vital that the imputation of Christ's righteousness be defended in our day as it was by Paul in the first century. To reject such a precious truth is to strip the gospel of its glory and to withhold from sinners an important means of comfort and confidence as they await the judgment of God.

Imputation and the Incarnation

Is the doctrine of the imputation of Christ's righteousness a central component of the apostolic gospel? This is the first question we must answer, and in order to do so it is helpful to understand how the apostles viewed the person and work of Christ. It is not an overstatement to say that a proper understanding of Christ and his work depends on a proper understanding of the law.

According to Paul, Christ's incarnation was necessary so that he might be "under law". By taking on flesh Christ entered into the plight of his people. Numerous times in Matthew's gospel Christ spoke of his mission as the fulfilling of the law. The incarnation was a means to an end. By being born of a woman Christ was enabled to be born under law.

What does it mean that Christ was born “under law”? This terminology is used by Paul in his letter to the Galatians. He uses the term in reference to the Galatians in 4:21. He speaks of them as desiring to be under law. It is this desire that deeply concerned Paul and motivated him to write the epistle. Under law is not referring to the law as a rule and guide for proper living. Paul would hold unwaveringly to such a view of the law. In the context of Galatians “under law” means obligated to obey the demands of the law for the purpose of being judged righteous by God.

This becomes clear in Galatians 5:4 where Paul wrote, “I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised (i.e. under the law) that he is a debtor to keep the whole law. You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.” By becoming “under law”, as symbolized in circumcision, the Galatians were expressing their commitment to the law as a means of gaining righteousness.

Imputation and Representative Righteousness

The same definition of “under law” must be applied to Christ in Galatians 4:4. Christ became man so that he might be under law as a means of obtaining righteousness. Some have argued that Christ was only able to gain righteousness for himself. Christ’s obligation to fulfil the law had a personal effect. It gained him a right standing before the Father and set an example for his people to follow.

Surely this does not correspond with Paul’s teaching. According to Paul Christ was made under the law for the purpose of redeeming “those who were under the law.” Christ came as a representative for those under bondage to law. He came to “redeem”, that is to liberate us from the bondage of law. Christ perfectly fulfilled all the requirements of the law for his people. Note the marvelous change in our relationship to the law as a result of Christ’s incarnation and life. He was “born under the law, to redeem those who *were* under the law.” We once “*were* under the law” as a means of gaining righteousness, but now, because of Christ’s redeeming work we are “no longer a slave” to the law but “a son” of God.

How is it that we move from being under law to being free from law as a means of gaining righteousness? According to Paul’s gospel Christ came “under law” to fulfil all the law’s requirements for us. Christ has kept the whole law for us. His righteousness is imputed or transferred to us and legally becomes ours. “For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness,” wrote Paul, “to everyone who believes.” (Rom. 10:4)

The Galatians were rejecting the liberty they had in Christ. By desiring to be under law again they were rejecting the righteousness that comes through faith in Christ. Paul encourages them to “stand fast in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.” (Gal. 5:1)

Imputation and the Moral Law

Some argue that Paul is concerned with the ceremonial law only. Those who make such an argument want the obligations of the moral law to continue to be binding on all Christians as a means of justification. This argument is flawed and undermines God’s plan of redemption. There is a plausibility to this argument. In Galatians 4 Paul speaks of the futility of observing days, months, seasons and years. This is a clear reference to the Mosaic ceremonial system. Yet, in another place Paul warns them that if they become circumcised

they are obliged to keep the “whole law”. In Romans 2:25 Paul wrote that “circumcision is indeed profitable if you keep the law; but if you are a breaker of the law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision.” The point is this: if one becomes circumcised he is bound to keep both the ceremonial and moral aspects of the law. That is what is meant by the “whole law.” Failure to keep the whole law results in the curse (Gal. 3:10-11ⁱⁱ).

According to the apostolic gospel, Christ became man so that he might redeem us from the law. The law places two inescapable demands on us. The first is total conformity to its every command. The second is punishment for any breach of its precepts. Christ’s person and work corresponds with both aspects of law. Christ came “under the curse” to free us from the punishment of law. He also came “under law” to free us from the righteous requirements of law for justification.

Imputation and Our Contribution

One question remains: Is Christ’s imputed righteousness all that is required to secure our acceptance before God? At the heart of this question is a burning desire within the heart of every person to contribute something to his or her acceptance before God. There exists in us all a lust for self-righteousness. Some people teach that faith in Christ is a means of entering into the community of God’s people. In order to maintain that standing we must live righteously. The emphasis is taken from Christ and placed on our individual effort. What contribution does personal righteousness and law keeping make toward our justification?

In Philippians 3:4-6 the apostle Paul speaks of his personal religious achievements as a Pharisee. In comparison with other Jews he boasts of excelling them all. He had pride in his religious pedigree as a Hebrew of Hebrews. He had pride in his religious performance as blameless concerning the righteousness of the law. In comparison with other Jews, Paul was the total package. He had it all. It is important to note in this context that Paul is dealing with positive contributions to righteousness. He is not dealing with the punishment of the law.

Although Paul had it all when compared to his contemporaries, he knew that he was lacking when it came to God’s holy law. It is one thing to be righteous in comparison to another human being; quite another thing to be righteous in comparison to God’s law. Paul’s great desire was to be righteous before God. Since he knew how unworthy his own contributions were, he rejected them outright. Those things he once boasted in he now counts as “loss for Christ.” All his personal achievements as a Pharisee he deems worthless.

What about Paul’s achievements as an apostle? What about his growth in sanctification? Do these things have a positive contribution to make toward his righteousness? He continues by writing that he “also counts all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus.” “All” is loss.

Every conceivable contribution toward righteousness is excluded. According to Paul there is no place for the idea that Christ has given Christians the power to work out their own righteousness. According to Paul there

is no place for the idea that we are justified on the Day of Judgment by our covenant faithfulness. According to Paul there is no place for the idea that the good works of other saints can be transferred to us.

Paul is consumed by one goal. He wants more than anything to “gain Christ and be found in Him.” The imputation of Christ’s righteousness is what Paul rests in for justification. He could not make it plainer to his readers. He flees from himself and all his attempts at righteousness. He flees to Christ and seeks to be identified with Christ at the judgment. “Not having my own righteousness from the law,” says Paul, “but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith.”

We learn from Paul that the imputation of Christ’s righteousness to the believer is exclusive. Nothing can be added to it. We contribute absolutely nothing. What a glorious thought!

Conclusion

The doctrine of the imputation of Christ’s righteousness speaks comfort to the humbled sinner. The high demands of the law are fully met in Christ. The accusations of the Evil One are silenced in Christ.

“If God is for us who can be against us?” “Who shall bring a charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns?”

It is our duty and privilege to embrace the imputation of Christ’s righteousness as a necessary article of faith. We are to apply this rich teaching to ourselves. Paul reminded the Galatians that “as many as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” What have we to fear in the judgment? When God looks upon us he will see us clothed in the glorious garments of Christ’s righteousness and he will be well pleased. It is no wonder that the apostles gave the message of salvation in Christ the title gospel. Truly it is good news.

¹ John Owen, *The Works of John Owen*, vol. v (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust), 252.

¹ Here Paul is referring to the pronouncement of the curse in Deuteronomy 27:11-26. It is important to note that the sins mentioned are moral rather than ceremonial. The curse falls upon the idolater, the rebellious child, the dishonest, the sexually immoral, etc. The same is true for Paul’s argument in Romans 1-3. The sins he condemns are moral rather than ceremonial (idolatry, sexual immorality, theft, blasphemy (Rom. 2:21-24)).

From the Session

It has come to the attention of the church elders that an article in last months’ Main Thing caused concerns for some of our church members. We apologize for any problems it may have created. In the future an elder or the pastor will carefully proof read any articles on doctrinal matters to make sure they reflect the theological convictions of the PCA. We are fully committed to the teachings outlined in the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms. We also want it to be known that it was not the authors intention to mislead.

Missions Conference

Last year, 2017, we chose as our Children's Mission's focus, Rekindle Children's Hope (RCH), Cameroon, Africa. We immersed ourselves using our five senses to comprehend a typical day in the life of a young child growing up in Cameroon – a child in an RCH program, and non-RCH child.

This year, when I learned the theme of the Missions Conference, "Who Is A Missionary", there was no "established mission" to build on/ branch out from, and I found myself on my knees with a clean slate, asking God to be the writer. It took weeks in the making. The starting point for each one of us and our children must be – the need to know that "I truly believe before I can share with others. I turned to Acts 9, which tells of Saul's conversion, to help the children see the need to "receive before they can give."

God helped each step of the way to bring together the plan for Saturday afternoon. Included in this was for me to be in the Delta at the last minute, to be able to attend the State basketball championship weekend to support my son, Jordan, a player on the Columbus Christian Academy team. I stood in awe of God as He provided the help and support needed here at the church for me to be away. Rachel Brown graciously offered to take on overseeing the children's program on Saturday.

A very BIG thank you to Rachel Brown, Alice Talley, and everyone who volunteered and gave of your time and energy to love our children and show them the beauty and excitement of following Christ!

Colleen

On Saturday during the Missions Conference as the adults enjoyed missions' updates and challenging and encouraging teaching, the children were able to meet and hear from two of our missionaries as well. It was a joy to watch them engage, especially as Clarke Norton taught them a

song in Ukrainian and as they peppered him with questions! We were able to spend time praying for both men, their families and ministries.

Alice Talley delighted the children with her gift of storytelling as she walked them through the life, conversion, and early mission of the Apostle Paul. They learned to be a missionary, first they had to believe the message of the gospel, and they saw through Paul's life how God changes hearts to love Him and love others. We were then reminded that once we have that love we must share it!

To help them understand the gospel, what it is they must believe, we introduced the Wordless Book and they learned that no matter how good they look on the outside (yellow gold), we are full of sin which separates us from God (black-Romans 3:23). The blood of Jesus is the only way our hearts can be made clean (red- Romans 5:8/white- 1 John 1:9). Once God's work has been done in our hearts we will grow (green) and have a restored relationship with God who is supreme (gold).

One of the songs the children learned that went along perfectly with the conference's theme we will be singing at VBS this summer. Some of the words are:

*"God said, 'Go into the world
And tell them about Me
Help them learn like you have learned
To always follow Me'
And if that's what Jesus said
That's what I'll do."*

The children will be given the opportunity to serve our missionaries by taking up Sunday School offerings beginning this Sunday, March 4, to help supply Bible training materials to pastors in various parts of the world by supporting the mission of Third Millennium Ministries which the adults were able to hear about Sunday morning.

Rachel Brown

February has been both interesting and fun here at preschool because it is always fun to learn. The teachers always learn right along with the students. I know I have. This week we are learning about George Washington and Abraham Lincoln in the fours' class. They, of course, want to know where these former presidents live, which leads to all kinds of discussions. Sometimes we need a degree in theology to answer their questions; but what a privilege to guide their thoughts toward the God who made them.

We took a field trip to the post office to mail Valentines that we made in the fours' class. The nice post mistress was happy to see us and gave the children stickers. Lots of loving Valentines were shared on February 14. Each class had special treats provided by the sweet Moms, including heart shaped sandwiches, which were great and helped in learning shapes in the twos' class. The tea party always provides a perfect setting for learning etiquette, manners, and enjoying dressing up.

MSCS is now taking registration for enrollment for next year. Please tell your friends and family about our precious preschool.

Love,
Ms. Cathy



What a wonderful Missions Conference we had with Richard Pratt as our keynote speaker. All of his sessions were wonderful to hear and to take to our hearts. The food and fellowship were great as always with over 125 attending. We want to thank the Missions committee for providing the pulled pork, and I want to thank all the volunteers for their help in the kitchen.

It's already March and time to plan our next luncheon. **It will be the 3rd Sunday of the month. The date is March 18th following the morning worship service.** I have divided the congregation as follows. If your last name begins with:

A-E Meat or Chicken

F-L Hot Vegetable

M-R Dessert

S-Z Cold Vegetable/Salad

We haven't had a pot luck luncheon since November. I know that you're looking forward to the delicious variety of dishes as much as I am.

Mark your calendars for the **3rd Sunday, March 18, following the worship service** when we can enjoy our 4 F's...Fellowship, Family, Fun...without the Fuss!

Lynda



The Men's Prayer Breakfast was held on February 7. There was a good group in attendance. The cooks out-shone themselves with a great spread of "down home" breakfast favorites. Allan provided a thoughtful and insightful message.

The next Breakfast will be **Wednesday, March 7 at 6:30 AM in the Fellowship Hall.** Mark your calendars and plan to attend.

Mike



Women in the Church

Our M&M verse is II John 3, "Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Father's Son, will be with us in truth and love." WIC in the Morning will meet March 4 at 10:45 in our fellowship hall. We will be studying the fourth commandment. WIC at Night will meet March 4 and 20 at 7:00 in HeBrews. Please join us for a sweet fellowship and Bible study! We need you and you need us!

February was a month of witnessing how our church family comes together and accomplishes a worthwhile goal for the glory of our Lord and Savior. The Missions Committee did a fabulous job of planning and orchestrating the conference! And many other people used their talents to assist. The Deacons provided a delicious fish fry with all the trimmings, the Mehargs and Ron Simpson served another perfect church wide luncheon, our women brought side dishes galore, Debbie Jenkins arranged all the beautiful flowers for the fellowship hall, Kathy Newton designed and provided the items for the vignette in our sanctuary, Crystal Coleman designed and made the spectacular posters in our sanctuary, Marianne Field did her continuously amazing task of keeping in touch with our missionaries and all the organizational efforts she puts into the committee, and Diann, of course, did her part exceptionally well! Colleen Meek, with several helpers, provided special missions oriented classes for our children. This is just a short list.....there are many more people who prayed, worked, and contributed to our conference. The blessing is that many of us used our talents and it was a huge success! Dr. Richard Pratt is an awesome speaker with the outstanding mission of giving pastors around the world a free seminary education. It was, indeed, a good conference. (Footnote: Did you know that three members of MSPC have a missionary heritage? How special is that!)

Bess



Happy Hearts

Happy Hearts met on February 13 to celebrate loving each other and more importantly to celebrate God's love for and in us. Please read and study 1 John 4:7-21 and let me emphasize a few verses. "Let us love one another for love comes from God....this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins...God lives in us and his love is made complete in us...God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God and God in him." This is our true message as we celebrate Valentine's Day.

We were so blessed to have an opportunity to get to know Aidan Dunkelberg who plays violin for our church services. He was delightful, very relaxed, entertaining, talented and gifted. It is obvious that Aidan has spent many hours practicing and working very hard to achieve the skills he possesses. It is equally obvious that he has a God given talent. He is a senior at MSMS and is presently auditioning at conservatories to further his career in music. He will have a double major, probably physics. We are praying that God will place him in the perfect place and that Aidan will continue to develop his talent in the coming years. It was exciting to be near him while he played his violin or fiddle. His entire being expresses the beautiful music we hear on Sunday mornings. He explained to us that the violin and fiddle are one and the same instrument. The difference is in how it is played. When asked which he likes best, Aidan replied, "Fiddle is fun, but violin is more



beautiful". He did both for us and his description of the two types of music was accurate. He plays fiddle mostly by ear and the violin by note. His performance was from memory and we were astonished by his ability to do this. He played beautifully and we loved every minute of his performance. Both of his parents are professors at MUW and Aidan is their only child. They have every reason to be very proud of him! We at MSPC certainly are and appreciate Aidan's participation in our worship services.

Happy Hearts always enjoys having guests and we were especially pleased to have Todd and Kathyryn with us as well as Laurie Flora who accompanied her mom, Peggy Kennedy. Rhonda White and Karmel Crandall were able to join us also. It was a special Valentine's party. Elizabeth Crandall, Hannah Arnold, and Kayla Lovegren were precious guests who served the tables and delighted the participants. They wore little white lace aprons, made by Shirley Swoope for the occasion, and were adorable. The girls had as much fun serving as we had being served by them. It was a wonderful treat to have them interacting with us! The meal was more formal than usual. The girls served green salads adorned with a red pepper heart, thanks to Ann Chilcutt, prior to the entree. Removing those plates, they then served plates of pork tenderloin with an apple sauce and pepper jelly topping, creamed potatoes, whipped up by Jean Yelverton, green beans, and a roll. Jean and her sister, Bet Sanchez, made scrumptious Strawberry Crunch for dessert. Bet was my chosen kitchen helper and we had great fun serving the plates. Our young servers were quite busy with the three course meal and they did an exceptional job with

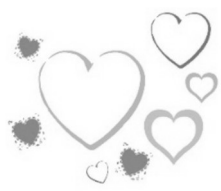
joy in their hearts and a sweet persona! After the meal, our capable cleanup crew led by Ben Chilcutt were just as wonderful as the servers and Aidan! This is such a labor of love and so appreciated! Ben says Nancy Franks is going to lose her performance badge if she misses many more opportunities to excel! We did miss Nancy, but are sure she was doing something very worthwhile or she would have been with us.

Last but not least, the fellowship hall was trimmed to the nines! Thanks to Nell Fleming and Kitty Brewer! It is so much fun to set the tables and make them look as pretty as we can, but it is more fun when working with people you love!! The white table cloths and red chargers were in keeping with the theme. We placed small cherubs with soft netting on red fabric, a heart shaped vase with a pink tulip, assorted Valentine candies, and handmade valentines made by Shirley Swoope on each table. The long table was covered with more of the same and a pair of silver candelabra with red candles. Every Valentine's party should include an awesome violinist, three smiling and beautiful servers, good food, candelabra, candy, and valentines! The most important component is of course sharing all this with people you love!!! We did and it was a special blessing! We missed those of you who were unable to be with us and we are hoping you will be with us for our March meeting!

A very special thank you to each person who assists in whatever way to make Happy Hearts all that it is to each of us!



Bess





March 2018

Sun.	Mon.	Tue.	Wed.	Thu.	Fri.	Sat.
				1 Prayer Meeting Robin Weaver	2	3 Robby & Frances Glenn
4 Communion AM Service	5 John Ensley Jay Nail	6 WIC 10:45 AM WIC at Night 7 PM	7 Men's Prayer Breakfast	8 Prayer Meeting	9 Family Movie Night 6 p.m. Patrick & Morgan Shipp	10
11 Daylight Saving Time Begins Hannah Nail	12 SPRING BREAK 12-16 William Arnold	13	14 No Services	15 Prayer Meeting	16	17 Jon Zarandona
18 Congregational Luncheon	19 Missions Committee 6 p.m.	20 Happy Hearts 10:30 a.m. WIC at Night 7 PM Crystal Coleman	21	22 Prayer Meeting John Rogowski	23	24 Vee Ferguson
25	26	27 Becca Allgood Jesse Duncan, Sr.	28 No Services Ron Simpson	29 Prayer Meeting Maundy Thursday Services	30 Debbie Jenkins	31 Easter Egg Hunt MSPC 11 a.m.

Notes

The Lord's Supper will be observed during the morning service on Sunday, March 4, 2018.
 Women in the Church will meet on Tuesday, March 6, at 10:45 in the Fellowship Hall.
 WIC at Night will meet on Tuesday, March 6, and March 20 at 7 p.m. in HeBrews.
 The Men's Prayer breakfast will be held on Wednesday, March 7, at 6:30 in the Fellowship Hall.
 Family Movie Night – March 9 at 6 p.m.
 Daylight Saving Time begins on March 11. **Spring Ahead! This is SPRING BREAK week. (12-16)**
 Congregational Luncheon – March 18
 Missions Committee meeting -- March 19 at 6 p.m.
 Happy Hearts will meet on Tuesday, March 20, at 10:30 in the Fellowship Hall.
 Easter Egg Hunt – March 31 – at MSPC at 11:00 a.m. Please make plans to help “stuff” the eggs for the hunt. More details to come.

March Volunteers

Nursery

March 4	Lauren Zarandona Roger & Joy Day
March 11	Ann Marie Miller Jay & Hannah Nail
March 18	Meryl Fisackerly <i>Volunteer Needed</i>
March 25	Sandra Pilkinton Laurie Flora

Ushers

March 4	Allan Brewer, Phillip Goodwin, Russ Russell
March 11	Gray Flora, Bill Laws, Matt White, Stephen Matocha, Ben Woodson
March 18	Grover Allgood, Ray Kilpatrick, Mike Meharg, Jay Nail, Patrick Shipp
March 25	Gee Allgood, Roger Day, Brent Drown, Trip Hairston, Henry Pilkinton



NEW NEEDS:

CONTINUING NEEDS:

Our Shut-Ins:

Louise Armstrong
Sadie Brewer
George & Martha Clegg
Verda Laws
Dot Pilcher
Emily Shull

Jennifer Garner
Phillip Goodwin
Barbara Harrell
Poogie Laws
Sue Lovegren
Dan Matocha
Edna Mae McCoy
Melanie McCoy
Colleen Meek's mother
John Mark Russell
Alice Talley's great-nephew – Braxton
Brad Talley
Faith Whitlock
Rick Wright

President Donald Trump
Officials in Washington
Governor Phil Bryant
Mayor Robert Smith
Police Chief Fred Shelton
Sheriff Mike Aldredge
State, City, and County Officials

Helping Hands
Life Choices Pregnancy Center
Palmer Home
All Churches and Pastors in Columbus

March
Money Counter
Jay Nail

February
Budget Report
Offerings this Month
\$ 21,609

**MAIN STREET
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

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Main Street Presbyterian Church

(A Presbyterian Church in America Congregation)

Sunday Schedule

9:00 a.m. Church Officer Prayer Time

9:15 a.m. Sunday School Fellowship

9:30 a.m. Sunday School

10:40 a.m. Morning Worship

6:00 p.m. Evening Worship

Wednesday Schedule

5:30 p.m. Supper

6:00 p.m. Children and Youth Activities

6:00 p.m. Adult Bible Study and Prayer Time

Thursday Schedule

Weekly Prayer Meeting at Noon
