**THE EXPOSITION OF HOLY SCRIPTURE BY ALEXANDER MACLAREN**

**GENESIS-021. FAITH AND RIGHTEOUSNESS by ALEXANDER MACLAREN**

*"And he believed in the Lord; and He counted it to him for righteousness."*

*Genesis 15:6*

It is remarkable to find this anticipation of New Testament teaching so far back. It is like finding one full-blown flower in a garden where all else is but swelling into bud. No wonder that Paul fastened on it to prove that justification by faith was older than Moses, than law or circumcision, that his teaching was the real original, and that faith lay at the foundation of the Old Testament religion.

**I.** The Nature of Faith.--The metaphor in the Hebrew word is that of a man leaning all his weight on some strong stay. Surely that metaphor says more than many definitions. It teaches that the essence of faith is absolute reliance, and that unites us with Him on whom we rely. Its result will be steadfastness. We are weak, mobile, apt to be driven hither and thither, but light things lashed to fixed things become fixed. So reeds shaken with wind are changed into iron pillars.

**II.** The Object of Faith.--Lord. It is a Person, not the promise but the Promiser. Of course, reliance on the Person results in acceptance of His word, and here it is God's word as to the future. Our faith has to do with the future, but also with the past. Its object is Christ, the historic Christ, the living Christ, the Christ who will come again. How clear the nature of faith becomes when its object is clear! It cannot be mere assent, but trust. How clear becomes its identity in all ages! The creeds may be different in completeness, but the object of faith is the same, and the emotion is the same.

**III.** The effect of Faith.--Righteous is conformity to the will of God. Abram was not righteous, but he yielded himself to God and trusted Him, and God accepted that as the equivalent of righteousness. The acceptance was shown by the Covenant, and by the fulfilment of the promises.

So here is the great truth that faith is accepted for righteous. It is rightly regarded and treated as righteous, by the estimate of God, who estimates things as they really are. It is righteousness, for--

**(a)** Faith is itself a supreme act of righteousness, as being accordant with God's supreme desire for man.

**(b)** Faith unites with Christ the righteous.

**(c)** Faith will blossom out into all righteousness.