

Pastoral Letter

January 2011

Living the righteous life

It is the most amazing thing for a sinner to be declared righteous in God's sight – for one of God's enemies to become one of his friends – to have (and to know that we have) all our sins forgiven – to be right with God, innocent of all the many offences we have committed against him – to have the Lord Jesus Christ 'made ... our righteousness' (1 Corinthians 1:30). Is it any wonder that the apostle Paul goes on immediately to affirm, 'Let the one who boasts [or, glories], boast in the Lord (v31)?

Yet this presents us straightaway with this question: how should the righteous live? In the light of the great transformation which grace has worked in us, and continues to work in us, what sort of lives should we lead? The 'short' answer (though, in truth, it is a 'long' one, once you begin to work it through) is this: the 'righteous' should 'live righteously'. J C Ryle entitled one of his books *Practical Religion*, and that's exactly what the Christian life – the righteous life – is: practical, intensely so.

One of the richest parts of Scripture for setting this out in detail is the Old Testament book, Proverbs. Here is a selection of some of the things it highlights about living the righteous life. Let us meditate upon them, one by one, looking up the contrast in the references, and examining ourselves before God in the light of them.

- 'The memory of the righteous is a blessing' (10:7)
- 'The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life' (10:11); 'The mouth of the righteous brings forth wisdom' (10:31)
- 'The wage [or, labour] of the righteous leads to life' (10:16)
- 'The tongue of the righteous is choice silver' (10:20)
- 'The lips of the righteous feed many' (10:21); 'The lips of the righteous know what is acceptable' (10:32)
- '.. the desire of the righteous will be granted' (10:24); 'The desire of the righteous ends only in good' (11:23)
- 'The hope of the righteous brings joy' (10:28)
- '.. the offspring [or, seed] of the righteous will be delivered' (11:21)
- 'The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life' (11:30)
- '.. the root of the righteous will never be moved' (12:3); '..the root of the righteous bears fruit' (12:12)
- 'The thoughts of the righteous are just [or, right]' (12:5)
- '.. the house of the righteous will stand' (12:7); 'In the house of the righteous there is much treasure' (15:6)
- 'The light of the righteous rejoices' (13:9)
- 'The heart of the righteous ponders how to answer' (15:28)
- 'The father of the righteous will greatly rejoice' (23:24).

This should be a profitable exercise if we go about it in a humble spirit. May we all be given such, to God's praise!