

JASON BOOTHE

# LIVING BY FAITH IN THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF CHRIST

RESTING IN CHRIST'S OBEDIENCE AND  
WALKING IN GOSPEL JOY

## Living by Faith in the Righteousness of Christ

*"You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet.*

*"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.*

*"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you,*

*unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. - Matthew 5:13–20*

As our Lord continues His Sermon on the Mount, He graciously turns our attention to both the calling and the confidence of those who belong to Him. In Matthew 5:13–20, Jesus speaks words that shape our understanding of the Christian life from beginning to end. He speaks of salt and light, of law and righteousness, and of a kingdom founded upon the saving work of God. At every point, Christ directs our eyes away from ourselves and toward Him as the One who fulfills all righteousness.

Jesus begins by declaring, “You are the salt of the earth” and “You are the light of the world.” These words are spoken with certainty. Our Lord does not issue a challenge to become something through our own strength. He announces what His disciples already are by His gracious calling. Salt preserves and seasons. Light reveals and guides. Together, these images describe a life shaped by grace and placed within the world by God’s design.

This calling rests securely upon God’s work, not our effort. The Apostle Paul echoes this truth when he writes, “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10). The good works that shine before others do not originate in human resolve. They flow from God’s gracious work in Christ. When believers live lives of faithful obedience, the glory belongs to the Father, because the obedience on display is the fruit of His grace. As Paul reminds us, “By the grace of God I am what I am” (1 Corinthians 15:10).

Jesus then turns to the law, saying, “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.” These words anchor our understanding of Scripture and salvation. The law stands as the holy expression of God’s character and will. Christ does not set it aside. He fulfills it in every respect. He embodies perfect obedience. He accomplishes all righteousness. Every promise and command finds its fulfillment in Him.

Paul celebrates this fulfillment when he declares, “For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes” (Romans 10:4). The law reaches its intended goal in Jesus Christ. What the law requires, Christ provides. What the law reveals, Christ completes. In Him, God’s faithfulness and holiness shine with perfect clarity.

Our Lord then speaks words that press deeply upon the heart: “Unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.” Here, Jesus directs us to a righteousness that flows from the heart, a righteousness grounded in the saving work of God. This righteousness is not achieved through outward conformity. It is received as a gift through faith in Christ.

Paul speaks plainly and pastorally to this truth. “For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight” (Romans 3:20). He then proclaims the hope of the gospel: “But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law... the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe” (Romans 3:21–22). This is the heart of the Christian faith. The righteousness that opens the door to the kingdom is the righteousness of Christ, credited to us by faith. As Paul declares, “For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Corinthians 5:21).

This imputed righteousness brings deep comfort and lasting joy. It frees believers to obey God’s law with grateful hearts. Obedience flows from a secure standing in Christ, not from fear or uncertainty. The law becomes a gracious guide for thankful living. Paul captures this freedom beautifully when he writes, “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1).

Matthew 5:13–20 calls us to behold Christ and to rest in His finished work. We are salt and light because He has made us His own. We cherish God’s law because it reveals His holiness and leads us to Christ, who fulfilled all righteousness on our behalf. We pursue righteousness because Christ has already given us His!

May we walk in the confidence of Paul’s words: “I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me” (Galatians 2:20). And as Christ lives in us, may our lives shine brightly by faith in Christ alone, to the glory of our Father in heaven.

Amen.

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