

*Christ*  
*has set us*  
**FREE**

**9 Words Every Christian Should Know**

**Patrick J. Griffiths**



# Christ Has Set Us Free

Nine Words  
Every Christian Should Know

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◆ For Christ and His Church.

# About the Author

Dr. Patrick Griffiths is an energetic teacher with a passion to shout the supremacy of God in all things, by finding, celebrating, and declaring that Jesus Christ is enough in this life and in the life to come. This is achieved through the systematic study of God's Word, an activity Pat has dedicated his life to. He was saved at the age of 17, immediately enrolled in Bible College, and subsequently pursued an M.Div, Th.M, and a D.Min degree. For over 35 years, he has taught students of all ages and has mentored many for vocational ministry. His heart lies in the local church and her mission to carry this message of grace to every tongue, tribe, people and nation.

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*For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore,  
and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.*

*(Gal. 5:1, ESV).*

## **The First Word**

God has written an incredible *Story*. It arrests the affections and pushes one's passions for what is truly breathtaking. It is a *Story* of beauty, fall, love, and rescue. The entire text of the Bible speaks to this *Story*. Nothing falls outside of its borders or is excluded from its narrative. It is always impossible to capture sweeping movements in mere words, yet the nine words presented in this booklet are concepts that every Christian should understand. These words unleash the power of the cross to move individuals and set enslaved minds free. The scope of this freedom is breathtaking.

The apostle Paul, in the Book of Romans, uses the *Story* to speak to the problems within the Church of Rome. Paul uses the *Storyline* as foundational to very practical ends. The *Story* flows to and from the person and work of Jesus Christ. He is the *Story's* Hero. His work is vast and limitless. All He does is lavish in its ability to cancel out the nature of the crime against Him by His people.

When one is new in their relationship with God, it is important to understand all they are and have in Christ. This is the full gospel of salvation. The Bible makes a strong

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distinction between living under the Law and living under grace (Rom. 6:15); of being in bondage versus being set free (Gal. 5:1). The vast majority of people live quiet lives of desperation not knowing where they came from, why they are here, or where they are going.<sup>1</sup> Only the biblical record answers such questions. Such questions form the *Story* God wrote. The Christian needs to learn this *Story* in order to live fully in the freedom Christ secured on their behalf. Such truth moves the believer from “having to,” to “wanting to.” It moves the believer from the sphere of duty to that of desire. We are not to live in the arena of punishment, but of pardon. We are to cease our doing and begin to enjoy our resting.

One of the glaring tragedies of the Christian life is the bondage in which most believers live, a subtle slavery that goes mostly undetected by the individual. Believers embrace their freedom from hell’s damnation, only to live in bondage to daily sin and a performance-based acceptance before God. They are like the institutionalized inmate, who upon gaining a complete pardon has no idea how to function in freedom and so goes back to finding safety in the routines of his imprisonment. They are like the released slave who continues as a slave. Neither knows how to act or behave. They are both free but still act as if they are in bondage.

Consider the idea of “learned helplessness.” Have you ever wondered why the chained elephants in the zoo or at a circus do not pull out the little stake in the ground and go on their merry way? When the elephant was small, he could not move the chain. Day after day, the elephant would pull on the chain wanting to be free, but it never could break the chain or pull the stake out. After several weeks of training, the elephant quits trying to get free; it has learned to be helpless.

Two biblical books greatly assist believers in their pursuit of Christ. The first is Romans and the second is Galatians. Both sound the call of freedom. Throughout both letters, certain words describe the movement of the believer from a position of disfavor to that of favor before God.

First, consider the Book of Galatians. What appears to be the problem? Apparently, believers in Galatia were “troubled” (5:12) by “false brethren” (2:4). Their agitation was real (4:17). They were “bewitched” (3:1) into leaving their position of liberty to be entangled with the yoke of bondage (5:1). Paul saw such a move as shocking (1:6). Why would anyone abandon a position of liberty for one of bondage? They were running well (5:7), but now were “hindered” and thus “overtaken in a fault” (6:1). Those who turned back had “fallen from grace” (5:4) and needed to be “restored” (6:1).

Paul stood amazed (Gal. 1:6), afraid (4:11) and perplexed (4:20) that anyone would leave the yoke of Christ (Matt. 11:28-30) for the yoke of slavery (Gal. 5:1). How does this happen? Unfortunately, drifting is almost inevitable if we do not anchor ourselves to the bedrock of who He is, what He has done, and who His people are in Him before the Father.

Second, consider the Book of Romans. One of our misfortunes is the failure of the church to live in the theology of Romans. Because of its neglect, we have failed to understand the fundamental doctrines of redemption, forgiveness, propitiation, justification, imputation, reconciliation, and adoption. To lack depth in these areas is to remove the believer’s foundation for joy. Without understanding our position and identification in Christ before

the Father, our walk before Him becomes tentative, fragile, and desperate. It will lack the confidence, assurance, and certainty that can and should be ours. We speak of obedience, service and the imperatives of Scripture and rightly so. Unfortunately, such speech is often in the absence of positional truth (who you are as a Christian before God). We have made it sound as if God is absent from such activity. Our obedience has become markedly man-centered. Yet our acts of obedience as expressed through our free choices are the outworking of God's eternal purpose. If we can intellectually embrace the theology of Romans, then it will be possible to escape the roller coaster ride of uninformed emotionalism. Theology, properly understood, provides the fuel for a lifetime of joy.

Believers must distinguish between the substance of Christ and the shadow, the mere reflection of Christ. Often we speak of our position or standing in Christ, but fail to see how such a theology is to change our mindset as we live in the shadow of this life. We might know the truth in our minds but we fail to experience the truth in our emotion. Consider the following passage by the Apostle Paul from Romans 3:21-26. We will read from the *New American Standard Bible*.

### **Justification by Faith**

<sup>21</sup> But now apart from the Law *the righteousness* of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, <sup>22</sup> even *the righteousness* of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; <sup>23</sup> for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, <sup>24</sup> being **justified** as a gift by His grace through the **redemption** which is in Christ Jesus; <sup>25</sup> whom God displayed publicly as a **propitiation** in His blood through faith. *This was* to demonstrate His **righteousness**, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; <sup>26</sup> for the demonstration, *I say*, of His **righteousness** at

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the present time, so that He would be **just** and the **justifier** of the one who has faith in Jesus. (Rom. 3:21-26)

We are familiar with this text, but because of the language used, we often fail to understand what this text is telling us.

Now let us read it from the *New Living Translation*.

### **Christ Took Our Punishment**

<sup>21</sup> But now God has shown us **a way to be made right with him without keeping the requirements of the law**, as was promised in the writings of Moses and the prophets long ago. <sup>22</sup> **We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ.** And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are. <sup>23</sup> For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard. <sup>24</sup> **Yet God, with undeserved kindness, declares that we are righteous. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins.** <sup>25</sup> For God presented Jesus as the sacrifice for sin. **People are made right with God when they believe that Jesus sacrificed his life, shedding his blood.** This sacrifice shows that **God was being fair when he held back and did not punish those who sinned in times past,** <sup>26</sup> **for he was looking ahead and including them in what he would do in this present time.** God did this to demonstrate his righteousness, for he himself is fair and just, and **he declares sinners to be right in his sight when they believe in Jesus.** <sup>27</sup> Can we boast, then, that we have done anything to be accepted by God? No, because **our acquittal is not based on obeying the law. It is based on faith.** <sup>28</sup> **So we are made right with God through faith and not by obeying the law.** (Rom. 3:21-28)

Now let us read it from the *Living Bible* by Kenneth Taylor.

<sup>21-22</sup> But now God has shown us **a different way to heaven**—not by **“being good enough”** and trying to keep his laws, **but by a new way** (though not new, really, for the Scriptures told about it long ago). Now **God says he will accept and acquit us—declare us “not guilty”**—if we trust Jesus Christ to take away our sins.

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And we all can be saved in this same way, by coming to Christ, no matter who we are or what we have been like. <sup>23</sup> Yes, all have sinned; all fall short of God's glorious ideal; <sup>24</sup> yet now **God declares us "not guilty" of offending him if we trust in Jesus Christ**, who in his kindness freely takes away our sins. <sup>25</sup> **For God sent Christ Jesus to take the punishment for our sins and to end all God's anger against us. He used Christ's blood and our faith as the means of saving us from his wrath.** In this way he was being entirely fair, even though he did not punish those who sinned in former times. For he was looking forward to the time when Christ would come and take away those sins. <sup>26</sup> **And now in these days also he can receive sinners in this same way because Jesus took away their sins. But isn't this unfair for God to let criminals go free, and say that they are innocent? No, for he does it on the basis of their trust in Jesus who took away their sins.** (Rom. 3:21-26)

Do you hear what God is saying? The Son declares us right before the Father. It is because of His Son that His people will never face His anger again. It is because of His Son that His people are . . . NOW free. Yet past and present sin still enslave believers. The problem is the failure to understand the infinite impact the person and work of Jesus Christ has on our present condition.

The Bible tells us how we might know God and the power of His provision for our rescue and restoration. It is not a rulebook or an end in itself. Its purpose is so that we might see Him. Because of our self-centeredness, we have the constant battle of desiring to have authority over Christ. **God gave us the Bible, not to tell us how to live, but to show us what He is like.** There is a world of difference between those two ideas.

The Reformation of the sixteenth century . . . brought out from this fountain a new phase and type of Christianity, which had never as yet been fully

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understood and appreciated in the Church at large. **It was, in fact, a new proclamation of the free Gospel of St. Paul, as laid down in the Epistles to the Romans and Galatians [emphasis added].<sup>2</sup>**

When one believes in the Lord Jesus Christ for the salvation of his soul, he knows very little theology. The recipient of Christ is often completely ignorant of the tremendous theological truth that had transpired and is transpiring all around them. Salvation does not require us to know all of this. It is necessary, however, to know all of it in order to “know all you are in Him and He is for you.” When we learn the truth, we can truly rest in His finished work.

It is the person and work of Jesus Christ that aligns us with God’s *Story*. His life and death provided the perfect sacrifice whereby this provision becomes powerful in those who believe this *Story*. This is the means through which God can placate His justice and pardon His people. The intent of this booklet is for us to understand the richness of His work in order for us to align with His *Story* and to live in His rest.

We will use the Book of Romans (which parallels the Book of Galatians) to make possible the lesson.<sup>3</sup> There are several primary words found throughout the Book of Romans and celebrated throughout the New Testament that will facilitate our study.

## STUDY GUIDE QUESTIONS – THE FIRST WORD

1. Why is the experiencing of freedom so essential to the gospel, to the Christian life?
2. What does the person and work of Jesus Christ address and cancel in us?
3. What is the bondage described?
4. “Why am I here, what am I to do, and where am I going?” How do many answer these questions? Where do they go for the answers if not from the Bible?
5. Reflect on your life to this point in time. How have you seen God’s *Story* woven into your story?
6. What is your source of purpose and hope in life? What do you hold on to when life becomes difficult?
7. How would you describe yourself? How does God see you? Does your perception of yourself match God’s record?
8. Why do we look at our relationship with God as something we do and not something He does?
9. What is the overriding message of Romans 3:21-26? When you read the passage in different translations, what are your immediate impressions?
10. What does the person and work of Jesus Christ do for those who appropriate His provision by faith?



# Redemption

# 1

There are certain words that capture and move emotion. All of the words we will be considering in this study fall into this category. In addition, they evoke feelings of release and freedom. There is something “magical” about such words. They call out and reach into the deepest recesses of our psyche. They are words that one can taste and see when carried away and crushed by the consequences of sin. Redemption is one such word. Failure precedes redemption. Redemption exists because failure exists. Redemption secures release for those in bondage.

Listen to this initial thought found in *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*.

Whenever men by their own fault or through some superior power have come under the control of someone else, and have lost their freedom to implement their will and decision, and when their own resources are inadequate to deal with that other power, they can regain their freedom only by the intervention of a third party.<sup>4</sup>

Redemption is the word one finds working in this context. The New Testament pictures this redemptive activity in the work of Jesus.

His redemptive work cancels debt forever (Rom. 3:24).

Being **justified** as a gift by His grace through the **redemption** which is in Christ Jesus. (Rom. 3:24)

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In Him we have **redemption** through His blood, the **forgiveness** of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace. (Eph. 1:7)

So that He might **redeem** those who were under the Law, that we might receive the **adoption** as sons. (Gal. 4:5)

In whom we have **redemption**, the **forgiveness** of sins. (Col. 1:14)

Who gave Himself for us to **redeem** us from every lawless deed, and to **purify** for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds. (Titus 2:14)

And not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal **redemption**. (Heb. 9:12)

## Defining the word

A simple reading of the above verses carries tremendous power. The word itself has excellent company. Listen to another definition from the *Christian Apologetics and Research Ministry*.

Redemption means to free someone from bondage. It often involves the paying of a ransom, a price that ensures redemption. God redeemed the Israelites from Egypt. We were redeemed from the power of sin and the curse of the Law (Gal. 3:13) through Jesus (Rom. 3:24; Col. 1:14). The death of Jesus purchased His people (1 Cor. 6:20; 7:23).<sup>5</sup>

J. I. Packer defines redemption as “Christ’s actual substitutionary endurance of the penalty of sin in the place of certain specified sinners, through which God was reconciled to them, their liability to punishment was forever destroyed, and a title to eternal life was secured for them.”<sup>6</sup>

Wow. If we could but lay hold of such concepts, we would be free indeed. Further, in this short study, we will see how redemption is the basis for forgiveness and propitiation (see chapters 2 and 3).

Leon Morris says, “Paul uses the concept of redemption primarily to speak of the saving significance of the death of Christ.”<sup>7</sup>

The English word redemption means “repurchase” or “buy back,” and in the Old Testament referred to the ransom of slaves (Exodus 21:8). In the New Testament the redemption word group is used to refer both to **deliverance from sin and freedom from captivity**.

Theologically, redemption is a metaphor for what is achieved through the Atonement.<sup>8</sup>

One of the beauties of our current study is what each word presupposes.

### **What redemption presupposes – debt**

Inherent within the word is the idea of buying back. As it relates to our sin debt, it speaks of its complete and full cancellation. When Christ redeemed us, He paid in full our sin debt before the Father.

Redemption presupposes captivity, slavery, bondage. When Adam and Eve chose to reject God, they sold themselves and their posterity into captivity. Whereas once freedom and

liberty existed, there would be only bondage and enslavement.

Christ had to pay the debt because of our own inability to do so. When He paid the debt, He did so in full. He did not leave any behind. There is nothing for us to consider. Never again can we be a debtor to God for our sin. The Father addresses sin fully and finally in the work of His Son.

### **What redemption provides – freedom**

The work of Jesus Christ frees us from sin's slavery. Whereas once we were slaves to sin and death, now we are free in Christ (Gal. 5:13; 1 Peter 2:16).

There are three primary words used for “redemption” in the New Testament. The first two are **exagorazo** and **agorazo** (same root word). These words occurs in Galatians 3:13, 4:5, Ephesians 5:16 and Colossians 4:5.

Christ hath **redeemed** us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree. (Gal. 3:13)

To **redeem** them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. (Gal. 4:5)

These words describe the believing Church purchased by the blood of Christ ([**agorazo**] Acts 20:28; 1 Cor. 6:20, 7:23, Rev. 5:9).

<sup>28</sup> Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, **to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.** (Acts 20:28)

<sup>18</sup> Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside

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the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body. <sup>19</sup> Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? <sup>20</sup> **For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.** (1 Cor. 6:18-20)

<sup>22</sup> For he who was called in the Lord while a slave, is the Lord's freedman; likewise he who was called while free, is Christ's slave. <sup>23</sup> **You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of men.** (1 Cor. 7:22, 23)

<sup>8</sup> When He had taken the book, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each one holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. <sup>9</sup> And they \*sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and **purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.** (Rev. 5:8, 9)

The third word for redemption is **lutroo**, and it occurs in Titus 2:14 and 1 Peter 1:18.

Who gave himself for us, that he might **redeem** us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. (Titus 2:14)

Knowing that you were not **redeemed** with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers. (1 Pet. 1:18)

Each of the three words (**agorazo**, **exagorazo**, and **lutroo**) emphasizes a different aspect of God's redemptive work on our behalf.

- **Agorazo** speaks of "to purchase in the marketplace." This verb was used of men in the Roman world purchasing slaves in the market.
- **Exagorazo** with the prefix "**ek**," emphasizes separation

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of what has been purchased from the slave market altogether. This adds the idea of being taken *out of* the slave market.

- **Lutroo** carries the fullest meaning of redemption, namely, To set free by the payment of a ransom.<sup>9</sup>

As can be seen from the context, the idea is to buy back, to pay a purchase price. The word choice is telling. Yet, not only is debt cancelled, but freedom is given. Relating this to salvation gives a tremendous picture as seen in Christ's words on the cross, "It is finished" (John 19:30). "It is finished" is the translation of one word. Receipts during Christ's time often had this word written on them to indicate, "PAID, or PAID IN FULL." When Christ said, "It is finished" (paid in full) our redemption (to buy back from/out of sin) was complete.

Consider Galatians 3:13, "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us." Matthew 20:28 says He gave His life a "ransom" for many. First Timothy 2:6 stresses this same truth. Revelation 5:9 tells us the ransom price is His blood. It is for this reason 1 Corinthians 6:20 and 7:23 says, "For you were bought with a price." **Christ, by being the infinite God-man, exhausted the penalty of the broken Law by being our substitute. CHRIST BORN UNDER THE LAW MET THE DEMANDS OF THE LAW THAT HE MIGHT FREE US FROM THE LAW.** Now consider the implications of His redemptive work.

### **What are the implications of such a thought?**

First, the Father will never bring up our sin issue again. Why? Because He has dealt with it in full. To bring it up would be to minimize the redemptive act of Christ.

Second, we can now live in a “debt-free relationship” with the Father as it relates to the sin issue. Can we once more become debtors after infinite cancellation happens? No.

Finally, “There is no possibility of going into debt again. We do not have to start over again and try to keep the slate clean. **There is no more slate.** God is not keeping score, granting or withholding blessings on the basis of our performance.”<sup>10</sup>

*My Redeemer*

*Written by Philip P. Bliss Music by James McGranahan*

I will sing of my Redeemer  
and His wondrous love to me;  
on the cruel cross He suffered,  
from the curse to set me free.  
Sing, O sing of my Redeemer,  
With His blood He purchased me;  
On the cross He sealed my pardon,  
Paid the debt and made me free.

Our redemption forms the foundation from which we can praise His glorious name. Let us wrap ourselves in this truth and join countless worshippers gathered for eternity.

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## STUDY GUIDE QUESTIONS - REDEMPTION

1. Define redemption in your own words.
2. What does redemption presuppose?
3. Describe the feeling you have when you make the final payment on your mortgage.  
Compare this payment to how Jesus Christ completely satisfied your sin debt. What is the difference between these two debt payments?
4. What does it mean that there is no more slate? Why do people live as if there is a slate of marks against them?
5. What are some ways people attempt to buy their freedom from the burden of life? How does this compare with what Jesus Christ has done?
6. What means has God employed to redeem sinners from sin's debt?
7. What does redemption provide?
8. How does realizing Jesus redeems you from all of sin's debt change your thinking about God, about yourself, and about your relationship with God?
9. Summarize what impacted you from this chapter.



# Forgiveness

# 2

The need for forgiveness is presupposed. Its necessity is intrinsic to our fallen state. Yet, forgiveness restores the fallen. It does not simply dismiss the charge; it reinstates the alienated. Guilt is the fever carried by the sinner; forgiveness is the prescription ordered by the Great Physician. Forgiveness is what sinners thirst after. Every conscience carries the virus of past sin, present failure and future transgression. The treatment is only possible in the work of another. Jesus is the Redeemer from sin's debt and the means through which we secure God's forgiveness. Forgiveness from God is possible because Jesus paid sin's debt.

The consequence of redemption's work is the canceling of debt and thus the forgiveness of debt, of sin. His redemptive work secures His ability to forgive our transgressions against Him. Consider the following three passages.

Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, **just as God in Christ also has forgiven** [charizomai] **you**. (Eph. 4:32)

When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, **having forgiven** [charizomai] **us all our transgressions**. (Col. 2:13)

I am writing to you, little children, **because your sins have been forgiven** [aphiemi] **you for His name's sake**. (1 John 2:12)

## Defining the Word

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines forgiveness as "to grant

free pardon and to give up all claim on account of an offense or debt." God pardons us based on His Son's redemptive death. He drops the charges against us. There is a forgiving of debt. **What we do is not the basis for God's forgiveness, but on what He does.** His forgiveness of us is gracious. It is gracious because He provides the means for forgiveness to take place. He sends our sins away. Psalm 103:12 and Micah 7:19 capture this idea.

As far as the east is from the west, **so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.** (Ps. 103:12)

He will again have compassion on us; He will tread our iniquities under foot. Yes, **you will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.** (Micah 7:19)

There are many passages in the New Testament speaking to the idea of forgiveness. Forgiveness is an inseparable part of our relationship to God. In its absence, nothing is possible. In its presence, all things are possible. Acts 2 records the outworking of our Lord's victory over sin and death. The returning of His glory (i.e. Shekinah glory) to the Temple fifty days after His death, burial, and resurrection celebrate His victory over sin and death. On that day, the apostle Peter explains the significance of that event. He shows how Jesus is the centerpiece of God's *Story*. How Jesus is the fulfillment of the Seed Promise (Gen. 3:15) and the completion of the Blood Picture (Gen. 3:21). Upon hearing such truth his audience asks a rather simple but necessary question, "Brethren, what shall we do?" Peter responded with the following words, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself" (Acts 2:37, 38).

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There are two noteworthy elements in Acts 2:37, 38. First, forgiveness is necessary and only grantable by God (Acts 2:38b; Mark 2:7). Its occurrence in the Book of Acts is notable. The Book records for us key elements prominent in those formative decades immediately following our Lord's ascension into heaven. Forgiveness through faith in Christ is a recurrent theme in these sermons in Acts (i.e., Peter in Acts 2:38; 3:19; 5:31; 10:43; and Paul in Acts 13:38).

- Peter said to them, 'Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the **forgiveness of your sins**; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:38)
- He is the one whom God exalted to His right hand as a Prince and a Savior, to grant repentance to Israel, and **forgiveness of your sins**. (Acts 5:31)
- Therefore repent of this wickedness of yours, and pray the Lord that, if possible, the intention of your heart may be **forgiven** you. (Acts 8:22)
- Of Him all the prophets bear witness that through His name everyone who believes in Him receives **forgiveness of your sins**. (Acts 10:43)
- Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through Him **forgiveness of your sins** is proclaimed to you. (Acts 23:38)
- To open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive **forgiveness of your sins** and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me. (Acts 26:18)

What does this idea of forgiveness mean? Here is our difficulty with our theological surmising. On a human level, our confession of sin does not negate the consequences of

poor choices. If one spends years abusing their body, confession and repentance will not automatically restore them to health.

**Yet, when God forgives, all of the negative consequences as they relate to Him are gone!** When God forgives us because of His Son's work on our behalf, there is no longer any sin issue hanging over our head.

The problems we face in this life are only the shadows of the much deeper and darker reality. When we appropriate the living Christ through faith in His person and work, every negative brought about by sin that exists between us and God is gone. Do we hear this, **IT IS GONE!** Here is what it sounds like according to the Bible, **"IT IS FINISHED, IT IS DONE"** (John 19:30; Rev. 21:6).

Therefore when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, **'It is finished!'** And He bowed His head and gave up His spirit. (John 19:30)

Then He said to me, **"It is done.** I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost. (Rev. 21:6)

Why would it appear that our experience of God is so empty and sinful pleasure so enticing? It is because the shadow immediately gratifies our "lusting" in whatever shape it takes. There is no long-term delay between poor choices and immediate gratification. The trouble comes with prolonged participation with such temporal gratification. We perpetually sacrifice the joy we have in God on the altar of immediate gratification.

God delivers us from this empty pursuit. We must look past our despair, our disease, and our dysfunction and we must look to our present reality in Jesus. He does and is delivering us from our sin and from our self.

The second element in Acts 2:37, 38 is how God promised such provision for sin's atonement. The forgiveness of sin and the filling of the Holy Spirit are consequences of the person and work of Jesus Christ. Notice the language selected. **The language is inclusive. The invitation is wide** because the need is universal. The provision for forgiveness is equally universal. All may come.

### **What forgiveness presupposes - violation / transgression**

We have committed a transgression against God. As Adam's offspring, we are lawbreakers. We live in violation of God's boundaries. Our greater offense, however, is our rejection of His joy. Forgiveness is relational and personal. We do not forgive animals or inanimate objects. We forgive people. God forgives us. God does nothing wrong, thus He never needs to be forgiven. We wrong God and others and we need forgiveness. We have violated God's Word. The person and work of Jesus Christ secures forgiveness.

### **What forgiveness provides - no condemnation**

Forgiveness is a pardoning that answers the sentence against us. Forgiveness grants the consequence of cancelled debt, freedom. God's forgiveness of us negates sin's eternal consequence because of the cross. Our forgiveness of others, however, cannot negate the intrinsic demerit of sin.

You are free. You are released. You are rescued. You are

delivered. You are without debt. You are blameless before the Father and above reproach. You are a joint heir with Jesus. You are at complete liberty to walk with God in the cool of the day in the Garden of His making (Gen. 3:8). You are able to approach the throne of grace with freedom and liberty, obtain mercy, and find help in your time of need (Heb. 4:14-16). Friends, forgiveness from God gives you love without condition (Gal. 5:13, 14), acceptance without requirement (Eph. 4:32), forgiveness without limit (Matt. 18:22), blessings without merit (Luke 15:11-32) and service without reward (Luke 6:35).

### **What are the implications of such truth?**

First, God did for us what we could never do for ourselves. He paid sin's debt. The consequence of this cancellation is forgiveness.

Second, because God dealt with our sin in full we will never lack His immediate and unconditional forgiveness. His present forgiveness is the overflow of His past forgiveness.

Third, we need not be in bondage to our present sin. Such bondage is unnecessary.

Finally, we need not ask for what is already ours in Christ before the Father. Rather, we can and should return thanks for the marvelous gift of forgiveness that is ours in Christ Jesus.

## STUDY GUIDE QUESTIONS - FORGIVENESS

1. Define forgiveness in your own words.
2. What does forgiveness presuppose?
3. How does forgiveness and guilt interact in the life of a Christian?
4. How does forgiveness change our identity and position with God?
5. What is the act of forgiveness based upon? What hope does this truth of forgiveness give?
6. What does forgiveness provide?
7. As a Christian, on what basis does God pardon?
8. When God forgives what is gone?
9. How does realizing Jesus forgives you of all your sin change your thinking about God, about yourself, and about your relationship with God?
10. Summarize what impacted you from this chapter.





# Propitiation

# 3

What moves God to act is the overabundance of His grace toward His people who can do nothing to undo their sin. It is from this grace platform God sent His Son to offer up Himself as a redemptive sacrifice whereby the debt of sins against Him are fully and forever answered. It is on this basis He can forgive His people of their sins against Him. This forgiveness is a consequence of His justice being satisfied or placated through the perfect sacrifice of His Son. "God's righteous anger needed to be appeased before sin could be forgiven, and God in his love sent his Son (who offered himself willingly) to satisfy God's holy anger against sin."<sup>11</sup> Thus, the life and death of Jesus Christ addresses the Father's justice and placates His wrath (Rom. 3:25). Let us wash ourselves in this word from God that can enable us to live free lives.

Whom God displayed publicly as a **propitiation** in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God **He passed over the sins** previously committed. (Rom. 3:25)

Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make **propitiation** for the sins of the people. (Heb. 2:17)

And He Himself is the **propitiation** for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world. (1 John 2:2)

In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the **propitiation** for our sins. (1 John 4:10)

Regardless of where we might be emotionally, one cannot read such words and not be moved. God could have allowed us to remain in our sin. God, however, did for us what we

could not do for ourselves. He did what was necessary in satisfying His own sentence of justice against sin.

## **Defining the word**

The word “propitiation” has to do with anger and wrath. When speaking of sin, **propitiation only happens with God.** He is wrathful against the sinner’s sin. To propitiate means, “To placate, satisfy, or appease.”

The word **propitiation** carries the basic idea of appeasement, or satisfaction, specifically towards God. Propitiation is a two-part act that involves appeasing the wrath of an offended person and being reconciled to them.<sup>12</sup>

**God is angry with the sinner.** The sinner is the object of God’s wrath (John 3:36). The death of Jesus Christ placates the wrath of God against the sinner. The sufficiency of His death satisfies the justice of God against sin. His death answers the justice and sentence of God against the sinner.

Whereas redemption is God’s work on the cross in reference to sin, propitiation is His work on the cross in relation to Himself. Christ’s death propitiated (satisfied, appeased) the righteous wrath of God.<sup>13</sup>

Propitiation is the attitude of the judge who declares the guilty justified. Justice placates a judge. God is satisfied because His Son’s offering meets the demands of the violated Law. His obedience to the Law makes the Lawbreaker a commandment keeper.

Jesus Christ accomplished propitiation through His crucifixion and sacrifice on the cross. He satisfied the wrath and indignation of God. The crucifixion and sacrifice of Christ satisfied an offended God. When Adam and Eve rejected God and by their rebellion alienated themselves from Him, the only means of restoration would be through God's own doing. The fulfillment of the Seed Promise (Gen. 3:15) and the completion of the Blood Picture (Gen. 3:21) are His means of satisfying the injustice created by the atrocity of His people against Him.

The root word for propitiation has three expressions (**hilaskomai**, **hilasmos**, and **hilasterion**).

And he is the **propitiation** for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world. (1 John 2:2)

Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the **propitiation** for our sins. (1 John 4:10)

Whom God hath set forth to be a **propitiation** through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God. (Rom. 3:25)

And over it the cherubim of glory shadowing the **mercy-seat**; of which we cannot now speak particularly. (Heb. 9:5)

And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be **merciful** to me a sinner. (Luke 18:13)

Wherefore in all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make **propitiation** (KJV - reconciliation) for the sins of the people. (Heb. 2:17)

“Propitiation” is from the Greek **hilasterion**, meaning “that which expiates or propitiates” or “the gift which procures propitiation.” The word in the New Testament for the place of propitiation is the “mercy seat” (Heb. 9:5). There is frequent similar use of **hilasterion** in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament (Exod. 25:18ff). The mercy seat was sprinkled with atoning blood on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:14), representing that the righteous sentence of the Law had been executed, changing a judgment seat into a mercy seat (Heb. 9:11-15; compare with “throne of grace” in Hebrews 4:14-16; place of communion, Exodus 25:21-22).

Another Greek word, **hilasmos**, speaks of Christ as propitiation (1 John 2:2; 4:10 [“atonement” in the Septuagint {Lev. 25:9}]). The thought in the Old Testament sacrifice and in the New Testament fulfillment is that Christ completely satisfies the just demands of a holy God for judgment on sin by his death on the Cross of Calvary.

God, in view of the cross, is declared righteous in having been able to forgive sins in the Old Testament period, as well as being able to justify sinners under the New Covenant (Rom. 3:25,26; cf. Exod. 29:33). Propitiation, as **hilasmos**, is satisfying the perfect justice of a holy and righteous God, thereby making it possible for Him to show complete mercy without compromising His righteousness or justice.

### **What propitiation presupposes - wrath / anger**

The transgression of Law solicits judgment. There would be no need for placation if there were no offense made. Because there is an impartial judge who judges each one’s work

(1 Peter 1:17), a means must exist to placate the violation of a broken law. Jesus is God's response to humanity's rebellion.

### **What propitiation provides - favor**

Propitiation interrupts the judgment against the guilty. The work of Christ enables God to act toward us in a merciful manner. It is from mercy He bestows grace. In satisfying the demand, the response of the judge turns from wrath to joy.

### **What are the implications of such truth?**

First, if the death of Christ sufficiently and effectually removes the object of God's wrath thus placating His anger and satisfying His justice, then God can never be angry with us again.

Where did we pick up the idea that God is mad or irritated? Knowing *God's entire* wrath was poured out on His Son at His death on the cross, how can we think like that? As a matter of fact, the reason He brought Jesus back from the grave is that He was satisfied with His Son. Ponder this: if the Father is satisfied with His Son's full payment for sin, and we are in His Son, by grace through faith, then *He is satisfied with you and me*. How long must Christians live before we finally believe that? <sup>14</sup>

Second, we will never face God's anger. God will never be angry with those who participate in the propitiating work of Christ before the Father. It is not possible for a Christian to cause God to become angry.

There is nothing you can do that will make Him mad – nothing!<sup>15</sup>

Michael Wells, in *Sidetracked in the Wilderness*, shares the following regarding an acquaintance.

The truth was that she was pleasing to God already, and she was to work not for His favor, but because she already had it.<sup>16</sup>

Finally, even though all of us will one day stand before the throne of God and have our work judged, let us not fear the outcome. The day of revealing will be a day of great joy, for in that day we will finally see all God chose to do in us and through us to those around us. It will be a day of great glory to the one who alone is worthy of such praise.

Let us not fear such freedom, but let us tremble at the sheer joy of its glory as it is but a whisper of His voice and the hem of His garment.

## STUDY GUIDE QUESTIONS - PROPITIATION

1. What moves God to act?
2. What is the act of propitiation based upon? What hope does this truth of propitiation give?
3. What does propitiation presuppose?
4. What needed to be appeased?
5. How does Jesus placate God's wrath?
6. Define propitiation in your own words.
7. What does propitiation provide?
8. What relationship does the law have with propitiation? How does propitiation, judgment, and mercy relate?
9. How does realizing how God's wrath against you is satisfied in the work of Jesus Christ change your thinking about God, about yourself, and about your relationship with God?
10. Summarize what impacted you from this chapter.





# Justification

# 4

Because His person and work is so vast, God the Father can now declare and see those in Christ as righteous (Rom. 3:22). God can declare sinners righteous because the sin offering of His only begotten Son answered the sin debt against them. It is the life and death of His Son that placates the sentence of justice against them whereby He can now forgive them of their transgression and declare them blameless before Him. Such truth is wonderful beyond imagination.

## Defining the Word

The word “justification” means, “to declare righteous.” A cause for the Reformation was whether it meant “to declare” or “to make.” Protestants believe it means, “To declare righteous.”

Consider the following explanation of justification by several published theologians.

The doctrine of justification means then that **in God’s sight the ungodly man, now “in Christ,” has perfectly kept the moral law of God**, which also means in turn that “in Christ” he has perfectly loved God with all his heart, soul, mind, and strength and his neighbor as himself. . . . The moment the sinner, through faith in Jesus Christ, turns away from every human resource and rests in Christ alone, the Father imputes his well-beloved Son’s perceptive (active) obedience to him and accepts him as righteous in his sight. <sup>17</sup>

To justify means to declare righteous. **The concept**

**does not mean to make righteous, but to announce righteousness.** Just as announcing condemnation does not make a person wicked, neither does justification make a person righteous. Nevertheless, condemning or justifying announces the true and actual state of the person.<sup>18</sup>

To be justified means more than to be declared “not guilty.” It actually means to be declared *righteous* before God. **It means God has *imputed* or charged the guilt of our sin to His Son, Jesus Christ, and has *imputed* or credited Christ’s righteousness to us.**<sup>19</sup>

**It is a legal act wherein God pronounces that the believing sinner has been credited with all the virtues of Jesus Christ.**<sup>20</sup>

By justification, we mean that judicial act of God by which, on account of Christ, to whom the sinner is united by faith, **he declares that sinner to be no longer exposed to the penalty of the law, but to be restored to his favor.**<sup>21</sup>

This means that **this received justice is a gift of God.** It is not acquired by individual effort, good “works” are only its manifestation and its fruit. **Everything depends on the connection with Christ,** like the connection of members to the head or branches to a vine.<sup>22</sup>

**Justification may be defined as that act by which unjust sinners are made right in the sight of a just and holy God.**<sup>23</sup>

From these authors it becomes evident that one’s justification

is not only the negative of charges dropped but also the positive granting of Christ's righteousness. The acquiring of this is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.

Nothing has changed in us except now as we stand before the Father, He declares us righteous. However, this does not mean change does not happen. Practical sanctification and the doctrine of regeneration make the sinner righteous, but even then such righteousness are foreign (or alien) to us.

Romans 1:18-3:20 declares us wrong, whereas now (3:22) we are right. How or why can such a transaction be true? We are declared right only because of our standing in Him by grace alone through faith alone.

What changed? Our position changed. We did not personally merit a right standing before the Father. Grace freely does what we cannot do.

### **Looking at justification biblically**

Here, we have taken the word "justifies" and traced it through the New Testament. What follows are some initial observations.

1. Faith appropriates a blameless standing before the Father (i.e. justification) and is in contrast to works righteousness (Acts 13:38,39; Rom. 3:21, 22, 26, 28, 30; 4:2-6, 9, 11, 13; 9:30-33; 10:1-13; Gal. 2:16, 17, 21; 3:6, 8, 11, 21-26; Titus 3:5).

Nevertheless knowing that a man is **not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus**, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified. (Gal. 2:16)

The only possible way for anyone to stand without blame before the Father is because of the person and work of Jesus Christ. Faith receives the work (i.e. agreeing with God's record of our condition and His provision).

2. The sinless life and sacrificial death of the Lord Jesus Christ is the basis of a blameless standing before the Father (Rom. 3:24, 25; 5:18, 19).

<sup>18</sup> So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, **even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men.** <sup>19</sup>For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous. (Rom. 5:18, 19)

As noted above, the provision made by God for sin in the person and work of Jesus Christ declares not guilty all who come.

3. A blameless standing before the Father (i.e. justification) is impossible without faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 3:22).

Even the righteousness of God **through faith in Jesus Christ** for all those who believe; for there is no distinction. (Rom. 3:22)

4. A blameless standing before the Father (i.e. justification) is a provision of grace and thus a gift (Rom. 3:24; 5:16, 17; Titus 3:5-7).

**Being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.** (Rom. 3:24)

A blameless standing before the Father is a gift made possible by the Father when He sent His Son to pay sin's debt so that His wrath against us would be satisfied.

5. A blameless standing before the Father (i.e. justification) makes us what Christ is, and He, what we are (1 Cor. 1:29-31; 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Pet. 3:18).

**He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.** (2 Cor. 5:21)

**For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust,** so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit. (1 Peter 3:18)

In a positional sense, we are what Christ is. The practical outworking of this is the putting on of the new and the putting off the old by the renewing of one's mind (Eph. 4:22-24). It is, in this sense, that we are righteous. In truth, it is His righteousness seen in and through us. Our righteousness is actually the outworking of His righteousness in us. It is as we become aware of whom He is that we are desirous of putting on those qualities that will reveal Christ to others through us.

6. The consequence of a blameless standing before the Father (i.e. justification) is a yielded life to God. (Rom. 6:13-19; James 2:14-26; 1 Pet. 2:24, 25; 1 John 2:29)

<sup>12</sup> Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, <sup>13</sup> and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. (Rom. 6:12, 13)

Here is where justification and sanctification intermingle. **A life of holiness is the fruit of justification.** New birth causes us to take on the nature and mannerisms of our heavenly Father. The book of James appears to fly right into the face of the initial point of justification by faith alone. James' primary point is simply this, "A faith that does not result in a practical display of God's righteousness through it is a dead faith." The Apostles James and John say the same things. It is a faith that has not produced life. A seed has yet to germinate (1 John 3:9, 10).

<sup>9</sup>No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. <sup>10</sup>By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother. (1 John 3:9, 10)

A yielded life is a fruit of the Holy Spirit. It is not something we do, but done in us and through us to those around us by someone else. This is as true of this Spirit-fruit as it is of all other good works done in us and through us to those around us.

Justification by faith will always bring forth the fruit of righteousness. The work of the Law cannot justify. It is a justifying faith that produces adherence to the Law. Only the justified can "keep" Law. It is for this reason those in Adam are Lawbreakers (James 2:10) and those in Christ are commandment keepers (1 John 2:23).

**Yet the justified keep the Law only as far as Christ kept the Law. His Law-keeping kept the Law for us (Rom. 8:1-4).**

<sup>1</sup>Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. <sup>2</sup>For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has

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set you free from the law of sin and of death. <sup>3</sup>For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, <sup>4</sup>**so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us**, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. (Rom. 8:1-4)

We do not have to because He did and He does. God's provision fulfills the demands upon us (Rom. 8:10). Our conformity to the will of God is because of His conformity to the will of His Father. Our conformity is a result of His conformity. **We are because He is.** It is only as we understand the nature of God's gospel grace that we live righteously (Titus 2:11-15).

<sup>11</sup> **For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men,** <sup>12</sup> **instructing us** to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, <sup>13</sup> looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, <sup>14</sup> who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds. <sup>15</sup> These things speak and exhort and reprove with all authority. Let no one disregard you. (Titus 2:11-15)

Dudley Hall, in *Grace Works* reiterates the faithfulness of God to fulfill His promises.

God has made great and precious promises to his covenant people. We can rest in his trustworthiness. Jesus is the fulfillment of all God's promises to us. As we embrace his life, **God performs in us everything he requires of us.** When God's promises are the issue, trust and rest are the result. When principles without promises are the issue, performance and striving will always be present.<sup>24</sup>

*Christ Has Set Us Free*

7. When God declares us blameless before Him because of the work of His Son (i.e. justification), those justified have peace with God, access to God and boldness before God (Rom. 5:1, 2, 9; 8:33, 34).

Because of justification, we have peace with God and an unconditional access into His presence. Such peace and access are the result of Christ's work on our behalf. Tied into this great truth is that of our reconciliation. Whereas once we were alienated from God, we now have access to God. We have fellowship with Him, because He spanned the gulf and we are now reconciled to God. We cannot merit it. Moreover, we cannot maintain it. To have peace and access is a result of grace. We could never have gained it through self-effort. Why do we believe our actions will bar our access and rob our peace? Do we believe what we do or fail to do maintains our access before the Father? Friend, it is time for us to once more embrace the theology of the cross. **Christ has set us free!**

Our justification results in us having peace with God. We are no longer in a state of fear. We no longer tremble at our inability to measure up to God's unattainable standard (1 Peter 1:17-19; 1 John 4:16-18). Depravity might want to control us and "lord" it over us. We might wish for others to feel guilty and inadequate, but God who stands in our corner as our advocate (1 John 2:1, 2) asks those who would, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of my elect whom I have declared righteous? Who is there among you that can condemn those whom I have freed?" (Rom. 8:31-39). NO ONE! We are free! Gloriously free! Jesus paid it all and now all to HIM we owe!



8. When God declares us blameless before Him because of the work of His Son (i.e. justification), those justified are freed from sin and the wrath of God against it. (Rom. 5:9; 6:7 [“freed” = “justified”])

Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, **we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.** (Rom. 5:9)

We have lived so long in bondage that we have to learn how to live as free men (Rom. 6:1, 2; Gal. 5:13; 1 Peter 2:16). We sin so naturally that we must learn how to live in righteousness just as we have lived in sin.

If you belong to Christ, you are *100% justified* in Him; there is *zero* condemnation for you. Justification has no degrees!<sup>25</sup>

This is a persistent tension in our vocabulary. Just as we were in Adam, so now we are in Christ. If our “in Adam” identity was controlling us, so also our “in Christ” identity is to control us. We must always work from what is true and not from how we feel.

### **What are the implications of such a thought?**

First, practically speaking, nothing changed.

Justification is the sovereign act of God whereby He declares righteous the believing sinner - **while he is still in a sinning state.**<sup>26</sup>

In our practice, we are still as wrong as we were in Romans 1:18-3:20. Now, however, even though our practice has not changed, our standing before God has. We are right with

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God. Whereas before (1:18-3:20) we were wrong, now (3:21-26) we are right. Nothing can affect this “rightness with God.” **Nothing we did caused it and nothing we can do will cancel it. Our actions can never undo what Christ alone has done.**

Second, in light of the context within Romans, to be right with God is to be justified. To become non-right is to undermine the truth of justification by faith. To call Christians to get right with God is theologically inaccurate. The basis of our “rightness” with God is not in our ability to perform or obey but on our position in Christ.

Third, as a Christian it is impossible not to be right with God. **We did nothing to merit it and we can do nothing to maintain it. To think our sin makes us not right is to fail to see the scope of our sinful condition. To think our obedience makes us right is to fail to see the scope of our justification.** How could God initially declare us righteous and treat us as such, and now treat us as unrighteous?

It’s no wonder so many believers walk around seeing themselves as “sinners.” They are double-minded about their standing before God – especially when they visit church on Sunday and are reminded to “**get right with God.**” As James 1:8 says, “A double-minded man [is] unstable in all he does,” and this lack of understanding about the finality of the cross is spiritual instability.<sup>27</sup>

Fourth, we will address the question concerning sinful acts later. Yet such actions on our part cannot change our “rightness” with God. The doctrine of justification forever settles our rightness with God. It is as certain as His Son.

Fifth, our feelings do not determine our justification. Too many believers live their daily lives based on their feelings. As such, they experience little of justification's joy. Our inability to measure up to all the imperatives (i.e. commands) in the New Testament might make us feel like a failure. We might feel distant and alienated from God because of our sin nature, but the fact of the matter is, we are right with God because we have been justified by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. Nothing can alter this glorious truth.

Listen to this insightful comment by Alva J. McClain in his commentary on the book of Romans.

A good many people think of justification as the first or initial blessing of the Christian life, its value ending at that point. Nevertheless, while justification is the initial blessing, it is more than that in the Christian life. Justification is not only the first or initial blessing, but justification carries with it every other blessing of the Christian life, and when a man is justified, he has everything God has to give.

So, let us never think of justification as being a small thing. It is the greatest thing in the Christian life, because it carries with it everything else. A great many Christians are not enjoying every blessing. **However, that does not change the fact that when God gives justification by faith, he gives with that justification everything that He has to give.**<sup>28</sup>

Friend, His justifying activity brings us joy.

## STUDY GUIDE QUESTIONS - JUSTIFICATION

1. Define justification in your own words.
2. What does justification presuppose?
3. What is impossible without faith?
4. What is the fruit of justification?
5. What happened when Jesus justified us?
6. What does justification state about our identity and position with God?
7. Who performs in us everything required of us?
8. What relationship does the law have with justification?
9. How can our emotions cloud the truth of our justification?  
What can we do to overcome the feelings?
10. How does realizing the work of Jesus Christ declares you right with God change your thinking about God, about yourself, and about your relationship with God?
11. Summarize what impacted you from this chapter.

# Blamelessness

(Without Guilt)

# 5

Adam and Eve's action of covering themselves with the work of their own hands speaks to their driving need to cover their nakedness. It was a nakedness of soul producing in them both shame and guilt. Had God chosen to abandon His creation, He would be justified [blameless] in His actions. God, however, condescended and in His humility provided the means whereby Adam and Eve could become "blameless." This blamelessness is the biblical thought of justification.

Justification is God's declaration that [Christians] stand before him **without guilt** and are **fully acceptable to him** as those **who are pleasing to him in every way** through Christ Jesus, who both lived and died on our behalf and whose righteousness becomes ours by faith.<sup>29</sup>

Blamelessness is the more common and descriptive term. However, the idea is equally captured in the statement, "Guiltless or without guilt."

God's redemptive work justifies the ungodly and removes from them all guilt before His judgment seat (Rom. 3:19-26).

<sup>19</sup> Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, **so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God;** <sup>20</sup> because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin. <sup>21</sup> But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, <sup>22</sup> even the righteousness

of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; <sup>23</sup> for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, <sup>24</sup> being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; <sup>25</sup> whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; <sup>26</sup> for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. (Rom. 3:19-26)

Guilt is a consequence of transgression. Forgiven sin removes guilt. It enables the individual to be blameless before God. There is little debate or doubt that we are a guilty people. The emotion or feeling of wrongdoing is guilt. Guilt exists because transgression exists.

Christians misunderstand and misappropriate the idea and emotion of guilt. The idea of guilt in the Bible is elusive. There are few, if any, verses speaking directly to this idea. Regardless, the thought of guilt marks our existence. What are we to do with it?

In speaking on the topic of "What is Sin," Pastor John MacArthur provides the following thought on guilt. Although it is an extended statement, it captures well the tension we face in handling this volatile emotion.

Our culture has really declared war not only on sin because they don't want anything defined as sin. So our culture has declared war on sin and consequently declared war on guilt. The very idea of guilt is considered medieval, obsolete, and certainly unhealthy. There was a mega best seller twenty years ago by Wayne Dyer, Dr. Wayne Dyer, it was called

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*Your Erroneous Zones.* And he said the most useless of all erroneous zones is guilt. He said, "Guilt...must be exterminated, spray cleaned and sterilized forever." We have to get rid of guilt. And he says here's how you do it. "Do something which you know is bound to result in feelings of guilt. Take a week to be alone. If you've always wanted to do something, despite the guilt engendering protestations from other members of your family, these kinds of behavior will help you tackle that omnipresent guilt."<sup>30</sup>

As we can see, the world has no answer for guilt apart from deadening and defiance. The Bible does have an answer and it is through provision and removal.

## **Defining the Word**

The word guilty means "liable to punishment." The word is in the New Testament (Rom. 3:19).

Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become **accountable** [guilty] to God. (Rom. 3:19)

Because of our sin, we are responsible to pay the penalty against it. This word needs some careful explanation, for in today's world the usual meaning of the term is guilty feelings, or the subjective aspect of guilt. "What we are referring to here, however, is the objective state of having violated God's intention for man and thus being liable to punishment."<sup>31</sup>

Without Christ, we are responsible to pay our sin debt before God. Without Christ's propitiatory work, we are the object of

His wrath (John 3:36). Such a sentence against our sin is just and inescapable. We are **guilty** of our crimes against God and we will pay for our sins.

Christ's substitutionary death received the just sentence against our sin. He took our place. He received our punishment. Because of His sufficiency, there is no longer any penalty against it.

In his study of the biblical idea of guilt, Stephen Motyer compares and then contrasts the idea of guilt under the First Covenant and then under the New Covenant. His conclusion is telling.

The New Testament has no need for a word equivalent to *asam* [guilt] because we do not need to pay. The Son of Man gives his life as a "ransom for many" (Mark 10:45), paying our indebtedness for us.<sup>32</sup>

Although it would appear those who are under the New Covenant no longer need to wrestle with the idea of guilt since the person and work of Jesus Christ have answered it fully, the idea of Christian guilt continues. By its misunderstanding and misappropriation, false guilt enslaves and paralyzes Christians before their heavenly Father.

### **What guilt presupposes -violation and culpability**

People are guilty because they have violated an existing standard. Because they violate absolutes, they are guilty. They are guilty because there is an objective lawgiver who requires conformity to an absolute standard.



## What blamelessness provides - emotional release

Although we speak of guilt as an emotion, it is possible to be guilty without feeling any emotion. When people speak of feeling guilty, it means they know they are wrong and thus punishable for their violation. All people are guilty before God for their crimes/sins against Him, but not all people recognize their guilt before God.

Often when one begins to realize their sins against God, they also recognize their guilt. The removal of guilt happens when one appropriates the work of Jesus Christ. This removal of legal guilt releases one from the emotion of guilt.

Hebrews 9:23-10:3 clearly lays out this idea.

<sup>23</sup> Therefore it was necessary for the copies of the things in the heavens to be cleansed with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. <sup>24</sup> For Christ did not enter a holy place made with hands, a mere copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; <sup>25</sup> nor was it that He would offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the holy place year by year with blood that is not his own. <sup>26</sup> Otherwise, He would have needed to suffer often since the foundation of the world; **but now once at the consummation of the ages He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.** <sup>27</sup> And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment, <sup>28</sup> **so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many,** will appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him. <sup>1</sup> For the Law, since it has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the very form of things, **can never, by the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year, make perfect those who draw near.** <sup>2</sup> Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, **because the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have had consciousness of sins?** <sup>3</sup> But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins year by year. (Heb. 9:23-10:3)

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The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from ALL SIN (1 John 1:7, 9; Col. 2:13). Prior to the cross, we stand guilty. After the cross, such is no longer the case.

### **What are the implications of such truth?**

Puritan minister Richard Baxter warned about the emotional toll of carrying unnecessary guilt: “That sorrow, even for sin, may be overmuch. That overmuch sorrow swalloweth one up.”<sup>33</sup> Baxter captured the feelings of people who have not experienced forgiveness. Grief over past sin plunges them into a depth of sorrow. Guilt swallows them up, and they feel as if they are drowning.

The first implication is we need never fear either immediate or future punishment by the Father for our sin.

Second, if we were guilty before the Father for any of our transgressions, it would be a declaration that the death of Jesus was inadequate.

Some teach every bad thing in one’s life is a consequence of God’s chastisement. Thus, many struggle with guilt. Often when something goes wrong in our circumstances we begin looking for some underlying sin problem. If we understand the work of Jesus Christ correctly, then the intrinsic demerit of sin is not the Father’s chastisement of us.

Should a believer “feel guilty” when they sin against God? Absolutely, for the sin has intrinsic culpability. However, such guilt is not before the Father. The Father is not holding you liable and He will not extract from you the punishment intrinsic to the sin. Those who “feel” no guilt in sinning have

many challenges facing them.

Although the quote is lengthy, it deserves attention. Listen to the pastoral counsel offered by J. Dwight Pentecost in his article, "God's Answer to the Problem of Guilt."

God has to separate a sinner from Himself because He sees the sin in the sinner. But when the blood of Christ perfects us [referring to Hebrews 10] and removes every sin, there is nothing that God can find in us as a basis of condemnation. The glorious truth is that when we are covered with the blood of Christ, God looks upon us just as He looked upon His own beloved Son; and there is no more reason for God to reject the one who is covered by the blood of Christ than there is for God to reject Christ Himself.

**Thus, the doctrinal argument of the apostle in Hebrews 10 shows how one passes from a guilt about sin to a guiltlessness about sin. That guiltlessness or clear conscience is the result of appropriating by faith Christ's work on the sinner's behalf. Freedom from guilt is not the result of sinless perfection; it depends on the value of Christ's blood which cleanses us from all sin.** When a child of God commits a sin, Satan can take the occasion to appear in God's presence and accuse that believer before God (1 John 2:1-2). Since our sonship is settled, he seeks to keep us from enjoying it. If God has dismissed from His memory every sin covered by the blood of Christ, then obviously that feeling of guilt cannot come from Him.

Some people get upset if they have guilt feelings and others get upset if they don't have them. One is as wrong as the other. The answer to both is the same.

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Trust God to do His work. Jesus Christ will keep on applying the benefits of His death to the believer so that he is always acceptable to God the Father. If we are guilty, then we must trust God. If we are not guilty, then we still must trust the Spirit to do the work which He has come to do. If guilt arises, it does not originate from God.<sup>34</sup>

Friends, there is truly something wonderful in what was just stated. You and I will at some point “feel guilty” over something we said or did or failed to do. Know this: You are not guilty before God anymore! You stand blameless in his sight.

## STUDY GUIDE QUESTIONS - BLAMELESSNESS/GUILT

1. Define blameless and guilt in your own words.
2. What does guilt presuppose?
3. Why do people think they need to “get right” with God before coming to Him? Is such thinking biblically valid? Why or why not?
4. In what ways do people attempt to mitigate their guilt? What truly removes it?
5. How does the finality of Jesus Christ’s death on the cross change our guilt?
6. What does blamelessness provide?
7. What is the act of blamelessness based upon? What hope does this truth of blamelessness give?
8. How does realizing Jesus Christ causes you to be blameless before the Father change your thinking about God, about yourself, and about your relationship with God?
9. Summarize what impacted you from this chapter.



# Imputation

# 6

The Father's justice is able to be satisfied because **He places on His Son** the sins of the rebel and **transfers to** the rebel His Son's righteousness (Rom. 4:6-8).

<sup>3</sup>For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and **it was counted unto him for righteousness**. <sup>4</sup>Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. <sup>5</sup>But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. <sup>6</sup>Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, <sup>8</sup>Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin. <sup>9</sup>Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. <sup>10</sup>How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision. <sup>11</sup>And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; **that righteousness might be imputed unto them also**. (Rom. 4:3-11, KJV)

<sup>22</sup>And therefore **it was imputed to him for righteousness**. <sup>23</sup>Now it was not written for his sake alone, that **it was imputed to him**; <sup>24</sup>But for us also, **to whom it shall be imputed**, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; (Rom. 4:22-24, KJV)

To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, **not imputing their trespasses unto them**; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. (2 Cor. 5:19 KJV)

Even as Abraham believed God, and **it was accounted to him for righteousness**. (Gal. 3:6, KJV)

And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed

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God, and **it was imputed unto him for righteousness**: and he was called the Friend of God. (James 2:23, KJV)

And **He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross**, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed. (1 Peter 2:24, NASB)

For Christ also died for sins once for all, **the just for the unjust**, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit. (1 Peter 3:18)

The entire act of God saving sinners is God-centered. God gives; humanity receives.

Pastor Tim Keller shows the relationship between the truths of our justification with the consequence of imputation in the following statement:

If the truth of being *justified by Christ alone* (not by our works) is lost, then all Christian truths are lost. For there is no middle ground between Christian righteousness and works-righteousness. There is no alternative to Christian righteousness *but* works-righteousness; if you do not build your confidence on the work of Christ, you must build your confidence on your own work. On this truth and *only* on this truth the church is built and has its being.<sup>35</sup>

The imputed righteousness of Jesus forms the identity of the believing before the Father. There are no other grounds and there can be no other grounds. Frankly, why would anyone desire anything else?



## Defining the Word

Imputation means, “To credit to one’s account.” In *How People Change*, Timothy Lane and Paul Tripp note the following in the chapter titled, “Married to Christ.”

This is what happens when we become Christians. **Christ assumes our liabilities and graciously gives us his assets.** This is God’s amazing grace.<sup>36</sup>

Christ’s works, all of them, are imputed to the Christian for justification.<sup>37</sup>

How might we understand the idea of biblical imputation? Positively considered, it means we have the righteousness of Christ credited to our account (Rom. 4:6). We are, because of Him, as righteous as Jesus Christ is. It is an **alien righteousness**. It is not native to us. Because of the doctrine of imputation, we have all the necessary resources to meet any charge brought against us. Imputation is a bank account with unlimited resources. Whatever the need, the resources prove enough. It is for this reason the apostle Paul makes the following declaration.

<sup>31</sup> What then shall we say to these things? **If God is for us, who is against us?** <sup>33</sup> **Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies;** <sup>34</sup> **who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died,** yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. (Rom. 8:31, 33, 34)

Negatively considered, God will never credit sin to our account (Rom. 4:8). Romans 4:6-8 is a quotation from Psalm 32:1, 2. David longed to be this man, though such an

experience was foreign to him. David existed before final fulfillment. He still felt God's heavy hand against him. A blessed man is the one who does not have sin credited to his account.

In their remark on 2 Corinthians 5:18-21, the IVP New Testament Commentary provides this insight.

Reconciliation occurs because "God does not count *their* sins against *them*" (v. 19; not *men's* sins). To "count against them" (*logizomenos autois*) in the world of commerce referred to calculating the amount of a debt (Heidland 1967a:284-85). Today we might think of charges on a credit card for which we are held legally responsible. **Here it means not posting debts to our account that should rightfully be ours.** The debts are called *sins*--or better, "trespasses" (KJV, RSV, NRSV, NASB), a term that in Hellenistic Greek has to do with a false step, slip or blunder. The REB's "misdeeds" catches the sense. To the Greek *paraptomata* are mistakes that result from ignorance. To the Jew they are deliberate actions knowingly committed against God (Bauder 1978:585-86). As someone once said, "sin is a clenched fist and its object is the face of God."<sup>38</sup>

Jesus takes all of our rebellion against the Father and in return, He gives us His righteous acts. God treated Him as guilty and treats us as righteous. Jesus becomes the lawbreaker and we become the commandment keeper.

### **What are the implications of such truth?**

First, New Testament believers are blessed. Though God is

omniscient and sees all sin, **God will never credit sin to their account** [thus, they are never guilty before Him]. God will never count or consider sin against the New Testament believer.

Second, God will always deal with us as righteous. He will never deal with us according to our sin.

This does not lessen the intensity of our striving against sin or dismiss the intrinsic demerit of all sin, but rather empowers us to fight sin with the very righteousness of Jesus Christ and His victory over it. Sin is a travesty. Yet sin can no longer do what it once did. Sin has lost its grip on us. It no longer carries its penalty against us. Its power has been overthrown and its final and fullest destruction is certain.

This imputed righteousness is passive righteousness. Of this passive righteousness, Martin Luther writes,

It is called “passive righteousness” because we do not have to labor for it...It is not righteousness that we work for, but righteousness we receive by faith. This passive righteousness is a mystery that someone who does not know Jesus cannot understand. In fact, Christians do not completely understand it and rarely take advantage of it in their daily lives . . . When there is any fear or our conscience is bothered, it is a sign that our “passive” righteousness is out of sight and Christ is hidden. The person who wanders away from “passive” righteousness has no other choice but to live by “works” righteousness. If he does not depend on the work of Christ, he must depend on his own work. So we must teach and continually repeat the

truth of this “passive” or “Christian” righteousness so that Christians continue to hold to it and never confuse it with “works” righteousness.<sup>39</sup>

Listen to the thoughts of Robert Thune and Will Walker regarding passive righteousness.

Luther reminds us that if we “wander away from passive righteousness,” our hearts will naturally tend toward self- or works-righteousness. To fight against our tendency to shrink the gospel in this way, we must consistently repent of false sources of righteousness and preach the gospel to ourselves, especially the truth of passive righteousness. *We must cling to the gospel promise that God is pleased with us because he is pleased with Jesus.* When we embrace the gospel in this way, seeing our sin is not scary or embarrassing. It actually leads to worship because Jesus died for all of it, and it is liberating because we are no longer defined by it! *Our righteousness is in Christ (I think we too often forget how profound that statement is!). The good news of the gospel is not that God makes much of us, but that God frees us to make much of Jesus.*<sup>40</sup>

Can anything be more glorious?

Third, Charles Leiter calls these realities, “The very heart of the gospel.”<sup>41</sup> There is nothing we can do to undo what God has done. The person and work of Jesus Christ is full and final. O may God continue to teach us His truth. We must pray, “Holy Spirit teach us such truths. Cause our lives to overflow with such victory as we battle against the world, the flesh, and the devil.”

## STUDY GUIDE QUESTIONS - IMPUTATION

1. Define imputation in your own words.
2. What roles do God and man play in the forgiveness of sin? Who is in the role of giving and who is in the role of receiving?
3. What feelings do you experience when unexpected money is deposited into your checking account? Do you sense the same amazement and joy about God's deposit?
4. How does imputation change our identity and position with God?
5. Why do we gravitate toward self-righteousness when we lose sight of the truth of the gospel?
6. What is the act of imputation based upon? What hope does this truth of imputation give?
7. Will God count or consider sin against the New Testament believer?
8. What is passive righteousness?
9. How does realizing you have the righteousness of Christ change your thinking about God, about yourself, and about your relationship with God?
10. Summarize what impacted you from this chapter.



# Reconciliation

# 7

Everyone knows through experience the anxiety caused by unresolved conflict within relationships. Whatever the cause for the conflict, the consequence is undeniable and nauseating. It is the proverbial “pink elephant” needing to be addressed, but ignored. God would not ignore the conflict, but resolved the conflict. He would do so through the provision made by His own will and hand. The feeling brought about by the resolving of relational conflict is the consequence of reconciliation. Reconciliation brings resolution. It disarms and disables the tension.

It is one thing to feel that God as our Maker supports us by his power, governs us by his providence, nourishes us by his goodness, and attends us with all sorts of blessings — **and another thing to embrace the grace of reconciliation offered to us in Christ.**<sup>42</sup>

By placating God’s justice, the rebel is **reconciled** to the Father.

For if while we were enemies we were **reconciled** to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been **reconciled**, we shall be saved by His life. (Rom. 5:10)

Now all these things are from God, who **reconciled** us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of **reconciliation**. (2 Cor. 5:18)

Yet He has now **reconciled** you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach. (Col. 1:22)

The idea of reconciliation is a common concept and seen in everyday situations.

The word “reconciliation” refers to the process of changing something thoroughly and adjusting it to something else that is a standard. For example, when you adjust your watch to a time signal, you are reconciling the watch to a time standard. Or when you reconcile your checkbook, the standard to which you match it is the bank’s record of your account. On rare occasions the bank must reconcile its accounts to yours.”<sup>43</sup>

God is the ultimate standard. Through Jesus, He adjusts us to the standard. His redemptive activity perfectly aligns the sinner to the Father.

Jesus was willing to be the rejected Son so that our families would know reconciliation. Jesus was willing to become the forsaken friend so that we could have loving friendships. Jesus was willing to be the rejected Lord so that we could live in loving submission to one another. Jesus was willing to be the forsaken brother so that we could have godly relationships. Jesus was willing to be the crucified King so that our communities would experience peace.<sup>44</sup>

Peace is the consequence of reconciliation and Jesus brings reconciliation.

### **Defining the word**

Paul is the only New Testament writer to use the noun *katallage* (reconciliation) and verb *katallasso* (to

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reconcile). The basic idea is to change or make otherwise. In Greek social and political spheres, the term denoted a change in relations between individuals, groups, or nations, while in the religious arena it was used of relationships between gods and humans. In Paul's writings, **God is always the reconciler**. Those in need of reconciliation are hostile human beings (2 Cor 5:18-19; Rom 5:10-11). The initiative . . . is with God who changes a relationship of enmity to one of friendship. This is accomplished *through Christ*, that is, through his death on the cross (Rom 5:10).<sup>45</sup>

To think God took the initiative for our reconciliation with Him is truly amazing.

Reconciliation comes from the Greek family of words that has its roots in *allasso*. The meaning common to this word group is “change” or “exchange.” Reconciliation involves a change in the relationship between God and man or man and man. **It assumes there has been a breakdown in the relationship, but now there has been a change from a state of enmity and fragmentation to one of harmony and fellowship** [Emphasis added].<sup>46</sup>

In his biblical reflections on reconciliation, Dr. Joseph Pathrapankal, director of Anugraha Renewal Centre for The International Consultation on Peace, Security and Development in South Asia makes the following comment.

The basic characteristic of reconciliation is that the initiative as well as the environment for this salutary

event is taken and worked out mainly by the offended party in the estrangement and not by the other who is responsible for such an estrangement.<sup>47</sup>

In our biblical context, we can repeatedly see how God, the offended, seeks out and reconciles the offender to Himself. How incredible is this?

### **What reconciliation presupposes – alienation**

Reconciliation is necessary because alienation exists. “Reconciliation is focused on restoring broken relationships.”<sup>48</sup>

We were once enemies of God (Rom. 5:10; Col. 1:20, 21).

For **if while we were enemies** we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. (Rom. 5:10)

<sup>20</sup> and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven. <sup>21</sup> And **although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind**, engaged in evil deeds, (Col. 1:20, 21)

### **What reconciliation provides – fellowship, friendship**

If propitiation is the negation of judgment, reconciliation is the positive embracing of the one pardoned. Reconciliation is possible because Jesus placates God’s judgment against sin.

<sup>14</sup> **You are My friends** if you do what I command you. <sup>15</sup> No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; **but I have called you friends**, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you. <sup>16</sup> **You did not**

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**choose Me but I chose you**, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you. (John 15:14-16)

## What are the implications of such a thought?

The person and work of Jesus Christ reconciles us to God thus providing fellowship with Him. We can no more break fellowship than we can break reconciliation. The state of communion is fellowship and fellowship is the product of reconciliation. If you are reconciled to God, you have fellowship with God. Reconciliation links with fellowship. As does redemption and propitiation or propitiation and reconciliation. To have any one of them is to have all of them.

Listen carefully to the Apostle Paul's liberating concept in Second Corinthians 5:20 as noted by the IVP New Testament Commentary.

*Be reconciled to God* (v. 20). Two things need to be noted. First, the verb is passive. It is not that we must reconcile ourselves to God--as would be the case with the Greeks or Romans vis-à-vis their gods. Rather, **we are to be reconciled, that is, to accept what God has already achieved.** Second, the gospel minister's job is not to bring about reconciliation but to announce what has already occurred. In a real sense, he or she is the town crier or herald proclaiming a news item of earth-shaking significance.<sup>49</sup>

On a very relational level, the idea that we can be reconciled to one another where estrangement exists is based solely on

the reconciliation provided by God for us. Again, let us listen to this excellent statement by Dr. Joseph Pathrapankal.

For Paul, God is the source of human reconciliation. The divine power enables and empowers the ministry of reconciliation in the world, extended to all areas where divisions of all sorts remain. God is in us, saying to the world, "Be reconciled."<sup>50</sup>

Friend, let us be reconciled to God and with one another.

## STUDY GUIDE QUESTIONS - RECONCILIATION

1. Define reconciliation in your own words.
2. What does reconciliation presuppose?
3. Why is it so difficult for people to be reconciled? What fear is preventing people from reconciling? Do we impose this same fear and understanding on to God's reconciliation?
4. What two sides are always present in reconciliation? What role did God take? Who made the move to reconcile? How does this change your thoughts and feelings?
5. What does it mean to say that reconciliation is passive?
6. What is the act of reconciliation based upon? What hope does this truth of reconciliation give?
7. What does reconciliation provide?
8. How does realizing Jesus Christ reconciles you to the Father change your thinking about God, about yourself, and about your with God?
9. Summarize what impacted you from this chapter.



# Our New Identity *In Christ*

# 8

In God's rescue of His people from sin and death to freedom and life, He completely conquers those who believe. In "saving His people from their sins" God moves the unbelieving from the kingdom of darkness and death into the Kingdom of light and life ruled over and *in Christ* (Col. 1:13; 1 Peter 2:9). He restores them for joy.

The doctrine of imputation is very much the identical twin to our new identity *in Christ*. God takes whom we are *in Adam* (our sinful status) and places it on His Son Jesus and He takes the very righteousness of *in Christ* and places this on us. He takes us out of our location *in Adam* and transfers us to our new location *in Christ*. This transfer creates a new identity for those who believe.

The Bible shows us how one's nature determines one's identity. Those who believe are located, positioned, or placed *in Christ*. Moreover, those who are without Jesus Christ are still located, positioned, or existing *in Adam*. This "position" creates one's identity. Our position intertwines with our nature. Our nature links inseparably with our position and identity. This identity establishes how God receives us. If we are still *in Adam*, then all of who or what Adam is determines who or what we are before God. If we are now *in Christ*, then all of who Christ is determines who and what we are before God.

With the fall of Adam, every one of his descendants has been imputed with his fallen nature. **Imputation means** what debt

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or resources were Adam's are now the recipients. This fallen (i.e., Adamic) nature controls our intellect, volition, and emotion. This is what Genesis 6:5, Psalm 51:5, and Romans 5:12 state.

Then the LORD saw that **the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.** (Gen. 6:5)

Behold, **I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me.** (Ps. 51:5)

Therefore, **just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned.** (Rom. 5:12)

In the larger scheme of things, this old nature is non-redeemable. The nature does not change. The only way anyone can break free of his or her fallen nature is to receive a new nature. When a person receives the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Savior, they receive a new nature, a nature that is holy, perfect, and blameless (Eph. 4:24). The Father **imputes** the righteousness of His Son to the account of the believing. This new nature becomes the governing principle in the life of the believer. **Just as the old, so now the new.** In addition, this new nature becomes the believer's new identity before God. The old nature still exists, but it no longer has any authority over them (Rom. 6:14) and no longer represents one's identity before God.

Only God is capable of carrying out this transaction. He alone is able to redeem, forgive, placate, justify, render guiltless, impute and reconcile.



For Paul, **union with Christ is summed up in the short phrase “in Christ” and its various equivalents.** It is supposed by many to be original with Paul, and the idea appears in different ways about **two hundred and sixteen times in his writing.**<sup>51</sup>

## Defining the word

Over eighty-nine verses contain the phrase *in Christ* in the New Testament.

Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are **in Christ Jesus.** (Rom. 8:1)

Just as **He chose us in Him** before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. (Eph. 1:4)

As for you, the anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, **you abide in Him.** (1 John 2:27)

Now, little children, **abide in Him,** so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming. (1 John 2:28)

By this we know that **we abide in Him and He in us,** because He has given us of His Spirit. (1 John 4:13)

In 1867, Horatius Bonar Scottish churchmen and poet wrote the following statement as it relates to our union and identity in Christ.

If I am a new creature in Christ, then I stand before God, not in myself – but in Christ. He sees no longer me – but only him in whom I am – him who represents

me, Christ Jesus, my substitute and surety. In believing, I have become so identified with the Son of his love, that the favor with which he regards him passes over to me, and rests, like the sunshine of the new heavens, upon me. In Christ, and through Christ, I have acquired a new standing before the Father. I am “accepted in the beloved.” My old standing, that is, that of distance, and disfavor, and condemnation, is wholly removed, and I am brought into one of nearness, and acceptance, and pardon—I am made to occupy a new footing, just as if my old one had never been. Old guilt, heavy as the mountain, vanishes; old dread, gloomy as midnight, passes off; old fear, dark as hell, gives place to the joyful confidence arising from forgiveness and reconciliation, and the complete blotting out of sin. All things are made new. I have changed my standing before God; and that simply in consequence of that oneness between me and Christ, which has been established, through my believing the record given concerning him. I come to him on a new footing, for I am “in Christ,” and in me there has been a new creation.<sup>52</sup>

### **Looking at our *in Christ* identity biblically**

What we are *in Christ* swallows up what we once were *in Adam*. This action qualifies His people to be blameless before Him.

Though we cannot thoroughly examine the treatment of such a topic in such a short space, please consider the following thought of being *in Christ*.

The New Testament describes the believer as being *in Christ*. The term is synonymous with salvation (Rom. 8:1; 2 Cor. 5:19; Eph. 1:20). No one *in Christ* can be lost. The preposition “in” is a description of position. To be *in Christ* is to be in the realm of His ownership, identification, association, fellowship, and presence.

“In Christ” is an expression of intimate interrelatedness, analogous to the air that is breathed: it is in the person, yet at the same time, the person is in it.<sup>53</sup>

The opposite is equally true. Not to be *in Christ* is to be lost. No one can be in Him and out of Him at the same time. Such a statement raises the question as to whether or not the Father ever sees us apart from His Son. The answer must be an unequivocal no. For Him to see us apart from His Son assures us of our lost estate. Our heavenly Father never sees us apart from being *in Christ*.

Self-righteousness shows itself in a search for one’s own identity apart from relationship. Identity is sought in performance, position, and success. But let’s face it, you will never have an identity except in your relationship with Jesus. In Christ you are important. Outside of him, you are lost.<sup>54</sup>

Salvation is a consequence of being *in Christ*. Several terms come into play as we consider the idea of being *in Christ*.

The heart of Pauline theology is our union with Christ (Rom. 8:1, 1 Cor. 6:17, Gal. 2:20). Although often overlooked in favor of an emphasis on justification by faith, Paul’s treatment of the spiritual life in Christ is

central to the apostle's understanding of religious experience. Communion with Christ is presented as synonymous with salvation, achieved by faith and consummated in love. Christ "for us" must be kept together with Christ "in us."<sup>55</sup>

Such language celebrates our "one flesh" standing with Christ before the Father (Rom. 7:1ff).

We are *in Christ* through **Spirit Baptism** (1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:27). At salvation, the Holy Spirit places us into the body of Christ. Such an action on His part guarantees our placement into His body. For us to fall outside of Him would be to negate and reverse the action of the Holy Spirit on our behalf.<sup>56</sup>

To be *in Christ* is to partake of all that He has provided through His perfect life and sacrificial death. The Book of Romans provides for us the benefits of His life and death on our behalf.

### **What are the implications of such a thought?**

First, either an individual is *in Adam* or they are *in Christ*.

Second, anyone can move from *in Adam* to *in Christ*. However, no one can move from *in Christ* to *in Adam*.

Third, for those *in Adam* there is hope. Christ is the hope.

Finally, for those *in Christ* there is certainty and assurance.

Michael Parsons concludes his thoughts on Paul's use of the

phrase “in Christ” with the following words:

It primarily designates a **close and indissoluble relationship** with the Lord, but more than that **it speaks of solidarity** with Christ in his death and resurrection as the representative head of his people, the church.<sup>57</sup>

## STUDY GUIDE QUESTIONS - OUR NEW IDENTITY IN CHRIST

1. According to the Bible, what creates an individual's identity?
2. How do imputation and our new identity in Christ complement each other?
3. Define what it means to be "in Adam" or "in Christ."
4. Whose identity is our identity?
5. Can one vacillate between an "in Adam" identity and an "in Christ" identity? Please explain your response.
6. What are the traits of the new nature we receive from Christ?
7. What is the new identity based upon? What hope does this truth of the new identity give?
8. How does realizing you have a new identity in Christ change your thinking about God, about yourself, and about your relationship with God?
9. Summarize what impacted you from this chapter.

# Adoption 9

Reconciliation addresses alienation. It does not, however, demand or require assimilation, privilege, or standing. God moves past the great conflict resolving power of reconciliation and adds sonship through second birth and adoption. Adoption grants access and privilege. It gives standing and inheritance.

God is a father who graciously adopts believers in Christ into his spiritual family and grants them all the privileges of heir-ship. Salvation is much more than forgiveness of sins and deliverance from condemnation; it is also a position of great blessing. Believers are children of God.<sup>58</sup>

Because of God's **redemptive** activity, He adopts His people into His family. The apostle Paul alone uses this word in the New Testament and only in the following five references.

For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but **you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!"** (Rom. 8:15)

And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, **waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons**, the redemption of our body. (Rom. 8:23)

Who are Israelites, **to whom belongs the adoption as sons**, and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises. (Rom. 9:4)

So that He might redeem those who were under the Law, **that we**

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**might receive the adoption as sons.** (Gal. 4:5)

**He predestined us to adoption as sons** through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will. (Eph. 1:5)

John Flavel, in his book *Fountain of Life*, celebrates what Christ is for us in the following statement.

The sacrifice made unto God by Jesus Christ, is of unspeakable value, and everlasting efficacy, to perfect all them that are or shall be sanctified, to the end of the world. Out of this fountain flow all the excellent blessings that believers either have or hope for. Had it not been for this, there had been no such things as justification, adoption, salvation, peace with God and hopes of glory, pardon of sin, and divine acceptance. A man might have happily imagined such things as these, as he may golden mountains, and rivers of liquid gold, and rocks of diamonds: but these things could never have had any real existence had not Christ offered up himself a sacrifice to God for us. Who can express the mercies, comforts, happiness of such a state as this? Reader, let me beg thee, if thou be one of this pardoned number, to look over the cancelled bonds, and see what vast sums are remitted to thee. What can't thou do but fall down at the feet of free grace, and kiss those feet that moved so freely towards so vile a sinner?<sup>59</sup>

Throughout this short study, the intent has been to introduce the reader to the immeasurable grace of God who has called them from darkness into light (1 Peter 2:9). The woof and weave of gospel fabric is inseparably interwoven. To separate



the pieces from the whole is to do a disservice to the work of God. The following statement speaks to the connectedness of God's redemptive work:

At the root of the human condition is a struggle for righteousness and identity. We long for a sense of acceptance, approval, security, and significance – because we were designed by God to find these things in him. But sin has separated us from God and created in us a deep sense of alienation. Speaking of the Jewish people in his own day, Paul writes, “[T]hey did not know the righteousness that comes from God and sought to establish their own” (Rom. 10:3). We do the same thing. Theologically speaking, pretending, and performing are just two sophisticated ways of establishing our own righteousness. When we pretend, we make ourselves out to be better than we are. When we perform, we are trying to please God by what we do. Pretending and performing reflect our sinful attempts to secure our own righteousness and identity apart from Jesus. To really experience the deep transformation God promises us in the gospel, we must continually repent of these sinful patterns. Our souls must become deeply rooted in the truth of the gospel so that we anchor our righteousness and identity in Jesus and not in our selves. Specifically, the gospel promises of passive righteousness and adoption must become central to our thinking and living.<sup>60</sup>

## **Defining the word**

Listen to how the Westminster Confession - 34 defines this

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concept, “Adoption is an act of God’s free grace, whereby we are received into the number, and have a right to all the privileges, of the sons of God.” There is only one specific term for adoption used in the Bible.

[Adoption is the] filial and familial relationship of Christians with God. “The actions of God by which people are brought into filial relationship with Him and conferred with privileges thereof” (**ISBE**). Not in conflict with birth metaphor of regeneration, but simply connotes additional idea of kinship relationship. [It is the] new relationship with God as Father; the apex of privilege as part of God's family.<sup>61</sup>

### **Looking at adoption biblically**

The consequence of adoption is the ability to call God, Father (Rom. 8:15). Moreover, although adoption is immediate there is still a future application of adoption (Rom. 8:23). Perhaps its completion is part of what the apostle John spoke of in 1 John 3:1, 2 when our transformation will be complete. The redemptive work of Jesus Christ on behalf of His people secures our adoption (Gal. 4:5). God predetermined adoption (Eph. 1:5). Adoption is because of Jesus Christ. In adoption, the alienated become children of God and co-heirs with Jesus.

### **What adoption presupposes – orphan / without parentage**

If adoption makes one a child of God, then prior to such action such a child is not of God, but is of the devil (John 8:44). John the apostle seems clear on this in numerous passages, thus the need to be “born-again” (John 3:3). Without adoption, no one can call God his Father and without adoption, no one can be a co-heir with Jesus.

## What adoption provides – family

The redemptive work of God restores what existed prior to the fall into sin. His work changes everything. The same idea of intimacy and purpose prior to the fall continues to this day. Adoption enables the alienated to participate in the inheritance.

We need to believe this truth. We have drawn too sharp of a distinction between what we are in Christ and the continuing battle we have with the old nature. **We have allowed ourselves to make our failed experiences and submission to the old nature as our defining points.** This is woefully catastrophic. Such bottom feeding robs us of all He is for us and we are in Him. Consider this thought by Miles J. Stanford, “Let the facts of your position OVERWHELM the feelings of your condition.”<sup>62</sup>

## What are the implications of such a thought?

Charles Leiter correctly notes,

Christian have both a new identity and a new power. These are *facts*, whether we believe them or not. Believing them does not make them true, and not believing them does not make them false. Reality is not changed by our faulty perception of it. What is changed is our *experience* of that reality.<sup>63</sup>

Friend, because of His work those who were once His enemies have become His friends and those once orphaned through the fall are now adopted through the cross.

## STUDY GUIDE QUESTIONS - ADOPTION

1. Define adoption in your own words.
2. What does adoption presuppose?
3. What does adoption provide?
4. Why does adoption grant access and privilege before God?
5. How does adoption change our identity and position with God?
6. What is the consequence of our adoption? Can you sense the true treasure of addressing God as Father? Prior to salvation who was your father?
7. What is the act of adoption based upon? What hope does this truth of adoption give?
8. How does realizing Jesus Christ enables your adoption into God's family change your thinking about God, about yourself, and about your relationship with God?
9. Summarize what impacted you from this chapter.

# The Last Word

The purpose of this short study was to see how Jesus Christ is enough in this life and in the life to come. There is nothing and no one who can be for us what we are in Him. May the Holy Spirit of God be pleased to reveal this truth to us and may He then cause us to understand.

Christ Jesus has done it all. Yet we forget to rest in His provision. We forget and we fall back into self-effort. Our habit of asking for more forgiveness, more redemption, more righteousness, and more sanctification must be replaced with a habit of trusting Him. He has done everything for us. And living by faith in what He has done for us is what pleases Him.<sup>64</sup>

Our activity or ability does not determine who we are in Him. He does everything for our joy. Nothing can alter His opinion of us. Nothing can alter His dealings with us, because He deals with us according to the merit of His Son. It is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. May today find us bathing in the abundance of God's provision, washed in His lavish provision, and may we never rest until we rest in Him.

## STUDY GUIDE QUESTIONS - THE LAST WORD

1. Review all the summaries you wrote at the end of each chapter. What truth is most meaningful to you? Why?

# Endnotes

## THE FIRST WORD

<sup>1</sup> “Most men lead lives of quiet desperation and go to the grave with the song still in them.” “I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived.” Henry David Thoreau <http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/h/henrydavid132662.html#ixzz1jea26jK0> Thoreau understood the questions confronting us all. He failed in not allowing the Biblical text to form his worldview; thus robbing Him of life’s fullest and ultimate meaning and purpose.

<sup>2</sup> Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1993), 1:204.

<sup>3</sup> “In Romans, the most theological of Paul’s Epistles, we find the most systematic development of the doctrine of grace. This is to be expected, since the heart of Paul’s message was the gospel, the power of God unto salvation, and since grace is used as a synonym for gospel and salvation.” Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *The Grace of God* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1963). 37.

## CHAPTER 1: REDEMPTION

<sup>4</sup> Colin Brown, *NIDNTT*, 3:177.

<sup>5</sup> <http://carm.org/dictionary-redemption>

<sup>6</sup> Packer, J. I., Preface to John Owen’s, *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ*, Banner of Truth, 7.

<sup>7</sup> Leon Morris, ‘Redemption’ *Dictionary of Paul and his Letters* [Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1993]: 784.

<sup>8</sup> Bruce Demarest, *The Cross and Salvation: The Doctrine of Salvation* [Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1997]: 176, 177.

<sup>9</sup> *Understanding Christian Theology*, Swindoll and Zuck, General Editors, 834, 835.

<sup>10</sup> Jerry Bridges, *Transforming Grace*, 21.

## CHAPTER 3: PROPITIATION

<sup>11</sup> Crossway Bibles (2009-04-09). *ESV Study Bible* (Kindle Locations 277848-277859). Good News Publishers/Crossway Books. Kindle Edition.

<sup>12</sup> *Propitiation* at Got Questions Ministries.

<sup>13</sup> *Understanding Christian Theology*, Swindoll and Zuck, General Editors, 835.

<sup>14</sup> Swindoll, *Grace Awakening*, 61, 62.

<sup>15</sup> Steve McVey, *Grace Rules*, (Eugene: Harvest House Publishers, 1998), 148.

<sup>16</sup> Michael Wells, *Sidetracked in the Wilderness*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1991), 82.

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## CHAPTER 4: JUSTIFICATION

- <sup>17</sup> Robert L. Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1998), 742, 747
- <sup>18</sup> Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *Basic Theology* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 298
- <sup>19</sup> Jerry Bridges, *Transforming Grace* (NavPress: Colorado Springs, 1991), 36.
- <sup>20</sup> Paul Enns, *Moody Handbook of Theology* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1989), 638.
- <sup>21</sup> A.H. Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1907), 849.
- <sup>22</sup> Ceslas Spicq, *Theological Lexicon of the New Testament*, 1:325
- <sup>23</sup> R.C. Sproul, *Essential Truths of the Christian life*, (Wheaton: Tyndale House, 1998), 189
- <sup>24</sup> Dudley Hall, *Grace Works* (Multnomah Pub., 2000), 131.
- <sup>25</sup> Charles Leiter, *Justification and Regeneration* (Heart Cry Resources – [www.heartcrymissionary.com](http://www.heartcrymissionary.com), 2007), 37.
- <sup>26</sup> Swindoll, *Grace Awakening*, (Word Publishing: Dallas, 1991), 24.
- <sup>27</sup> Bob George, *Faith That Pleases God*, (Harvest House Publishers: Eugene, 2001), 178.

## CHAPTER 5: BLAMELESSNESS

- <sup>28</sup> Alva J. McClain, *Romans*, 121.
- <sup>29</sup> Southern Seminary, "A Christian Understanding of Islam," Summer 2013, Vol. 81, Num. 3. Interview with Brian Vickers concerning his new book, *Justification by Grace through Faith: Finding Freedom from Legalism, lawlessness, Pride, and Despair*, 19.
- <sup>30</sup> <http://www.gty.org/resources/sermons/90-233> What is Sin? Genesis 3:1-7 January 30, 2000.
- <sup>31</sup> Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 605
- <sup>32</sup> <http://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionaries/bakers-evangelical-dictionary/guilt.html> Elwell, Walter A. "Entry for 'Guilt'". *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 1997.
- <sup>33</sup> Baxter, Richard. "What are the Best Preservatives against Melancholy and Overmuch Sorrow?" In *Puritan Sermons 1659-1689, Being the Morning Exercises at Cripplegate*. 6 vols. Edited by James Nichols. Wheaton: Richard Owen Roberts, 1981, 3:253.
- <sup>34</sup> J. Dwight Pentecost, *Life's Problems God's Solution: Answers to Fifteen of Life's Most Perplexing Problems* (Kregel, 1998), 18, 19, 21, 22. This is an excellent article and worthy of careful consideration by all who trust in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sin.

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## CHAPTER 6: IMPUTATION

<sup>35</sup> Tim Keller, *Galatians for You: For Reading, For Feeding, For Leading* (Good Book Company), 2013.

<sup>36</sup> [Emphasis added] Timothy S. Lane and Paul David Tripp, *How People Change* (New Growth Press, 2006), 55. This is an excellent chapter on the believer's union with Christ.

<sup>37</sup> C. Matthew McMahon, "The Active and Passive Obedience of Jesus Christ," in <http://www.apuritansmind.com/justification/the-active-and-passive-obedience-of-jesus-christ-by-dr-c-matthew-mcmahon/>

<sup>38</sup> <http://www.biblegateway.com/resources/commentaries/IVP-NT/2Cor/Ministry-Reconciliation>

<sup>39</sup> Commentary on Epistle to the Galatians, Preface – Martin Luther, 1535.

<sup>40</sup> Robert L. Thune and Will Walker, *The Gospel-Centered Life Leader's Guide*, New Growth Press, 38-39.

<sup>41</sup> Leiter, *Justification and Regeneration*, 28.

## CHAPTER 7: RECONCILIATION

<sup>42</sup> [Emphasis added] John Calvin, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill (Philadelphia, Pa.: The Westminster Press, 1960), 40.

<sup>43</sup> <http://www.realttime.net/~wdoud/topics/reconciliation.html> Numerous places on the internet use this quote. Some site realtime.net while others simply make the quote without citation. We have attempted due diligence. One, however, might encounter difficulty finding the original site.

<sup>44</sup> Paul David Tripp, *Relationships: A Mess Worth Making* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2006), 13.

<sup>45</sup> <http://www.biblegateway.com/resources/commentaries/IVP-NT/2Cor/Ministry-Reconciliation>.

<sup>46</sup> <http://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionaries/bakers-evangelical-dictionary/reconciliation.html> William J. Woodruff in Elwell, Walter A. "Entry for 'Reconciliation'". *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 1997.

<sup>47</sup> [http://www.overcomingviolence.org/fileadmin/dov/files/shared\\_resources/Bible%520study-Reconciliation.pdf](http://www.overcomingviolence.org/fileadmin/dov/files/shared_resources/Bible%520study-Reconciliation.pdf) Dr. Joseph Pathrapankal, "Morning worship and Biblical Reflections on Reconciliation," in *International Consultation on Towards Peace, Security and Development in South Asia*, April 1, 2009, Whitefield, Bangalore, India, p. 1.

<sup>48</sup> <http://thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/tgc/2012/03/29/how-to-move-from-forgiveness-to-reconciliation/>

<sup>49</sup> [www.biblegateway.com/resources/commentaries/IVP-NT/2Cor/Ministry-Reconciliation](http://www.biblegateway.com/resources/commentaries/IVP-NT/2Cor/Ministry-Reconciliation)

<sup>50</sup> [http://www.overcomingviolence.org/fileadmin/dov/files/shared\\_resources/Bible%2520study-Reconciliation.pdf](http://www.overcomingviolence.org/fileadmin/dov/files/shared_resources/Bible%2520study-Reconciliation.pdf) Dr. Joseph Pathrapankal, "Morning worship and Biblical Reflections on Reconciliation," in *International Consultation on Towards Peace, Security and Development in South Asia*, April 1, 2009, Whitefield, Bangalore, India, p. 5.

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## CHAPTER 8: OUR IDENTITY

<sup>51</sup> [Emphasis added] [http://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/vox/vol18/in-christ\\_parsons.pdf](http://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/vox/vol18/in-christ_parsons.pdf) Michael Parsons, "'In Christ' in Paul," *Vox Evangelica* 18 (1988): 25-44.

<sup>52</sup> Horatius Bonar, *Christ and the New Creation*.

[http://gracegems.org/Bonar/christ\\_and\\_the\\_new\\_creation.htm](http://gracegems.org/Bonar/christ_and_the_new_creation.htm)

<sup>53</sup> R. David Rightmire, "Union with Christ," in *Baker Theological Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 789.

<sup>54</sup> Hall, *Grace Works*, 87.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.* 789.

<sup>56</sup> Water baptism is the shadow of this reality.

<sup>57</sup> [http://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/vox/vol18/in-christ\\_parsons.pdf](http://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/vox/vol18/in-christ_parsons.pdf) Michael Parsons, "'In Christ' in Paul," *Vox Evangelica* 18 (1988): 25-44.

## CHAPTER 9: ADOPTION

<sup>58</sup> <http://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionaries/bakers-evangelical-dictionary/adoption.html>

<sup>59</sup> John Flavel, *The Fountain of Life*

<sup>60</sup> Bob Thune and Will Walker, *The Gospel-Centered Life* (World Harvest Mission, 2009), 19.

<sup>61</sup> <http://www.christinyou.net/pages/adoption.html>

<sup>62</sup> <http://withchrist.org/MJS/menus.htm>

<sup>63</sup> Leiter, *Justification and Regeneration*, 87.

## THE LAST WORD

<sup>64</sup> George, *Faith That Pleases God*, 96, 97.



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God has written an incredible *Story*. It arrests the affections and pushes one's passions for what is truly breathtaking. It is a *Story* of beauty, fall, love, and rescue. The entire text of the Bible speaks to this *Story*. Nothing falls outside of its borders or is excluded from its narrative. It is always impossible to capture sweeping movements in mere words, yet the nine words presented in this booklet are concepts that every Christian should understand. These words unleash the power of the cross to move individuals and set enslaved minds free. The scope of this freedom is breathtaking.

The Bible tells us how we might know God and the power of His provision for our rescue and restoration. It is not a rulebook or an end in itself. Its purpose is so that we might see Him. Because of our self-centeredness, we have the constant battle of desiring to have authority over Christ. **God gave us the Bible, not to tell us how to live, but to show us what He is like.** There is a world of difference between those two ideas.

It is the person and work of Jesus Christ that aligns us with God's *Story*. His life and death provided the perfect sacrifice whereby this provision becomes powerful in those who believe this *Story*. This is the means through which God can placate His justice and pardon His people. The intent of this booklet is to understand the richness of His work in order for us to align with His *Story* and to live in His rest.

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