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Courage To Come Home

It used to take considerable courage to go to the mission field. Now it takes as much courage to come home.

In my father's day, coming home was a kind of triumph. The missionary was a hero. Today he is an antihero. Even in Christian churches I am eyed as a throwback to a more primitive era, to the days of colonialism and cultural aggression.

In the old days furlough was a temporary withdrawal from the frontier for rest and recuperation in the warm embrace of the heart of Christendom. But Christendom doesn't have a heart today, and coming home is more of an icy shock than a warm embrace.

—Samuel Moffett

S. S. LESSON AND YOUTH PROGRAM FOR FEBRUARY 22

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Christ Is Our Righteousness

WILLIAM C. ROBINSON

The message of the first tract written in behalf of the Reformation for England was brief and clear.

When there was no room in England for William Tyndale to translate the Bible, he fled to the protection of Martin Luther. There in Germany, Luther's associate John Bugenhagen wrote this word for the English people: "We have only one doctrine: Christ is our righteousness." That sentence states well the fruit of Luther's own agonizing search for a gracious God.

In peril of his life, young Martin Luther vowed to become a monk, thinking that only in that way could he do enough to make God gracious to him. He kept the rules of his order with a strictness which earned for his monastery great praise. He diligently attended the seven sacraments.

He confessed his sins for hours at a time. He listened to sermons on sin, law, duty, merit, fear and penance but found no Gospel in them.

He tried to climb up to God by the three ladders offered by the medieval Church: the way of merit or moralistic piety, the way of thought or rational scholasticism, and the way of ecstatic piety. But when he was unable to climb up to heaven by his own efforts, God came down in Christ and did for sinful man what he could not do for himself and what he cannot do without.

Little monk, you can never do enough to make God gracious; but you can start with the living God

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who is so gracious that He has wrought out for the sinner the righteousness of God in the perfect human life and the sacrificial death of Christ. By raising Christ for our justification, God declared that Christ had satisfied all of His holy requirements for our complete forgiveness.

And this righteousness of God is communicated to me, the sinner, as I put my trust in Christ. By the obedience of the One are the many justified.

The Holy Spirit opened to Luther this blessed truth as he was studying Romans 1:17: The one justified by faith is the one who shall live. God in Christ has done and obeyed and suffered enough to justify you. He is the end of the law for righteousness.

As Luther wrote in his commentary on Galatians: "Righteousness is given in the Word of the Gospel through which Christ comes and gives Himself to me so that I can lay hold upon Him in faith, as the ring lays hold upon the precious stone . . . Therefore let us turn our eyes wholly to the brazen serpent, Jesus Christ crucified, and assuredly believe that He is our right-

eousness and life.

"For in the whole Gospel nothing else does Christ do but take us out of ourselves and put us under His wings that we may trust wholly in His satisfaction and merit . . . As chickens are covered under the wings of the hen, so we should shroud ourselves and our sin under the covering of the flesh of Christ, who is our pillar of cloud by day and our pillar of fire by night."

Luther also wrote, "God does not give grace freely in the sense that He will demand no satisfaction, but He gave Christ to be the satisfaction for us."

The best righteousness which sacraments, service, right thinking, and kind deeds can work in us will not suffice. "All for sin could not atone; Thou must save, and Thou alone."

Christ is our righteousness. All that He did and bore for us on Calvary and through His whole life is the righteousness of God given for and to sinners—imputed to us and received by faith alone. This is no cheap grace. It cost God. It cost Christ. It costs the Holy Spirit to bring it to us, to work faith in us and thereby to unite us to Christ in our effectual calling. ☐

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