Imputed Righteousness

2 Corinthians 5:21

3-30-2025



For He hath made Him to be sin for us,
who knew no sin; That we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. (2 Corinthians 5:21)

The <u>Righteous</u> Jesus was treated as <u>Sinful</u> (v.21a)

***So that* the <u>Sinner</u> can be treated as <u>Righteous</u>** (v.21b)

Illustrations of the Need for a Covering:

The Wedding for the King's Son (Matthew 22:1-14)
The Man Without a Wedding Garment (Matthew 22:11-14)

When Adam & Eve Sinned, They attempted to Cover Themselves their way
God Performed the First Sacrifice and Provided a Covering for Adam & Eve

We have all Sinned. Sin Required a Sacrifice. Jesus is God's Perfect Sacrifice!

The Law could not save us: Galatians 3:24 - Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. Romans 3:28 - Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.

> Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this [is] his name whereby he shall be called, **THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS**. (Jeremiah 23:5-6)

"A wedding garment" – The only suitable garment we can wear is the imputed righteousness of Christ

Righteousness For The Unrighteous

2 Corinthians 5:21

Introduction: (v.20)

I. The _____ Jesus was treated as _____ (v.21a)

II. *So that* the _____ can be treated as _____ (v.21b)

Righteousness For The Unrighteous

2 Corinthians 5:21

Introduction: (v.20)

Throughout human history, men have wondered about the same question that the ancient Job asked: "How should a man be just with God?" (Job 9:2; cp. 25:4).

2 Cor. 5:20
"Beseech you" – we urge you; we entreat you.

"We pray you" - to repeatedly ask.

There ought to be some persuasive strong appeal in our witness.

When was the last time you strongly urged someone to be reconciled to God through Christ?

The very fact that we need to be reconciled implies that we are not automatically born reconciled to God. Rather, we are at enmity with God.

"Be ye reconciled to God" –

"Reconciled" – *katallasso* = To change back. When used of relationships, the word means to effect a change so that two parties who previously have been estranged from each other can be brought back together again. Reconciliation means to change from enmity to friendship; from hostility to favor; from separation and distance between two persons to closeness and peace.

1) The <u>imperative</u> mood shows the <u>urgency</u> of reconciliation.
It is no little matter; your entire eternal destiny hinges on whether or not you are reconciled to God.

No reconciliation = No Heaven (no eternal life).

2) The passive voice shows the sovereign work of God in reconciliation. He does the work, we receive it.

"Reconciliation is not something man does but what he receives; it is not what he accomplishes but what he embraces" (John MacArthur, p. 200).

We must yield and trust Christ and He will do the instantaneous miracle of reconciling us to Himself.

I. The Righteous Jesus was treated as Sinful (v.21a)

"For" – For you see; here Paul expands on his previous thought of reconciliation (v. 20). And says in effect be reconciled to God and here is how you can be reconciled. Christ paid your sin debt and now provides righteousness.

"For he" – God took the initiative in providing for our salvation.

"Salvation is of the Lord" (Jonah 2:9)

It was no mistake or foiled plan that brought Christ to Calvary's cross; it was the Father's plan.

"Who knew no sin" – the word "knew" (ginosko) "expresses knowledge gained by experience" (Rogers, citing D.W. Burdick, p. 403).

Christ being God and thereby being omniscient knew all things; that is, He knows about all things, but he never experienced the effects of sin personally.

Christ's sinlessness is taught repeatedly:

John 8:46 Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me?

John 19:4 Pilate therefore went forth again, and saith unto them, Behold, I bring him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in him.

Heb 4:15 For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as *we are, yet* without sin.

Heb 7:26 For such an high priest became us, *who is* holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens;

***"Holy"* -** There is no sin in Him.

***"Harmless"* -** There is no badness in Him.

***"Undefiled"* -** There is no impurity in Him.

***"Separate from sinners"* -** There is no connection between Christ and sinners (as far as His nature is concerned).

1Pe 2:22 Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth:

1Jo 3:5 And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin.

Jesus is called "the Holy One and the Just" by Peter (Acts 3:14)

"Made Him to be sin" – Does not mean "that God made Him a sinner (Hughes, p. 126), but a sin offering."

In what sense was Christ "made…sin for us"?

1) He bore our sins in His own body (1 Pet. 2:24)
2) He was made a sin offering for us (Isaiah 53)

"Christ was not made a sinner, nor was He punished for any sin of His own. Instead, the Father treated Him as if He were a sinner by charging to His account the sins of everyone who would ever believe. All those sins were charged against Him as if He had personally committed them, and He was punished with the penalty for them on the cross, experiencing the full fury of God's wrath unleashed against them all." (MacArthur, p. 215).

"This is what happened during those three dark hours on Good Friday. Though all analogies or explanations of what happened fall short, they provide a glimpse. For example, think of Christ's heart as a sea hemmed in by the mountains of our festering sin. Then imagine our sins coursing down the mountains into his heart until all the mountains of evil slide into the sea. Or think back to the magnifying glass you played with as a child. If held under the sun's rays, it could start a fire. Remember how if you focused the white spot of its concentrated light on a leaf or a bug (only boys did this!), it would begin to burn. Our sins were focused on Christ on the cross, and He suffered the fiery wrath of God. On the cross Christ was robed in all that is heinous and hateful as the mass of our corruption poured over him. Wave after wave of our sin was poured over Christ's sinless soul. Again and again during those three hours His soul recoiled and convulsed as all our lies, hatreds, jealousies, and pride were poured upon his purity. "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us – for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree' " (Gal. 3:13). (MacArthur, p. 126)

“All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned everyone to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.” (Isa. 53:6)

“On the cross God treated Jesus as if He had lived our lives with all our sin, so that God could then treat us as if we lived Christ’s life of pure holiness. Our iniquitous life was legally charged to Him on the cross, as if He had lived it, so that His righteous life could be credited to us, as if we lived it” (MacArthur, p. 217).

The scape goat (Lev. 16:7ff) –

One goat killed (Lev. 16:7-9, 15)

(picturing the payment for sin)

One goat removed (Lev. 16:10, 21-22)

(picturing the removal of sin)

II. *So that* the Sinner can be treated as Righteous (v.21b)

Is it an imparted righteousness (1 Pet. 2:24) or an imputed righteousness (Rom. 4-5) or both?

The emphasis of this verse is an imputed righteousness.

Just as all our sins were credited to Christ, so His righteousness is credited to us. But note: He credits us with righteousness not only that we might be viewed as holy in God's eyes but so that we would also see our standing and then live a life that truly reflects who we are. We live righteously on earth when we realize we are righteous in God's sight.

On the cross, God the Father treated Jesus as if He was a sinner, and now He treats us as if we were perfectly righteous.

"The righteousness of God" –

1) A righteousness that comes from God (He provides it)

2) A righteousness that is God's righteousness (it makes us as He is)

What does it mean to be made the righteousness of God?
It means to be justified.

What does the word "justified" mean?

The Bible terms:

Old Testament term - (tsadaq) -
to be proven righteous (Ps. 51:4)
to be declared righteous (Is. 53:11)

New Testament term - (dikaioo) -
to be proven righteous (Mt. 11:19, 12:37; Rom. 3:4; Ja. 2:21, 24, 25)
to be declared righteous (Rom. 3:24, 28, 30)

The term "justified" is a courtroom term which deals with legal matters.

In the same way a judge would uphold law, evaluate the evidence, pass judgment, and declare a verdict, so God (the Judge of the universe) renders a verdict regarding men (the verdict is either: just or unjust [righteous or unrighteous] - cp. Dan. 12:2; Acts 24:15).

***Justification is that <u>judicial</u> act of God by which He <u>declares</u> the sinner as <u>righteous</u> and treats him as such.**

God's justification of a sinner does <u>not</u> **<u>make</u>** him sinless (innocent); rather, God declares the guilty sinner as righteous because of the sinner's new relationship to His Son Jesus Christ. The saved sinner has a new position or standing in the eyes of God, whereby God views and declares a "justified" man as being "just as if he had never sinned."

***JUST IF I ED**

JUST (as) IF I (had never sinn-) ED"

Justification refers to man's position in God's sight -- "justified in His sight (Rom. 3:20)

"The righteousness of God" - How righteous is God? Perfect!

You have God's perfection credited to your spiritual bank account if you are "in Him" (in relationship with Christ).

Reconciliation is possible because we have the righteousness of Christ wrapped around us.

ILLUS: The man who tried to get into Heaven without a wedding garment (Matthew 22:11f).

Ezekiel 33:13
When I shall say to the righteous, *that* he shall surely live; if he trust to his own righteousness, and commit iniquity, all his righteousnesses shall not be remembered; but for his iniquity that he hath committed, he shall die for it.

Romans 10:3
For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.

Philippians 3:9
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:

1. The basis for our righteousness is:
THE DEATH OF CHRIST

a. "...my righteous servant (shall) justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities (Is. 53:11).

b. "Being justified freely...through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 3:24)

c. "Being now justified by His blood" (Rom. 5:9, cp. 3:25)

2. The means of our righteousness is:
OUR UNION WITH CHRIST

"the righteousness of God **IN HIM**"

a. By means of four analogies (pictures), the Bible teaches that believers are united to Christ:

1) The Branches (Jn. 15:5)
2) The Body (I Cor. 12; Eph. 4:4-16)
3) The Bride (Eph. 5:23-32; Rev. 19:7, 9)
4) The Building (I Cor. 3:9; Eph. 2:21, 22)

b. The believer's union with Christ (Eph. 5:30-32) is not physical, pantheistic, nor a union of essence; rather, it refers to His spiritual presence within us (Jn. 14:23) and our participation in His life (I Jn. 5:11-12) and righteousness (II Cor. 5:21)

c. Righteousness comes "in" Christ

1) "By (in) him all that believe are justified from all things" (Acts 13:39)

2) There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1)

3) But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness..." (I Cor. 1:30)

4) "Therefore if any man be in Christ he is a new creature..." (II Cor. 5:17)

5) God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them..." (II Cor. 5:19)

(SEE: Ephes. 1:3, 6, 10; 2:6)

d. Righteousness comes "through" Christ

The word (dia) means "through, by means of"

1) "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:1; cp. "dia" in Rom. 5:2, 9, 10, 11; 6:15-21)

2) "Ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God" (I Cor. 6:11).

It is the Holy Spirit who spiritually unites the believer to Christ (II Cor. 12:13; Rom. 6:1ff). This union then results in the "imputation" of Christ's righteousness to the sinner's account (II Cor. 5:21) (Illustration: the poor peasant who married the prince)

The word "imputation" is a banking term which simply refers to how God credits believing sinners with Christ's righteousness (SEE: Romans 4:3-8).

GOD'S STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS		
Name	**Deposit**	**Final Balance**
Pharisee	Works	Sin (- debt)
Judaizer	Works	Sin (- debt)
Abraham	Faith	Righteousness (+ credit)
David	Faith	Righteousness (+ credit)
[Your Name]	?	?