

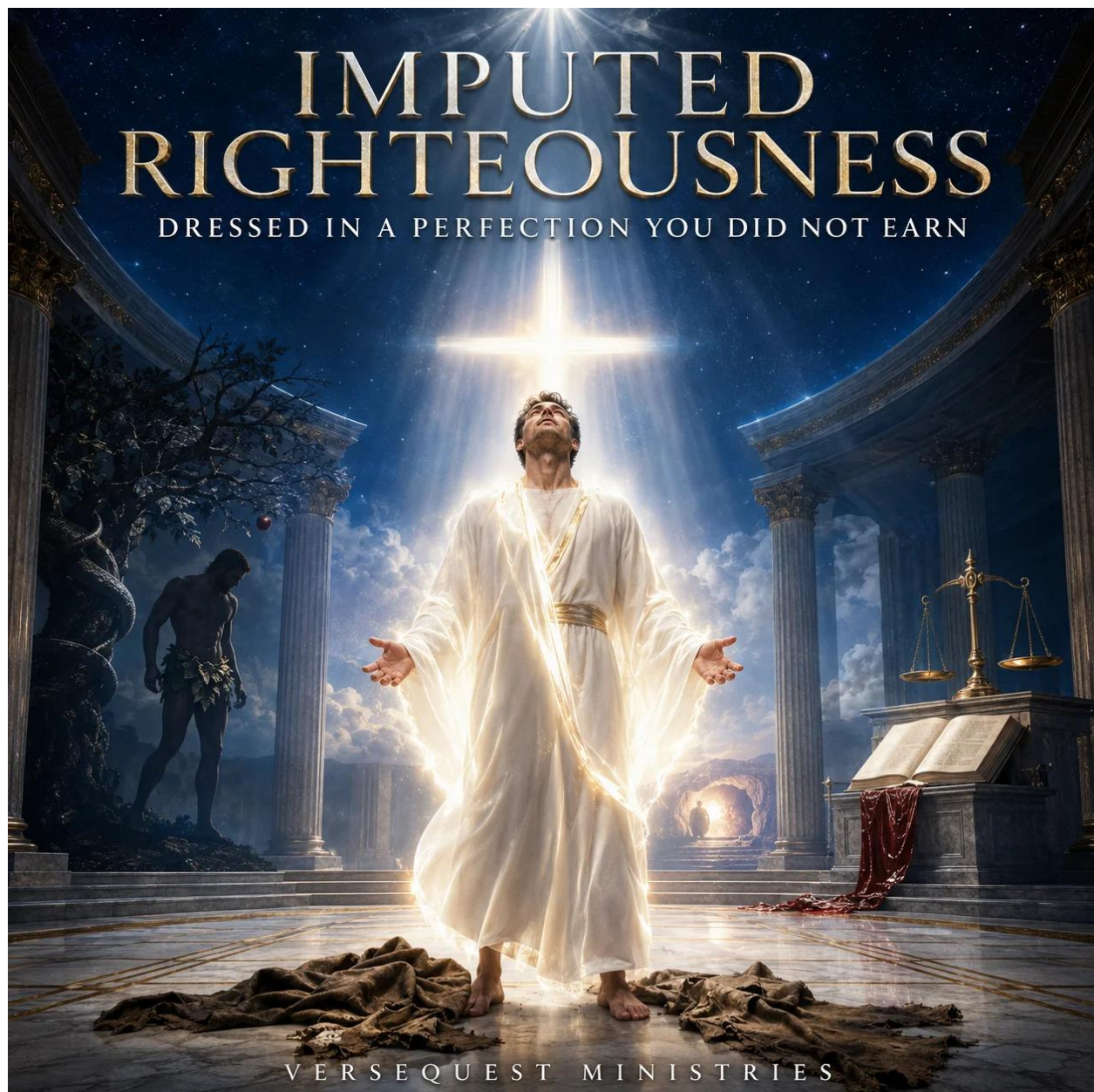
Imputed Righteousness

Dressed in a Perfection You Did Not Earn

Series 1-10

By Paul Tackett

VerseQuest Ministries





IMPUTED RIGHTEOUSNESS

Dressed in a Perfection You Did Not Earn

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VERSEQUEST MINISTRIES

Teaching the Bible as it is written and rightly divided.

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Introduction to Imputed Righteousness — Dressed in a Perfection You Did Not Earn

Religious man has been sewing since Eden. The moment Adam sinned, discovered his nakedness, and heard God approaching, he ran for the fig tree, opened the first tailor shop in human history, and tried to manufacture a covering. He did not possess righteousness, so he arranged leaves to imitate one. He could hide part of his nakedness from Eve, but he could not hide one inch of guilt from God. That first apron became the pattern for every system of human merit that followed. Man sins, conscience speaks, shame enters, and religion hands the guilty fellow a needle. One man stitches together morality, another uses sacraments, another chooses church membership, another sews with charity, and another reaches for education, sincerity, family tradition, denominational loyalty, or selected acts of obedience. The materials change; Adam remains the tailor. Human religion is the art of dressing condemned flesh attractively enough that other condemned people applaud the outfit.

The doctrine of imputed righteousness closes Adam's shop and locks the door. It announces that God will not accept the sinner's homemade garment, no matter how sincerely it was assembled, how expensive the material appeared, or how favorably it compares with another sinner's rags. Isaiah 64:6 says, "all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." Notice that God does not merely call our wickedness filthy. Even the righteousnesses we attempt to present as the ground of acceptance cannot survive the light of His holiness. The average man reads that verse and immediately tries to exempt the respectable portions of his wardrobe. He knows his lies are filthy, but he hopes his charity is clean. He knows his lust is stained, but he expects church attendance to remain presentable. God gathers the entire display and calls it what it is. The trouble is not that man needs a few alterations. Heaven rejects the fabric.

Imputation is God's language of reckoning, counting, charging, and crediting. It is courtroom and ledger language. A debt belongs to one account and is placed upon another; righteousness belonging to another is credited to the believer. Paul illustrates the principle in Philemon when he writes concerning Onesimus, "If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account." Paul did not become Onesimus in character. He offered to assume responsibility for the debt. Romans 4 uses the same kind of language repeatedly: counted, reckoned, and imputed. God does not justify the ungodly by pretending he never committed sin or by congratulating him for righteousness he never possessed. He deals with the record upon the basis of Jesus Christ's finished work. Grace does not falsify heaven's books. Calvary settled them.

Three great reckonings stand at the center of the doctrine. Adam's offence brought sin, condemnation, and death upon the human race. The sinner's guilt was laid upon Jesus

Christ at Calvary. Christ's righteousness is credited to the believer who trusts Him. Romans 5 says, "by one man's disobedience many were made sinners," and then answers, "by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." Isaiah 53 says, "the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." Second Corinthians 5:21 gathers the entire exchange into one verse: "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." Adam left you a debt you did not originate personally at its fountainhead. Christ offers you a righteousness you could never originate at all. The first inheritance came by natural birth; the second is received through the new birth.

This doctrine begins by destroying man's favorite myth about himself: that every person enters the world morally neutral and needs only proper education, environment, encouragement, and opportunity. Romans 5:12 says, "by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men." Humanity was not born upon a level spiritual field and gradually misdirected by unfortunate influences. It entered a wreckage already burning. Adam did not merely provide a poor example that later sinners happened to imitate. He stood as the representative head of his race, and his disobedience introduced sin, death, judgment, and condemnation. Every descendant later supplies personal confirmation by willingly committing his own sins, but the poisoned river began at the headwaters. Civilization keeps filtering individual cups while refusing to admit that the spring itself was contaminated.

The doctrine then leads directly to Calvary, where the sinless Son of God stood in the judicial place of guilty men. Jesus Christ did not become morally corrupt, personally sinful, satanic in nature, or inwardly defiled. Scripture says He "knew no sin," "did no sin," and "in him is no sin." He was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners." Yet He bore our sins in His own body on the tree, was made a curse for us, and was made sin for us. The charges belonged to us; the judgment fell upon Him. Every lie, lust, rebellion, blasphemy, secret corruption, neglected duty, proud thought, and open transgression placed upon the Substitute was a crime He never committed. The innocent Christ answered the guilty man's indictment. Calvary was not a sentimental demonstration arranged to make humanity feel valuable. It was a judicial execution where love supplied what holiness demanded.

Before Christ's righteousness could be placed upon the believer, the believer's sin had to be placed upon Christ. The exchange cannot be cut in half. Many religious systems are willing to let Christ carry part of the sin as long as man is permitted to contribute part of the righteousness. They offer the cross the largest percentage and reserve a small portion for baptism, sacraments, law-keeping, church loyalty, charitable labor, or final perseverance. But the sinner's smallest claimed contribution becomes a seed from which boasting grows. If man supplies one stitch, he will eventually open a museum to display it. Romans

11:6 refuses the mixture: “if it be of works, then is it no more grace.” Grace and works cannot be combined as co-purchasers of justification. Add one drop of wages to the fountain of grace, and you have changed the entire account.

Abraham becomes Paul’s first great witness. Genesis 15:6 says, “And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.” Abraham stood beneath the stars with an aging body, a barren wife, and a promise no natural calculation could support. He had only the word of the Lord, and he believed it. Circumcision came afterward. The law of Moses arrived centuries later. The Levitical priesthood did not exist, Israel had not become a nation, and no sacramental institution stood between Abraham and God. Paul reaches behind Sinai, beyond the priesthood, and before circumcision so the legalist cannot bury Abraham beneath a pile of ceremonies. Faith was not a meritorious work deserving wages. It was the empty hand receiving what God graciously credited.

David becomes the second witness, and his testimony knocks the halo off religious respectability. David knew what it meant to possess a record filled with adultery, deception, conspiracy, and blood. He could not place the victory over Goliath on one side of heaven’s scale and expect it to outweigh Uriah’s murder on the other. Good works do not grant a sinner permission for later wickedness, and wicked works cannot be erased by performing several good deeds afterward. Yet David wrote, “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity.” Paul quotes David in Romans 4 as describing “the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works.” The guilty king did not repair the ledger. God put away the sin.

Paul then closes the wage window entirely. Romans 4 says, “to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.” A worker receiving his paycheck has not received a gift; he has collected wages owed. If salvation is earned through religious performance, God becomes a debtor to the successful sinner. Heaven becomes compensation, eternal life becomes payroll, and the cross becomes an advance payment toward a bill man must finish. Paul allows no such arrangement. “To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly,” faith is counted for righteousness. God does not justify people because they have successfully transformed themselves into godly candidates. He justifies the ungodly who believe on Jesus Christ. The gospel does not reward a renovated Adam. It places the believing sinner in Christ.

Justification must therefore be understood as a judicial declaration, not a slow moral renovation. Practical sanctification is progressive. The saved man must grow in grace, renew his mind, walk in the Spirit, mortify sinful members, confess failures, study Scripture, resist temptation, endure chastening, and learn obedience. Glorification awaits

the day Christ changes the believer's vile body and fashions it like His glorious body. But justification is immediate. Romans 5:1 says, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God." The believer does not spend years becoming increasingly acquitted. A judge either pronounces the defendant condemned or justified. God's verdict is not suspended while heaven waits to see whether Christian flesh can preserve Christ's righteousness.

That distinction between standing and walk becomes essential. The believer's standing is perfect because it is in Christ. He is accepted in the Beloved, complete in Christ, seated in heavenly places, sealed by the Holy Spirit, made the righteousness of God, and placed beyond condemnation. His walk remains imperfect because he still carries unredeemed flesh through a world ruled by sin. Confusing those truths produces legalism on one side and lawlessness on the other. The legalist thinks every stumble cancels acceptance; the careless professor thinks acceptance makes holiness unnecessary. Scripture rejects both. A Christian does not live right to become accepted. He should live right because he is accepted. Imputed righteousness does not make practical righteousness optional; it places practical righteousness upon the only foundation that will hold it.

The believer who fails does not need another Calvary, another new birth, or another judicial justification. He needs confession, cleansing, correction, restored fellowship, and sometimes severe chastening. First John 2:1 says, "these things write I unto you, that ye sin not." God's standard is not softened. Yet the same verse continues, "And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." Christ's righteousness remains the answer when the believer's conduct proves unrighteous. The Advocate does not argue that the Christian never sinned. He stands upon the propitiation already accomplished. The Christian should never use eternal security as a permission slip for sin, but neither should he use sin as evidence that Christ's blood has become insecure.

Satan understands enough of the ledger to attack the conscience while hiding the gospel from view. Revelation calls him "the accuser of our brethren." He retrieves forgiven sins, enlarges present failures, questions the sincerity of past faith, and whispers that someone with such a record could never belong to God. Some facts in his prosecution may be accurate because believers do stumble and sometimes behave shamefully. The answer is not to claim the defendant is better than the accusation suggests. The answer is that Christ is better than the defendant could ever become. Romans 8 asks, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth." Satan can read the charges, but he cannot reverse the verdict.

Assurance likewise rests upon God's written testimony, not the believer's changing emotions. First John 5 says God has given a record concerning His Son: "He that hath the

Son hath life.” John writes so believers “may know” they have eternal life. God did not place assurance inside an emotional weather system where it rises and falls with fatigue, temptation, grief, excitement, or the quality of yesterday’s prayer. He placed it in His written word. Feelings may report the believer’s present condition, but they possess no authority to revise his position. A nervous Israelite behind the Passover blood was safer than a confident Egyptian outside it. Safety depended upon what God saw on the door, not how steadily the person inside held the lamp.

This assurance does not belong to every religious professor. A man may possess a baptismal certificate, church membership, moral habits, family tradition, Christian vocabulary, and a remembered walk down an aisle while never trusting Christ. First John 5:12 draws the line without consulting the membership secretary: “He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.” Assurance belongs to the person who has believed the gospel—that Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again according to the Scriptures. It does not belong to the man trusting his prayer, ceremony, denomination, character, or future faithfulness. Faith receives Christ; it does not admire the religious experience of having once spoken about Him.

The doctrine reaches its appointed conclusion in glory. Jude says Christ is able “to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.” Ephesians 5 says Christ will present the Church to Himself without spot, wrinkle, or blemish. Colossians 1 says believers will be presented holy, unblameable, and unreprouvable in God’s sight. That final presentation will not occur because Christian flesh eventually accumulated enough merit to finish what Christ merely started. Philippians 1:6 says the One who began the good work will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. Romans 8 carries the justified all the way to glorification. The same grace that opened the door will bring every believer through it.

The judgment seat of Christ will still examine the believer’s service. Works of gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, and stubble will meet the fire. Faithful service will receive reward; worthless labor will burn; some believers will suffer loss. But First Corinthians 3:15 distinguishes the work from the worker’s salvation: “he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.” The foundation is Jesus Christ. A man’s building may burn without the foundation collapsing. This is not an excuse to arrive at the judgment seat carrying a wheelbarrow of kindling. It is the doctrinal distinction that preserves both eternal security and genuine accountability. Salvation is settled; service will be examined.

Imputed righteousness leaves man nothing to boast about and gives him everything worth possessing. The sinner contributes the sin laid upon Christ; Christ contributes the righteousness placed upon the believer. That arrangement wounds pride because flesh wants credit, but it heals the conscience because Christ supplies perfection. Religion tells

the sinner to climb until he reaches God. Grace announces that God came down, took the sinner's place, paid the sinner's debt, and offers the sinner His own righteousness. Religion keeps Adam sewing beneath the fig tree. Grace clothes the believer in Jesus Christ.

This ten-part series will follow that scarlet thread from Adam's condemnation to the believer's final presentation in glory. It will examine the debt entered through the first man, the guilt laid upon the sinless Substitute, the righteousness counted to Abraham, the forgiveness described by David, the wage window closed by Paul, the filthy wardrobe of human merit, the distinction between standing and walk, the accusations Satan cannot sustain, the assurance resting upon God's record, and the final glory Christ alone will complete. The journey begins with a condemned race wearing homemade aprons and ends with glorified saints standing faultless in the perfection of Another.

That is imputed righteousness: not righteousness achieved, but righteousness received; not a sinner improved sufficiently to impress God, but a sinner placed in Christ; not grace assisting flesh, but grace excluding its boast; not God overlooking sin, but God judging it at the cross; not Christ paying most of the price, but Christ declaring, "It is finished." The believer will enter glory with no receipt from Adam's tailor shop and no signature on Christ's garment. Grace began the work, grace carries the work, grace will complete the work, and grace will receive every thread of the glory.

1 of 10 Imputed Righteousness — The Day Adam's Debt Was Entered in Every Man's Ledger

Key Passage: Romans 5:12-19

"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:

(For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law.

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.

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 man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many.

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.

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.)

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. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous."

Introduction

The natural man does not want a diagnosis; he wants a compliment. He will sit patiently while a preacher tells him that he is confused, wounded, uninformed, underprivileged, misunderstood, or merely traveling through an unfortunate season. Tell him that he needs education, encouragement, opportunity, affirmation, or a better environment, and he will nod his head as solemnly as a wooden saint on a dashboard. But open a King James Bible and tell him that he was born into a condemned race beneath the reign of sin and death, and suddenly the patient becomes offended by the Physician. The Bible does not begin its explanation of man's trouble with poor self-esteem, insufficient social development, or an unfulfilled need for personal expression. It begins with a man, a commandment, a serpent, a forbidden tree, and an act of deliberate disobedience. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin." That is not a suggestion offered for discussion by a committee of religious sociologists. It is God's autopsy report on the human race. Man keeps putting cosmetics on the corpse because he does not like the Coroner's conclusion. He gives sin new names, death new decorations, and rebellion a university vocabulary, but the body remains dead. You can powder Adam's face, straighten his tie, and place a diploma beneath his folded hands; you still have a funeral.

Romans 5:12–19 carries us beneath the individual branches of human wickedness to the poisoned root from which they grow. Paul does not merely say that Adam furnished mankind with a bad example, as though Adam were the first delinquent in a long line of independent imitators. Adam stood as the representative head of the human race. When he sinned, sin entered the world; when sin entered, death followed it; and when death entered, it passed upon all men. Adam did not merely dirty his own room. He set fire to the house while the entire human family was still in him. His single transgression opened the door through which condemnation marched, and every one of his descendants was born on the wrong side of that doorway. We later commit our own sins willingly, repeatedly, and without needing Adam to stand behind us with written instructions. Yet our personal transgressions do not explain the entire depth of our condition. We sin because we are sinners, and we are sinners because we belong naturally to Adam's fallen race. The apple does not struggle to become part of the tree; it grows from the tree and bears the nature of its source. Human conduct is rotten because human nature fell at its fountainhead. Civilization keeps trimming the branches while Scripture points an axe toward the root.

But Romans 5 does not drag us into Adam's ruin merely to leave us counting the wreckage. Paul places two men before us: Adam and Jesus Christ. Two heads, two acts, two judicial consequences, two kingdoms, and two destinies stand in deliberate contrast. By one man came sin, condemnation, and death; by one Man came grace, justification, righteousness, and life. The doctrine that wounds human pride is the very doctrine that makes the gospel possible. If you reject the principle of representation because you resent Adam's act being charged to his descendants, you have begun sawing through the doctrinal limb upon which your salvation rests. The gospel declares that another Man may act for you, that another Man may bear what belonged to you, and that another Man may supply what you could never produce. The same courtroom principle under which Adam's offence brought condemnation is used by God to announce a far greater verdict through Jesus Christ. The first Adam left you an inheritance of death before you could earn it; the last Adam offers you a gift of righteousness that you could never earn. Human religion tries to teach Adam's children how to behave better in the condemned house. The gospel takes the believing sinner out of Adam and places him in Christ. Salvation is not Adam improved. It is the sinner transferred to another Head.

Chapter One — The Door Through Which Sin Entered

Romans 5:12 says, "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world." Sin did not originate in Adam, for the Devil had already sinned and had already fallen before he approached Eve through the serpent. But sin entered the human world through Adam. The verse deliberately says "by one man," not by one woman, although Eve ate first. First Timothy 2:14 explains, "And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression." Eve was deceived; Adam knew exactly what he was doing. God had given the commandment to Adam in Genesis 2:16–17 before Eve was formed: "Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it." Adam received the commandment directly, stood as the responsible head, and transgressed with his eyes open. The modern man likes to portray the fall as an unfortunate mistake committed by primitive people who lacked sufficient information. The Bible calls it disobedience. Adam did not need another seminar. He needed to obey the plain words God had already spoken. The first human sin was not committed because God's wording was obscure but because man preferred his will to God's word.

"And death by sin." Death was not part of some natural evolutionary cycle that God later decided to use as a religious illustration. Scripture identifies death as an intruder, an enemy, and the judicial consequence of sin. God had warned Adam, "for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." The serpent replied, "Ye shall not surely die."

Every corpse in every cemetery is therefore a witness that God told the truth and the Devil lied. The undertaker may dim the lights, soften the music, arrange the flowers, and apply enough cosmetics to make death appear civilized, but the casket remains a wooden argument against Satan's sermon. Death is not man's harmless graduation into another stage of cosmic development. First Corinthians 15:26 calls it "the last enemy." It tears soul from body, removes men from their earthly habitations, breaks families, silences voices, and turns beauty back toward dust. Adam's sin did not merely produce an unpleasant emotion or an embarrassing stain. It brought a tyrant into the human realm, and that tyrant has never lost a natural-born subject. The hospital fights him, the vitamin salesman delays him, the mortician dresses him, and the philosopher renames him, but none of them can dethrone him.

"And so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Death moved from Adam to his descendants because Adam's fallen life was the only natural life he could transmit. Genesis 5:1 says that God made Adam "in the likeness of God," but verse 3 says Adam "begat a son in his own likeness, after his image." Seth was not born in the unfallen likeness in which Adam had first been created; he was born after the likeness of a fallen father. Adam could not pass along innocence he no longer possessed. A bankrupt man does not leave his children a fortune merely because he once owned one. Adam squandered the estate before his sons arrived to claim it, and the foreclosure notice was already on the door. Every descendant born through natural generation entered a race in which sin reigned and death collected its due. That inherited ruin does not excuse our personal wickedness, for every accountable sinner adds his own signatures to Adam's rebellion. We do not merely inherit the disease; we enthusiastically display its symptoms. Nobody has to teach a child to lie, covet, demand his own way, or conceal disobedience. Training is required to restrain sin, not to introduce it. Adam supplied the fallen nature, and every one of us has furnished ample personal evidence that we received it.

Chapter Two — Adam Was More Than a Bad Example

The shallow explanation says that Adam sinned first and everybody afterward simply followed his example. Romans 5 will not permit that reduction. Verse 15 says, "through the offence of one many be dead." Verse 16 says, "the judgment was by one to condemnation." Verse 17 says, "by one man's offence death reigned by one." Verse 18 says, "by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation." Verse 19 says, "by one man's disobedience many were made sinners." Paul does not repeat the expression "by one" because he ran short of vocabulary. The Holy Ghost is hammering the representative character of Adam's act into a skull thickened by self-righteousness. Adam's descendants certainly follow his example when they personally sin, but death's universal reign cannot be

explained merely by imitation. Men do not die only after consciously duplicating Adam's exact transgression. Infants die who never stood before a forbidden tree, heard a directly spoken prohibition, or chose to imitate Adam's particular offence. Something more than imitation is present. Adam acted as the natural and representative head of humanity, and the consequences of his act reached the race that proceeded from him.

Verse 14 makes the point unmistakable: "Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression." From Adam to Moses there was no Sinai covenant, no Mosaic code, and no stone-tablet arrangement under which men committed the same kind of violation Adam committed against a directly stated prohibition carrying a specific death sentence. Yet death reigned. It did not request permission, wait for Moses, or suspend operations until the law had been printed. It reigned like a king. Adam had been given dominion over the earth, but through his offence he surrendered the human race to another ruler. Death sat upon the throne, sin enforced its decrees, and the grave collected the citizens. Men between Adam and Moses committed personal sins, but Paul's point reaches deeper: even those who had not sinned "after the similitude of Adam's transgression" remained subject to death. The reign of death revealed that humanity stood beneath a condemnation larger than the sum of each man's individually recorded acts. Adam's offence had introduced a judicial condition into the race.

Adam is therefore called "the figure of him that was to come." He is a figure of Christ by contrast as the head of a people whose act affects those represented by him. Adam's one disobedient act brought condemnation upon his race; Christ's obedient work provides righteousness and life for those who receive Him. Adam stood at the head of natural humanity, while Christ stands as the Head of a new creation. First Corinthians 15:22 says, "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." The verse does not teach that every lost man will eventually be saved, for the passage concerns resurrection order and clearly distinguishes those who are Christ's at His coming. It identifies two positions: "in Adam" and "in Christ." Every person begins in Adam by natural birth. No one enters Christ through natural descent, church ritual, national heritage, or moral effort. He must be born again. The first birth places a man in the family that dies; the second birth places the believer in the One who conquered death. Adam is not merely the first fellow in history to provide a poor moral demonstration. He is the ruined head of the old creation. Christ did not come to polish Adam's crown. He came to begin another race.

Chapter Three — The Meaning of the Heavenly Ledger

To impute something is to reckon, count, credit, or charge it to an account. The word concerns judicial reckoning, not a chemical change in moral substance. Romans 4 uses

the language repeatedly. Abraham “believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.” Paul speaks of the man “to whom God imputeth righteousness without works,” and quotes David: “Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.” Philemon 18 furnishes a plain practical example when Paul says concerning Onesimus, “If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account.” Paul did not claim to have personally committed Onesimus’s wrong. He offered to have the debt charged to his own account so that Onesimus could be received. That is ledger language. A debt belongs to one man, but another voluntarily assumes the obligation. Scripture does not require a Greek professor with three pairs of spectacles to make the matter intelligible. God put the illustration in a one-chapter book and wrote it plainly enough for a saved farmhand to understand.

When Adam sinned, his offence brought a judgment affecting those naturally represented in him. Romans 5:18 says, “by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation.” This does not mean that every infant has personally committed Adam’s conscious act or that God pretends each descendant physically stood beside the tree and reached for the fruit. It means Adam’s act had representative consequences. His race was constituted a fallen, dying, condemned humanity. Romans 5:19 says, “by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners.” They were placed in the standing and condition of sinners under the headship of Adam. Personal sins later demonstrate and increase individual guilt, but personal acts occur within a condition already ruined. A man born aboard a sinking ship may punch holes in the wall himself, but his personal vandalism did not place the vessel in the ocean or begin the original breach. He entered an existing disaster and then proved by his own conduct that he belonged among the mutineers.

The doctrine of imputation protects us from two opposite errors. First, it prevents us from reducing sin to outward conduct that can be corrected by religious grooming. If the trouble were only a collection of bad habits, salvation might be a training course. But man’s problem involves his standing in Adam, his fallen nature, and the condemnation resting upon the race. Second, imputation prevents us from imagining that justification means God infuses enough goodness into a sinner to make him gradually deserving of acceptance. God reckons righteousness to the believing sinner because of Christ. The sinner is not justified by becoming personally sinless before the verdict; he is declared righteous because the righteousness of Another is placed to his account. Practical holiness must follow salvation, but it cannot become the basis of the verdict without destroying grace. Religion forever mixes the courtroom with the workshop. It tells the defendant to repair himself until the Judge can safely acquit him. The gospel announces that Christ has satisfied the law, paid the debt, and offers His own righteousness to the

ungodly believer. God does not acquit sinners by falsifying the ledger. He acquits them because Christ settled it.

Chapter Four — Death Reigned Before Moses Arrived

Romans 5:13 says, “For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law.” Paul does not say there was no sin before Moses. He says exactly the opposite: “sin was in the world.” Cain murdered Abel long before Moses descended Sinai. The world before the flood became so corrupt that “every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” Sodom was overthrown before Israel received the commandments. Men possessed conscience and enough divine light to be responsible, as Romans 1 and 2 demonstrate. But sin is not charged as transgression against a particular stated statute where that statute has not been given. The Mosaic law made sin identifiable, specific, and legally itemized within the covenant under which it was delivered. Romans 5:20 says, “Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound.” The law did not manufacture sin any more than a flashlight manufactures cockroaches. It turned on the light and showed what had already been crawling through the room.

“Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses.” That “nevertheless” wrecks the theory that death came only because each person violated the law of Moses. Moses had not arrived, yet cemeteries were already filling. Pharaohs built tombs large enough to advertise their power, but those monuments became stone billboards announcing that death had defeated them. Kings, shepherds, warriors, infants, craftsmen, and patriarchs all went down into the dust. Genesis 5 tolls like a funeral bell: “and he died,” “and he died,” “and he died.” Men lived hundreds of years, but the additional centuries merely lengthened the corridor leading to the same grave. Methuselah survived 969 years and still did not outlive Adam’s sentence. Longevity is not immortality. A man may take nine centuries to reach the cemetery, but if he arrives there at last, death has kept its appointment. The reign of death before Sinai proves that the human problem cannot be confined to violations of the Mosaic code. The sentence was operating from Adam onward.

This distinction matters because religious men repeatedly confuse Adam, Moses, and Christ as though the Bible contained nothing but one long, undivided moral improvement program. Adam brought sin and death into the human world. Moses received a law that exposed sin, identified transgressions, and made the offence abound. Jesus Christ came to deal with both sin and its penalty through His death, burial, and resurrection. The law could diagnose but could not regenerate. It could pronounce a leper unclean but could not place new life in his blood. It could identify the serpent’s venom but carried no antidote in its tablets of stone. Galatians 3:21 asks, “Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid.” The problem was not a defect in the law but the inability of fallen flesh to keep it.

“For if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law.” Moses can lead the criminal into the courtroom and read the charges. He cannot remove Adam’s blood from the criminal’s veins or impart the life of the risen Christ.

Chapter Five — Adam’s Children Cannot Educate Away Adam’s Ruin

If man’s trouble is rooted in Adam, then education cannot remove it. Education may teach a sinner to spell his sins, classify them, defend them, finance them, or commit them with improved technology, but it cannot change his spiritual ancestry. An unschooled thief may steal a loaf of bread; an educated thief may steal a pension fund through twelve shell companies and call it asset restructuring. The diploma changed the method, not the nature. Human knowledge has built faster machines without creating holier passengers. It has carried Adam’s fallen children across oceans, through the air, and into digital worlds, but wherever Adam’s son travels, he takes Adam’s nature with him. Jeremiah 13:23 asks, “Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?” Then comes the application: “then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil.” Education has value in its proper sphere, but it cannot perform a new birth. A library can inform the mind; it cannot resurrect the spirit. You cannot teach a corpse enough anatomy to make it stand up.

Morality cannot erase Adam’s condemnation either. The respectable sinner looks across the street, finds somebody filthier than himself, and uses the comparison as a homemade certificate of righteousness. He does not drink like that man, cheat like this woman, swear like his coworker, or behave like the criminals shown on the evening news. His entire case depends upon selecting a sufficiently rotten standard. But God does not compare sinners with the worst man in town. He measures them against His own holiness. Romans 3:23 says, “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” The issue is not whether one arrow flew farther than another; every arrow fell short of the mark. The clean pig and the muddy pig still came from the same pen. One descendant of Adam may wear a tailored suit, pay his bills, mow his lawn, and speak politely, while another sleeps in an alley with a bottle beneath his coat. Their earthly conditions differ, their personal offences differ, and their judgment will account for those differences, but neither man possesses the righteousness required to enter God’s presence.

Religion cannot remove the charge. Baptism may wet the body, but water cannot wash a man out of Adam and into Christ. Church membership may place a name on a human roll without entering it in the Lamb’s book of life. Sacraments may occupy the hands while the heart remains “dead in trespasses and sins.” Self-improvement may teach the old man to wear deodorant, restrain his vocabulary, and arrive punctually for worship, but the old man remains old. Jesus did not tell Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews and a master of Israel, that

he needed minor repairs. He said, “Ye must be born again.” Nicodemus possessed religion, morality, knowledge, position, and respectability. What he lacked was life. The natural birth had placed him in Adam, and no quantity of religious varnish could convert Adamic wood into a new creature. Man’s programs keep offering paint to people whose house is already condemned. The gospel does not renovate the condemned building. It brings the believing sinner into a new creation.

Chapter Six — The Objection of the Offended Sinner

At this point human pride rises from the defendant’s chair and objects: “Why should Adam’s act affect me? I was not there. I did not choose him. It is unfair that one man’s disobedience should bring condemnation upon his descendants.” The objection sounds impressive until the objector begins describing the salvation he wants. He wants another Man’s death to pay for sins He did not commit. He wants another Man’s blood to cleanse a record He did not write. He wants another Man’s righteousness placed upon an account that did not earn it. He objects to representation when Adam is mentioned and begs for representation when Christ is preached. That is theological bookkeeping performed with a forked pencil. If one man cannot act representatively for others, then the objector has not merely attacked original sin; he has attacked substitutionary atonement and imputed righteousness. The principle he resents in Romans 5:18 is the same principle upon which he must depend in Romans 5:19. The Bible does not allow him to fire Adam as his representative while hiring Christ on more favorable terms.

Furthermore, every sinner personally ratifies Adam’s rebellion as soon as he becomes morally accountable. The man who complains that Adam chose disobedience on his behalf has spent his own life choosing the same principle whenever God’s word crossed his will. He may not have eaten from Adam’s tree, but he has reached for ten thousand forbidden fruits of his own. He has lied when truth was commanded, coveted what was not his, exalted himself, neglected God, resisted light, cherished lust, excused bitterness, and treated the Creator as an unnecessary interruption. Ecclesiastes 7:29 says, “God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions.” The fallen sinner is remarkably creative when manufacturing exceptions for himself. He objects to Adam’s single offence while guarding a private warehouse filled with his own. The man demanding to be judged solely upon his personal record should think carefully before filing that request. Revelation 20 describes a judgment where the dead are judged “according to their works.” Nobody standing there is acquitted.

God did not arrange the representative principle to trap innocent people who otherwise would have remained flawless forever. He revealed it as the framework through which ruin is explained and grace is magnified. We are naturally joined to Adam by birth, but we may

be joined to Christ by faith. The first connection was never placed within our power to choose; the second is proclaimed through the gospel and must be received. Romans 5:17 speaks of “they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness.” A gift may be sufficient for all while benefiting only those who receive it. Christ’s work is not a compulsory universal salvation that sweeps unbelievers into heaven while they reject the Son of God. John 3:36 remains plain: “he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.” Adam’s descendants do not escape Adam by complaining about Adam. They escape condemnation by receiving Jesus Christ. The gospel is not God apologizing for the first man. It is God offering the last Adam.

Chapter Seven — The Last Adam Opens a Better Ledger

First Corinthians 15:45 says, “The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit.” Christ is not called the second Adam as though a third might someday be required. He is “the last Adam.” God is not conducting another experiment with humanity or waiting to see whether Christ’s work will succeed where the first arrangement failed. Jesus Christ completed the work. The first Adam received life and lost his estate through disobedience; the last Adam possesses life in Himself and gives it to others. Adam stretched out his hand toward a tree and brought death; Christ stretched out His hands upon a tree and bore death. Adam acted in a garden where every legitimate need had been supplied; Christ obeyed in a garden while sweating “as it were great drops of blood.” Adam said, in effect, “Not thy will, but mine”; Christ said, “Nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.” One man’s disobedience opened the grave, and one Man’s obedience walked out of it.

Romans 5 repeatedly declares that Christ’s provision is not merely equal to Adam’s damage. Grace is greater. “But not as the offence, so also is the free gift.” “Much more the grace of God” has abounded. “Much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.” Adam’s offence brought condemnation because of one sin; Christ’s free gift deals with “many offences unto justification.” Christ does not merely return the believer to Adam’s original probation, place him back in Eden, and warn him not to spoil the arrangement again. The saved man receives a standing in Christ superior to Adam’s untested innocence. Adam could fall; the believer’s life is “hid with Christ in God.” Adam stood as a creature capable of forfeiting his earthly position; the believer is accepted in the Beloved, sealed by the Holy Spirit, joined to Christ’s body, and made a partaker of eternal life. Grace does not drag the sinner back to the starting line. It carries him beyond the place from which Adam fell.

This is why the passage moves from the “offence of one” to “the righteousness of one.” Romans 5:18 says, “even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men

unto justification of life.” The provision is proclaimed to all, and the gospel may be preached to every creature, but verse 17 identifies the beneficiaries as those who “receive” the gift. Verse 19 adds, “by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.” Christ’s obedience includes His sinless life and reaches its great sacrificial climax in His obedience unto death. Philippians 2:8 says He “became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” The righteousness offered to the sinner was not woven from human effort, religious ceremony, or moral intention. It is the righteousness of the obedient Son of God. Adam left his children a debt they did not personally create at its fountainhead. Christ offers believers a righteousness they did not personally produce at any point. The old ledger says “condemnation”; the new ledger says “justification.” The transfer occurs neither by evolution nor imitation but by receiving the gift through faith.

Conclusion

The day Adam sinned, more happened than the personal downfall of one man. Sin entered the human world, death entered by sin, and death passed upon all men. Judgment came to condemnation, and Adam’s descendants were born into a creation already groaning beneath the curse. The cemeteries, hospitals, wars, crimes, betrayals, diseases, broken homes, and secret corruptions of human history are not unrelated accidents floating through an otherwise healthy world. They grow from a race severed from its proper fellowship with God. Man does not need a flattering explanation of his symptoms. He needs God’s explanation of his condition. Adam’s fall explains why progress never progresses beyond the human heart, why civilization can invent a computer without curing covetousness, and why every generation discovers new machinery for committing ancient sins. The scenery changes, but Adam keeps appearing in every photograph. Modern man carries a device containing the accumulated knowledge of centuries and uses it to distribute gossip, pornography, vanity, and fraud at the speed of light. He put Adam on wireless internet and called it advancement.

Yet the Bible does not reveal Adam’s debt so that the sinner will surrender to despair. It reveals the old account so that he will stop trying to settle it with counterfeit currency. Your education cannot pay it. Your baptism cannot pay it. Your denomination cannot pay it. Your moral improvement cannot pay it. Your tears, resolutions, ceremonies, prayers, donations, and promises cannot pay it. If those things could satisfy the judgment, Christ died for nothing. But Christ did not die for nothing. He came as the sinless Son of God, obeyed where Adam disobeyed, bore the judgment sinners deserved, shed His blood, died, was buried, and rose again. He does not offer to become your assistant in a joint project of self-redemption. He offers salvation as a free gift. The old religious craftsman keeps arriving at heaven’s courtroom wearing a homemade suit stitched with good intentions. God points to

the righteousness of His Son and says that nothing else meets the standard. Salvation does not improve the sinner's costume. It clothes him in the perfection of Another.

Every person reading these words is found under one of two heads. You are in Adam or in Christ. There is no neutral hallway between the two, no spiritual waiting room for respectable undecided people, and no third representative scheduled to appear. In Adam, sin reigns, death reigns, and condemnation stands. In Christ, grace reigns "through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord." You entered Adam by natural birth; you must enter Christ through the new birth. The transaction is not accomplished by promising to imitate Jesus, cleaning yourself sufficiently, or persuading God that you are less corrupt than your neighbor. It is accomplished when an ungodly sinner believes on the Lord Jesus Christ and receives the gift God has provided. The doctrine that first strips man of every boast afterward gives the believer a standing no accusation can destroy. Adam's debt was entered before you began decorating your character, but Christ's righteousness is offered before you can perform one work deserving it. The first Adam explains the grave behind you. The last Adam opens glory before you. You cannot rewrite the old ledger, but through faith in Jesus Christ, you can be placed in the Man who settled it.

2 of 10 Imputed Righteousness — When God Laid the Guilty Man's Record on an Innocent Christ

Key Passage: Isaiah 53:4–6; 2 Corinthians 5:21

"Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all."

—Isaiah 53:4–6

"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

Introduction

Calvary was not a religious pageant staged to produce a lump in the throat, moisten the eye, and give sentimental people something solemn to contemplate before Easter dinner. It was not God's dramatic way of announcing that love is preferable to hatred or that sacrifice

makes an inspiring moral lesson. Calvary was a judicial execution. A righteous Judge dealt with a real indictment, a broken law, accumulated guilt, an appointed Substitute, and a penalty that had to be exhausted. The cross had blood because sin deserved death. It had darkness because judgment had fallen. It had a forsaken cry because the sinless Substitute had entered the guilty man's place. Modern religion likes a decorative cross polished smooth enough to hang above a choir loft, but the cross in the King James Bible is rough with judgment, wet with blood, and occupied by a Man bearing charges that were not His. Isaiah does not say He was wounded to help us discover our potential. He says, "he was wounded for our transgressions." He was not bruised because society failed to appreciate His uniqueness. "He was bruised for our iniquities." The cross is not heaven's sympathy card to suffering humanity. It is the place where God's justice struck the Substitute instead of the sinner.

The doctrine of imputed righteousness cannot be understood until the doctrine of imputed sin is faced. Before the righteousness of Jesus Christ could be reckoned to the believing sinner, the believing sinner's guilt had to be placed upon Jesus Christ. The transfer runs in two directions: our sin to Christ and His righteousness to us. Second Corinthians 5:21 contains the entire exchange in one verse sharp enough to cut the throat of every system of human merit: "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." Christ knew no sin, yet He was made sin for us. We knew no righteousness worthy of God, yet in Christ we are made the righteousness of God. He received what belonged to us so that we could receive what belonged to Him. He did not become a sinner in character, and we do not become the source of divine righteousness in ourselves. The transaction is judicial and representative. The guilty record was laid upon the innocent Substitute; the perfect standing of the Substitute is credited to the guilty believer. Religion attempts to split that verse in half. It will allow Christ to bear some of the sinner's punishment, provided the sinner is permitted to contribute some of his own righteousness. But Calvary does not offer Christ as a partial payment beside man's pocket change.

This truth must be guarded because nearly every corruption of the gospel strikes either Christ's sinlessness, Christ's substitution, Christ's finished work, or the believer's complete acceptance in Him. If Christ possessed sin of His own, He could not bear ours. If He merely furnished an example, He did not answer our indictment. If He suffered only to demonstrate the seriousness of evil, then justice did not receive the payment Scripture declares. If His death merely opened an account that religious works must finish funding, then "It is finished" should have been, "It is started." But the Bible will not permit such clerical vandalism. First Peter 2:24 says Christ "his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree." Galatians 3:13 says He was "made a curse for us." Isaiah 53 says the Lord laid

our iniquity upon Him. The innocent Christ stood where the guilty sinner belonged, bore what the guilty sinner deserved, and satisfied the judgment the guilty sinner could never survive. Grace is free to the recipient because it was ruinously costly to the Substitute. Salvation did not become cheap at Calvary. It became paid for.

Chapter One — The Substitute Had No Record of His Own

The first requirement of a substitute is that he not be under the same condemnation as the man whose place he takes. A debtor cannot discharge another debtor's account with an empty purse, and a condemned criminal cannot climb onto the scaffold to satisfy the sentence of another while his own sentence remains unpaid. Jesus Christ therefore had to be absolutely sinless—not merely better than other men, less corrupt than His generation, unusually spiritual, or morally advanced. He had to be “holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners,” as Hebrews 7:26 declares. First Peter 1:19 calls Him “a lamb without blemish and without spot.” First John 3:5 says, “in him is no sin.” The devils could identify Him as “the Holy One of God,” Pilate could announce, “I find no fault in him,” and the dying thief could confess, “this man hath done nothing amiss.” Heaven, hell, Rome, and a condemned criminal all testified to what modern theology keeps trying to blur: there was no stain in the Lamb.

Christ's sinlessness was not merely the result of unusually disciplined conduct. His holy person was bound up with who He was and how He entered the world. The eternal Word “was made flesh, and dwelt among us.” He was conceived by the Holy Ghost and born of a virgin. Luke 1:35 records the angel's declaration: “that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.” He did not enter the world through ordinary human generation under Adam's fallen headship. He possessed true humanity without inheriting Adam's corruption. He was tempted in all points like as we are, “yet without sin.” Temptation pressed upon Him from without, but it found no traitor within. The Devil could offer kingdoms, bread, spectacle, and shortcuts, yet there was nothing in Christ answering to the bait. Satan throws a hook into the human heart and usually finds enough lust there to drag the whole fisherman's boat behind it. With Christ, the hook struck holiness. The prince of this world came and had nothing in Him.

Every day of Christ's earthly life demonstrated the perfection of the sacrifice He would offer. He obeyed where Adam disobeyed. He answered Satan with Scripture where Eve entertained a conversation about revising Scripture. He fulfilled the law without bending it, evading it, or trimming it to accommodate the flesh. He loved God perfectly, loved His neighbor perfectly, spoke truth perfectly, submitted perfectly, judged perfectly, and walked perfectly. Yet His righteousness was not the brittle respectability of a Pharisee who stays clean by refusing to touch ruined people. Christ could sit among publicans and sinners

without contracting their corruption because holiness in Him was not a coat of religious paint. He touched the leper and cleansed the leper; the leper did not contaminate Him. He entered the house of death and called the dead forth; death did not conquer Him. Only such a Man could approach Calvary with no personal debt to settle. The nails did not fasten a criminal to that tree. They fastened the only innocent Man who ever lived to the place reserved for criminals.

Chapter Two — The Record Laid Upon Him Belonged to Us

If Christ had no sin of His own, then the sin He bore had to belong to others. Isaiah 53 does not leave the ownership in doubt: “our griefs,” “our sorrows,” “our transgressions,” “our iniquities,” and “the iniquity of us all.” The pronouns are nails driven through every attempt to make Calvary an abstract display. Christ did not bear theoretical evil floating somewhere in the universe like religious fog. He bore the actual guilt of actual sinners. Every lie had an owner. Every lust arose in a heart. Every blasphemy came from a tongue. Every rebellion was an act of a will. Every neglected commandment, corrupted desire, concealed motive, bitter thought, selfish ambition, and proud refusal belonged on the record of a guilty person. Sin is not an unfortunate atmospheric condition for which nobody is responsible. David confessed, “Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight.” Before sin becomes a social problem, it is treason against God.

Man prefers general confession because general confession allows him to remain generally innocent. He will admit that “nobody is perfect” because he expects that foggy slogan to erase every particular offence. He talks about human weakness the way a crooked banker talks about an accounting irregularity. The Bible does not permit him to hide in the crowd. Isaiah says, “we have turned every one to his own way.” That is the core of sin: the creature choosing his own way against the way of his Creator. One man’s own way may lead through a tavern; another man’s own way may lead through a cathedral. One rebels with a bottle, another with a prayer book, another with a bank account, another with a reputation, and another with a pulpit. The scenery differs, but the road belongs to self. A respectable sinner walking his own way is no less lost than a scandalous sinner crawling along his. Polished rebellion is still rebellion. A gold-plated idol remains an idol, and a well-dressed Adam remains Adam.

The record placed upon Christ therefore included the entire foul inventory of human guilt for which He offered Himself. First Peter 2:24 says He “bare our sins”—plural—“in his own body on the tree.” The Lord knew every hidden chamber of the human heart before the first hammer struck a nail. Nothing surprised Him at Calvary. He knew the secret sin never confessed to another human ear, the thought buried beneath religious manners, the act concealed behind a respectable name, and the rebellion that would not be committed until

centuries after His resurrection. He knew what men had done, what they were, and what their sin deserved. Yet He went to the cross voluntarily. The sinner often softens his record until he imagines Christ died for a collection of minor personality defects. Scripture restores the proper language: transgressions, iniquities, sins, offences, trespasses, uncleanness, wickedness, enmity, and guilt. Christ did not die because humanity needed cosmetic adjustment. He died because the ledger was full and the sentence was death.

Chapter Three — The Lord Laid the Iniquity Upon Him

Isaiah 53:6 says, “the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.” Calvary was not an accident arranged by angry men while God helplessly observed from a distance. Acts 2:23 says Christ was “delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God,” although wicked hands remained fully responsible for crucifying and slaying Him. Human rulers acted freely in their malice, yet God overruled their wickedness to accomplish His redemptive purpose. Judas sold Him, the priests delivered Him, Pilate sentenced Him, Roman soldiers crucified Him, and the crowd mocked Him; but above every human hand stood the determinate counsel of God. The Lord laid the iniquity upon the Substitute. Men supplied the false accusations, nails, thorns, spit, scourge, and cross. God performed the judicial reckoning that gave those sufferings their saving meaning. Without that divine transaction, Christ’s death would have been another murder in a world already soaked with innocent blood. Because God laid our iniquity upon Him, the cross became the altar where the Lamb answered for sinners.

The language “laid on him” reaches back into the sacrificial system, where guilt was identified with an appointed substitute. On the Day of Atonement, Aaron laid both hands upon the head of the live goat and confessed over it “all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat.” The goat then bore those iniquities “unto a land not inhabited.” The animal did not become morally wicked. Guilt was ceremonially identified with the substitute, which carried it away according to God’s appointment. Those sacrifices could never finally remove sin, for Hebrews 10:4 says, “it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.” They were shadows pointing toward the Lamb of God. What the symbol pictured repeatedly, Christ accomplished once. John the Baptist announced Him: “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” The shadow walked off the page when Jesus Christ climbed Calvary.

God’s act of laying our iniquity upon Christ does not mean that guilt was a physical substance poured into His veins or that His holy nature was transformed into corruption. Imputation is judicial reckoning. The charges belonging to sinners were placed to the account of their representative Substitute, and He accepted the liability. Paul illustrated

the principle when he wrote concerning Onesimus, “If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account.” Paul did not become Onesimus in character. He assumed responsibility for the debt. At Calvary the eternal Son accepted a debt infinitely greater than anything Onesimus owed Philemon. Our guilt was placed upon His account, and He answered it fully. He did not protest that the sins were not personally His, although they were not. He did not call twelve legions of angels, although He could have. He did not descend from the cross, although His enemies mocked Him to do so. Love held Him where nails never could have kept Him. The iniquity was ours; the obedience was His; the laying was God’s.

Chapter Four — Made Sin for Us, Yet Never Made a Sinner

Second Corinthians 5:21 must be allowed to say exactly what the King James Bible says: “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin.” The verse does not say Christ committed sin, loved sin, practiced sin, inherited sin, or became sinful in character. It immediately guards His holiness with the words “who knew no sin.” Scripture sets the sinlessness of Christ beside the imputation of sin so that no honest reader has permission to confuse the two. He was made sin “for us”—in our place, on our behalf, and as our judicial Substitute. The spotless Lamb stood beneath the legal consequence of the sin charged to Him while remaining personally spotless. A judge may order an innocent volunteer to satisfy another man’s financial obligation without pretending the volunteer originally stole the money. Responsibility can be assumed without personal character being corrupted. At Calvary Christ bore the liability of sin without becoming a lover or practitioner of it.

Some stumble over the expression “made him to be sin” because they imagine that the only alternatives are to weaken the verse into a vague symbol or turn Christ into a corrupted sinner. The Bible requires neither error. Scripture sometimes uses “sin” in close connection with the sacrifice appointed to deal with sin, but 2 Corinthians 5:21 deliberately states the exchange in its strongest judicial form. Christ was treated according to the guilt charged to Him so that believers might be treated according to the righteousness found in Him. He occupied the place sin deserved. The curse fell upon Him, wrath was endured by Him, and death claimed Him because He stood as the appointed bearer of guilt. Yet Hebrews 9:14 still calls Him a sacrifice offered “without spot to God.” The fire consumed the sacrifice; it did not prove the sacrifice defective. Judgment fell because the Lamb carried the record, not because the Lamb had acquired a sinful nature.

This distinction also guards the person of Christ from the reckless language of those who speak as though the Son of God became satanic, spiritually regenerated in hell, or personally contaminated by the sins He carried. No such blasphemous circus appears in

the King James Bible. Christ's saving work was accomplished through His sacrificial death and shed blood. On the cross He said, "It is finished." He did not announce that redemption would be completed after several days of spiritual torment beneath Satan's authority. The Devil was not Calvary's victorious jailer collecting payment from Christ. Hebrews 2:14 says that through death Christ destroyed "him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." Colossians 2:15 says He spoiled principalities and powers, making a show of them openly. Christ did not become a sinner, lose His deity, or require a new birth. The sinner needed regeneration; the Saviour remained "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever." The Lamb entered the fire spotless and came through triumphant.

Chapter Five — The Chastisement of Our Peace Fell Upon Him

Isaiah 53:5 says, "the chastisement of our peace was upon him." Peace with God was not achieved by God deciding that sin was too unpleasant to discuss. It required chastisement. Romans 5:1 declares, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." That peace rests upon an accomplished judgment, not a negotiated compromise between holiness and rebellion. God did not lower His standard until sinners could step over it. Christ met the standard and bore the penalty for our violation of it. Every blow of judgment that stood between the sinner and peace fell upon the Substitute. The world speaks endlessly of peace while rejecting the Prince of Peace because it wants tranquillity without truth, reconciliation without righteousness, and heaven without blood. That is not peace; it is anesthesia applied to a condemned conscience. Biblical peace is the settled result of justice satisfied at Calvary.

"He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities." The physical sufferings of Christ were terrible beyond sentimental description. His back was opened by scourging, His brow pierced with thorns, His face struck and spat upon, His hands and feet nailed to the wood, and His body suspended beneath the merciless pressure of crucifixion. Yet thousands were crucified under Rome, and their deaths saved nobody. The saving distinction lies in the word "for." Christ's wounds were substitutionary. He was not merely suffering beside humanity as its most tragic victim; He was suffering for guilty people beneath a divine appointment. The Roman soldiers could tear His flesh, but only God could make His soul "an offering for sin." Men could raise the cross, but only God could lay the iniquity upon Him. Human brutality explains the instruments; divine justice explains the transaction.

At noon darkness covered the land until the ninth hour. Creation drew a curtain while the Creator bore judgment. Then came the cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Christ quoted the opening words of Psalm 22, a passage that had described the crucifixion centuries before Rome drove its first nail. The forsaken cry was not playacting. The

Substitute entered the judicial abandonment belonging to the guilty and endured the awful reality signified by the darkness. Yet the eternal Godhead was not dissolved, the Son did not cease to be God, and the Father did not stop loving the Son. Christ was offering Himself “through the eternal Spirit” to God. The unity of the Godhead did not collapse at Calvary; the incarnate Son bore the penal consequence of the guilt imputed to Him. He stood where the sinner deserved to stand, beneath the judgment the sinner could not survive, and He drained the cup without leaving one drop for those who trust Him.

Chapter Six — The Blood Satisfied the Court of Heaven

Leviticus 17:11 declares, “it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.” Hebrews 9:22 confirms, “without shedding of blood is no remission.” The blood of Christ was not an ornamental detail added to make the cross appear more solemn. It was the appointed price of redemption. First Peter 1:18–19 says believers were not redeemed with corruptible things such as silver and gold, “but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.” Modern religion may prefer a bloodless gospel because blood embarrasses cultured rebels, but heaven has never consulted human taste when determining how sin must be answered. Cain brought the produce of his labor and discovered that God would not accept a bloodless substitute devised by human sincerity. Abel brought the firstlings of the flock by faith. From Eden’s coats of skins to the Passover lamb, from the Levitical altar to Isaiah’s wounded Servant, the scarlet line moved toward Calvary.

Romans 3:25 says God set forth Christ “to be a propitiation through faith in his blood.” Propitiation means that God’s righteous demands against sin were satisfied. Christ did not persuade a reluctant God to become loving; the Father sent the Son because God already loved the world. Neither did divine love persuade holiness to ignore the indictment. At Calvary love provided what holiness required. Mercy did not smother justice in a dark alley and sneak the sinner through the back door. Justice was satisfied publicly, fully, and righteously. Romans 3:26 declares that God is both “just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.” God remains just when He acquits the believing sinner because the sentence has fallen upon the Substitute. The court does not pretend the crime never existed. It points to the blood and declares the payment sufficient.

When Christ cried, “It is finished,” He announced completion, not exhaustion alone. The types had been fulfilled, the demanded sacrifice had been offered, the guilt had been answered, and the redeeming work had reached its appointed end. Hebrews 10:12 says, “this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God.” The Old Testament priest stood because his work was never finished; Christ sat down because His offering required no sequel. Rome may keep a priest standing at an altar

and present Christ repeatedly, but the Bible places Him seated at the Father's right hand after one sacrifice for sins forever. A finished sacrifice does not need religious maintenance. It needs to be believed. Any system that adds human merit, repeated sacrifice, sacramental payment, or personal suffering to Calvary sends the believer an invoice after Christ stamped the account "PAID."

Chapter Seven — The Great Exchange Opens the Door to Righteousness

Second Corinthians 5:21 does not end with Christ made sin for us. It declares the purpose: "that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." The verse moves from substitution to imputation, from the cross to the believer's standing, and from the charged record to the credited righteousness. Christ bore what was ours so that we might receive what is His. The believer is not merely returned to a blank account, standing spiritually naked and hoping to accumulate enough good works before death. Forgiveness removes the debt; justification credits righteousness. God does not merely erase the sinner's red ink. He writes the righteousness of Jesus Christ across the ledger. The believing sinner possesses a standing he never performed, purchased, or deserved. Heaven does not inspect him and discover sufficient native goodness. Heaven sees him "in Christ." The location of the righteousness is the safeguard of the whole doctrine: "in him."

Philippians 3:9 expresses the same truth through Paul's testimony: "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." Paul had religious credentials long enough to make a Pharisee's robe drag behind him like a royal train, but he counted the entire pile loss and dung. He did not offer God his best achievements beside Christ's righteousness. He abandoned his own righteousness as a ground of acceptance. Human religion keeps trying to sew one filthy rag onto Christ's spotless garment so the wearer can claim he helped. But the righteousness God accepts is "of God," received "by faith," and possessed "in him." Add one thread of human merit and the boaster reaches for the needle. Grace cuts the whole homemade suit off his back.

This exchange becomes the sinner's possession through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not automatically applied to every man regardless of unbelief, for John 3:18 says, "he that believeth not is condemned already." The gospel announces that Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day according to the Scriptures. The sinner receives the benefit by believing on Him, not by admiring the doctrine, joining a religious institution, enduring a ceremony, or promising future improvement. Romans 4:5 says, "to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." The ungodly man does not arrive with wages; he receives a gift. He does

not present a clean record; he trusts the One who bore his filthy record. Faith is the empty hand that receives Christ, and an empty hand has nothing with which to boast.

Conclusion

Calvary stands at the center of history as the place where the innocent Christ answered the guilty man's indictment. The offences belonged to us. The holiness belonged to Him. The Lord laid our iniquity upon the Lamb, and the Lamb voluntarily bore it. He was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities, chastised for our peace, made a curse for us, and made sin for us while remaining the spotless Son of God. The cross was not divine theatre, moral instruction, religious ornament, or sentimental martyrdom. It was substitution. Remove substitution and the blood becomes scenery. Remove imputation and Christ's sufferings become a tragedy without a transaction. Remove the resurrection and death appears to have retained its prisoner. But Christ bore the charge, paid the price, dismissed His spirit after crying, "It is finished," and rose bodily from the grave as the victorious Saviour.

The sinner therefore has only two choices concerning his record. He may carry it himself into judgment, or he may trust the One upon whom God laid it at Calvary. He cannot revise it sufficiently to make it acceptable. He cannot conceal it from omniscience, dilute it with good deeds, wash it with water, excuse it by comparison, or bury it beneath religious activity. A man may hide a criminal file beneath a hymnbook, but the Judge can still read it. The gospel does not ask the sinner to prove that the record is less serious than God says. It commands him to agree with God about his guilt and believe on the Substitute who answered it. Repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ do not improve the old account. They abandon every false plea and receive the provision God has made.

Before the righteousness of Christ could be placed upon the believer, the believer's sin had to be placed upon Christ. That is the great exchange. The spotless One wore the sinner's charges so that the sinner could wear the spotless One's righteousness. Christ received condemnation without deserving it; the believer receives justification without earning it. He took the curse; we receive the blessing. He entered the darkness; we are brought into light. He tasted death; we receive eternal life. He stood in the guilty man's place so that the guilty man, through faith, could stand in His. Religion tells Adam's fallen children to clean their record. The gospel declares that Christ carried it to Calvary and settled it with His own blood. The only safe place for a guilty man is in the innocent Christ.

3 of 10 Imputed Righteousness — Abraham Believed God, and Heaven Entered the Credit

Key Passage: Genesis 15:1–6

“After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward. And Abram said, Lord GOD, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus? And Abram said, Behold, to me thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir. And, behold, the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir. And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be. And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.”

Introduction

Abraham stood beneath a night sky with an aging body, a barren wife, an empty nursery, and a promise that mocked every natural calculation. God told him that an heir would come from his own bowels and that his seed would be as the stars. There was no child in Sarah’s arms, no medical evidence in Abraham’s favor, no visible machinery already moving the promise toward fulfillment, and no human probability upon which faith could rest. Abraham had only “the word of the LORD.” That was enough. Genesis 15:6 records one of the great financial statements in the Bible: “And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.” Abraham did not perform a ceremony, present a religious résumé, build a denominational headquarters, receive circumcision, keep the law of Moses, or negotiate a payment schedule with heaven. He believed God. Heaven opened the ledger and entered righteousness where Abraham had supplied no righteous wage. Faith did not create the promise, deserve the promise, improve the promise, or help God fulfill the promise. Faith simply took God at His word.

Religious man despises that arrangement because it leaves him with nothing to display in the trophy cabinet. He wants a salvation that includes a receipt bearing his signature, a uniform announcing his affiliation, a scar proving his participation, or a list of achievements long enough to make his neighbor appear spiritually unemployed. He can tolerate grace as long as grace hires him as a partner and gives him a desk in the front office. But Romans 4 locks the works department, closes the wage window, and announces that God “justifieth the ungodly.” Paul reaches back beyond Sinai, behind the Levitical priesthood, before Israel received its national ordinances, and even before Abraham was circumcised. Then he places Genesis 15:6 on the witness stand. The legalist arrives carrying Moses; Paul

produces Abraham before Moses was born. The sacramentalist arrives carrying circumcision; Paul shows Abraham counted righteous years before the knife ever touched him. The institutional religionist arrives with his membership roll; Paul points toward a solitary man under the stars believing what God said.

Paul's use of Abraham does not erase dispensational distinctions or pretend that Abraham understood every truth later revealed through the apostle to the Gentiles. Abraham was not preaching the fully revealed gospel of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ as set forth in 1 Corinthians 15:1–4. He believed the particular revelation God gave him concerning the promised seed. Yet Paul, under inspiration, uses Abraham to establish an enduring principle: righteousness is reckoned on the ground of faith rather than paid as wages for works. The content revealed grew clearer as God unfolded His purpose, but faith has never earned anything from God. Today the saving object is not a general belief that God exists, nor Abraham's promise concerning his earthly seed. The sinner must believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and trust the finished gospel of grace. Abraham looked toward a promise whose ultimate fulfillment rested in Christ; we look back upon the cross and empty tomb where that redemptive work was accomplished. The revelation differs in fullness, but the ledger still excludes boasting. God receives all the glory because faith comes empty-handed.

Chapter One — Faith Began With the Word of the Lord

Genesis 15 does not begin with Abraham inventing a dream and then persuading himself to feel confident about it. "The word of the LORD came unto Abram." Biblical faith begins where God has spoken. Anything else may be optimism, imagination, presumption, ambition, superstition, or religious excitement, but it is not Bible faith. Romans 10:17 says, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Faith does not create reality by the intensity of its own emotional temperature. It receives the testimony God has given. Abraham did not stand beneath the stars repeating affirmations about his fertility until the universe responded. God spoke, Abraham heard, and faith rested upon the Speaker. The modern religious market has turned faith into a mental crowbar used to pry blessings out of heaven, as though God were a locked vending machine and positive confession were the correct combination. Abraham's faith was not confidence in Abraham. It was confidence "in the LORD."

The setting made that faith meaningful. Abraham's circumstances contradicted the natural likelihood of the promise. Genesis 15 finds him childless, while Genesis 17 later tells us he was ninety-nine years old and Sarah was ninety. Romans 4:19 says that Abraham considered "his own body now dead" and "the deadness of Sara's womb." God waited until human strength had reached the graveyard before displaying divine faithfulness. If

Abraham and Sarah had produced Isaac while young and naturally fruitful, the flesh could have printed business cards claiming partnership in the miracle. God allowed the clock to run down until nature could no longer pretend to be the author of the promise. Man likes to offer God ninety percent of the strength and then thank Him for supplying the remaining ten. God sometimes waits until every human battery is dead so no one can mistake who turned on the light.

Yet Abraham did not ignore reality. Romans 4:19 says he “considered” his own body and Sarah’s womb. Faith is not pretending that old age is youth, barrenness is fertility, debt is wealth, sickness is health, or a problem does not exist because mentioning it might frighten a blessing away. Abraham looked directly at the natural impossibility and then looked beyond it to the God who had spoken. Romans 4:20–21 says, “He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform.” Faith does not deny the size of the obstacle; it refuses to make the obstacle larger than God. Abraham’s confidence did not rest upon what his body could perform but upon what God had promised. Faith becomes strong when man stops measuring God’s word with the ruler of human ability.

Chapter Two — Abraham Believed in the Lord

Genesis 15:6 does not merely say Abraham believed a doctrine about God. It says, “he believed in the LORD.” The object of faith matters. A man may possess enormous sincerity while sincerely trusting a lie. He may believe in religion, himself, humanity, ceremonial water, moral progress, ancestral tradition, ecclesiastical authority, or a saint carved from lumber, and none of those objects can justify him. Faith is not saving because faith itself possesses mystical virtue. Faith saves only in relation to the God who speaks and the provision He appoints. A drowning man may believe with heroic intensity that a stone will float, but his sincerity will accompany him straight to the bottom. The value of faith lies not in the muscles of the hand but in the strength of what the hand grasps. Abraham believed in the Lord because the Lord had spoken.

The promise given to Abraham concerned a seed. God had called him from Ur, promised to make of him a great nation, and declared that in him all families of the earth would be blessed. In Genesis 15, Abraham feared that Eliezer of Damascus, a servant born in his house, would become his heir. Human reasoning had already begun arranging an alternative fulfillment. But God rejected the substitute: “This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir.” God did not ask Abraham to revise the promise so it would fit available resources. He restated it in terms that removed the convenient escape hatch. The heir would not come through adoption, legal

arrangement, household custom, or creative interpretation. God's promises do not require theologians to rescue them from their plain wording. When the Lord said Abraham's own seed, He did not mean Abraham's well-organized substitute.

The promise ultimately reaches beyond Isaac to Jesus Christ. Galatians 3:16 says, "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ." This does not cancel the literal, national promises made to Abraham's physical descendants through Isaac and Jacob, nor does the Church steal Israel's covenants by hiding them inside a theological filing cabinet marked "spiritual." God will fulfill every national promise made to Israel because "the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." Yet the supreme Seed through whom blessing comes to the nations is Christ. Abraham saw the beginning of a line that God already knew would lead to Calvary. Jesus said, "Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad." Abraham did not possess the completed Pauline revelation, but the promise he believed rested upon the faithfulness of the God whose purpose centered in Christ.

Chapter Three — Heaven Counted What Abraham Could Never Earn

"And he counted it to him for righteousness." The word "counted" belongs to the language of reckoning, accounting, and credit. God did not examine Abraham's character and discover a hidden reserve of perfect righteousness. Abraham's later history proves that he remained capable of fear, deceit, impatience, and poor judgment. He went down into Egypt during famine, misrepresented Sarah as merely his sister, and allowed Pharaoh's house to suffer because of his cowardly arrangement. He later repeated similar conduct before Abimelech. Abraham was a great man of faith, but he was not a sinless man of flesh. If Genesis 15:6 meant that God rewarded Abraham's flawless moral performance, the Holy Ghost selected the wrong biography to illustrate it. Abraham needed credited righteousness precisely because personal righteousness could not carry the account.

Romans 4:3 quotes Genesis word for word: "Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." Paul then repeats the accounting vocabulary: "reckoned," "counted," and "imputeth." This is not the gradual creation of righteousness inside Abraham until he became personally worthy of acceptance. It is God's judicial reckoning of righteousness to him. Imputation does not mean God tells a lie about the sinner. The Judge does not pretend the ungodly man has personally lived a spotless life. He places righteousness to the believer's account upon a righteous basis that Calvary would fully reveal. God could credit righteousness without corrupting justice because Christ, "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world," stood at the center of His redemptive purpose. The cross occurred in history at the appointed time, but God's promise and counsel were never uncertain. Heaven's ledger did not depend upon Abraham eventually

becoming good enough to validate the entry. It depended upon God being faithful enough to provide the righteousness.

Faith itself was not treated as a meritorious substitute for works, as though God lowered the passing grade and decided that one noble act of believing deserved eternal payment. Faith has no wages in its pockets. It contributes no righteousness of its own. It receives what God gives. When Scripture says faith was counted for righteousness, the meaning is not that the human act of believing became a quantity of moral perfection equal to the righteousness of Christ. The expression identifies faith as the appointed means through which righteousness is reckoned. A beggar's open hand does not purchase the bread placed within it. The hand merely receives what another paid for. Religious man studies the hand, compliments its posture, measures its sincerity, and eventually starts charging admission to hand-opening ceremonies. The Bible keeps pointing to the Giver. Abraham's faith glorified God because it confessed that God alone could perform what He had promised.

Chapter Four — Wages Belong to Workers, but Righteousness Came as a Gift

Romans 4:4 draws a line that every religion built upon human merit tries to erase: "Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt." If a man performs labor under an agreement and receives his wages, the employer has not bestowed grace. He has paid a debt. The worker may be thankful for employment, but he does not fall at the employer's feet and praise him for a free gift when Friday's paycheck arrives. He earned the wages. If salvation is paid because of baptism, church membership, law-keeping, sacraments, charity, perseverance, suffering, religious loyalty, or personal reform, then God owes the saved man something. Grace becomes payroll, heaven becomes compensation, and the sinner arrives at the judgment seat waving a timecard. That may satisfy the pride of man, but Romans 11:6 says, "if it be of works, then is it no more grace."

The next verse is even more offensive to religious respectability: "But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly." God does not justify people because they have successfully transformed themselves into godly candidates before coming to Him. He justifies the ungodly. That does not mean He approves ungodliness, dismisses holiness, or gives saved men permission to wallow in sin. It means the person receiving justification has no righteous standing of his own to offer as payment. Practical holiness follows salvation as its proper fruit; it does not precede justification as its purchasing price. The sinner is not told to clean himself until God can safely touch him. He is told to believe on the One who justifies the ungodly. A doctor who treated only healthy men would have a very tidy office and a useless profession. A gospel that justifies only the already righteous has no customers.

This distinction destroys boasting. Romans 4:2 says, “For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God.” A works system always manufactures a boaster because the worker has contributed the decisive achievement. He may speak piously about grace, but somewhere in his testimony he must explain why he qualified while another man did not. He chose better, performed more, endured longer, joined the correct institution, received the proper ceremony, or maintained sufficient goodness. Grace shuts his mouth. Romans 3:27 asks, “Where is boasting then? It is excluded.” Faith is not the last tiny work the sinner performs so he may preserve one button of pride on an otherwise empty coat. Faith renounces the entire wardrobe. Abraham had nothing to boast of before God because the promise, power, fulfillment, and credited righteousness all came from God.

Chapter Five — Circumcision Was the Sign, Not the Source

Paul asks the question every sacramental system would prefer to leave unanswered: “How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision?” Romans 4:10 answers, “Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision.” Genesis 15:6 records Abraham’s righteousness reckoned by faith. Circumcision was not instituted until Genesis 17. The inspired order settles the matter. Abraham was counted righteous before he received the physical mark. The knife did not create his standing; it followed the standing God had already granted. Paul reaches into Genesis, dates the transaction, and closes the sacramental loophole before a church council can crawl through it. If circumcision—the covenantal sign given directly by God to Abraham—did not justify Abraham, no later religious ceremony invented, administered, or controlled by men can claim greater power.

Romans 4:11 calls circumcision “a sign” and “a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised.” A sign points to something; it does not create the thing to which it points. A seal confirms an existing reality; it does not manufacture the original substance. The wedding ring does not create the marriage covenant each morning when a husband places it on his finger. It signifies a relationship already established. Abraham’s circumcision marked the covenantal distinction God appointed for him and his physical seed, but it did not enter righteousness into the ledger. Religion repeatedly takes the sign, places it where God put faith, and then sells control of the sign as control of salvation. The priest acquires customers, the institution acquires power, and the sinner acquires false confidence. God’s order is simpler: Abraham believed, God counted, and the sign followed.

This does not make obedience or divinely appointed signs worthless. Abraham obeyed God and circumcised his household. Faith that refuses every command of the God it claims to trust is counterfeit noise. But obedience must remain in its proper doctrinal place. It demonstrates, expresses, and follows faith; it does not become the meritorious ground

upon which God owes justification. The thief on the cross received no opportunity to submit to circumcision, enter baptismal water, join an assembly, take communion, or repair the earthly damage of his criminal life. He believed on the dying King beside him, and Christ said, "To day shalt thou be with me in paradise." Water could not reach him, a priest could not administer him, and good works had no time to accumulate. Grace reached him while religion was still looking for a ladder.

Chapter Six — Paul Reached Behind Sinai and Broke the Legalist's Measuring Stick

Abraham lived centuries before Moses received the law. Galatians 3:17 states that "the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul" the covenant previously confirmed by God. The law did not arrive at Sinai, travel backward through time, and become the basis of Abraham's righteous standing. Abraham could not keep a Mosaic code that had not yet been given to Israel. He could not serve under a Levitical priesthood that did not yet exist, offer sacrifices at a tabernacle not yet built, or observe statutes belonging to a nation not yet formed. Paul chooses Abraham precisely because the legalist cannot bury him beneath Sinai. God counted him righteous before the thunder, smoke, tables of stone, Aaronic garments, ceremonial washings, and national ordinances ever appeared.

Galatians 3:18 says, "For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise." Law and promise operate upon different principles. Law says, "Do this and receive what obedience earns." Promise says, "Believe the One who has pledged what He will perform." The law is holy, just, and good, but it cannot give fallen flesh the power to meet its demands. Galatians 3:21 says, "if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law." The defect was never in God's law; it was in man's flesh. A straight ruler does not make a crooked board straight by exposing every bend. The law revealed sin, condemned transgression, and served its appointed purpose, but it could not impart life. Abraham's account had already demonstrated that righteousness must come from God by faith.

Rightly dividing the word also prevents us from treating every biblical arrangement as interchangeable. Abraham received promises concerning land, seed, nationhood, kings, and worldwide blessing. Israel later received the law as a national covenant. The Church, the body of Christ, was a mystery later revealed through Paul and is not spiritual Israel wearing Gentile clothing. Yet the legalist grabs commandments from Israel's covenant, signs from Abraham's covenant, warnings from tribulation passages, and language from the gospel of the kingdom, mixes them in a theological cement truck, and pours the whole mess over Paul's gospel of grace. The apostle will not permit it. Under the present dispensation, salvation is "by grace...through faith," "not of works, lest any man should

boast.” Paul does not steal Israel’s promises when he cites Abraham; he proves that righteousness was never earned by fallen flesh.

Chapter Seven — Abraham’s Faith Pointed Beyond Abraham

Galatians 3:8 says, “the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed.” This gospel announced beforehand was the good news of worldwide blessing through Abraham’s line. It pointed toward Christ, but Abraham was not handed a printed copy of Romans and 1 Corinthians beneath the stars. The mystery of the body of Christ remained hidden until revealed through Paul. The death, burial, and resurrection of Christ now stand as the completed historical content of the gospel by which sinners are saved. First Corinthians 15:3–4 declares “that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day.” We should neither rob Abraham of the light God gave him nor pretend he possessed revelation God had not yet disclosed. Faith believes what God has said; it does not pretend God said everything at once.

Abraham’s life also exposes the difference between faith receiving a promise and flesh attempting to help fulfill it. After Genesis 15, Sarah proposed Hagar, Abraham consented, and Ishmael was born. God had promised a son, but the flesh opened a planning department and decided heaven needed administrative assistance. Galatians 4 later uses Hagar and Sarah to illustrate bondage and promise. Ishmael came through human arrangement; Isaac came through divine power. The lesson reaches straight into every works-based religion. Flesh hears God promise righteousness through faith and immediately offers to contribute ceremonies, achievements, penance, endurance, and moral credentials. It builds an Ishmael and expects God to name him Isaac. But “the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman.” What flesh produces cannot inherit what grace promises.

James 2 does not contradict Romans 4. Paul points to Genesis 15, where Abraham believed God and righteousness was counted to him. James points to Genesis 22, years later, where Abraham offered Isaac and demonstrated the reality and maturity of his faith. Paul addresses justification before God apart from works; James confronts a dead profession that produces no evidence before men. James repeatedly speaks of what may be seen: “shew me thy faith,” and “seest thou how faith wrought with his works.” Abraham was not first counted righteous on Mount Moriah, or Genesis 15:6 becomes a divine bookkeeping error waiting decades for correction. His offering of Isaac vindicated outwardly the faith God had already counted. Works did not plant the root of

righteousness; they displayed its fruit. A tree is not alive because somebody ties apples to its branches, but a living apple tree will eventually prove its nature.

Conclusion

Abraham stood beneath the stars with nothing in his hands but the word of God in his ears. His body could not produce the promise, Sarah's womb could not carry it by natural strength, Eliezer could not substitute for it, Hagar could not manufacture its true fulfillment, circumcision could not purchase it, and the law arriving centuries later could not rewrite its terms. God promised; Abraham believed; God counted. That order is the backbone of the passage. Heaven did not examine Abraham's works and discover an unpaid wage. It reckoned righteousness to a man who trusted the Lord. Abraham's faith did not make God faithful. It rested upon the faithfulness already belonging to God. The stars above him were not motivational decorations. They were visible witnesses that the God who numbers and names the host of heaven could perform one impossible promise in an old man's house.

Religious man still arrives carrying his timecard. He wants God to inspect the hours he spent in church, the ceremonies he received, the habits he restrained, the money he donated, the prayers he repeated, the suffering he endured, or the tradition he defended. He may call the entire arrangement grace, but if the reward is paid because of his performance, Romans 4 calls it debt. God will owe no sinner eternal life. Salvation is "the gift of God." The worker receives wages because an employer is obligated; the believer receives righteousness because God is gracious. The first arrangement gives man something to boast about. The second leaves him praising the Giver. Grace is not God helping good men finish climbing. It is God justifying ungodly men who have finally stopped presenting their blisters as payment.

Today the sinner is not asked to believe that his physical descendants will become as the stars. He is commanded to believe the gospel of Jesus Christ. The promised Seed has come. He lived without sin, died for our sins, was buried, rose again, and now offers justification freely to every sinner who believes. The cross has been raised, the blood has been shed, the tomb has been emptied, and the full price has been paid. Faith adds nothing to that work because nothing can be added. It simply receives Christ. Abraham believed God, and heaven entered the credit. The same God still justifies the ungodly—not those who bring Him wages, but those who abandon every boast and believe on His Son. Faith is not man making a generous contribution to salvation. Faith is the confession that God has done what man never could.

4 of 10 Imputed Righteousness — David's Blessed Man With No Sin Left on the Ledger

Key Passage: Psalm 32:1–5; Romans 4:5–8

“Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile. When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah. I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah.”

—Psalm 32:1–5

“But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.”

—Romans 4:5–8

Introduction

David knew what it meant to have a record that could not survive an honest reading. He was not a harmless religious gentleman who occasionally misplaced his temper or forgot to say grace before supper. He committed adultery with Bathsheba, deceived her husband, manipulated military orders, arranged Uriah's death, and then attempted to settle back onto the throne as though a royal robe could cover what God had already seen. Second Samuel 11 records the collapse in language too plain for a public-relations office to deodorize. David saw, desired, took, concealed, plotted, and killed. The man who had faced Goliath with a sling became afraid to face the truth without an excuse. Sin can turn a lion into a lizard in one afternoon. The sweet psalmist of Israel wrote no song while he was hiding Uriah's blood beneath the palace carpet. His harp was silent because hypocrisy had tied knots in every string.

Yet this guilty king became the inspired witness Paul summoned in Romans 4 to describe “the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works.” Paul had already called Abraham to the stand. Abraham testified that faith was counted for righteousness before circumcision and centuries before the law. Then Paul called David—a circumcised man living under the Mosaic law, a king responsible to know that law, and a sinner whose crimes stood exposed beneath it. David did not testify that he repaired his record through enough good deeds. He did not claim his victory over Goliath balanced his adultery, his psalms offset his deception, or his former faithfulness cancelled Uriah's

blood. Heaven does not operate a scale where a murdered man can be outweighed by several hymns and a building donation. David spoke of forgiveness, covering, and non-imputation. His blessing rested not in a flattering evaluation of his character but in what God did with his guilt.

Psalms 32 and Romans 4 therefore bring us into the courtroom where grace performs no cosmetic tricks. God does not pretend the sin never happened, call adultery a complicated relationship, rename murder an administrative failure, or flatter David as a basically good man navigating an unfortunate season. God judged the sin truthfully, confronted the sinner directly, forgave the confessed iniquity, and still imposed severe earthly consequences. Forgiveness was not fiction, and grace was not senility in the Judge. The righteous basis upon which God could put away David's sin would be displayed fully at Calvary, where Jesus Christ bore the guilt of sinners and satisfied the demands of justice. David looked forward through shadows and promise; Paul looked back through the blood and resurrection of Christ. The ledger was not cleaned because David's sin was small. It was cleaned because God's grace was greater.

Chapter One — The King's Record Could Not Survive the Light

Second Samuel 11 begins with David remaining at Jerusalem "at the time when kings go forth to battle." The chapter does not teach that every moment of rest is sinful, but it certainly shows how quickly neglected duty can provide an upholstered chair for temptation. David rose from his bed, walked upon the roof, saw Bathsheba washing, and desired what belonged to another man. The king who possessed wives and royal privileges coveted the wife of a loyal soldier. Sin is never satisfied by abundance because sin is not hunger for what is needed; it is rebellion demanding what God has forbidden. David sent messengers, took Bathsheba, and committed adultery. Lust saw a woman; selfishness ignored a husband; power supplied the opportunity; and secrecy promised to sweep up afterward. Sin always advertises the pleasure in bright letters and prints the consequences in ink small enough for the Devil's lawyer to read.

When Bathsheba announced that she was with child, David began constructing a cover-up. He called Uriah home from battle, hoping the soldier would go to his wife and unknowingly provide David with a respectable explanation for the pregnancy. But Uriah possessed more loyalty while deceived than David displayed while crowned. He refused the comforts of home while the ark, Israel, Judah, and his fellow soldiers remained in the field. David then made him drunk, but even intoxication did not move Uriah into the trap. At last David wrote the man's death order and placed it in the man's own hand. Uriah carried the letter that arranged his execution because he trusted the king who had betrayed him. That is sin after

it has put on a necktie and started managing details. Adultery conceived deception; deception recruited drunkenness; drunkenness failed; murder entered the meeting.

The chapter closes with a sentence every hidden sinner should nail above his secret door: “But the thing that David had done displeased the LORD.” Joab followed the orders, Bathsheba mourned, David brought her into his house, the child was born, and public appearances may have settled into an acceptable arrangement. Men saw a king caring for a fallen soldier’s widow. God saw adultery and blood. David could control the military report, palace conversation, wedding announcement, and public explanation, but he could not edit the record in heaven. The sinner’s greatest mistake is believing that silence on earth means ignorance in heaven. Numbers 32:23 says, “be sure your sin will find you out.” Sin does not need a detective; it knows your address. David possessed a throne, army, palace, reputation, and nation, yet not one could bribe the Eye that had watched the rooftop.

Chapter Two — Silence Did Not Heal What Sin Had Broken

Psalms 32:3 says, “When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long.” David’s silence was not innocent quietness. It was the stubborn concealment of acknowledged guilt. He would not confess what God already knew, and the unconfessed burden worked through him like rust beneath polished metal. He still possessed his royal title, but inwardly he was collapsing. The king could order musicians to play, servants to attend, soldiers to march, and officials to report, but he could not command his conscience to become blind. Sin hidden from men still testified inside him. The conscience may be drugged, distracted, trained to use softer vocabulary, and surrounded with noise, but it cannot make the Judge disappear. A man can turn up the music high enough to drown the alarm and still burn with the building.

“For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me.” David did not attribute his distress to poor self-image, unresolved childhood tension, insufficient leisure, or the pressures of executive leadership. The hand of God was heavy upon him. The Lord loved David too much to let him become comfortable beneath a pile of unconfessed blood. Divine conviction is mercy pressing upon a sinner before judgment finishes the conversation. David’s “moisture” was turned “into the drought of summer.” The spiritual life once flowing through his fellowship with God had become dry and barren. Psalm 51 would later reveal the cry beneath that drought: “Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation.” David did not ask God to restore salvation itself, as though eternal life had fallen out of his pocket on the palace roof. He asked for restored joy, a clean heart, and a right spirit. Sin had broken fellowship, silenced praise, and withered usefulness.

The world advises the guilty man to silence the conscience; God commands him to silence the excuses. Men will prescribe distraction, entertainment, self-acceptance, revised definitions, and a support group willing to call darkness a lifestyle. The Bible says, “He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.” There is a wrong covering and a right covering. David tried to cover his sin through deceit, manipulation, and murder; Psalm 32 rejoices that God covered the sin through forgiveness. What man covers remains on the ledger. What God covers is dealt with righteously. The sinner’s cover-up darkens the evidence; God’s covering answers the charge. One is conspiracy; the other is grace. David’s palace carpet could conceal Uriah’s blood from visitors, but only God could remove the guilt from David’s account.

Chapter Three — Nathan Tore the Royal Cover Off

Second Samuel 12 opens with five words that destroyed David’s carefully managed illusion: “And the LORD sent Nathan.” God did not lose David’s address because the king moved behind palace walls. Nathan entered with a story about a rich man who possessed many flocks yet stole a poor man’s single cherished lamb. David’s anger kindled against the offender, and he pronounced judgment with the confidence of a ruler who had temporarily forgotten that the evidence was pointed at him. Sin makes a man severe toward another person’s reflection while remaining tender toward the monster standing behind his own eyes. David could condemn theft in a parable while excusing adultery and murder in the palace. Then Nathan delivered the sentence that removed every royal curtain: “Thou art the man.”

Nathan did not tell David that he was merely experiencing inconsistency between his values and behavior. He named the rebellion against God. The Lord had anointed David, delivered him from Saul, given him the kingdom, and supplied abundance. “Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in his sight?” David’s sin was not merely against Bathsheba, Uriah, Joab, the army, or the nation, although all were affected. It was a despising of God’s commandment. Psalm 51:4 says, “Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight.” David did not deny the human victims. He recognized that every sin reaches its highest treason against the God whose law was violated. The modern man measures evil by social damage alone because removing God from the courtroom lets him rewrite the criminal code.

David finally answered, “I have sinned against the LORD.” The confession was brief because truth does not need the padding excuses require. Saul had once confessed, “I have sinned,” but immediately began explaining the people, the pressure, and his desire to retain honor. David’s confession in Second Samuel 12 and Psalm 51 contained no transfer of blame to Bathsheba, palace life, loneliness, Joab, Uriah, or the burdens of being king. He

did not appeal to his past victories or remind Nathan how many psalms he had written. He owned the sin. Confession does not inform God of something He missed; it brings the sinner's testimony into agreement with God's record. First John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." Confession is not negotiating the charge downward. It is finally calling the thing what God called it.

Chapter Four — The Lord Put Away What David Could Not Repair

Nathan replied, "The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die." Under the Mosaic law, adultery and murder carried death. David could not offer an animal sacrifice specifically prescribed to erase deliberate murder and adultery, stroll around the altar, and return home with a ceremonial receipt. Psalm 51:16 acknowledges, "For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it." David knew a slaughtered animal offered as a ritual payment would not settle the high-handed crimes he had committed. His appeal rested upon the mercy of God: "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness." The king who could pay soldiers, servants, craftsmen, and officers possessed no currency for this debt. Mercy was not one option among several. It was the only door left standing.

"The LORD also hath put away thy sin." David did not put it away through penance, public relations, military achievement, future generosity, or a heroic promise never to fail again. God put it away. The wording places the action where it belongs. Human religion forever sends the guilty man into a repair shop with instructions to rebuild his record. God's grace announces that only God can deal with guilt before God. David could confess, repent, and cast himself upon mercy, but he could not manufacture the judicial ground upon which a holy God forgave him. Romans 3:25 later explains that God set forth Christ as a propitiation "for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God." The cross provided the righteous basis for God's dealings with believers before Calvary as well as after it. David's forgiveness was not divine carelessness awaiting correction. It rested prospectively upon the blood Christ would shed.

God's putting away of sin did not mean God rewrote history and declared that Uriah had never died. Forgiveness is not the denial of facts. Nor did it mean every earthly consequence disappeared. Nathan immediately announced that the sword would not depart from David's house, evil would rise against him, and the child born from the adulterous union would die. The same mouth declared pardon and chastening. This distinction must be kept straight. The sin was put away judicially so David would not die beneath its legal sentence, but God's governmental dealings continued. Grace cancelled condemnation; it did not make sowing and reaping a nursery tale. Forgiveness removes the guilt that sends a man to judgment; it does not always remove scars, broken trust, damaged homes, lost opportunities, or the crop grown from wicked seed.

Chapter Five — David Described a Righteousness Without Works

Romans 4:6 says, “Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works.” Paul does not claim David earned righteousness by writing Psalm 32. He says David described the blessedness of righteousness imputed “without works.” That phrase does not leave room for one ceremonial work, one moral work, one charitable work, or one final work of perseverance inserted through a theological side door. “Without works” means works do not form the ground, price, cause, or cooperative instrument of justification. Works belong in the saved life as the fruit of salvation and the proper service of one already accepted. They do not enter the courtroom carrying payment. The legalist can contribute as many works as the phrase “without works” permits, which is exactly none.

David was an especially devastating witness because he possessed works a religious man would love to present. He had trusted God against Goliath, spared Saul when revenge was within reach, honored the Lord’s anointed, led Israel, defeated enemies, recovered the ark, written inspired psalms, and desired to build a house for God. If earlier merit could be stored like credit in a religious bank, David should have had enough to cover one dark season. But good works cannot be transferred backward to erase evil works. One act of obedience cannot make murder innocent. A faithful morning cannot purchase permission for an adulterous evening. God does not grade eternal righteousness on a curve or average holiness and wickedness until the sinner squeaks past with a seventy. James 2:10 declares that the man who keeps the whole law yet offends in one point “is guilty of all.”

David therefore described blessedness, not compensation. A paycheck is not a blessing bestowed upon the undeserving; it is a debt paid to the worker. Romans 4:4 says, “to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.” David was not congratulated for having offset his crimes. He was forgiven. His iniquities were not balanced; they were pardoned. His sins were not minimized; they were covered. His account was not improved by religious deposits; sin was not imputed to it. Every word removes human achievement and magnifies divine action. Religion crowns the worker; grace blesses the guilty. Religion builds a staircase and charges admission; grace finds the cripple at the bottom and carries him through the door.

Chapter Six — Forgiven, Covered, and Not Imputed

“Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven.” To forgive carries the thought of release from the burden or removal of the charge. David had carried guilt beneath the heavy hand of God until confession opened the matter honestly. Forgiveness lifted what he could not move. The word “iniquities” reminds us that grace does not deal merely with accidental

slips. Iniquity is crookedness, perversity, and departure from the right path. God forgives real evil committed by real sinners. He does not wait until the guilty man renames iniquity a harmless preference. A doctor cannot treat the disease the patient insists on calling good health, and a sinner will not value pardon while he keeps admiring the crime.

“Whose sins are covered.” This covering is not David’s cover-up. God did not conceal evidence from Himself or place a curtain over an unpaid account. Under the Old Testament economy, the sacrificial system pointed toward the final offering of Christ. Hebrews 10:4 says, “it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.” Animal blood could never possess the value of the sinless Son of God’s blood. The types awaited their fulfillment. When Christ came, He “put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.” David’s sin was covered within God’s merciful administration because the Lamb of God would ultimately answer it. The cross did not persuade God to forget His standards. It fulfilled them. Calvary is where covering ceases to look like leniency and stands revealed as justice satisfied.

“Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.” This is the ledger’s decisive entry. To impute is to reckon, charge, or place to an account. The sin existed; David committed it; God condemned it; consequences followed it. Yet God did not hold the forgiven man beneath its eternal charge. Paul places that statement beside righteousness imputed without works. The negative and positive stand together: sin is not charged, and righteousness is credited. The believer in the present dispensation possesses the full revelation of this exchange in Christ. Second Corinthians 5:21 says Christ was made sin for us “that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” The sin charged to Christ is not charged again to the believer. God does not collect the same debt from the Substitute and the saved sinner.

Chapter Seven — No Condemnation Does Not Mean No Consequences

David’s life after forgiveness proves that non-imputation is not permission to treat sin lightly. The sword entered his house. Amnon violated Tamar, Absalom murdered Amnon, rebellion divided the kingdom, David fled Jerusalem, and family sorrow followed him like a long funeral procession. God forgave David, but David still harvested a bitter crop. Galatians 6:7 warns believers, “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.” Grace cancels hell; it does not guarantee that drunkenness will preserve a liver, adultery will preserve a marriage, dishonesty will preserve trust, or recklessness will preserve opportunity. Eternal security is not eternal exemption from consequences. The saved fool may go to heaven earlier than expected and arrive with smoke on his coat.

For the Church, the body of Christ, Romans 8:1 declares, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." The believer's judicial standing is settled because he is in Christ. Colossians 2:13 says God has forgiven believers "all trespasses." Ephesians 1:7 says, "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." Yet that same saved believer may grieve the Holy Spirit, lose fellowship, damage his testimony, endure chastening, and suffer loss at the judgment seat of Christ. First Corinthians 3 describes a man saved "yet so as by fire" after his worthless work is burned. Salvation remains because Christ secured it; reward can be lost because service must be judged. The family relationship stands, but the Father still reaches for the rod.

First John 1:9 therefore concerns honest fellowship, not repeated judicial rebirth. When the believer confesses sin, God is "faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." He does not become a son again every time he confesses, any more than a disobedient child must be physically reborn after every offence against his father. The relationship rests upon birth; fellowship requires light and honesty. David's misery while silent and restoration after confession illustrate the spiritual damage of hiding sin even when God's covenant mercy remains. Grace never teaches a believer to wink at the very sins that nailed his Saviour to the cross. The man who uses non-imputation as a pillow for rebellion has misunderstood both the cost of grace and the holiness of the One who supplied it.

Conclusion

David's record should have silenced every boast he might have carried before God. Adultery stood on one page, deception on another, conspiracy beneath it, and Uriah's blood ran through the whole account. David could not erase the entries, rewrite the history, offer an adequate sacrifice, or compensate the dead. When Nathan said, "Thou art the man," the king had nowhere left to hide. Yet when David confessed, Nathan said, "The LORD also hath put away thy sin." Psalm 32 then described the blessing: transgression forgiven, sin covered, iniquity not imputed. David was not blessed because his wickedness had been minor. He was blessed because God's mercy had been mighty.

Paul carried David's testimony into Romans 4 and placed it beside Abraham's. Abraham proved righteousness was counted by faith before circumcision and before the law. David proved that a circumcised man under the law, guilty of crimes his works could never repair, still depended upon righteousness imputed without works. Together they stand like two witnesses at the funeral of human merit. One believed a promise under the stars; the other confessed blood beneath a crown. Neither presented wages. Both magnified the God who reckons righteousness by faith. The legalist may arrive with a cleaner public record than

David, but he still lacks the perfection of Jesus Christ. Heaven is not entered by possessing fewer scandals than a guilty king. It is entered by possessing the righteousness of Another.

The believer's confidence therefore rests neither in a flawless past nor in an unbroken future performance. It rests in Christ, who bore sin and supplies righteousness. God does not pretend the believer never sinned; He points to the cross where that sin was judged. He does not merely postpone condemnation until the believer's next failure; He declares that there is "now no condemnation" to those in Christ Jesus. The saved man should confess sin, forsake sin, hate sin, and accept God's chastening, but he must never imagine that his tears pay what Christ's blood left unpaid. David's blessing belongs to the man whose ledger has been settled by grace. When Christ's righteousness is entered, no religious résumé can improve the account, and no forgiven sin can reverse the verdict.

5 of 10 Imputed Righteousness — God's Courtroom Has No Wage Window for the Ungodly

Key Passage: Romans 3:19–28

"Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: 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; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law."

Introduction

God's courtroom has no wage window for the ungodly. There is no polished counter where a sinner slides forward a stack of baptismal certificates, charitable receipts, church attendance records, sacramental credentials, moral improvements, and religious achievements while an angel calculates whether the pile is high enough to purchase

eternal life. There is no heavenly clerk stamping “JUSTIFIED” upon the account because the defendant accumulated sufficient hours of respectable behavior. The ungodly man possesses no wages with which to purchase righteousness. What he has earned is death: “For the wages of sin is death.” What God offers is a gift: “but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Religion stays in business by confusing those two lines. It takes what God calls a gift, sets up a tollbooth in front of it, and announces that the traveler must pay an institutional fee before receiving what Christ purchased with His blood. Paul walks into that marketplace with Romans 3–5 in one hand, Galatians 2–3 in the other, and kicks the cash register into the street.

Justification is not a gradual religious improvement program in which God watches a sinner become progressively less offensive until He finally decides to accept him. It is a judicial declaration. God, acting as Judge, declares the believing sinner righteous upon the ground of Jesus Christ’s finished work. Practical sanctification involves growth, obedience, correction, struggle, maturity, and increasing conformity to God’s word. Glorification awaits the day when the believer is delivered from the presence of sin and fashioned like Christ’s glorious body. But justification is neither the growth of sanctification nor the future completion of glorification. It is the present verdict God pronounces when an ungodly sinner believes on Jesus Christ. Romans 5:1 does not say, “Therefore being gradually improved by religious effort, we may eventually hope for peace with God.” It says, “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” The Judge does not place the believer on probation while heaven waits to see whether Christ’s righteousness will hold. The verdict rests upon Christ, not the defendant’s future record.

That doctrine is too clean for ecclesiastical machinery. Religious systems prefer a foggy salvation because fog makes room for toll collectors. If the sinner is justified fully and immediately by faith in Christ, what becomes of the priest who claims to dispense saving grace, the institution that claims to control admission, the ceremony marketed as a spiritual payment, or the legalist who has spent forty years polishing his halo? Paul answers by excluding boasting. The cross leaves no corner where human merit may set up a souvenir stand. Christ paid the price, Christ shed the blood, Christ satisfied justice, Christ rose from the dead, and God justifies the man who believes in Christ. Grace is not God contributing the largest share while the sinner supplies the closing costs. Salvation is either entirely of grace or it is a wage, and Romans 11:6 refuses to let men mix the two: “if it be of works, then is it no more grace.”

Chapter One — The Law Stops Every Mouth Before the Judge

Romans 3:19 declares the purpose of the law's testimony: "that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God." The natural man enters God's courtroom talking. He has an explanation for every offence, an excuse for every failure, a comparison for every shortcoming, and a relative more wicked than himself waiting to be introduced as supporting evidence. He blames his environment, temperament, upbringing, pressures, disappointments, opportunities, temptations, companions, and occasionally God Himself. Adam blamed the woman God gave him; Eve blamed the serpent; their descendants have been expanding the department of excuses ever since. Then the law speaks. One by one the sinner's defenses collapse until every mouth is stopped. The law was not given to help a criminal deliver a more persuasive closing argument. It was given to silence him.

"All the world" becomes guilty. The pagan in Romans 1 is guilty beneath the revelation of creation and the truth he suppresses. The moralist in Romans 2 is guilty because he condemns in others what he practices himself. The Jew possessing the oracles of God is guilty because hearing the law cannot substitute for keeping it. Romans 3 gathers the entire human race beneath the charge: "There is none righteous, no, not one." The indictment reaches understanding, seeking, conduct, speech, violence, direction, peace, and fear. Throats become open sepulchres, tongues practice deceit, lips conceal poison, mouths fill with cursing, feet hurry toward destruction, and eyes lose the fear of God. Man's corruption is not a scratch on one religious fender. The whole vehicle is wrapped around Adam's tree.

The standard is not whether one sinner appears cleaner than another. Romans 3:23 says, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." God's glory is the measure. A man may jump farther than his neighbor and still fail to cross the canyon. The respectable church member may land several feet beyond the public drunk, but both disappear into the same gulf if the standard is the glory of God. Human comparison is the preferred mathematics of self-righteousness because it permits a sinner to choose the lowest denominator available. God compares man with divine holiness, not the fellow living three houses down. Once that standard enters the courtroom, the moral exhibition closes. The cleanest sinner in Adam still comes short.

Chapter Two — The Law Diagnoses Sin but Cannot Justify Flesh

"Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight." Paul does not say that few will be justified by the law, that justification by law is difficult, or that only unusually disciplined people will accomplish it. He says "no flesh." The exclusion covers disciplined flesh, religious flesh, educated flesh, circumcised flesh, baptized flesh, charitable flesh, conservative flesh, and flesh wearing a collar backward. God's problem is not that men have selected the wrong variety of flesh. "In my flesh," Paul says, "dwelleth no

good thing.” The law can command flesh, condemn flesh, and expose flesh, but it cannot place divine life inside flesh. A mirror can reveal dirt on a face; it cannot climb off the wall and wash the face.

“For by the law is the knowledge of sin.” The law identifies the disease but does not become the cure. Romans 7:7 says, “I had not known sin, but by the law.” The commandment “Thou shalt not covet” entered the hidden chambers where public respectability could not follow. A man may avoid murder while cherishing hatred, avoid adultery while feeding lust, avoid theft while worshipping covetousness, and avoid public scandal while enthroning himself against God. The law reaches motive as well as action and reveals that sin is not merely what man does with his hands. It is what he loves in his heart. The law turns on the light. The cockroaches were already in the kitchen.

Galatians 3:21 asks, “Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid.” The fault is not in the law. It is “holy, and just, and good.” The fault lies in fallen man, who cannot produce life or righteousness through it. “For if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law.” If God could have saved sinners by issuing another commandment, Calvary would have been unnecessary. If moral instruction could regenerate Adam’s descendants, Moses would have saved the world with two tables of stone. But the law cannot give life. It is a perfect yardstick laid beside a crooked man. Breaking the yardstick will not straighten him, and keeping it beside his bed will not impart righteousness.

Chapter Three — God Supplied a Righteousness Outside the Sinner

Romans 3:21 announces the great turn: “But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested.” Those two words—“But now”—open a door no human effort could unlock. The law has spoken, mouths have stopped, the world has become guilty, and no flesh can be justified by deeds. Then God manifests righteousness apart from the law as a method of human attainment. This righteousness was “witnessed by the law and the prophets,” for the Old Testament pointed toward Christ through promise, type, sacrifice, and prophecy. Yet the righteousness is now manifested in the light of Christ’s completed work and Paul’s inspired explanation. God did not discover a way to lower His righteousness. He supplied His righteousness to people who had none.

Verse 22 identifies it as “the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe.” The righteousness originates with God, rests upon the faithfulness and finished work of Jesus Christ, is offered unto all, and comes upon all who believe. “There is no difference” because all have sinned. The Jew cannot purchase it with covenant ancestry; the Gentile cannot excuse himself through ignorance; the moralist

cannot earn it through restraint; the ceremonialist cannot administer it through ritual. The same righteousness comes upon every believer because every believer requires the same Christ. God does not maintain a bargain rack of lesser righteousness for ordinary sinners and a premium garment for religious professionals. Every saved man wears the perfection of Another.

Philippians 3:9 gives Paul's personal testimony: "And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law." Paul possessed circumcision, Hebrew ancestry, tribal identity, Pharisaic training, zeal, and an outward record he once called blameless. Yet when Christ appeared, Paul threw his religious medals into the rubbish pile. He desired "that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." Paul did not ask God to place Christ's righteousness beside his own and compare tailoring. He abandoned his own righteousness as a ground of acceptance. A man cannot wear Christ's garment while insisting on keeping one sleeve from Adam's wardrobe.

Chapter Four — The Cross Made God Both Just and Justifier

Romans 3:24 says believers are "justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." "Freely" means without payment from the recipient. "By his grace" identifies the source. "Through the redemption" identifies a price paid by another. "In Christ Jesus" identifies the only location where that redemption is possessed. Grace is free, but redemption was not cheap. The sinner contributes no purchase price because Christ paid it in blood. First Peter 1:18–19 says we were not redeemed with corruptible things such as silver and gold, "but with the precious blood of Christ." Heaven's gift is free to the believer because Calvary's cost was borne by the Son of God.

God set forth Christ "to be a propitiation through faith in his blood." Propitiation means God's righteous demands against sin were satisfied. Divine justice did not receive a partial installment followed by a promise that the sinner would continue making payments through church attendance. Christ bore the judgment, shed the blood, died, was buried, and rose again. When He cried, "It is finished," He did not leave an unpaid balance for a priest, sacrament, or moralist to collect. Hebrews 10:12 says, "this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God." A seated High Priest and a finished sacrifice leave no altar open for religious reconstruction.

The cross enables God to remain "just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." God does not justify sinners by pretending sin is harmless. He justifies them because sin has been judged in the Substitute. Mercy does not mug justice behind the courthouse. Mercy satisfies justice at Calvary and then opens the prison door righteously. If God simply ignored sin, He would cease to be just. If He condemned every sinner without providing a

Substitute, none would be saved. At the cross, holiness demanded payment, love supplied the Lamb, justice accepted the sacrifice, and grace offers the resulting righteousness to faith.

Chapter Five — Justification Is a Verdict, Not a Religious Probation

Romans 5:1 says, “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” “Being justified” describes a settled standing, and “we have peace” describes a present possession. The verse does not place the believer in a waiting room while God reviews his future performance. The believing sinner moves immediately from condemnation to justification. John 5:24 says he “hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.” Those verbs do not describe a slow climb up an ecclesiastical staircase. Everlasting life is possessed, condemnation is escaped, and the passage from death to life has occurred.

Justification must not be confused with practical sanctification. The justified believer still requires growth, discipline, correction, instruction, confession, and daily submission to the word of God. He may behave inconsistently with his perfect standing and suffer chastening, damaged fellowship, lost testimony, earthly consequences, and loss of reward. But his failures do not cause God to reopen the justification trial. Christ does not return repeatedly to the cross every time a Christian stumbles. Romans 8:33 asks, “Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth.” The Judge who pronounced the verdict already knew the defendant’s entire history.

Glorification is future, but justification is present. Romans 8:30 links God’s purpose so securely that Paul writes, “whom he justified, them he also glorified.” The future completion is spoken of with the certainty of an accomplished act because God’s purpose cannot be defeated. The believer’s body still awaits redemption, but his standing in Christ is not hanging from the thread of human performance. Religion puts the sinner on probation because probation keeps him dependent upon the institution. Grace puts him in Christ because Christ keeps him by divine power. The difference is the distance between a prisoner awaiting sentence and a son awaiting inheritance.

Chapter Six — Sacraments and Ceremonies Cannot Collect Christ’s Payment Twice

Water baptism is an important act of obedience and public identification for the believer, but it cannot justify the ungodly. Paul said, “Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel.” If baptism were the instrument by which sinners entered justification, Paul’s statement in 1 Corinthians 1:17 would be unthinkable. The gospel by which sinners are saved is Christ’s death for our sins, His burial, and His resurrection according to the Scriptures. Baptism pictures that gospel; it does not add blood to it. Water can wash dirt

from the flesh, but it cannot place the righteousness of God upon the soul. The thief beside Christ entered paradise without touching a baptismal pool because the Saviour, not the water, opened the door.

The Lord's supper is a remembrance, not a repeated sacrifice. Christ said, "this do in remembrance of me." The bread and cup proclaim the Lord's death until He comes; they do not drag Him repeatedly from the Father's right hand and place Him again upon an altar. Hebrews 10:14 says, "For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." One offering. Perfected forever. Religion sees those words and immediately begins constructing a weekly mechanism to improve what God calls perfect. It is astonishing how much theology is required to make "one" mean repeated and "for ever" mean until the next ceremony.

Church membership, charitable giving, moral reform, prayer, Bible reading, and Christian service all have proper places, but none belongs in the purchase price of justification. A believer should assemble, give, pray, study, serve, and walk uprightly because he is saved, not in order to persuade God to save him. Galatians 2:16 repeats three times that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ. Paul repeats it because religious flesh keeps crawling back to the wage window after God has closed it. Works are evidence of living faith and material for judgment of service; they are not currency at the throne of grace.

Chapter Seven — Adding Works Does Not Improve Grace; It Destroys Its Principle

Galatians was written because men followed Paul's preaching with a religious amendment. They did not necessarily deny Christ outright; they added circumcision and law-keeping as requirements. The Devil's most effective counterfeit often keeps Christ's name on the sign while removing the sufficiency of His work from the contract. Paul answered, "if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain." He did not say works make Christ's death slightly less efficient. If righteousness can come through law, Christ's death becomes unnecessary. A single human work added as a condition of justification does not decorate grace. It denies that grace is enough.

Galatians 3:3 asks, "Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?" Flesh cannot finish what the Spirit began. The same inability that prevented the sinner from justifying himself also prevents him from maintaining justification through personal merit. The believer should persevere in obedience, but his security rests upon God's faithfulness, Christ's intercession, the Spirit's sealing, and the completed work of redemption. Ephesians 1:13-14 says believers are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise

“which is the earnest of our inheritance.” God does not place His earnest in the believer and then lose the transaction because the believer has a bad week.

Galatians 5:4 warns those seeking justification by law: “Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.” Paul is not teaching that a saved man falls in and out of eternal life every time he struggles. He is warning that justification by law abandons the operating principle of grace. Christ becomes of no saving effect to the man who insists upon establishing his own righteousness instead of receiving God’s. Romans 10:3 describes Israel’s tragedy: “going about to establish their own righteousness,” they did not submit to the righteousness of God. Self-righteousness does not merely fail to help salvation. It stands in rebellion against the righteousness God offers.

Conclusion

God’s courtroom begins with every mouth stopped and the whole world guilty. The law reads the charges, exposes the heart, and removes every excuse. No flesh is justified by its deeds because no flesh meets the glory of God. The pagan, moralist, Jew, Gentile, church member, philanthropist, and religious official arrive through different doors but stand beneath the same indictment. One may carry idols, another commandments, another certificates, and another a polished reputation. None carries righteousness equal to God’s standard. The law can tell the defendant why he is guilty; it cannot provide the verdict he needs.

Then the gospel announces righteousness from God, redemption in Christ, propitiation through His blood, and justification by faith. Christ answered the law, bore sin, paid the price, rose again, and now stands as the sole ground upon which God justifies the ungodly. The sinner is not asked to assist Christ, improve Christ, complete Christ, repeat Christ, or add something to Christ. He is commanded to believe on Him. “To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly,” faith is counted for righteousness. The empty hand receives what the pierced hands purchased.

There is no wage window in heaven for the ungodly because sinners have no righteous wages to collect. The wages they earned are death; the life they need is a gift. Any church, teacher, priest, preacher, ordinance, or system that adds human merit to Christ’s finished work has built an unauthorized tollbooth in front of the cross. Drive past it. God justifies freely by grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. The verdict is immediate, the righteousness is divine, the peace is present, and the glory belongs entirely to God. Salvation is not God rewarding a successful religious worker. It is God declaring an ungodly believer righteous because Jesus Christ did all the work.

6 of 10 Imputed Righteousness — Heaven Will Not Accept Your Homemade Suit

Key Passage: Isaiah 64:6; Philippians 3:4–9

“But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.”

—Isaiah 64:6

“Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss 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.”

—Philippians 3:4–9

Introduction

Religious man has been sewing since Eden. The moment Adam and Eve sinned, “the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.” There is the first denominational sewing circle in human history: guilty people with opened eyes, awakened shame, no blood, no sacrifice, and a homemade covering assembled from the vegetation God had created. They did not deny that something was wrong. They simply assumed they could repair it themselves. That is religion in its original pattern. Man sins, conscience speaks, shame enters, and flesh opens a tailor shop. The material changes from fig leaves to sacraments, morality, philosophy, charity, tradition, education, respectability, and church membership, but the needle is still in Adam’s hand. Man does not want God to clothe him because that would require admitting he is naked. He wants God to admire the apron.

Isaiah 64:6 does not say merely that man’s wickedness is filthy. Everybody expects murder, adultery, theft, blasphemy, and cruelty to smell bad. The verse reaches into the display cabinet where religious man keeps his finest accomplishments and says, “all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.” Not some righteousnesses. Not the careless, insincere, or second-rate ones. “All our righteousnesses.” These are the deeds man points to when attempting to establish his worth before God. He selects his cleanest moral hour, his most generous gift, his most disciplined habit, his most sincere prayer, and his most respectable public performance. Then he hangs those deeds beneath a light supplied by human

comparison and admires the stitching. God turns on the light of His holiness, and the entire wardrobe changes color. The problem is not that man's righteousness needs professional alteration. God will not accept the fabric.

Paul knew more about religious tailoring than most men who ever strutted through a sanctuary. He possessed birth, bloodline, covenant sign, tribal pedigree, Hebrew culture, Pharisaic training, legal discipline, public zeal, and an outward record that could be called blameless. If human righteousness could dress a sinner for heaven, Paul owned the finest suit in Jerusalem. Then Jesus Christ met him, and the wardrobe became a manure pile. Paul did not say his credentials required minor adjustment. He counted them loss and dung "that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness." The contrast is absolute: his own righteousness or the righteousness of God, flesh or Christ, achievement or faith, homemade clothing or a garment supplied by Another. Salvation does not put a white collar on Adam's fig-leaf apron. It strips the sinner of every claim to merit and clothes him in Christ.

Chapter One — Adam Opened the First Tailor Shop

Genesis 3 reveals the instinct of fallen man before any priesthood, denomination, seminary, cathedral, or religious corporation existed. Adam and Eve sinned against a plain commandment and immediately became conscious of their nakedness. Their first action was not to run toward God and confess. They sewed. Guilt produced religion before it produced honesty. They gathered leaves, arranged a covering, and attempted to make themselves presentable. The apron may have concealed part of their nakedness from each other, but it could not restore innocence, fellowship, spiritual life, or righteousness before God. Human coverings are always designed for horizontal inspection. They work best when the neighbors are standing far enough away.

Then "they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden," and the homemade covering suddenly lost its persuasive power. Adam and Eve hid among the trees. If their aprons had truly solved the problem, they should have stepped forward proudly and invited God to inspect the craftsmanship. Instead, the sound of the Lord's voice exposed what the leaves could not repair. A sinner may feel properly dressed at a banquet of other sinners, but the presence of God changes the dress code. Isaiah cried, "Woe is me! for I am undone" when he saw the Lord high and lifted up. Job said, "I abhor myself" after God answered him. Peter fell before Christ and said, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord." The closer a man comes to God's holiness, the less impressed he becomes with his own tailoring.

Genesis 3:21 says, “Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them.” God replaced man’s covering with a covering He supplied. The text does not describe every detail of the death involved, but skins do not grow on trees and animals do not surrender them through improved farming. Blood was shed, innocence died, and God clothed the guilty. The pattern points forward through Scripture toward the sacrifice of Christ. Man sews leaves; God provides a covering through death. Man’s religion begins with his hands working; God’s redemption begins with an innocent substitute dying. Every works system returns to the fig tree with Adam carrying a sewing basket.

Chapter Two — Isaiah Inspected Israel’s Best Garments

Isaiah 64 is not the testimony of pagans boasting beneath idols. It is a confession arising from people who possessed revelation, covenant history, prophets, ordinances, and the name of the Lord. “But we are all as an unclean thing.” The prophet does not carve out an exemption for the respectable portion of the nation. “We are all.” The uncleanness reached the people collectively and personally. Their iniquities carried them away like wind sweeping a dead leaf from the branch. Man is fond of describing himself as spiritually sturdy, but Isaiah describes him as faded foliage blown down the road by his own sin. The sinner calls himself independent while iniquity drags him like rubbish through an alley.

Then comes the statement religious pride cannot digest: “all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.” Isaiah does not say righteous acts have no proper value in their proper place. Scripture commands justice, mercy, honesty, charity, obedience, and holiness. God rewards faithful service performed by His children through His grace. The issue is righteousnesses offered by unclean people as the basis of acceptance before a holy God. A contaminated source cannot produce a spotless garment. The same hand performing the charitable act belongs to a heart that has broken God’s law, cherished selfish motives, and fallen short of His glory. A criminal cannot erase yesterday’s murder by helping an elderly woman across the street this morning. The good act may truly help the woman, but it does not cancel blood in the courtroom.

“Our righteousnesses” also reveals the ownership problem. They are ours—generated, selected, measured, and presented by fallen man. Philippians 3 later contrasts “mine own righteousness” with “the righteousness which is of God.” Human righteousness carries human fingerprints. It is limited, inconsistent, mixed with pride, weakened by selfish motive, and measured against a convenient standard. God’s righteousness is perfect because God is perfect. A man trying to enter heaven through personal righteousness is attempting to place a homemade patch beside the seamless perfection of Jesus Christ. The patch does not improve the garment. It advertises that the wearer never understood it.

Chapter Three — Human Comparison Keeps the Tailor in Business

Second Corinthians 10:12 describes men “measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves,” and concludes that they “are not wise.” Human comparison is the mirror installed in every self-righteous dressing room. The sinner avoids comparing himself with Jesus Christ because that mirror exposes every stain. Instead, he selects a drunk, criminal, hypocrite, immoral celebrity, dishonest politician, corrupt preacher, or troublesome relative and announces that he is better. Of course he is better by the standard he selected. A man standing in six feet of sewage may boast that his neighbor is submerged beneath eight feet, but neither should advertise his cleanliness.

The Pharisee in Luke 18 prayed “with himself,” thanking God that he was not as other men. His prayer contained religious vocabulary, fasting, tithing, and a carefully selected comparison with the publican. He was not speaking to God so much as reading his résumé aloud where heaven could hear it. The publican stood afar off, refused to lift his eyes, smote his breast, and said, “God be merciful to me a sinner.” Christ said the publican “went down to his house justified rather than the other.” The Pharisee had more material in his religious closet, but the publican knew he was naked. One man displayed his suit; the other begged for mercy. Heaven accepted the beggar and rejected the tailor.

Romans 3:23 destroys comparison by restoring God’s standard: “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” The issue is not whether one sinner comes closer than another. Both come short. A man may be kind without being sinless, sincere without being righteous, charitable without being justified, and religious without possessing eternal life. Cornelius in Acts 10 was devout, feared God, gave alms, prayed always, and possessed a good report, yet God sent Peter to tell him words whereby he would be saved. His virtues did not make the gospel unnecessary. They did not substitute for Christ. Moral qualities may distinguish one man from another before society, but only Christ’s righteousness distinguishes the believer from condemnation before God.

Chapter Four — Paul Wore Religion’s Finest Suit

Paul begins his list in Philippians 3 by saying, “If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more.” He does not attack human righteousness as a man who never possessed any religious advantages. He lays his finest credentials on the table before throwing them away. He was “circumcised the eighth day,” exactly according to covenant requirement. He did not receive the sign late as a proselyte. His family had placed it upon him on schedule. If ceremonies could provide righteousness, Paul possessed the correct ceremony at the correct time under the correct covenantal history. Yet he classified it under “confidence in the flesh.”

He was “of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews.” Paul possessed the right ancestry, nation, tribe, and cultural identity. Benjamin had remained with Judah when the kingdom divided, and Israel’s first king had come from that tribe. Paul’s Hebrew credentials were not the diluted claims of a distant admirer. He belonged to the historic people through whom God had given the law, covenants, promises, and Scriptures. Yet ancestry could not justify him. God’s faithfulness to Israel’s national promises does not turn Jewish blood into a substitute for Christ’s blood. John the Baptist warned men not to say, “We have Abraham to our father,” as though genealogical paperwork could perform regeneration.

“As touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.” Paul had training, affiliation, zeal, discipline, and outward conformity. He was no careless pew warmer who attended twice a year and misplaced his religion between holidays. He was devoted enough to travel, argue, arrest, persecute, and destroy what he thought opposed God. Sincerity did not save him. Zeal did not save him. A clean public record did not save him. He was sincerely wrong, zealously blind, religiously lost, and rushing toward Damascus with official papers in his hand and murder in his heart.

Chapter Five — Christ Turned Paul’s Profits Into Dung

“But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.” Paul had maintained a religious profit column where each credential increased his confidence. Circumcision was gain, pedigree was gain, Pharisaic standing was gain, zeal was gain, and legal respectability was gain. Then Christ appeared, and the accounting system collapsed. What Paul had called assets became liabilities because they had encouraged him to trust flesh and reject the Son of God. Human righteousness is not spiritually neutral when it becomes a substitute for Christ. The very thing a man admires may be the curtain hiding the cross from him. A drunk may know he is ruined; a Pharisee may polish the chain that holds him.

“Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.” Paul’s reckoning was not confined to a moment on the Damascus road. “I counted” becomes “I count.” He continued judging every competing source of confidence as loss beside Christ. The flesh does not retire after salvation. It tries to reopen the old account, retrieve former credentials, and establish a new basis for boasting. Paul kept the books closed. Christ was not merely one superior asset added to the portfolio. Christ replaced the portfolio. When a man possesses the Sun, he does not boast about the candle he surrendered.

Paul says he counted those things “but dung, that I may win Christ.” The Holy Ghost chose a word religious decorators would rather replace with something suitable for embroidered wall art. Dung is refuse, waste, and filth to be discarded, not framed. Paul’s pedigree, ceremonial record, legal discipline, and outward righteousness became dung when offered as a ground of acceptance. The religious man wants Christ to appreciate the fragrance of his accomplishments; Paul says the pile belongs outside. God will not place Christ’s robe over a suit the sinner insists on displaying. The old confidence must be renounced, not accessorized.

Chapter Six — The Believer Must Be Found in Christ

Paul’s desire was to “be found in him.” Salvation does not merely place improved qualities inside Adam; it places the believer in Christ. First Corinthians 1:30 says, “But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.” The believer’s standing is located in a Person. He is accepted “in the beloved,” complete “in him,” and blessed with spiritual blessings “in heavenly places in Christ.” God does not search the believer’s flesh for sufficient righteousness. He sees him joined to the righteous Son of God.

“Not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law.” Paul refuses divided ownership. He does not say, “having Christ’s righteousness reinforced by mine.” Personal righteousness and imputed righteousness cannot share the foundation. If Christ supplies ninety-nine percent and the sinner supplies one percent, that one percent becomes the seed from which boasting grows. Galatians 2:21 says, “if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.” Paul does not say law-righteousness makes Christ’s death less convenient. It makes it vain. If man can contribute the righteousness needed for acceptance, Calvary becomes divine overreaction.

Paul instead seeks “that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.” Christ’s faithfulness, obedience, finished sacrifice, and perfect righteousness supply everything the believer lacks. That righteousness is received by faith, not manufactured by faith. The sinner’s believing does not weave the garment. Faith receives what Christ has already provided. Isaiah 61:10 speaks prophetically of being clothed “with the garments of salvation” and covered “with the robe of righteousness.” God is the Tailor, Christ is the garment, grace supplies it, and faith receives it. The wearer has no stitching to autograph.

Chapter Seven — Grace Clothes the Sinner Before Good Works Begin

Titus 3:5 says, “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us.” Paul does not merely exclude wicked works. He excludes “works of

righteousness.” That phrase closes the respectable entrance through which religious pride usually tries to sneak. Mercy saves because works cannot. The washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost are divine operations, not human payments. The sinner does not regenerate himself, birth himself, seal himself, place himself into Christ, or impute righteousness to his own account. Salvation is not self-improvement with religious music playing in the background. It is a divine rescue.

Ephesians 2:8–10 maintains the order: saved by grace through faith, “not of works, lest any man should boast,” and then “created in Christ Jesus unto good works.” Good works come after salvation as the path prepared for the saved man, not before salvation as the price paid by the lost man. God does not oppose good works; He opposes placing them where only Christ belongs. The same Bible that excludes works from justification commands believers to be “zealous of good works.” Grace does not produce laziness when properly understood. It produces gratitude, service, holiness, and obedience without turning those fruits into counterfeit currency.

At the judgment seat of Christ, the believer’s service will be examined for reward, not his soul retried for eternal life. First Corinthians 3 distinguishes the foundation from the structure built upon it. “Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” Works of gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, and stubble will be tried by fire. A man may suffer loss, “but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.” The garment of righteousness determines acceptance; the believer’s works determine reward. Mixing those judgments turns Christian service into terrified wage labor and salvation into probation. Christ is the foundation beneath the believer before the believer lays one board of service upon it.

Conclusion

Heaven will not accept your homemade suit. It will not accept one stitched from sincerity, morality, family tradition, denominational loyalty, baptism, charity, self-discipline, social respectability, political convictions, theological education, or years of religious activity. Those things may possess proper earthly or Christian value when kept in their assigned places, but none can become the righteousness God demands. Isaiah calls human righteousnesses “filthy rags.” Paul calls his former gains “dung.” Adam’s fig leaves could not survive God’s approach, and your improved fabric will not survive His judgment.

The gospel does not promise to wash Adam’s garment until it becomes Christlike. It announces a complete change of clothing. The sinner’s righteousness is rejected; Christ’s righteousness is imputed. The guilty man is not accepted because God lowers His standard but because Jesus Christ met it. Christ lived the perfection we never produced,

bore the sin we could never remove, shed the blood we could never supply, and rose with the victory we could never win. The believer is found in Him, clothed in Him, accepted in Him, and complete in Him. The garment originated entirely outside the sinner, which is why the sinner cannot boast about one thread.

Stop trying to tailor what God has condemned. Stop holding your religious apron beneath favorable light and comparing it with another sinner's rags. Stand where Paul stood when his profits became dung. Renounce every claim to personal merit and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. God does not place Christ's righteousness upon people who demand recognition for their own. Grace strips the boast before it clothes the believer. Salvation is not God admiring the suit you brought. It is God giving you the righteousness of His Son because nothing in your closet could enter heaven.

7 of 10 Imputed Righteousness — Your Standing Is in Christ Even When Your Walk Gets Mud on It

Key Passage: Colossians 2:6–10; Ephesians 4:1

“As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power.”

—Colossians 2:6–10

“I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called.”

—Ephesians 4:1

Introduction

The believer's standing and the believer's walk are joined, but they are not identical. His standing describes what God has made him in Christ; his walk describes how consistently he lives upon the earth according to that standing. His standing is perfect because Christ is perfect. His walk remains imperfect because he still carries unredeemed flesh through a dirty world. The standing was given the moment he believed the gospel; the walk must be learned, corrected, strengthened, and guarded throughout the Christian life. Confuse those two truths and you will build one of two doctrinal ditches. In the first ditch sits the

legalist, checking his spiritual pulse every fifteen minutes and wondering whether yesterday's failure erased Christ's righteousness. In the second ditch lies the careless professor, waving eternal security like a permission slip while dragging the Saviour's name through mud. One man thinks his walk creates his standing; the other thinks his standing makes his walk irrelevant. Both have lost the road.

The moment a sinner believes on the Lord Jesus Christ, he receives more than an opportunity to begin improving himself. He is justified, redeemed, reconciled, forgiven, regenerated, sealed, accepted in the Beloved, placed into the body of Christ, and made complete in Him. Second Corinthians 5:21 says he is made "the righteousness of God in him." Ephesians 2:6 says God has "raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Colossians 2:10 says, "ye are complete in him." Romans 8:1 says, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." Those are not progress reports. They are divine declarations. God does not say the believer may become partly accepted after six months of steady attendance. He says the believer is accepted, complete, seated, and beyond condemnation because his position is in Christ.

Yet the same epistles that announce that perfect position command believers to walk worthy, put away lying, flee fornication, mortify sinful members, forgive one another, renew the mind, resist the Devil, abstain from evil, and cleanse themselves from filthiness. Scripture never imagines that imputed righteousness makes practical righteousness unnecessary. It establishes the only sound foundation for it. The Christian does not live right to persuade God to accept him; he lives right because God has accepted him in Christ. He does not pursue holiness to remain a son; he pursues holiness because he is a son. Grace does not reduce obedience to a decorative option. It removes obedience from the wage counter and places it inside the family where love, gratitude, testimony, fellowship, chastening, and reward belong.

Chapter One — The Bible Seats the Believer Before It Commands Him to Walk

Ephesians reveals the order clearly. The first three chapters unfold what God has done for the believer: chosen in Christ, accepted in the Beloved, redeemed through His blood, forgiven according to the riches of grace, sealed by the Holy Spirit, made alive, raised together, seated in heavenly places, brought near by the blood, reconciled in one body, and blessed with spiritual blessings. Only after establishing that position does Paul begin chapter 4 with, "I therefore...beseech you that ye walk worthy." The word "therefore" connects the walk to the standing without confusing them. Paul does not say, "Walk worthy so God may decide whether to call you." He says, "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called." The calling came first. The worthy walk follows.

Ephesians 2:6 says God “made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” Sitting speaks of position and completed acceptance. Christ finished redemption and sat down at the Father’s right hand. The believer, joined to Christ, is said to be seated with Him. Yet Ephesians 4–6 repeatedly addresses the walk: “walk not as other Gentiles walk,” “walk in love,” “walk as children of light,” and “walk circumspectly.” The saved man is seated in Christ while walking through this world. His heavenly seat does not become muddy because his earthly shoes do, but the mud on his shoes still matters because he bears Christ’s name. Position does not erase responsibility. It gives responsibility a firm foundation.

Religion reverses the order. It tells the sinner to walk until he earns a seat, climb until he deserves acceptance, behave until God owes him membership in the family, and continue performing lest the chair be removed. The gospel seats the believer in Christ and then commands him to walk like someone who belongs there. A soldier does not march to earn citizenship every morning; he marches because he represents the country to which he already belongs. A son does not obey to acquire biological birth; he obeys because his father’s name is upon him. Christianity is not a treadmill positioned before the door of salvation. It is a new life received freely and then lived responsibly.

Chapter Two — The Believer’s Standing Is Entirely in Christ

Ephesians 1:6 says God has “made us accepted in the beloved.” The believer is not accepted because his temperament became pleasant, his habits became flawless, or his devotional record impressed heaven. He is accepted “in the beloved.” Christ is the ground, location, and measure of that acceptance. The Father is eternally satisfied with His Son, and the believer stands in that satisfied One. If acceptance rested upon daily performance, peace would rise and fall like a thermometer in a drafty room. One good week would produce confidence; one failure would send the Christian back to the courthouse wondering whether the Judge had reversed Himself. But Christ does not fluctuate. “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.”

Colossians 2:10 says, “And ye are complete in him.” Complete does not mean almost finished, conditionally assembled, or waiting for the next sacrament to supply a missing piece. The believer is complete in Christ because “in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.” Nothing can be added to Christ’s sufficiency, and nothing needs to be added to the believer’s standing in Him. Philosophy cannot improve it, human tradition cannot supplement it, religious ordinances cannot finish it, and mystical experiences cannot elevate it. A man cannot become more complete than complete. Religion sees that word and immediately opens a shop selling replacement parts.

Second Corinthians 5:17 says, “if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.” The verse does not say the believer’s flesh has become incapable of sin or that his earthly conduct instantly displays every feature of the new creation. It says his identity and position have changed because he is “in Christ.” First Corinthians 12:13 explains that by one Spirit believers are baptized into one body. This is not water baptism but the spiritual operation by which the Holy Ghost places the believer into Christ’s body. Once placed there, he is joined to the Head and to every other member. Salvation is not Christ moving into Adam’s condemned house as a temporary tenant. It is God taking the believer out of Adam and placing him into Christ.

Chapter Three — The New Standing Does Not Remove the Old Flesh

The believer becomes a new creature, but he does not receive a glorified body at conversion. Romans 7 records the conflict of a man who delights in the law of God after the inward man while discovering “another law” in his members. Paul cries, “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” He does not ask, “Who shall forgive me?” Justification has already been established in Romans 3–5. He asks about deliverance from the body in which sin still operates. The answer reaches through Jesus Christ toward the final redemption of the body. Until then, the saved man possesses a perfect standing while fighting an imperfect state.

Galatians 5:17 says, “For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other.” The presence of conflict does not prove the absence of salvation. In many cases, it proves the presence of new life. Before salvation the flesh may have possessed the house without opposition. After regeneration the Holy Spirit moves in, turns on the lights, opens the cupboards, and begins identifying what the former tenant considered normal. The Christian discovers struggles he never noticed while lost because a corpse does not complain about the undertaker’s work. New life feels the war.

The command is therefore, “Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.” Paul does not say the flesh will disappear if the believer reaches an advanced religious level. He says the believer must refuse its rule. Romans 6 says the old man was crucified with Christ positionally, and the believer must “reckon” himself dead indeed unto sin while yielding his members unto God. Reckoning does not make the standing true; it applies the truth of the standing to daily conduct. The flesh may knock on the door, shout through the window, and claim former ownership, but it has no rightful authority. A dethroned king can still organize a rebellion if the citizens keep taking his orders.

Chapter Four — Legalism Turns Every Sidewalk Into a Courtroom

The legalist makes the believer's acceptance depend upon the condition of his daily walk. Every failure becomes a possible loss of salvation, every doubtful emotion becomes evidence of abandonment, and every bad day becomes a new trial. Such teaching does not produce biblical holiness. It produces spiritual instability, concealed sin, proud comparison, or constant despair. The believer either pretends he has performed well enough or admits that he has not and lives terrified. The legalist's assurance is only as strong as his latest memory, and flesh has a remarkable ability to remember failures at two o'clock in the morning.

Galatians 3:3 asks, "having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?" The Galatians had received the Spirit by the hearing of faith, yet false teachers persuaded them that law and religious ceremony must complete what grace began. Paul calls the idea foolish. Flesh could not justify the sinner before salvation and cannot maintain divine righteousness afterward. The Christian life requires obedience and effort, but those operate as the response of a justified person, not as payments preserving the verdict. The Holy Spirit produces fruit; He does not supervise an installment plan for eternal life.

Romans 8:33–34 asks, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth." The question does not deny that Christians commit sins requiring confession and correction. It declares that no accusation can reverse God's justifying verdict. Christ died, rose again, sits at God's right hand, and makes intercession. The believer's case is not held together by his ability to argue his innocence. He is not innocent in daily conduct. His security rests upon the Substitute who answered the charge. Legalism makes the Christian stare at the defendant; assurance looks toward the Advocate.

Chapter Five — Grace Is Not a Permission Slip for the Flesh

Romans 6:1 asks the question careless flesh eventually asks: "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?" Paul answers, "God forbid." He does not weaken eternal security to restrain sin. He appeals to the believer's union with Christ: "How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" Grace does not say sin is harmless. Grace says the believer has been joined to the death and resurrection of Christ and should no longer present his members as instruments of unrighteousness. The proper answer to lawlessness is not insecurity. It is identity.

Titus 2:11–12 says the grace that brings salvation teaches believers to deny "ungodliness and worldly lusts" and to live "soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." Grace is a better teacher of holiness than law because grace brings the heart beneath the power of gratitude and new life. The law says, "Do this or face condemnation." Grace says, "Christ bore your condemnation; now live as one who belongs to Him." Cheap preaching may turn

grace into a pillow for sin, but biblical grace carries a rod, a schoolbook, and a looking for “that blessed hope.” Grace that never teaches holiness is not the grace Paul preached.

First Corinthians 6:19–20 reminds believers that their body is the temple of the Holy Ghost and that they are “bought with a price.” The conclusion is, “therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.” Ownership has changed. The Christian does not belong to himself. Eternal security does not mean he has secured eternal independence from the One who purchased him. He was bought by Christ’s blood and now bears Christ’s name. A careless walk cannot stain Christ’s righteousness, but it can stain Christ’s reputation before men. The world cannot see the heavenly ledger; it watches the believer’s shoes.

Chapter Six — Cleansing and Chastening Belong Inside the Family

First John 1:9 says, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Confession does not mean the believer returns to Calvary for another justification every time he sins. It is the honest dealing necessary for fellowship and cleansing. A disobedient son does not cease to be physically born into his family, but fellowship with his father can be broken until the offence is addressed. God does not command confession because Christ’s blood was insufficient. He commands it because grace never trains His children to lie about sin.

Christ’s advocacy also belongs to this family relationship. First John 2:1 says, “My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not.” The standard is clear: “sin not.” Then Scripture adds, “And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” It does not say “with the Judge” in this passage; it says “with the Father.” The relationship remains while the Advocate addresses the failure. Christ is “the righteous” because the believer’s standing still rests upon His perfection. When the Christian gets mud on his walk, Christ does not become muddy on the throne.

Hebrews 12 says, “whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth,” and chastening reaches “every son whom he receiveth.” Chastening is not God throwing a believer out of the family. It proves he belongs to the family. God may use conviction, consequences, rebuke, loss, sickness, humiliation, or even physical death in severe cases to correct His children. First Corinthians 11 records believers who were weak, sickly, and asleep because they treated the Lord’s supper wickedly. Yet Paul says they were chastened “that we should not be condemned with the world.” The rod in the Father’s hand is evidence that the courtroom condemnation has been escaped.

Chapter Seven — The Judgment Seat Examines the Walk Without Reopening the Verdict

Second Corinthians 5:10 says, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.” Believers will answer for “the things done in his body.” The Christian’s walk therefore matters eternally. Words, motives, stewardship, faithfulness, service, suffering, opportunities, and obedience will be examined by the Lord who sees through religious paint. Eternal security does not erase accountability. It establishes the proper courtroom. The Great White Throne concerns the lost and final condemnation; the judgment seat of Christ concerns saved people and the evaluation of service.

First Corinthians 3 explains that Jesus Christ is the foundation. Upon that foundation believers build with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, or stubble. Fire tries “every man’s work of what sort it is.” If the work abides, the believer receives reward. If it burns, he suffers loss, “but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.” The foundation survives because the foundation is Christ. The building may prove shamefully worthless without the foundation collapsing. That single verse separates standing from service so plainly that only a determined religious contractor could pour them back into the same bucket.

Practical righteousness affects fellowship, testimony, usefulness, joy, health, earthly consequences, chastening, and eternal reward. It does not create, supplement, or preserve imputed righteousness. The believer should therefore pursue holiness with greater seriousness, not less. He is not a condemned prisoner trying to earn release; he is Christ’s purchased servant preparing to give account. Fear of hell may produce frantic religious labor, but the love of Christ constrains faithful service. The Christian walks carefully because grace cost the Saviour everything and because every step will eventually meet the fire of divine examination.

Conclusion

The believer’s standing is in Christ even when his walk gets mud on it. He is accepted in the Beloved, complete in Christ, seated in heavenly places, sealed by the Spirit, made the righteousness of God, and placed beyond condemnation. Those truths rest upon Christ’s finished work, not the believer’s fluctuating condition. A bad day cannot make Christ unrighteous, a stumble cannot unseat Him from heaven, and a failure cannot reopen a debt His blood paid. The Christian’s security is as strong as the Saviour in whom God placed him.

But the mud still matters. Sin grieves the Holy Spirit, breaks fellowship, damages testimony, wounds others, invites chastening, produces earthly consequences, weakens usefulness, and burns reward. Grace does not ask the Christian to pretend the mud is clean. It commands him to confess it, wash his feet in the word, mortify the flesh, and walk in the Spirit. The man who uses security as an excuse for rebellion is not defending grace.

He is insulting the blood that purchased him. Christ did not rescue the believer from condemnation so he could become a well-insured servant of sin.

Legalism and lawlessness both disappear when standing and walk are rightly divided. The legalist must stop trying to preserve Christ's righteousness with Adam's performance. The careless professor must stop using Christ's righteousness to excuse Adam's filth. A Christian does not live right to become accepted; he lives right because he is accepted. He does not obey to remain in the family; he obeys because the Father's name is upon him. His standing is fixed in heaven, his walk is being worked out on earth, and both will meet at the judgment seat of Christ. Keep the standing where God placed it—in Christ. Then keep the walk worthy of the One who placed you there.

8 of 10 Imputed Righteousness — Satan Can Read the Charges, but He Cannot Reverse the Verdict

Key Passage: Romans 8:31–39; Revelation 12:10–11

“What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

—Romans 8:31–39

“And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.”

—Revelation 12:10–11

Introduction

Satan is an accuser. He has spent centuries studying the case files of fallen men, watching their weaknesses, recording their contradictions, encouraging their sins, and then appearing as prosecutor after helping arrange the crime. He tempts a man toward the ditch, applauds while he falls into it, and then stands over him explaining that no genuine child of God could ever have mud on his clothes. He sells the poison and then volunteers as coroner. Revelation 12:10 calls him “the accuser of our brethren” and says he accuses them before God “day and night.” Accusation is not a weekend occupation for the Devil. It is part of his continuing warfare against the people of God until he is cast down from his present access during the future conflict described in Revelation 12.

His prosecution is effective because some of the facts are true. Christians do fail. They may speak foolishly, think wickedly, neglect prayer, ignore Scripture, mistreat others, yield to lust, cherish pride, waste opportunities, and repeat sins they swore they would never commit again. The Devil does not need to invent every item in the indictment. He needs only to remove the blood from the evidence, Christ from the courtroom, and imputed righteousness from the believer’s view. Then he takes a forgiven offence, enlarges it until it fills the horizon, and whispers, “Look at yourself.” The correct answer is not, “I looked, and I am better than you say.” The correct answer is, “I looked to Jesus Christ, and He is better than I could ever be.”

Romans 8 does not answer accusation by praising the defendant. It points to the Judge who justifies, the Christ who died, the Christ who rose, the Christ who sits at God’s right hand, and the Christ who intercedes. Paul does not ask whether the believer has lived perfectly. He asks, “Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect?” The answer rests upon God’s completed verdict. The Devil may read the charges accurately, but he cannot place them back upon an account cleared through Christ’s blood. He may cross-examine the conscience, rattle the prison bars, wave the old record, and shout until dawn. The risen Advocate remains seated, and the verdict stands.

Chapter One — The Accuser Has Been Visiting Courtrooms Since Job

Job 1 presents Satan appearing among the sons of God before the Lord. When God mentions Job, Satan immediately attacks the man’s motive: “Doth Job fear God for nought?” He does not deny Job’s outward conduct. He alleges that Job serves God only because God has protected and prospered him. Satan’s accusation reaches beneath actions and attempts to corrupt the interpretation of motives. If Job is faithful, Satan says the faithfulness is purchased. If Job suffers, Satan expects the faithfulness to collapse. The

Devil cannot look upon any loyalty without trying to smear it with selfishness because he interprets every servant through his own rebellious heart.

In Zechariah 3, Joshua the high priest stands before the angel of the Lord “and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him.” Joshua’s filthy garments supply material for the prosecution. He does not stand there dressed in spotless personal righteousness. Yet the Lord does not invite Satan to manage the cleansing. He rebukes him: “The LORD rebuke thee, O Satan.” Then God commands, “Take away the filthy garments from him,” and says, “Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee.” Satan points to the garment; God performs the cleansing. The accuser knows how to identify dirt, but he cannot supply righteousness.

Revelation 12 looks forward to the time when Satan will be cast down and his access above terminated. Until that future event, he continues accusing. Yet even his present access exists beneath divine sovereignty. He is not God’s equal, an independent dark deity operating a rival universe, or an uncontrolled force capable of overruling heaven. In Job he required permission and received limits. In Zechariah he was rebuked. In Revelation his expulsion is certain. Satan may enter the courtroom as an accuser, but he never sits on the bench. The prosecutor makes noise; God owns the courthouse.

Chapter Two — The Devil Mixes Facts With a False Conclusion

The Devil’s favorite accusation often begins with something true and ends with something false. “You sinned” may be true. “Therefore Christ’s blood cannot cleanse you” is false. “You failed again” may be true. “Therefore God’s justification has been revoked” is false. “Your conduct was shameful” may be true. “Therefore you were never accepted in the Beloved” does not follow. Satan takes an actual offence and attaches a doctrinal conclusion that contradicts the gospel. He puts one accurate item on the first page so the believer will sign the entire fraudulent contract without reading it.

Peter denied the Lord three times. His denials were not minor verbal stumbles. He cursed, swore, and declared that he did not know Jesus Christ while the Saviour stood under accusation. Satan had already desired to have Peter “that he may sift you as wheat.” Yet Christ said, “But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.” Peter failed terribly, but Christ’s intercession did not fail. After the resurrection, Christ restored him and entrusted him with feeding the flock. Satan could read Peter’s denials from the transcript. He could not erase the prayer of the Advocate.

The answer to accusation is therefore not self-defense based upon personal merit. First John 1:8 says, “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves.” The believer who answers Satan by claiming practical innocence has walked directly into another lie. His

defense is not that the record contains no failures. His defense is that the failures were answered at Calvary and that God's remedy includes confession, cleansing, advocacy, chastening, and restoration. A saved man should agree with God about sin without agreeing with Satan about condemnation. Confession says, "I sinned, and Christ is sufficient." Accusation says, "You sinned, and Christ is insufficient." Those statements begin alike and end in opposite kingdoms.

Chapter Three — God's Justification Outranks Every Accusation

"Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth." Paul places the authority of God's verdict against every possible accuser. If God has justified the believer, no lesser court can reverse Him. Satan did not supply the righteousness, pay the redemption price, raise Christ from the dead, or pronounce the verdict. He therefore possesses no jurisdiction to cancel it. The Christian's security does not rest upon his ability to outargue the Devil. It rests upon God's authority as Judge.

Justification means God has declared the believing sinner righteous upon the ground of Christ's finished work. Romans 5:1 says, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." That peace is not a fragile ceasefire negotiated between two equally uncertain parties. It is the settled result of Christ's blood satisfying divine justice. Romans 5:9 says, "Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him." The word "now" places the verdict in the believer's present possession. Satan keeps presenting yesterday's evidence to a court where the decisive judgment has already fallen upon the Substitute.

Romans 4:8 says, "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." Non-imputation does not mean God forgets facts, approves wickedness, or refuses to correct His children. It means sin is not charged judicially to the believer's account because Christ bore it. The same God who refuses to impute sin imputes righteousness without works. Satan may attempt to reopen the ledger, but he cannot write in God's book. The blood removed his ink.

Chapter Four — The Risen Christ Is the Believer's Advocate

Romans 8:34 asks, "Who is he that condemneth?" Paul then gives four answers in one movement: "It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." Christ died, answering sin's penalty. Christ rose, proving death's claim exhausted and the sacrifice accepted. Christ sits at God's right hand, occupying the place of victory and authority. Christ intercedes, representing His people. Satan does not confront an unattended case file. He confronts the risen Son of God.

First John 2:1 says, “if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” The verse does not say the believer has an Advocate only if his failure was small, accidental, or unusual. Nor does it say Christ becomes righteous again after each confession. He is “Jesus Christ the righteous.” His unchanging righteousness is the answer to the believer’s changing performance. The Advocate does not argue that the Christian never sinned. He stands upon the propitiation already accomplished. Verse 2 says, “he is the propitiation for our sins.”

Hebrews 7:25 says Christ “ever liveth to make intercession” for those who come unto God by Him. His priesthood is unchangeable because He continues forever. Earthly priests die, religious systems alter, human advocates fail, and Christian feelings fluctuate, but Christ ever lives. The security of the case rests upon the life of the Representative. The Devil would need to kill the risen Christ, remove Him from God’s right hand, cancel His blood, overturn the resurrection, and seize the throne before he could successfully condemn one believer represented by Him. That is a long assignment for a defeated cherub with a lake of fire awaiting him.

Chapter Five — Conviction Leads to Cleansing; Accusation Drives Toward Condemnation

The Holy Spirit convicts through the truth of God’s word. His dealing is holy, specific, and directed toward confession, correction, and restored fellowship. When Nathan confronted David, he said, “Thou art the man.” The sin was named, David confessed, and the Lord put it away, although consequences remained. When Peter preached at Pentecost, his hearers were “pricked in their heart” and asked what they must do. Divine conviction does not flatter, but it leads toward God’s appointed remedy. It opens the wound so truth can clean it.

Satanic accusation uses sin to drive the believer away from that remedy. It often remains vague, repetitive, and absolute: “You are hopeless. Nothing changed. God cannot receive you. There is no use confessing. You may as well continue.” The Devil wants either concealment or surrender. If he cannot persuade the Christian that sin is harmless, he tries to persuade him that sin is unforgivable. Both lies keep the believer from honest fellowship with God. One hardens the conscience; the other buries it beneath despair. Satan does not care which ditch catches the traveler as long as he leaves the road.

First John 1:9 provides the biblical response: “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” God’s faithfulness and justice—not the emotional intensity of the confession—ground the cleansing. The believer names the sin, forsakes the excuse, and returns to the light. He does not perform penance

to re-purchase acceptance. Christ's blood already secured his standing. Confession restores fellowship and cleansing within the family. The Devil wants a hidden wound or an endlessly reopened wound; God cleans the wound and commands the soldier to stand again.

Chapter Six — The Blood Answers What the Accuser Reads

Revelation 12:11 says the brethren overcome the accuser “by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony.” In its direct prophetic context, the passage concerns those overcoming during the future conflict surrounding Satan's expulsion from heaven. It should not be carelessly stolen from its setting and turned into a modern slogan emptied of prophecy. Yet the blood's sufficiency is the same blood Paul preaches to the Church. Ephesians 1:7 says, “In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins.” Colossians 1:20 speaks of peace made “through the blood of his cross.” The accuser presents guilt; God presents blood.

The blood does not answer accusation by pretending the charge is imaginary. It answers by declaring the penalty paid. When Israel placed the lamb's blood upon the door at Passover, God said, “when I see the blood, I will pass over you.” He did not say, “When I inspect the moral superiority of the firstborn inside.” The safety of the household rested upon the blood God appointed. A nervous Israelite inside the blood-marked house was safer than a confident Egyptian standing outside it. Assurance does not strengthen the blood; the blood gives assurance something solid to believe.

The believer also answers through the word of God. Christ met Satan's temptations with, “It is written.” He did not enter an academic discussion about whether the Devil's interpretation made Him feel understood. He answered with Scripture rightly applied. When Satan says the believer is condemned, Romans 8:1 says there is now no condemnation in Christ. When he says sin has separated the believer from divine love, Romans 8:38–39 says no creature can accomplish that separation. When he says the believer's failure has cancelled God's work, Philippians 1:6 says God will perform the good work He began until the day of Jesus Christ. The sword of the Spirit is not a religious decoration. Draw it.

Chapter Seven — The Accuser's Final Sentence Has Already Been Written

Romans 8 expands the possible opposition: tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, sword, death, life, angels, principalities, powers, present things, future things, height, depth, and any other creature. None can separate the believer from the love of God in Christ Jesus. Satan belongs within that defeated category of created opposition. He is powerful, intelligent, ancient, malicious, and dangerous, but he remains a creature.

He cannot climb outside Paul's phrase "any other creature" and acquire authority God never gave him.

The believer is "more than conquerors through him that loved us." More than a conqueror does not mean untouched by battle. Paul mentions slaughter, persecution, and distress in the same passage. The conquest lies in the fact that none of those forces can undo redemption. Satan may trouble the walk, attack the testimony, exploit ignorance, tempt the flesh, and interfere with service. He can gain an advantage when believers ignore his devices. But he cannot remove a member from Christ's body, break the Spirit's seal, erase the new birth, or reverse God's justification. He may damage the soldier's equipment; he cannot rewrite the Soldier's citizenship.

Revelation 12 announces that the accuser will be cast down. Revelation 20 carries his defeat to its final destination: "the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone." The one who spent ages prosecuting the saints will stand beneath a sentence he cannot appeal. His future is not uncertain, symbolic fog, or a long rehabilitation program. The Lake of Fire awaits him. Satan loves reading the believer's past because he does not want the believer reading his future. His prosecution desk is temporary; his sentence is eternal.

Conclusion

Satan can read the charges, and some of them contain ugly facts. The Christian has no need to beautify his failures, deny his sins, or pretend practical righteousness has been perfect. Peter denied Christ, David committed adultery and murder, Corinthian believers behaved carnally, and Paul still described conflict within his members. Scripture does not hide the dirt of redeemed people. It displays the blood that answers it. The gospel is not good news because the defendant turned out to be innocent. It is good news because the innocent Christ stood in the guilty defendant's place.

The believer's answer to accusation is therefore not a polished self-defense. It is God's justification, Christ's death, Christ's resurrection, Christ's position at the Father's right hand, Christ's intercession, and Christ's blood. Confess what God identifies, forsake what the word condemns, accept chastening where necessary, repair earthly wrongs where possible, and continue walking in the light. But do not sign the Devil's conclusion that Christ's work has failed. A Christian may need cleansing without needing another Calvary. He may need correction without needing another new birth. He may suffer consequences without returning to condemnation.

The prosecution can shout all night, but morning still finds the Advocate at God's right hand. Satan may wave the old record, but the blood has already answered it. He may point

toward the defendant, but God points toward Christ. “Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth.” The Judge has spoken, the Substitute has died, the tomb is empty, the Advocate lives, and the verdict stands. Satan can read the charges. He cannot reverse the verdict.

9 of 10 Imputed Righteousness — Accepted Before You Feel It, Secure Before You Prove It

Key Passage: 1 John 5:9–13; John 5:24

“If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.”

—1 John 5:9–13

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.”

—John 5:24

Introduction

Many Christians spend years taking their spiritual temperature as though eternal life were a fever that might disappear overnight. They inspect the intensity of a prayer, measure the moisture of their eyes, review the emotional strength of a past experience, and wonder whether yesterday’s failure erased the new birth. On Monday they feel close to God and assume they are saved. On Tuesday prayer feels dry, temptation arrives, an old sin raises its head, and they begin planning another trip down the aisle to repeat the same transaction. By Friday they have been saved three times, lost twice, rededicated once, and still possess no more assurance than a weather vane in a hurricane. That is not humility. It is unbelief wearing a nervous religious face because it refuses to let God’s written record settle the question.

Biblical assurance does not rest upon the believer becoming impressed with himself. A Christian who looks long enough at his flesh will find enough corruption to ruin breakfast. Paul said, “For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing.” The believer’s comfort cannot rest upon discovering hidden goodness in the same flesh God told him not to trust. Assurance rests upon Jesus Christ—His person, blood, death, burial, resurrection, righteousness, intercession, and written promises. The question is not whether the believer feels eternally secure. The question is whether God told the truth when He said the believer “hath everlasting life” and “shall not come into condemnation.” Feelings report conditions inside the passenger; Scripture reports the strength of the ship.

First John 5 says God has given a “record” concerning His Son. A record is testimony to be believed, not an emotion to be manufactured. God says eternal life is in His Son, the person who has the Son has life, and those who believe may know they have eternal life. The verse does not say they may hope, guess, suspect, or occasionally experience it during a strong church service. They may know. Genuine assurance does not make sin harmless, service unnecessary, or false professions authentic. It simply places confidence where God placed salvation—in His Son. The man who trusts his feelings has selected a witness that changes testimony before lunch. The man who trusts God’s record has an answer written in heaven and preserved in a Book.

Chapter One — Assurance Begins With the Written Record

“If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater.” Every day men act upon human testimony. They trust clocks, calendars, maps, medical reports, bank statements, contracts, weather warnings, and legal documents. A traveler boards an airplane without personally inspecting every bolt because he receives human witness concerning its condition. A man accepts a deposit shown on his bank statement without crawling into the vault to count the bills. Yet when God gives written testimony concerning eternal life, religious unbelief suddenly demands a private emotional thunderstorm before accepting it. Man’s witness is received as sufficient for earthly business; God’s witness is treated like an uncertain rumor.

The witness concerns God’s Son. Assurance is not founded upon remembering every detail of the day of conversion, repeating an exact religious formula, or reproducing someone else’s dramatic testimony. Some can name the date, hour, pew, song, weather, and preacher. Others know the period when they understood the gospel and believed but cannot provide the minute for a commemorative plaque. Salvation does not rest upon the believer’s ability to preserve a perfect diary. It rests upon Christ and the gospel. Paul defines that gospel in 1 Corinthians 15:3–4: “Christ died for our sins according to the

scriptures; and...he was buried, and...he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.”

First John 5:13 states the purpose of the writing: “that ye may know that ye have eternal life.” God placed assurance in written words because experiences fade, memories weaken, and emotions change. The Bible remains where God put it. A Christian may wake exhausted, suffer illness, endure grief, face temptation, or pass through spiritual dryness without one letter of John 5:13 moving from the page. The believer’s internal weather can change without altering heaven’s title deed. God did not write the verse in disappearing ink controlled by the reader’s mood.

Chapter Two — The Heart Is a Witness, Not the Judge

The heart is not a reliable supreme court. Jeremiah 17:9 says, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.” That verse does not magically become false after salvation. The believer receives a new nature and the indwelling Spirit, but his flesh remains capable of distortion, fear, pride, lust, discouragement, and unbelief. A heart capable of exaggerating personal goodness is also capable of exaggerating hopelessness. One day it puts on a crown and boasts; the next day it crawls beneath the furniture and insists grace cannot reach it. Neither mood has authority to edit Scripture.

First John 3:20 directly addresses the problem: “For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.” The heart may condemn, but God outranks it. God knows more about the believer’s sins than the believer knows, including failures still hidden in the future, and He nevertheless placed salvation in Christ. Christ did not die with partial knowledge of the account. Omniscience did not discover a surprise after conversion and call an emergency meeting in heaven. God knew the entire record when He justified the sinner.

This does not mean every troubled conscience should be dismissed as meaningless emotion. Scripture may expose an unconfessed sin, neglected duty, falsehood, bitterness, or disobedience requiring honest confession and correction. But conviction concerning fellowship is not a reversal of justification. The believer should open the Bible, identify what God condemns, confess it, forsake it, and accept necessary consequences. He should not leap from “I sinned” to “Christ’s blood failed.” That conclusion does not honor holiness. It insults the sufficiency of the sacrifice.

Chapter Three — Eternal Life Is a Present Possession

John 5:24 uses language strong enough to support the full weight of assurance: the believer “hath everlasting life.” “Hath” means possesses now. Eternal life is not a temporary religious loan waiting for the borrower’s next late payment. If the life can expire, it was

never everlasting. If it lasts only until the believer's next failure, it should be called conditional life, probationary life, or renewable life. God called it everlasting before denominational committees arrived to shorten the warranty.

The verse also says the believer "shall not come into condemnation." That is a future promise grounded in a present possession. Christ does not say the believer is unlikely to be condemned if he maintains an impressive average. He says he shall not come into condemnation. Romans 8:1 agrees: "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." Condemnation belongs to the old standing in Adam; justification belongs to the new standing in Christ. The saved man may experience chastening, consequences, loss of fellowship, and loss of reward, but those are not eternal condemnation.

Finally, the believer "is passed from death unto life." The passage has already occurred. The verse does not describe a man standing halfway across a spiritual bridge while God and the Devil tug on opposite sleeves. Colossians 1:13 says God "hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son." Salvation is a divine transfer. The believer did not place himself there, and flesh cannot reverse God's operation. When God moves a man from death to life, the cemetery loses jurisdiction.

Chapter Four — Christ's Blood and Righteousness Secure Acceptance

Ephesians 1:6 says God has "made us accepted in the beloved." The believer is not accepted in his emotions, promises, performance, denomination, or prayer record. He is accepted "in the beloved." The Father's acceptance of the Son becomes the unshakable location of the believer's standing. God is not periodically pleased with Christ and periodically disappointed enough to expel everyone joined to Him. Christ remains the beloved Son, and those in Him remain accepted on His merit. Assurance looks toward the Beloved, not the behavior chart.

Romans 5:9 says believers are "now justified by his blood." The blood is objective, historical, completed, and sufficient. It was shed once at Calvary and does not require emotional reactivation. A Christian may feel the blood's value deeply or pass through a season when his emotions barely move, but the price remains paid. Israel's firstborn was safe behind the Passover blood because God said, "when I see the blood, I will pass over you." The nervous Israelite was no less protected than the confident Israelite. Safety rested upon what God saw outside the door.

Second Corinthians 5:21 says the believer is made "the righteousness of God in him." Imputed righteousness gives assurance a perfect garment. If acceptance depended upon personal righteousness, certainty would be impossible because personal performance

changes daily. But Christ's righteousness does not weaken when the believer is weary, shrink when he is tempted, or tear when he stumbles. Practical sin must be confessed and forsaken, but it does not make Christ unrighteous. The believer's standing is secure because the righteousness credited to him originated entirely outside him.

Chapter Five — The New Birth and the Spirit's Seal Are Divine Operations

First Peter 1:23 says believers are "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God." Corruptible seed produces life that decays; incorruptible seed does not. The new birth is not a ceremonial title pasted over the old nature. It is life imparted by God through His word and Spirit. A man does not perform his own birth, supervise his own conception, or preserve himself in the family through daily paperwork. Birth establishes relationship, and the divine seed is incorruptible.

Ephesians 1:13 says that after believing the gospel, believers are "sealed with that holy Spirit of promise." Ephesians 4:30 says they are "sealed unto the day of redemption." The seal is not placed until the believer's next bad decision, emotional collapse, or failure in prayer. Its stated destination is the day of redemption. The Holy Spirit is also "the earnest of our inheritance," God's pledge that the purchased possession will be redeemed. If God loses the sealed believer, He defaults on His own earnest. Heaven is not running a fraudulent real-estate closing.

Colossians 3:3 says, "your life is hid with Christ in God." Consider the security packed into that location. To seize the believer's eternal life, the enemy would need to break into God, remove Christ, and uncover the life hidden there. John 10:28–29 adds that no man can pluck Christ's sheep from His hand or the Father's hand. The believer is not pictured clutching Christ's little finger while Satan hangs from his ankles. He is held by the Son, held by the Father, sealed by the Spirit, and hidden with Christ in God. The entire Godhead stands behind the keeping.

Chapter Six — Failure Calls for Confession and Chastening, Not Another Birth

First John 2:1 says, "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not." God's standard remains holiness. Eternal security never becomes a divine endorsement of rebellion. Yet the same verse continues, "And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." The possibility of failure is addressed without cancelling the family relationship. Christ is Advocate "with the Father," not a stranger attempting to persuade a hostile Judge to consider another salvation application. The believer remains a child while Christ addresses the failure.

First John 1:9 commands confession. The Christian who sins should not hide, rename, justify, or celebrate it. He should agree with God, seek cleansing, make earthly matters

right where possible, and return to obedient fellowship. Confession does not replenish a deficient supply of Christ's blood or place another installment toward justification. It brings the child back into honest fellowship with the Father. A dirty son needs washing, not another birth certificate.

Hebrews 12 teaches that the Lord chastens every son He receives. Chastening can be painful because God takes holiness seriously. He may expose hidden sin, remove opportunities, permit consequences, humble pride, weaken fleshly confidence, or, in severe cases, end a believer's earthly life. First Corinthians 11 says some believers were weak, sickly, and asleep beneath divine chastening. Yet they were chastened "that we should not be condemned with the world." The Father's rod proves family membership; it does not erase it.

Chapter Seven — Genuine Assurance Is Not Counterfeit Presumption

Assurance belongs to those who have believed the gospel, not to everyone who adopted Christian vocabulary. First John 5:12 draws the line: "He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." Church membership is not the Son. Baptism is not the Son. Family heritage is not the Son. Moral improvement is not the Son. Repeating a prayer without believing the gospel is not the Son. A man may possess religion while lacking Christ, and Scripture offers him no false comfort.

Second Corinthians 13:5 says, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith." The examination does not ask whether the flesh has become sinless. It asks whether the person is "in the faith" and whether Jesus Christ is in him. A false professor should not be assured merely because he walked an aisle, raised a hand, was baptized as an infant, or inherited a denominational label. He must face the gospel honestly. Has he trusted Christ's death, burial, and resurrection as the complete answer for his sins, or is he still relying upon ceremony, character, church, experience, or future performance?

Works may provide evidence of life, but they do not become the foundation of assurance. A living tree should bear fruit, and a professing believer whose entire life displays settled hostility toward Christ has reason to examine his profession. Yet even the strongest Christian cannot extract assurance by counting enough fruit to declare himself worthy. Fruit varies by growth, season, opportunity, obedience, and chastening. The root remains Christ. Works can confirm a profession before men; only Christ's finished work justifies before God. The fruit may help identify the tree, but it never becomes the ground in which the tree stands.

Conclusion

God did not leave His children guessing about eternal life. He gave a record concerning His Son and wrote that believers may know. Eternal life is in Christ. The person who has Christ has life. The believer has passed from death to life, shall not come into condemnation, is accepted in the Beloved, justified by the blood, clothed in divine righteousness, born of incorruptible seed, sealed unto the day of redemption, and hidden with Christ in God. Those are not emotional impressions. They are statements from the mouth of God.

Stop treating your heart like the fourth member of the Godhead. It is not qualified to overturn Scripture. When it exposes a genuine sin under the light of God's word, confess the sin. When it claims Christ is insufficient, reject the lie. When Satan presents a failure, point to the blood. When legalism demands another payment, point to the finished cross. When religious emotion fades, read the record again. Peace does not come when the believer finally becomes impressed with himself. It comes when he becomes persuaded that God is satisfied with Christ.

This assurance should not produce carelessness. It should produce gratitude, holiness, service, courage, and love. The believer does not obey to keep himself born; he obeys because he bears the Father's name. He does not serve to purchase acceptance; he serves because he is accepted. He does not confess sin to rebuild the cross; he confesses because the cross made honest fellowship possible. You were accepted before you felt it and secure before you proved it because salvation began in God's grace, rests in Christ's righteousness, and is preserved by divine power. Believe the written record. God has never needed your feelings to make His promise true.

10 of 10 Imputed Righteousness — Presented Faultless in a Glory You Never Could Have Earned

Key Passage: Jude 24–25; Ephesians 5:25–27; Colossians 1:21–22

“Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.”

—Jude 24–25

“Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without

blemish.”

—Ephesians 5:25–27

“And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouable in his sight.”

—Colossians 1:21–22

Introduction

The final destination of imputed righteousness is not merely a forgiven sinner limping into heaven with smoke pouring from his pockets and an apology folded inside his coat. God’s purpose reaches beyond acquittal to presentation, beyond pardon to glory, beyond the removal of condemnation to the believer’s completed conformity to Jesus Christ. Jude says Christ is able “to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.” Ephesians says Christ will present the Church to Himself “not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.” Colossians says believers will be presented “holy and unblameable and unreprouable in his sight.” Those statements are not optimistic predictions based upon Christian flesh finally learning to behave. They rest upon Christ’s blood, Christ’s righteousness, Christ’s intercession, Christ’s keeping power, and Christ’s appointed completion of the work He began.

The believer did not begin salvation by earning righteousness, does not continue salvation by preserving righteousness, and will not complete salvation by manufacturing righteousness. The same righteousness credited by faith at conversion remains his only title to glory. Practical holiness matters. Service matters. Faithfulness matters. Sin carries consequences. Chastening is real. The judgment seat of Christ will expose the quality of every believer’s work, and some will receive reward while others suffer loss. But the fire examining service will not burn a justified man out of Christ. First Corinthians 3:15 says plainly, “he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.” The building may burn while the foundation remains, because “other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”

Religion keeps a tailor working in the back room because it cannot imagine anyone appearing before God without wearing at least one thread of human achievement. Grace closes the shop. The saints will not stand in glory admiring garments they stitched from morality, sacraments, church loyalty, suffering, perseverance, and charitable deeds. They will stand clothed in the righteousness of Another, transformed into Christ’s likeness by divine power, and presented by the very Saviour who purchased them. Grace began the

work, grace carried the work, grace completed the work, and grace receives every thread of the glory.

Chapter One — Christ Is Able to Keep What Christ Purchased

Jude begins his closing doxology with, “Now unto him that is able.” The believer’s final presentation rests upon Christ’s ability, not the flesh’s reliability. Flesh has already furnished six thousand years of evidence concerning its qualifications. Adam fell in a perfect garden, Noah became drunk after surviving the flood, Abraham lied after believing the promise, Moses struck the rock after speaking with God, David committed adultery after writing psalms, Peter denied Christ after walking beside Him, and the Corinthians became carnal after receiving apostolic preaching. Any salvation program depending upon flesh’s ability to preserve itself was bankrupt before the first payment came due. Jude does not say, “Now unto him who hopes you can manage.” He says, “unto him that is able.”

Christ is able “to keep you from falling.” That does not teach that a Christian reaches sinless perfection during his earthly walk or becomes incapable of stumbling. The New Testament commands confession, chastening, restoration, watchfulness, resistance, and growth because failures remain possible. Jude’s statement reaches to divine preservation amid apostasy, corruption, deception, and judgment. The believer is told in verse 21, “Keep yourselves in the love of God,” while verse 24 praises the One able to keep him. There is human responsibility in the walk and divine certainty in the final preservation. The Christian watches, prays, obeys, and builds himself up in the faith, but none of those activities replaces Christ as Keeper.

Second Timothy 1:12 says, “I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.” Paul did not say he knew what he had achieved. He knew whom he had believed. The security lies in the Person receiving the commitment. A bank’s safety does not rest upon the depositor standing outside all night clutching the front door. The strength of the institution holds what was entrusted to it. Christ has greater security than a steel vault and a better record than every bank that ever closed on Friday with the deposits still inside.

Chapter Two — Faultless Does Not Mean the Believer Never Failed

Jude says Christ will “present you faultless.” It does not say the believer’s earthly record contained no faults. Scripture has already recorded the sins, stumbles, ignorance, immaturity, neglected duties, wasted opportunities, and failures of God’s people. Faultless presentation does not arise from God losing the file or adjusting His eyesight. It arises because every fault capable of condemning the believer was charged to Christ, judged at

Calvary, and answered through His blood. God does not declare the believer faultless by pretending sin never existed. He declares him righteous because Christ settled it.

The word “present” places Christ in charge of the arrival. The believer does not climb the final stair, straighten his homemade robe, and introduce himself. Christ presents him. The Saviour who sought him, bought him, justified him, sealed him, kept him, interceded for him, and raised him will bring him before glory. Hebrews 7:25 says Christ is able “to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him.” Salvation reaches the uttermost because the Saviour ever lives. He does not rescue a sinner from the mouth of hell and then abandon him halfway to heaven with directions written on a napkin.

“Before the presence of his glory” reveals the standard of the presentation. Isaiah saw the Lord’s glory and cried, “Woe is me! for I am undone.” No fleshly righteousness can survive that light. Yet the believer will stand there faultless because he stands in Christ. Second Corinthians 5:21 says he has been made “the righteousness of God in him.” The glory that exposed Isaiah’s uncleanness will display the perfection Christ supplied. Heaven will not lower its light for the saint. Grace prepares the saint to stand in the full blaze.

Chapter Three — Christ Will Present the Church Without Spot or Wrinkle

Ephesians 5:25 says, “Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.” The Church’s glorious presentation begins with Christ’s love and self-giving, not the Church’s performance. He gave Himself for the Church before the Church could serve Him, suffer for Him, organize anything for Him, or produce one work deserving Him. His sacrifice is the foundation of the entire passage. The Church does not cleanse itself until Christ becomes willing to claim it. Christ claims what He purchased and cleanses what He claims.

“He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.” The verse does not refer to a priest throwing water on an infant or an institution controlling salvation through a baptismal font. The water is identified with “the word.” Scripture cleanses the believer’s practical walk by exposing dirt, correcting thought, rebuking sin, renewing the mind, and conforming conduct to Christ. Jesus told His disciples, “Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.” Christ’s blood cleanses from sin judicially; His word cleanses the daily walk practically. Religious water may wet the head, but only God’s word can enter the heart with a sword.

Christ’s purpose is to “present it to himself a glorious church.” He is both the Bridegroom and the One arranging the presentation. The Church will have no “spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.” A spot is defilement; a wrinkle suggests deterioration, age, and decay. Christ will remove both stain and ruin. The final Church will not be an elderly religious institution leaning on tradition and carrying the scars of ecclesiastical politics. It will be holy, glorious,

and without blemish because Christ completes what His grace began. The Bridegroom will not stand at the altar hoping the bride arrives properly dressed. He purchased the garment.

Chapter Four — Reconciliation Determines the Final Presentation

Colossians 1 begins with what believers were: “alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works.” That description does not flatter the natural man. He was not a neutral observer waiting for sufficient evidence. He was alienated from God and hostile in his mind, with wicked works displaying the enmity. Sin did not merely make him socially awkward in heaven’s company. It made him an enemy. Religious man objects to that verdict because he prefers to imagine himself as a basically decent citizen involved in a minor border dispute with God. Scripture calls it alienation.

“Yet now hath he reconciled.” The change is accomplished and present. God did not place the believer into a reconciliation program whose completion depends upon annual review. Christ reconciled him “in the body of his flesh through death.” The physical death of Jesus Christ stands at the center. Reconciliation did not occur through an example, philosophy, moral influence, mystical initiation, or ecclesiastical ceremony. Christ bore sins in His own body on the tree and made peace through the blood of His cross. The body men scourged, nailed, pierced, and buried became the instrument through which alienated enemies were brought near.

The purpose is “to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight.” Holy means set apart to God. Unblameable leaves no legitimate charge. Unproveable means no accusation can demand another judicial correction. This standing is “in his sight,” where omniscience sees everything. Men may blame, memory may reprove, conscience may tremble, and Satan may accuse, but God sees the believer through the reconciling death and imputed righteousness of Christ. The decisive inspection occurs in God’s sight, not in the opinion poll conducted by the accuser.

Chapter Five — The Rapture Will Complete What Justification Guaranteed

The believer’s soul is saved, his spirit has been made alive, and his standing is already complete in Christ, but his body still awaits redemption. Romans 8:23 says believers groan within themselves, “waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.” Salvation is complete in its purchase and certainty while awaiting the final transformation of the body. The Christian still grows old, becomes sick, suffers weakness, battles flesh, and eventually dies if the Rapture does not occur first. His decaying body does not contradict eternal life. It awaits the application of Christ’s victory to mortality.

First Corinthians 15 says, “the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.” Corruption puts on incorruption, mortality puts on immortality, and death is

swallowed up in victory. At the Rapture, Christ will descend, the dead in Christ will rise first, and living believers will be caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air. No grave will retain a member of Christ's body, and no living saint will require death as an entry fee. The undertaker's schedule will be cancelled by a trumpet.

Philippians 3:20–21 says the Saviour “shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body.” The Christian cannot accomplish that transformation through diet, discipline, medicine, exercise, positive thinking, or religious enthusiasm. All may affect earthly health, but none can turn mortality into glory. Christ performs the change “according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.” The same power that keeps the believer will transform him. Grace does not stop at the cemetery gate.

Chapter Six — The Judgment Seat Will Examine Service Without Retrying Salvation

Second Corinthians 5:10 says, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.” Every believer will give account for things done in the body, whether good or bad. The judgment seat is not the Great White Throne of Revelation 20, where the lost dead are judged according to their works and cast into the Lake of Fire. The Church will have been caught up before the Tribulation and will stand before Christ for examination of service. Rightly dividing those judgments prevents the saved man from turning the judgment seat into a second trial for eternal life.

First Corinthians 3 says every man's work will be made manifest because “the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.” The fire examines quality, not merely quantity. Religious activity may fill calendars, buildings, reports, and biographies while containing nothing able to survive Christ's eyes. Wood, hay, and stubble can build an enormous structure quickly; gold, silver, and precious stones require patient labor. Heaven is not impressed by square footage. Christ examines motive, doctrine, faithfulness, obedience, and whether service was built upon His foundation according to His word.

Some will receive reward, while others “shall suffer loss.” Yet the verse immediately adds, “but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.” Loss of reward is not loss of righteousness. The servant's work can burn without the Son's blood evaporating. This warning should not encourage laziness; it should destroy it. The believer's secure standing removes terror of damnation while leaving sober accountability before Christ. Grace guarantees the believer will reach the judgment seat; wisdom tells him not to arrive carrying a wheelbarrow of kindling.

Chapter Seven — Grace Will Receive Every Thread of the Glory

Romans 8:29 says believers were predestinated “to be conformed to the image of his Son.” Predestination in the passage concerns the appointed destination of those foreknown, called, justified, and glorified. God did not predestinate some believers to arrive half-finished while others complete themselves through superior effort. Everyone justified will be glorified. Romans 8:30 speaks of glorification as so certain that the future work appears in the past tense: “whom he justified, them he also glorified.” God’s purpose is not waiting to learn whether flesh can derail it.

Philippians 1:6 says, “he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.” God began the work, God performs the work, and the day of Jesus Christ supplies the appointed horizon. The believer cooperates in practical growth through obedience, but his final glorification does not depend upon his becoming a co-Saviour. First Thessalonians 5:23–24 prays that the believer’s whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless and then adds, “Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.” The Christian’s faithfulness matters; God’s faithfulness guarantees completion.

Jude ends by giving God “glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever.” That is where imputed righteousness must end. If salvation began with man, was preserved by man, or completed by man, then some portion of glory would belong to man. But Christ supplied everything. The saints will possess crowns for rewarded service, yet Revelation shows crowns laid before the throne because even rewarded service depended upon grace. Heaven will contain no boasting booth where redeemed men compare how much they helped the cross. Every crown will point toward Christ, every white robe will advertise His righteousness, and every glorified saint will be a monument to grace.

Conclusion

The doctrine of imputed righteousness began with Adam’s debt entered upon his race and now ends with redeemed sinners presented faultless before God’s glory. Between those two points stands Jesus Christ. Our sins were laid upon Him; His righteousness was placed upon believers. Abraham believed God, and righteousness was counted. David described the blessed man whose sin was not imputed. Paul closed the wage window, discarded his religious résumé, and demanded to be found in Christ without his own righteousness. The believer’s standing remained perfect when his walk became dirty, Satan’s accusations failed to reverse the verdict, and assurance rested upon God’s written record. Every line led to this presentation.

The saints will not enter glory because their flesh finally produced a spotless record. They will enter because Christ loved the Church, gave Himself for it, sanctified it, kept it, raised it, changed it, and presented it. Practical faithfulness will receive reward, and practical

failure may suffer loss, but neither reward nor loss becomes the believer's title to heaven. Christ is the title. His righteousness is the garment. His blood is the purchase price. His resurrection is the guarantee. His intercession is the present security. His coming is the appointed completion.

One day the last accusation will be silenced, the last weakness removed, the last grave opened, the last mortal body changed, and the entire Church displayed in the glory Christ purchased. No spot will remain, no wrinkle will survive, no judicial blame will stand, and no accusation will find a place to land. The saints will stand faultless in a glory they never could have earned, wearing a perfection they never could have woven. Grace began the work, grace carried the work, grace completed the work, and grace will receive every thread of the glory.

Conclusion to Imputed Righteousness — Dressed in a Perfection You Did Not Earn

The doctrine of imputed righteousness brings the sinner into God's courtroom, removes every excuse from his mouth, strips every homemade garment from his back, closes every wage window before his hands, and leaves him standing exactly where grace can reach him: guilty, empty, helpless, and unable to boast. That is where religious flesh does its loudest protesting because flesh would rather be congratulated than crucified, improved than replaced, and paid than pardoned. Man wants God to acknowledge that he contributed something worth keeping. God points toward Isaiah 64:6 and calls his righteousnesses "filthy rags." Man reaches for his baptism, church membership, morality, charity, sincerity, family tradition, religious suffering, denominational pedigree, and public reputation. God places the spotless righteousness of Jesus Christ beside the entire pile, and Adam's tailor shop suddenly smells like a laundry basket left behind at a leper colony.

The series began where human ruin began—with Adam. Romans 5:12 says, "by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin." Adam did not merely furnish history with its first unfortunate moral example. He stood as the representative head of the human race. His disobedience opened the door through which sin, death, judgment, and condemnation entered the human world. Every natural descendant was born into that fallen order and later supplied enough personal transgressions to confirm the family resemblance. The human race did not begin morally neutral and gradually become confused. It was born beneath Adam's wreckage, educated inside Adam's system, buried in Adam's cemeteries, and judged beneath Adam's condemnation. Humanity keeps rearranging the furniture in a condemned house and calls the activity progress.

The same representative principle that explains the ruin in Adam opens the door of salvation in Christ. Men object to Adam's act affecting them until they hear that Christ's act may save them. Then representation suddenly becomes attractive. The sinner who complains that he did not personally eat from Adam's tree still wants another Man's blood to pay for sins that other Man did not commit. He wants another Man's obedience entered where his own disobedience stood. He wants another Man's resurrection credited as the guarantee of life. Romans 5 places the two heads before us without consulting human pride: "by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." Reject the second Man and the first man remains your only representative.

At Calvary, the sinless Son of God stood beneath the guilty man's record. Isaiah 53:6 declares, "the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." Christ did not become sinful in character, corrupt in nature, or personally guilty of the crimes He bore. He "knew no sin," "did no sin," and possessed no sin within Himself. Yet He was made sin for us, made a curse for us, wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities, and chastised for our peace. He bore our sins in His own body on the tree. The charges belonged to us; the judgment fell upon Him. The nails entered innocent hands because guilty hands had signed the record.

Calvary was not a sentimental demonstration intended to make men feel important. It was the appointed place where divine holiness, justice, love, mercy, wrath, grace, judgment, blood, substitution, and redemption met without contradiction. God did not forgive sinners by pretending sin was harmless. He judged it in the Substitute. Mercy did not slip the prisoner through the courthouse basement while justice was looking out the window. Mercy satisfied justice publicly through the blood of Christ. Romans 3 says God is "just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." The cross does not reveal a God who stopped caring about righteousness. It reveals how far God went to provide the righteousness His holiness demanded.

Before Christ's righteousness could be placed upon the believer, the believer's sin had to be placed upon Christ. That is the great exchange of 2 Corinthians 5:21: "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." The sinner contributes the guilt; Christ contributes the righteousness. That arrangement leaves flesh with a poor speech for the awards banquet. Man cannot boast that he helped provide sin, and he cannot boast that he supplied divine righteousness. Grace takes the whole platform and leaves Adam standing backstage with his mouth closed.

Abraham's testimony then showed that righteousness is counted through faith rather than paid as wages. Genesis 15:6 says, "he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness." Abraham possessed no circumcision when that entry was made. The Mosaic law stood centuries in the future. There was no Levitical priesthood, national sanctuary, sacramental machinery, or ecclesiastical office collecting fees between the man and God. The Lord spoke; Abraham believed; God counted. Paul reaches behind Sinai and before circumcision to prevent the legalist from smuggling either into the transaction. Religion can pile ceremonies in front of Abraham, but the date in Genesis keeps showing that heaven entered the credit first.

David testified from the other side of moral collapse. He knew what it meant to carry adultery, deception, conspiracy, and blood upon his record. He could not offset Uriah's death by reminding God of Goliath. He could not pay for adultery with inspired songs, cancel murder with military victories, or persuade heaven that a king's office deserved a reduced sentence. Yet Psalm 32 pronounces the blessing: "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity." Paul quotes David as describing righteousness imputed "without works." Abraham arrived with no wages; David discovered that yesterday's wages could not pay today's debt. Both found grace standing where human merit had collapsed.

Romans 4 then closed heaven's wage window: "to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt." If eternal life is earned through works, God owes it to the successful worker. Grace becomes salary, salvation becomes compensation, and the cross becomes part of a cooperative payment plan. Paul will tolerate none of it. "To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly," faith is counted for righteousness. God does not justify the ungodly because they first become worthy. He justifies them because Christ is worthy, Christ paid, and they believe on Him. Faith is not the sinner's final meritorious work. It is the empty hand admitting there is nothing in the other hand.

That truth threw Paul's religious résumé into the dung heap. He had circumcision, ancestry, tribal identity, Hebrew culture, Pharisaic standing, zeal, and outward legal blamelessness. If human righteousness could purchase a seat in glory, Paul had enough credentials to wallpaper the hallway leading there. Then Christ appeared, and Paul counted the whole display loss and dung. His desire became, "be found in him, not having mine own righteousness." Paul did not ask God to reinforce his righteous garment with material from Christ. He discarded his own as a ground of acceptance and received "the righteousness which is of God by faith." When a man sees Christ clearly, Adam's medals start looking like bottle caps.

Imputed righteousness also gave us the necessary distinction between the believer's standing and his walk. His standing is perfect because he is in Christ. He is accepted in the Beloved, complete in Him, seated in heavenly places, sealed by the Holy Spirit, made the righteousness of God, and placed beyond condemnation. His walk remains imperfect because he still carries unredeemed flesh and must learn to walk in the Spirit. He must confess sin, renew his mind, mortify sinful members, resist temptation, endure chastening, and grow in grace. The standing is divine and completed; the walk is practical and developing.

Confusing standing and walk produces two equally muddy ditches. Legalism makes acceptance depend upon performance and leaves the Christian terrified that every stumble tore Christ's garment off his back. Lawlessness uses eternal security as a pillow beneath flesh and pretends practical holiness has become unnecessary. Scripture rejects both errors. The Christian does not live right in order to become accepted; he should live right because he is accepted. He does not obey to produce the new birth; he obeys because he has been born into God's family. Grace does not lower the standard of holiness. It changes the ground and power from which holiness proceeds.

When the believer sins, he does not need another cross, another blood supply, another spiritual birth, or another judicial justification. He needs confession, cleansing, correction, restored fellowship, and sometimes severe chastening. First John 2:1 says, "these things write I unto you, that ye sin not." God has no casual attitude toward sin. Yet the verse continues, "And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." The Advocate remains righteous when the client fails. Christ does not argue that the Christian never committed the offence. He presents the propitiation that already answered it.

The Devil hates this doctrine because it removes his accusations from the Judge's authority and places them beneath Christ's finished work. Satan can retrieve old charges, expose present failures, magnify shame, question motives, and whisper that no person with such a record could belong to God. Some accusations may contain factual material because Christians are capable of genuine and disgraceful failure. The answer is not to defend the flesh as better than Satan claims. The answer is that Christ is better than flesh could ever become. Romans 8 asks, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth." The prosecution can read the record, but it cannot reverse a verdict pronounced by God and secured by the risen Christ.

Assurance therefore rests upon God's written testimony rather than the heart's changing weather. First John 5 says, "He that hath the Son hath life." John wrote so believers "may know" they have eternal life. God did not tell His children to guess according to the quality

of their latest prayer, the intensity of an old experience, or the emotional strength of a hymn. He gave a record concerning His Son. A believer may feel strong or weak, joyful or burdened, confident or trembling, but the Son remains the same. The nervous Israelite behind the Passover blood was safer than the confident Egyptian outside it because security rested upon the blood God saw, not the feelings housed behind the door.

Genuine assurance must never become counterfeit comfort for an empty professor. Salvation is not produced by walking an aisle, repeating religious words, entering water, joining a church, adopting a label, or remembering an emotional event. The gospel declares that Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again according to the Scriptures. The sinner must believe on the Lord Jesus Christ rather than on his prayer about Christ. First John draws the line: "he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." A man may possess the ceremony, certificate, vocabulary, memory, and public reputation while lacking the Son. Religious furniture cannot turn an empty house into a living temple.

For the true believer, however, the final destination is certain. Jude says Christ is able "to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy." Ephesians says Christ will present the Church to Himself without spot, wrinkle, or blemish. Colossians says believers will be presented holy, unblameable, and unproveable in God's sight. The saints will not be presented faultless because their earthly conduct contained no faults. They will be faultless because every condemning charge was answered by Christ and His righteousness became their standing. God will not dim His glory to make imperfect people appear presentable. He will complete His work and bring them into the light wearing Christ.

At the Rapture, the dead in Christ will rise and living believers will be changed. Corruption will put on incorruption, mortality will put on immortality, and the vile body will be fashioned like Christ's glorious body. The salvation already complete in standing will reach the body in transformation. The believer who fought flesh will be delivered from its presence. The Christian who confessed sin will enter a condition where sin can never rise again. The grave will release its prisoners, death will lose its claim, and the undertaker's last word over the body of Christ will be cancelled by a trumpet.

The judgment seat of Christ will still examine service. Every work will meet the fire. Motives will be uncovered, doctrine tested, opportunities reviewed, stewardship weighed, and faithfulness rewarded. Wood, hay, and stubble will burn; gold, silver, and precious stones will remain. Some will receive crowns, while others suffer loss. Yet First Corinthians 3:15 declares of the man whose work burns, "he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire." The fire tests the building, not the righteousness of the foundation. Christ remains the foundation when the servant's pile becomes ashes.

That distinction should make the Christian more serious about service, not less. Eternal security is not an invitation to arrive before Christ carrying a wheelbarrow of kindling. The believer has been bought with a price and should glorify God in body and spirit. Every day contains material for the judgment seat. Every word, motive, opportunity, sacrifice, prayer, act of obedience, and response to truth will meet the eyes of Christ. Grace removes the terror of condemnation while increasing the weight of accountability. The saved man does not labor to keep himself out of hell. He labors because Christ rescued him, owns him, calls him, and will reward faithfulness.

Imputed righteousness should also produce humility. There is no place for spiritual peacocks in a gospel where every feather was borrowed. The strongest Christian stands in the same Christ as the weakest. The mature believer may possess greater knowledge, discipline, fruitfulness, usefulness, and reward, but he possesses no better justification. The thief on the cross and the apostle Paul entered acceptance through the same blood. One had minutes to serve, the other decades, but neither contributed a thread to Christ's righteousness. Grace levels the ground beneath the cross without pretending every life produces equal fruit afterward.

The doctrine should produce gratitude as well. The believer was not merely rescued from a punishment he disliked. He was given a righteousness he could never produce, joined to a Saviour he did not deserve, sealed by a Spirit he could not command, and promised a glory beyond his imagination. Salvation did not improve the sinner's bargain. It replaced his entire account. His sin went to Christ; Christ's righteousness came to him. Condemnation became justification, alienation became reconciliation, death became life, and Adam's inheritance gave way to Christ's. Gratitude is the only sane response when a bankrupt traitor receives a King's robe.

The doctrine should produce evangelistic urgency because every unsaved person remains in Adam, regardless of education, morality, religion, or public respectability. A clean-living unbeliever is still condemned. A baptized unbeliever is still condemned. A charitable unbeliever is still condemned. A church-attending unbeliever is still condemned. Nicodemus possessed religion, position, knowledge, morality, and Israelite heritage, yet Christ said, "Ye must be born again." The gospel is not needed only by publicans, addicts, criminals, and scandalous sinners. It is needed equally by the polished Pharisee who has mistaken deodorized flesh for divine righteousness.

There is no middle ground between Adam and Christ. No neutral hallway exists where respectable undecided people wait safely while considering their options. First Corinthians 15:22 says, "as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." Natural birth places a man in Adam; the new birth places the believer in Christ. Adam supplies sin,

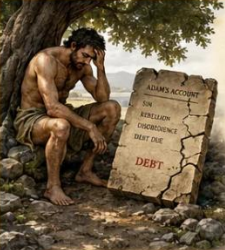
condemnation, and death. Christ supplies righteousness, justification, and life. The sinner does not escape Adam by admiring Jesus, adopting Christian ethics, reforming several habits, or joining a church. He must believe the gospel and be placed into Christ by the Holy Spirit.

If you are still trusting your own righteousness, stop sewing. Heaven will not accept the garment. Stop comparing yourself with criminals, hypocrites, false teachers, immoral neighbors, and corrupt religious officials. God does not compare you with the worst person you can locate. He compares you with His own glory, and Romans 3:23 says you have come short. Stop offering works as though Christ's blood needed a donation. Stop trusting baptism as though water could wash the ledger. Stop trusting sincerity as though believing a lie intensely could make it true. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

If you have trusted Christ, stop searching Adam's closet for assurance. Your flesh will never produce an outfit stable enough to give peace. Look to Christ. You are accepted in the Beloved, complete in Him, justified by His blood, clothed in His righteousness, sealed unto the day of redemption, hidden with Christ in God, and kept by divine power. Confess your sins, walk in the light, grow in grace, serve faithfully, and prepare to meet Christ at His judgment seat. But do not insult the finished work by treating your daily performance as the hinge upon which eternal life swings.

The series ends where salvation ends—with glorified saints standing faultless in the presence of God. No spot remains, no wrinkle survives, no condemnation speaks, no accusation lands, no flesh boasts, and no grave retains its claim. The saints stand in a glory they did not purchase, clothed in a perfection they did not weave, praising a Saviour whose work they could never improve. Adam's apron is gone, the wage window is closed, the ledger is settled, the blood has answered, the righteousness has been entered, and the Bride is ready.

That is imputed righteousness. It is the sinner's guilt placed upon Christ and Christ's righteousness placed upon the believer. It is Abraham counted righteous by faith, David forgiven without works, Paul found in Christ without his own righteousness, the believer accepted before he feels it, secure before he proves it, defended when Satan accuses him, corrected when he stumbles, rewarded when he serves, changed when Christ comes, and presented faultless when glory arrives. Grace begins the work, grace carries the work, grace completes the work, and grace receives every thread of the glory.



IMPUTED RIGHTEOUSNESS

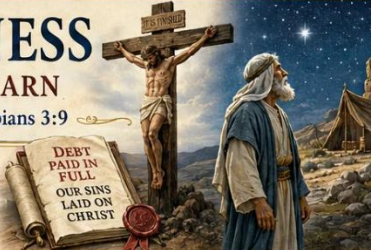
DRESSED IN A PERFECTION YOU DID NOT EARN

Romans 4:5-8 • Romans 5:12-19 • 2 Corinthians 5:21 • Philippians 3:9

CENTRAL TRUTH

God does not justify the sinner by improving Adam's righteousness. He charges the believer's sin to Christ and credits Christ's righteousness to the believer who trusts Him.

"that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." — 2 Corinthians 5:21



1. ADAM'S DEBT ENTERED

- By one man sin entered — Romans 5:12
- Judgment came upon all men — Romans 5:18
- "By one man's disobedience many were made sinners" — Romans 5:19

2. OUR RECORD LAID ON CHRIST

- "The LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all" — Isaiah 53:6
- Christ "knew no sin" — 2 Corinthians 5:21
- "Who his own self bare our sins" — 1 Peter 2:24

3. ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD

- "He believed in the LORD" — Genesis 15:6
- Faith counted for righteousness — Romans 4:3-5
- Circumcision followed as a sign — Romans 4:9-11

4. DAVID'S BLESSED MAN

- Righteousness imputed without works — Romans 4:6
- "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven" — Romans 4:7
- "The Lord will not impute sin" — Romans 4:8

5. NO WAGE WINDOW FOR THE UNGODLY

- "Being justified freely by his grace" — Romans 3:24
- "A man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law" — Romans 3:28
- God "justifieth the ungodly" — Romans 4:5

6. HEAVEN REJECTS THE HOMEMADE SUIT

- "All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags" — Isaiah 64:6
- Paul counted religious gain as loss — Philippians 3:7-8
- "Not having mine own righteousness" — Philippians 3:9

7. PERFECT STANDING, IMPERFECT WALK

- "Accepted in the beloved" — Ephesians 1:6
- "No condemnation" in Christ — Romans 8:1
- Walk worthy because accepted — Ephesians 4:1

8. THE ACCUSER CANNOT REVERSE THE VERDICT

- Satan is "the accuser of our brethren" — Revelation 12:10
- "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?" — Romans 8:33
- Christ died, rose, and intercedes — Romans 8:34

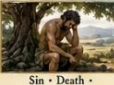
9. ACCEPTED BEFORE YOU FEEL IT

- Believe "the record that God gave of his Son" — 1 John 5:10-11
- "That ye may know that ye have eternal life" — 1 John 5:13
- Sealed until redemption — Ephesians 1:13-14

10. PRESENTED FAULTLESS IN GLORY

- Christ will "present you faultless" — Jude 24
- The Church: "not having spot, or wrinkle" — Ephesians 5:27
- Service judged; justification secure — 2 Corinthians 5:10

IN ADAM → AT THE CROSS → IN CHRIST → IN GLORY






Sin • Death • Condemnation

Guilt laid on Christ

Righteousness credited by faith

Faultless presentation

LAW / WORKS	GRACE / FAITH	PERFECT STANDING	IMPERFECT DAILY WALK
Debt Boasting Own righteousness Cannot justify	Gift Glory to God Christ's righteousness Justifies the ungodly	In Christ Accepted Justified Secure	Growth Confession Chastening Service
Romans 3:20-28; Romans 4:4-5		Ephesians 1:6; Romans 8:1; 1 John 1:9; Hebrews 12:6	



VERDICT: JUSTIFIED

WHAT THIS DOCTRINE DEMANDS



BELIEVE
God's record



REJECT
personal merit



REMEMBER
your standing



WALK
worthy



REST
in Christ

SALVATION DOES NOT IMPROVE THE SINNER'S COSTUME; IT CLOTHES HIM IN THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF ANOTHER.

VERSEQUEST MINISTRIES