

THE WORK  
OF CHRIST  
*in our salvation*

L. R. SHELTON, JR. (1923-2003)

# THE WORK OF CHRIST IN OUR SALVATION

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# THE WORK OF CHRIST IN OUR SALVATION

## 1. Substitution

We want to understand the work of the Lord Jesus Christ in our salvation. We'll show, first, God's eternal purpose in giving us Christ, His Son, as our Substitute; second, the reconciliation that resulted from His substitution; third, Christ as our federal representative in substitution; and fourth, the great truth of imputed righteousness by Christ's substitution.

Here set before us will be the glory, beauty, majesty, love, and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ as our Blessed Substitute, the One sent down by the Father to gather to Himself, by His death and resurrection, His people—whom the Father had given Him before the foundation of the world (Joh 17:6, 9, 11-12; 6:37).

### *Eternal purpose*

The purpose of God in Christ Jesus to bring many sons into glory was not just an after-thought of God, but was His eternal purpose—as set before us in language plain to understand upon the pages of Holy Writ. Observe the eternal decrees of our sovereign God in His purpose to save sinners by and through the substitutionary death of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In 2 Timothy 1:9-10, we read that God

9 hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, 10 But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

You will note in verse 9 that God has done something: He has issued an holy calling unto His salvation. This is not done according to our works, for Scripture tells us that we are dead sinners (Eph 2:5; 1Pe 2:24), and therefore can bring forth nothing that will commend us to God. No, this holy calling unto salvation in Christ Jesus is according to His own purpose and grace, for all the whys and wherefores are of Him. The purpose is in Himself, the reason for the salvation of poor sinners is found only in Him, based only upon

His marvelous, matchless grace. And when we say “grace,” we have ruled out all merit: there is no merit in any of us at all!

### *In Christ*

Not only is this salvation to be according to God’s purpose and flowing out of His heart of love—through His grace—but this salvation was to be invested in one person: the eternal Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. The Scriptures plainly declare that salvation is in none other, “for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Act 4:12). Salvation is only in the name and person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The purpose of God in Christ to save poor sinners was given us in Christ before the world began; God’s eternal purpose, therefore, cannot be brought to naught. Consequently, our blessed Lord can say in John 6:37: “All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.” Again, in His High Priestly prayer to the Father, He can say, “those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost” (Joh 17:12), for “my sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I gave unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish” (Joh 10:27).

This same truth of God’s eternal purpose is set forth in Ephesians 1, where we read that God chose His people in Christ before the foundation of the world. And for what reason? “that we should be holy and without blame before him” (vs. 4). In verse 5 we read that, in love, He “predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself,” which was done “according to the good pleasure of his will.” And for what purpose?—that it would be “to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved” (vs. 6). This must bless our hearts to know that the salvation which God gives in Christ reaches from eternity past to eternity future.

The reason God has done this for poor sinners is out of the love of His heart, for we read in John 3:16: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” This salvation from sin unto everlasting life through the substitutionary death of God’s only begotten Son, was “according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will” (Eph 1:11). When we meditate upon Ephesians 1:8-10, we see very clearly that it was God the Father’s good pleasure—something He purposed in Himself—that in the fulness of times He would send His only begotten Son to die in the place of His people, so He might gather together in One all things in Christ, both that are in heaven and on earth. It was God’s eternal purpose to head up all things in Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ of God. This eternal purpose led our Blessed Lord by the way of the cross, where He

would pour out His life's blood as our Substitute—so that in love to our souls He would deliver us from the pit of corruption, cast all our sins behind His back, reconcile us unto God, and present us perfect in Himself forever before the courts of heaven.

Consider also Hebrews 13:20: “Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant.” We see here that God has a covenant that is everlasting, signed and sealed with the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ; and those for whom this covenant was made are all His blood-bought ones. This is made known by these words in 1 Peter 1:18-20:

Ye know that ye were...redeemed<sup>1</sup>...with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you.

Yes, this everlasting covenant made by God with Christ for the salvation of His people, who are poor sinners, was made in eternity and reaches to eternity. It was signed in the blood of Christ, Who became Surety<sup>2</sup> for all His people. He gave Himself, He pledged Himself, to come die the death of the cross for His people. He pledged this back in eternity before the foundation of the world. Therefore, in time, He came—born of a woman, made under the Law—so He might save His people from their sins (Gal 4:4).

### *Christ came*

His name was called Jesus—Saviour, Deliverer—“for he shall save his people from their sins” (Mat 1:21). He said in prophecy through David, “a body hast thou prepared me...Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God” (Heb 10:5, 7). Then we read of Him in Philippians 2:6-8:

Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

Yes, our blessed Lord *came*, for “without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory” (1Ti 3:16).

Praise be to His holy name: Christ Jesus our Lord *came*. He came to do the Father's will: to lay down His life as an offering for the sins of His peo-

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<sup>1</sup> **redeemed** – obtained release from captivity by paying a ransom.

<sup>2</sup> **Surety** – one who assumes the debts of another.



ple. Therefore we praise, love, adore, honor, and obey Him, for He is the King of kings and Lord of lords. All glory and honor and praise is given unto Him on earth and in heaven. No wonder the saints in heaven and upon earth sing

a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth...Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing (Rev 5:9-10, 12).

While on earth, each one of these saints were made to know their sinnership before God, counting all things as dung so that they may know Christ, Who gave Himself for them. Listen to Paul, speaking in Philippians 3:7-10, as he describes what they all experienced:

What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. [Why?]. . . For the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: That I may know him.

### *By grace*

Oh what grace, what mercy, then, to be enabled by the grace of God and the operation of the Holy Spirit within us to fall at the feet of the crucified, risen Lord and crown Him king; to fall at His feet in repentance, confessing our guilty heart and life, laying down the arms of our rebellion, and crying:

I surrender all, I surrender all, my Lord. I want Thee above all earthly pleasures and joys. I want Thee above father, mother, sister, brother, wife, husband, children, self, and the world. Here is my will, break it; here is my heart, it shall be Thy throne; here is my life, do with it as Thou dost please. If Thou didst leave heaven's heights to come to earth's depths to die in my place, then Lord, I yield all I have and all I am up to Thee. Nothing will I withhold, all to Thee I give. Thou hast won my heart, I am thine forever.

So we see then that the substitution of our Lord Jesus Christ was the eternal purpose of God, carried out in time, for God "hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (2Co 5:21).

Oh, if indeed the living God has worked in your heart, then you should praise Him that He did it according to the good pleasure of His will, and "to the praise of the glory of his grace" (Eph 1:6).

## 2. Reconciliation

As we consider the work of the Lord Jesus Christ in our salvation, we come now to the reconciling work of our Lord Jesus through the shedding of His precious blood. We read in 1 Peter 1:18-19 these words: "Ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold...but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot."

In our Lord's work of redemption, reconciliation came first, for it is by Christ our Substitute that we are reconciled to God. This is brought out in 2 Corinthians 5:18-19 in these words:

And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.

### *Sin*

To understand what reconciliation by the blood of Christ means to us, let us first consider the act of sin, which made reconciliation by the blood of Christ necessary. In all the work of Christ, and above all in reconciliation, God's object is the removal and destruction of sin. Therefore, the knowledge of sin in our heart and nature is necessary to understand reconciliation.

When man fell into sin in Adam, he, by the law of sin, was brought under the power of sin and separated from God. The effect of sin on God was, therefore, terrible and disastrous. And what was the effect of sin upon God? It is this: sin is disobedience, a contempt for the authority of God. It seeks to rob God of His honor as God and Lord. Sin is also a determined opposition to a holy God; therefore, it not only can, but must awaken God's wrath. It has changed God's relationship toward man to make us His enemies. While it was God's desire to continue in love and fellowship with man, sin has compelled Him to become our opponent. Although the love of God toward man remains unchanged, sin made it impossible for Him to admit man into fellowship with Himself. It has compelled Him to pour upon man His wrath, curse, and punishment instead of His love. The change that sin has caused in God's relationship to man is awful.

This being so, then each one of us stands guilty before God as trespassing His rights and laws. Therefore, God cannot disregard His own demand that sin must be punished; His glory, which has been dishonored, must be upheld. As long as the debt of sin is not paid, nor the guilt removed, then it is impossible for the Holy God to allow sinners to come into His presence.



## *Removing guilt*

The question we ask, then, is this: “How can we be delivered from the guilt that is heaped up before God? Can the guilt of sin be removed? Can the effect of sin upon God, in awakening His wrath, be removed?” Yes, these things can be done. And when they are done, the power of sin will be broken in us; we are then at liberty to come into the presence of God. How? This can be done only through reconciliation, by the substitutionary death of Christ, by the shedding of His precious blood. And this, dear friend, is the substance of the gospel, Christ becoming our Substitute.

In reconciliation by the blood of Christ, our sins are so covered and the guilt of sin so removed, that the original relationship between God and man can be entirely restored. It so removes the guilt of sin, which awakens God’s wrath, that man can now draw near to God in the blessed assurance that there is no longer the least guilt resting on him to keep him from God’s presence.

This is the essence of the gospel, the good news brought down from heaven: God can be just in justifying a poor, repenting, believing sinner, because Christ has made us one in His death, burial, and resurrection—and has brought us unto God as reconciled to Him.

## *Wrath and love*

The wonder of all this is that the holy wrath of God and the holy love of God both find satisfaction in the work of Christ in shedding His precious blood for our sins. You see, the holy love of God was unwilling to let man go. In spite of all his sins, love would not give him up: he must be redeemed. On the other hand, the holy wrath of God would not surrender its demands for punishment of the sinner, because the Law of God had been broken and dishonored, and God’s standards therein must be upheld. There could be no thought of releasing the sinner as long as the Law of God was not satisfied. The terrible effect of sin on God in heaven must be removed, otherwise the sinner could not be delivered. The only salvation, then, that could satisfy both God’s holy love *and* His holy wrath was reconciliation by substitution.

This satisfaction of both the wrath of God and the love of God could take place only through a divine Substitute. This is the essence of the gospel, the good news that One has taken my place as a sinner and died beneath my sins. This the Lord Jesus Christ has done for poor sinners. By His own blood He entered once into the holy place, having made eternal redemption for His people (Heb 9:12). Praise the Lord: in this redemptive work of Christ, God is satisfied, and so are His children. They have rested their eternal, never-dying souls upon Christ and His work in death and resurrection; upon Christ and His complete satisfaction to the broken Law of God. They have

rested their weary, sin-tossed, guilty souls. He is all they need, all they want, and all God requires for both time and eternity. Yes, God's righteousness demands full payment for His broken Law, and His love in Christ's death satisfied it. And God's children also are satisfied. Their Substitute has paid their sin-debt in full, and God cannot collect their sin-debt twice: from the hands of their Surety, the Lord Jesus Christ, and then also from their own persons.

### *To know reconciliation*

Some may ask, "But how do you know this?" I know it because the Word of God declares that the Lord Jesus Christ accomplished it for His people. He rendered, in fullest measure of obedience and punishment, all that the Law of God could ever ask or desire. The Law was perfectly satisfied by Him. This is what the Word of God tells us. This is what the Holy Spirit bears witness to in the hearts and lives of His children. You see, the Holy Spirit assures us of what the blood of Christ has secured for us. They work together; for according to Romans 8:16, the Holy Spirit "beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God"—through the reconciliatory work of the Lord Jesus Christ at the cross and the empty tomb.

Some might say, "But I have never known this reality, this experiential reality of the work of Christ for me in bringing me back to God." This we can understand because, until sin is made real to us, we have no real need of Christ. Dear friend, if you have not experienced this, you have not truly become a lost sinner before God; for Christ came only to seek and to save those that are lost (Luk 19:10). You have never been lost, so you have never been found. If you have been lost spiritually, and Christ found you as you cried unto Him for mercy, you would know it, rejoice in it, and walk in the experiential knowledge of it the rest of the days of your life.

If you had ever known yourself to be a guilty, hell-deserving sinner before God, and God saved you for Christ sake, and pardoned you from all your sins, you would know it. It would be a thing remembered and rejoiced in before God.

If you had ever known the burden of sin, and that no matter what you did or tried, you could not get rid of it—and then God for Christ's sake gave you faith to look away to the Lord Jesus Christ, Who bore that burden of sin in His own body upon the tree, you would know it. It would be a thing remembered and rejoiced in the rest of the days of your life.

If you had laid at the feet of a sin-hating God and mourned over your sins and your far distance from God—mourned over the way you had treated God and made Him look upon your wicked, vile heart—and then He for Christ's sake heard your cry and delivered your poor, never-dying soul from

going down into the pit, you would know it, remember it, and rejoice in the experiential knowledge of it the rest of the days of your life. To those whom God saves by His grace, He gives the assurance that He has blotted out as a thick cloud their trespasses, because the blood of the Son of God has secured this blessing for them.

This to me is the greatest blessing of all: that I can walk in the knowledge of sins forgiven and commune with God at the mercy seat, through Jesus Christ my Lord. It is no good that I know only that Christ shed His precious blood for Peter and Paul, James and John—but to know that He shed it for me, this is where the blessing lies.

Therefore, when I hear from God's Word that He invites me to come to Him—that He says, "Come now, and let us reason together saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isa 1:18)—then I want to come to Him just as I am.

You see, you cannot make yourself one bit better. But you can come to Christ just as you are, cry after Him, tell Him your need—for He will hear and do His work in you by His Holy Spirit.

Perfect reconciliation has been made to God by Christ, so He invites you to come to Him. He alone can save, so He commands you to look away from yourself and to look to Jesus, the Author and Finisher of saving and keeping faith. Look to Him to do the work that only He by His Spirit can do in you. Repent and believe in Him (Mar 1:15)!

### 3. Federal Representation

As we consider the work of the Lord Jesus Christ in our salvation, Romans 5:12-21 describes one of the most important truths of the Bible. It is the fundamental doctrine of federal representation and the fact of imputation.<sup>3</sup> It reads:

**12** Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: **13** (For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. **14** Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come. **15** But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one

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<sup>3</sup> **imputation** – putting something to one's account.

man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. 16 And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification. 17 For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.) 18 Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. 19 For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. 20 Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: 21 That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

Here in these words is revealed the basic principle of how God deals with the human race. Here we see the old and the new races receiving from their respective heads—the first and the last Adams—all that they did for them. Here are the two central figures and facts of history, the first Adam and his disobedience, and the last Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ, and His obedience.

#### *In Adam unto condemnation*

These verses, I believe, are among the more important verses in God's Word. In Romans 5:12 we read: "By one man [i.e., the first Adam] sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." In verse 15 we read: "Much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many." Notice the comparison and the contrast!

In verse 16, by the one man Adam came condemnation; by the one Man Jesus Christ came justification. In verse 17, by the one man Adam came death; by the one Man Jesus Christ came life. In verse 19, by the one man's disobedience (Adam's) many were made sinners; by the one Man's obedience (Jesus Christ's) many shall be made righteous. In verse 20, by the one man Adam sin abounded; by the one Man Jesus Christ grace did much more abound. In verse 21, by the first Adam sin has reigned unto death; by the last Adam, Jesus Christ, grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life.

Surely then we have here the gracious truth of imputation: the first Adam stands as the federal head of the sinful human race, and what Adam did passes on to all his race. So the Lord Jesus Christ, the last Adam, stands as the federal head of the redeemed race, and what He did as the last Adam passes on to all His people. They both stand as our representatives. Therefore, if we never acknowledge the first Adam *as our representative* and know

that we became sinners in him, then we will never know anything of the blessings that the second Adam bought for His children by His death, burial, and resurrection as their representative.

Before we go any further, notice that this truth of imputation is also spoken of elsewhere in Scripture. We find in Romans 4:3-8:

3 Abraham believed God, and it was counted [imputed] unto him for righteousness. 4 Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. 5 But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted [i.e., imputed] for righteousness. 6 Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, 7 Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. 8 Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.

We find here that Abraham was saved not by any righteous acts of his own, but by the grace of God in Christ; and that when he believed God and trusted Him, then God's righteousness was imputed to his account in heaven. Also, we see here that no more were his sins imputed to *him*, but were imputed to the account of *Christ*; that is, they were put to the account of Christ, they were laid upon Him.

We see then in our passage in Romans 5 that by the sin of Adam we were all brought under guilt and condemnation. Adam was not a mere private individual, but the head and representative of all mankind. What he did in eating the forbidden fruit as recorded in Genesis 3 is imputed to us—put to our account—as though it had been actually done by us. And therefore we are subjected to the punishment that was pronounced against his transgression: "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Gen 2:17).

This is confirmed over and over again in Romans 5:12-19. If we know nothing about the imputation of Adam's sin to us, then we will know nothing about the imputation of Christ's righteousness to our account in heaven. Notice how this same point is emphasized. Verse 12, "by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Verse 15, "through the offence of one, many be dead"; verse 16, "the judgment was by one to condemnation"; verse 18, "by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation"; verse 19, "by one man's disobedience many were made sinners"; verse 20, by one man "sin abounded"; verse 21, by one man "sin hath reigned unto death."

This truth of imputation of sin and death can be proved with one simple truth. Death, physical death, has passed on all men. The death of infants demonstrates this truth, for nothing is plainer than the fact that God will not inflict punishment where there is no guilt (Eze 18:20), but He does in-

flict punishment—even death itself—on infants who cannot possibly have committed sin in their own person. For whose sin then is this punishment inflicted?—for the sin of Adam, the first parent, who was the head and representative of all mankind. This is what Romans 5:12-19 is teaching us.

The law that pronounced death as the penalty of transgressions was not given to Adam only, but to us also. Therefore, having transgressed the law in Adam, we are considered sinners and are subjected to all the penalties of sin, for it is written: “it is appointed unto men once to die” (Heb 9:27).

Now the first death (physical), we die because of Adam’s sin; the second death (spiritual separation from God) we will die for our own sins, those committed personally—unless we be found in the second Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ, before we die.

Adam as our representative opened the door through which sin and death entered and seized us all. All of our suffering, pain, sorrow, and heartaches came in because of sin. By this one man’s disobedience, sin came upon all of us. All manner of sin—hatred, bitterness, wickedness, murder, backbiting, deceit, spitefulness, and pride—all came in Adam. All the inventions of evil things—drunkenness, drugs, torture, war, famine, sickness, insanity, debauched lives, broken homes, broken marriages, hungry children, butchered babies, covetousness, greed, and all manner of lustful acts—came in by Adam. The first Adam by his disobedience opened the door to the floodgates of sin, and then hell opened her mouth to receive all of the disobedient sons of Adam. Yes, this is the way sin entered into this world, and death by sin.

### *In Christ unto salvation*

Some may be thinking, “I am not to blame then, for what I do.” But yes, you are to blame, because you are a responsible creature before God. To reject the fact of God’s Word that Adam acted as your representative is to also reject the only way out of your situation of sin. That way is by another Representative, the Lord Jesus Christ, Who is able to impute to you His righteousness.

You see, the Lord is to be praised that He did not sit idly by and let the whole human race perish, for this is what we deserve. But in love to our souls, He came in the person of His Son as the last Adam, the Lord from glory, and opened the door—a door of mercy for poor sinners.

Now notice as we go back over our verses in Romans 5 and see what the second Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ, brought in for His people as their federal head. In verse 15, “much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many”; in verse 16, by one Man (Jesus Christ) came justification; in verse 17, by one Man’s (Je-

sus Christ's) obedience came life; in verse 19, by one Man's (Jesus Christ's) obedience many shall be made righteous; in verse 20, by one Man (Jesus Christ) "grace did much more abound"—grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life.

We see then that Christ is given to us as a second Covenant Head. He became the Head of the spiritual seed, for all His spiritual seed are included in Him. All that He did or suffered is put to their account, as though they themselves had done or suffered that which He did.

This, then, is the teaching of Scripture: Christ's entire righteousness is imputed to His people for justification, precisely as Adam's disobedience is imputed to all men for condemnation. This is one of the greater truths of God's Word: that all Christ did while He was here on earth was done *in my stead, in my place, in my name*, so I can say, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Gal 2:20). Yes, the Scriptures teach that all my sins were imputed to Christ upon the cross, for He bore my sins in His own body upon the tree, and all His righteousness was imputed to me. All of God's children can speak in this first person because it is a living reality to them that Christ took their place.

So the Scriptures plainly teach that Christ became our Substitute so that He might bring us back to God. In order to do this, He had to die in the place of His people. But this He was willing to do, so that in Him many sons would be brought into glory by His resurrection from the grave (Joh 10:17-18; Heb 2:9-10).

By His death, burial, and resurrection, the Lord Jesus Christ brought in life, hope, and salvation from the power and penalty of sin. Where sin reigned in our mortal bodies—and we obeyed it through the lust of the flesh—our blessed Lord came in with the power of His blood and set us free from the law of sin and death. He gives us a new heart and a new nature like unto His, and gives us victory over sin, death, and hell.

Praise to the Lord, He does not leave us to ourselves, but sends His Holy Spirit to make us willing to lay down our arms of rebellion in the day of His power, to leave Adam's representation and to come to Christ, Who is the appointed One of God for reconciliation, to bring us back to Himself.

He commands us to repent and believe. He commands us to forsake our sinful ways and our sinful thoughts, and to return unto Him Who abundantly pardons. He gives us this grace to lay down our arms of rebellion. He gives us the hatred for sin; He gives us the desire after Christ and a cry after His righteousness. He puts within us the power to crown Jesus Christ Lord.



He gives us the faith to believe to the saving of the soul. He saves and keeps and delivers by His marvelous grace. He works in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure (Phi 2:13).

You see, if left to ourselves, we would be lost forever in Adam and would be in hell. But, praise the Lord, He has not only made salvation possible for us in Christ, but has also given the power to perform all that He commands us to do, for “Salvation is of the Lord” (Jon 2:9).

Praise God for Jesus Christ, our blessed Lord, the second Adam, Who as our federal head has imputed His righteousness to every repenting, believing sinner. This is all of grace, the gift of God worked in us by His Holy Spirit.

## 4. Imputed Righteousness

As we consider the work of our Lord Jesus Christ in our salvation, we have seen from Romans 5 the working of imputation, where “by one man [i.e., Adam] sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned” (5:12). Adam being the federal head of the human race, he stood for them; therefore when he sinned and fell, he brought all of the human race into bondage with him and into the consequences of his transgression—which was eternal separation from God!

But, praise the Lord, we also have seen from Romans 5 that God was not taken by surprise when Adam sinned and fell, but had from eternity prepared Himself another federal head in the Lord Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son, Who was willing to come and die in behalf of His people—so that He might bring many redeemed souls into heaven with Him.

We understand from Scripture, therefore, that this blessed doctrine of imputation not only condemns us by Adam’s sin being imputed to us; but it also works in our behalf by the free grace of our God being given to us in Christ, His perfect righteousness being imputed to us in the new birth.

Therefore, this brings us to a new text as we consider the blessed truth of *imputed righteousness*. In 2 Corinthians 5:21 we read, God “hath made him [i.e., Christ] to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” What our text plainly declares unto us in this: God has done something for us, something we could not have done ourselves. This consisted in His providing a substitute for us, One Who was willing to die our death and to go to the hell that we should have gone to—so that we might be enabled by the power of grace to stand justified before

Him in the righteousness of Another. He did this so He could be just in justifying poor sinners who come to Him through Christ.

### *By God's power*

God has done this by His power according to His own gracious loving heart. He has overcome all obstacles, removed all barriers, and cast down all opposition so that He, out of His goodness, could save poor hell-deserving sinners like each one of us. It is all God's work in this matter of reconciliation, in this matter of imputation, in this matter of substitution, in this matter of salvation. For you see, salvation is of the Lord. I repeat it again: *God has done this!* The problem of sin necessitated that God and God alone do this if ever any poor sinner out of Adam's race would be saved.

If we could have produced a righteousness that God could have accepted, then He would never have come to this earth and He would never have died. If there had been any other way for poor sinners to be saved, He would never have come to die. But there was no other way because we were *dead* in trespasses and sin, and must be quickened; we must be made alive by the power of God.

Our text also shows us it is in Christ that God has done this, making a way of salvation by substitution. It is all in Christ; apart from Him there is no salvation, no peace, no hope, no deliverance, no mercy, no putting away of sin. The theme of the whole Bible is this: that God's salvation—which He gives to poor, hell-deserving sinners—is by the blood of the cross of Christ and by the quickening power of His Holy Spirit. Only by Christ, in Christ, and through Christ, our divine Substitute, are we brought back to God. There is no other name, no other way, no other righteousness, no other blood whereby we might be saved (Act 4:12). This the Scriptures plainly declare over and over again.

### *By God's grace*

The Scriptures also keep on emphasizing that it is all of *grace*. "By grace ye are saved" (Eph 2:5), nothing of ourselves; it is wholly and completely of God's sovereign, free grace. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us" (Ti 3:5), based upon His free sovereign grace.

What a wonder it is that God would provide such a salvation for poor hell-deserving sinners! That it would be wholly and completely through His blood, wholly and completely given to us out of His heart of overflowing love—for we do not deserve God's salvation. His Word declares that He justifies us "freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Rom 3:24).

## *Freely*

What a wonder it is that His salvation is given to us *freely* in Christ, without cause or reason in us at all! The Scriptures plainly declare that there is in us nothing that would commend us unto God, nothing but that which would compel Him to cast us into hell for eternity. He sees nothing in us but sin—pure, undisguised sin, which is rebellion against His authority and hatred toward His person. He sees sin in all of its blackness of pride, lust, unbelief, covetousness, envy, strive, and confusion.

But yet He condescended<sup>4</sup> to come and die beneath all of our sins, and have those sins imputed to Himself. He did this so that He could impute His own perfect righteousness to our account, so that God might be just in justifying us and absolving us from all our sins for Christ's sake. He did all this so that we might be partakers of His divine nature and that we might forever be free from the power, penalty, and presence of sin. Praise His Holy Name, how we must rejoice in Him and His salvation!

If the Scriptures teach anything, they teach this gracious truth of imputation based upon substitution: that a) our sins—the sins of every repenting, believing sinner—were imputed to Christ, and b) His righteousness was imputed to us, based upon His substitutionary death, burial, and resurrection.

Now, as we look at the Scriptures, notice how faithfully and freely Christ acted on behalf of those who believe in Him. Watch the word *for* and let us see Christ as our Substitute as He gave Himself for His children. In speaking to His disciples at the Last Supper in Luke 22:19-20, He presented the bread of the supper as the type of His body, which He said “is given *for* you,” and the cup as a type of His blood, which is “shed *for* you.”

In John 10:15, we hear Christ saying, “I lay down my life *for* the sheep.” In John 10:11, He says, “the good shepherd giveth his life *for* the sheep.” As the Good Shepherd, He voluntarily laid down His life *for* His sheep, in the place of His sheep, that they could be members of His fold. The Good Shepherd died *for* the sheep. He became what they were, which is sin, that they may be what He is, which is righteousness. It is indeed an exchange of places. What grace, what mercy, what redeeming love is this!

In Romans 5:6 we read, “Christ died *for* the ungodly.” He took the place of the ungodly sinner, so that they may take a place with Him in righteousness before God. Romans 5:8 also declares this great and glorious truth in these words: “God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died *for* us.”

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<sup>4</sup> **condescended** – coming down or stooping to things unworthy.

1 Corinthians 15:3 declares, “Christ died *for* our sins according to the Scriptures,” meaning that there was no other way for God to put our sins away except that Jesus Christ our Lord would die beneath them and so fulfill the broken Law of God for us.

In Galatians 1:4 we read: Christ “gave himself *for* our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world.” He gave Himself for a purpose: that He might deliver us. We cannot deliver ourselves; we cannot take ourselves out of this present evil world. We cannot of ourselves break the power of this evil world over us. We cannot of ourselves produce a righteousness that God would accept. He has done this for us, and works this in us by His Spirit, so that we know this in reality as faith lays hold of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Our God wants us to get this great truth if we get nothing else. Nothing less than the mighty power of God must work in our behalf. He must die for us and by His power resurrect us if we are ever to be delivered from sin—its power, penalty, and presence. Education can’t do it; church membership can’t do it; baptism can’t do it; living a morally clean life can’t do it; making a profession can’t do it; “doing our best” can’t do it; going to church, saying our prayers, reciting some creed, giving of our money can’t do it—because we are dead in trespasses and sins. It must be by the power of God, based upon the grace of God, because Christ has willingly died in our place and made peace by the blood of His cross. Therefore, the apostle would write to the church at Thessalonica in thanksgiving to God that the gospel had come to them not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit (1Th 1:5).

We could go on multiplying the Scriptures that teach salvation by substitution, showing that Christ Jesus our Lord gave Himself *for* us, was made a curse *for* us; but these are enough to show to our hearts the necessity of this great exchange of Christ dying in the place of His people if ever we were to be delivered from sin, Satan, the world, and hell.

### *How the sinner comes to God*

Now we must face the issue of *how* God saves a sinner. How is a poor sinner brought into this state of reality that he or she can say, “Christ died for me”? First there must be, of necessity, the *knowledge of sin*; for without the knowledge of sin there is no need of salvation or a Savior. There must be a knowledge that I have sinned and come short of the glory of God. John 16:8 tells us that it is here where the Holy Spirit begins His work, which is in convincing us of the sin of unbelief. He also convinces us that we are sinners by nature, for this is the foundation of all our transgressions. By this I mean original sin, that original corruption that each of us brings into the world with us, which renders us liable to God’s wrath and damnation.

We must and will be convinced of this by the Holy Spirit if we will know Christ in reality as the Savior and Deliverer of our never-dying souls.

Next, the Holy Spirit will convince us of the *holiness of God* and of His righteous character against Whom we have daily and hourly sinned. This is the God Who must punish sin and put it out of His presence forever. Yes, the justice of God and the wrath of God burn against every soul outside of Christ—and rightly so, because we stand as guilty criminals before His throne, rebels to His government, if we be not *in* His divine Substitute, the Lord Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit must convince us of our need for a substitute and show us by His power from the Scriptures the suitability of the Lord Jesus as our Lord and Savior.

Then there follows the bringing forth of the *fruit for repentance*. Yes, the soul whom God saves and brings by His Spirit into the reality of a living union with Christ, lays down the arms of rebellion and cries unto God for mercy in Christ. There is a confession of sin, a hatred for sin, a turning to God from sin, a mourning over sin, and the acknowledgment of my hell-deserving condition. Only God knows when a soul has truly repented, for repentance is toward God against Whom you have sinned. Only He knows when you have surrendered up yourself completely to Him, taking the blame for your condition before Him.

Then, *saving faith* is given by the Holy Spirit, by which you look away to Christ as your only Savior and hope of deliverance from the wrath to come.

The Scriptures declare that salvation is by grace through faith and not of ourselves (Eph 2:8). By faith we turn from ourselves and embrace Christ in all His offices of prophet, priest, and king, and find in Him a suitability for all our needs. It is by faith that we are justified and have peace with God. It is by faith we follow Him all the days of our lives. For “as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believeth on his name” (Joh 1:12).

And my dear friend, when God does save you for Christ’s sake, you will never stop praising Him for having mercy upon your never-dying soul.

## 5. Gracious Invitations

### *The Word of God*

God’s eternal Word is forever settled in heaven and given unto us “by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2Ti 3:16-17).

The Word of God also is a two-edged sword to cut and heal us; it is bread to feed us; it is water to quench our thirst; it is a fire to burn its way into the deepest recesses of our hearts; it is a hammer to break up our stony hearts; it is a lamp to light our pathway; it is a rod to chastise us; it is a staff to lead us; it is life to quicken us and make us alive; it is the power of God in the hands of the Holy Spirit to save us, cleanse us, deliver us, make us suitable for the inheritance of the saints.

The Word of God warns us, commands us, guides us, leads us, and points us to the Lamb of God, Who takes away our sins by the shedding of His own precious blood. It also reveals unto us the gracious invitation of our Savior God to come to Him and find rest, peace, forgiveness, and deliverance from sin. In these gracious invitations of our Savior God, we shall see again in this section the work of our Lord Jesus Christ in our salvation.

In the last section, we saw from the Word of God the things that each soul experiences in his coming to Christ for salvation. He sees sin as it is in his nature; he sees sin as it flows from a wicked heart; he sees the awful sin of unbelief, which bars the heart from Christ. But he also knows the experience of deliverance through Christ, as he seeks Him and closes in with Him by faith.

We need now to consider the many gracious invitations that the Word of God gives to poor, needy sinners. It is written, as it were, in bold letters on the pages of Holy Writ: Come and Welcome to Jesus Christ. And what a theme on which to meditate! What a mercy for poor, hell-deserving sinners to hear: Come and welcome to Jesus Christ, for He alone is our salvation!

### *Our need of invitation*

Oh, how our souls should rejoice in such an invitation: Come and welcome to Jesus Christ—come and welcome to the only One Who can deliver us from sin and its deserved damnation. Come and welcome to the only One Who can save us from the wrath of God; come and welcome to the only One Who was lifted up for our transgressions and raised again for our justification. Come and welcome to the only One Who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; come and welcome to the only One Who can bring us back to God. Come and welcome to the only One Who can bring us to heaven; come and welcome to the only One Who is rich in mercy, grace, and love. Come and welcome to the only One Who has gone to prepare a place of rest and peace for us in His Father's home. Come and welcome to the only One Who opened the fountain of cleansing by the shedding of His precious blood for sin and for uncleanness.

What a mercy is this, then, that is bestowed upon poor sinners, to be invited to come to the feast made ready by the Master Himself! You might ask

the question, “To *whom* is this invitation of mercy given?” Matthew 11:28 has our Lord saying, “Come unto me, *all ye that labour* and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Yes, it is given to those who have labored long and hard to save themselves by the works of their own hands—and are no closer to God than when they started, but are in fact laden down with a heavy burden of sin. Our Lord says, “Come and welcome to me. Come lay down your burden of sin upon me, and I will give you rest.” Oh, what a mercy to lay that burden of sin upon Christ! I tell you from a heart of personal experience that there is no rest like the rest of the sin-weary soul upon the bosom of Christ by faith. I don’t know of another soul living that tried to work his way into the good graces of God as I did; but to quit my work and rest in Christ as my all in all was indeed a great mercy.

*“Come; for all things are ready”*

Again, Luke 14:17 has our Lord saying: “Come; for all things are now ready.” What is ready for those who are invited to come?

*Salvation from sin* is ready, for Christ Himself finished the work of redemption on the cross—and gave proof of its accomplishment by rising from the dead, leaving our sins in the grave.

The *Father* Who planned our salvation is ready to receive us in Christ because He has allowed the Lord Jesus back into His presence as our Representative. No sin was upon Him when He returned to glory as our High Priest. Our sins had all been left in the tomb, therefore the Father received Him and set Him above all principalities and powers.

The *riches* of His grace and mercy are ready. His white robe of righteousness is ready, His eye-slave to put upon our blinded eyes is ready, for Revelation 3:18 has our Lord saying:

I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.

*All power* is ready to save, deliver, and keep each poor soul that comes to Christ, for Christ says: “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth” (Mat 28:18); therefore, “him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out” (Joh 6:37). Yes, He has power to save and to keep. He will not cast us out, for He Himself said, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.” Yes, *all things* are ready.

*Other invitations*

Again, our Lord says, “Ho every man that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine



and milk without money and without price” (Isa 55:1). What a gracious invitation this is, to come and welcome to Jesus Christ as poor, bankrupt paupers! Oh praise the Lord, that fits my case; for that is all I am: a poor, worthless, penniless pauper. But this is the one to whom the invitation is given. No money, yet come and buy; for God freely gives “us *all things*” in Christ (Rom 8:32). What are these “things”? He freely pardons us for His sake. He freely forgives us all our sins for His sake; He blots them out as a thick cloud never to be remembered against us anymore. This is a blessed invitation, for it invites both the thirsty and the hungry, both the cursed of God and the devil’s castaways, to come and welcome to Jesus Christ, the only Friend of sinners.

Again, our blessed Savior says, “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool” (Isa 1:18). Ponder this! Meditate upon this! The Lord of glory is inviting poor sinners to come and reason with Him about their eternal souls!

He invites those who are sin-sick, sin-laden, sin-convicted and convinced to come and reason with Him, to learn that every sin you confess to be as scarlet—and every sin you confess to be red like crimson—He will forgive and cleanse. You might say, “But I am a great sinner”; but Jesus Christ says, “Come and welcome, I died for great sinners.” You might say, “But I am an old sinner, having lived all my life in sin”; but Jesus Christ says, “Come and welcome, I died for old sinners, black and dirty as they are.” You might say, “But I am a hard-hearted sinner”; but Jesus Christ says, “Come and welcome, I died for hard-hearted sinners, I give them new hearts.” You might say, “But I have served Satan all my days”; but Jesus Christ says, “Come and welcome, I died to deliver you from Satan’s clutches.” You might say, “But I have sinned against light and knowledge”; but Jesus Christ says, “Come and welcome, I died for sinners like you.” You might say, “But I have sinned against mercy, and the prayers of father, mother, and all of God’s people”; but Jesus Christ says, “Come and welcome, for I died for the ungodly sinner like you.” You might say, “But I have no good thing to bring with me, I have nothing but sin.” Praise God if this is so; for Jesus Christ says, “Come and welcome, for I have put away your sin by the sacrifice of Myself.”

We could go on to the end of time and show that if you are indeed a convinced soul before God that you need pardoning from all your sins—you need them put away, washed away in the blood of Christ; if you hate them, and cry out against them—then indeed God says He will put them out of His sight. “Come and welcome to Jesus Christ” is still the word to speak to you this day. The old hymn reads:

*Come, ye sinners, poor and wretched,  
Weak and wounded, sick and sore;  
Jesus ready stands to save you,  
He is able, He is able,  
He is willing, doubt no more.*

*Come, ye needy, Come, and welcome,  
God's free bounty glorify;  
True belief and true repentance,  
Every grace that brings us nigh;  
Without money, without money,  
Come to Jesus Christ and buy.*

*Come, ye weary, heavy laden,  
Bruised and broken by the Fall;  
If you tarry till you're better,  
You will never come at all.  
Not the righteous, not the righteous,  
Sinners Jesus came to call.*

*Lo! the incarnate God, ascended,  
Pleads the merit of His blood;  
Venture on Him, venture wholly,  
Let no other trust intrude;  
None but Jesus, none but Jesus,  
Can do helpless sinners good.<sup>5</sup>*

At times our souls may seem unable to be contained as we understand that our blessed Lord and Savior Jesus Christ still invites us to come to Him. As 1 Peter 2:4 puts it, “to whom coming”—that is, always coming, for He is still today our Lord and Savior, our Refuge and Hiding Place in every battle. He allows us to keep coming to Him to find in Him our all, for we need a Savior just as much today as when we first came to Him as poor, hell-deserving sinners.

“How do I come to Him?” you ask. This hymn will tell us—

*Just as I am, without one plea,  
But that Thy blood was shed for me.  
And that Thou bidst me come to Thee,  
O Lamb of God, I come! I come!*

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<sup>5</sup> “Come Ye Sinners, Poor and Needy” – hymn by Joseph Hart, 1759.

*Just as I am, and waiting not,  
To rid my soul of one dark blot,  
To Thee Whose blood can cleanse each spot,  
O Lamb of God, I come! I come!*

*Just as I am tho' tossed about,  
With many a conflict, many a doubt,  
Fightings within and fears without,  
O Lamb of God, I come! I come!*<sup>6</sup>

Come and welcome to Jesus Christ!



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<sup>6</sup> “Just as I Am, Without One Plea” – hymn by Charlotte Elliot, 1836.