

LESSON 7:

Rediscovering Redeeming Love

Changing Identities

Getting Started

In the last lesson, we learned that only faith could bring us into a right relation to God and we also learned the definition of faith. In this lesson, we will attempt to gain more knowledge of just exactly what we have faith in. In order to experience the Christian life as we long to, we must first accurately understand what occurred on the cross between Christ and the good thief (Luke 23:39-43). Christ promised him eternity. He certainly wasn't going to *do* anything to deserve it—not in his position. But he didn't have to because what Jesus promised him was a *change of identities*. Christ came to the cross to die, giving His righteous life for us; we in turn come to the cross to die, surrendering our old sinful life for Him. Whether this exchange comes as we are taking our last breaths or as a small child, the process is the same. Christ then begins to live out His life within us. (Galatians 2:20)

This is the heart of Christian conversion. It is an *exchanged* life. It is what we mean by the term *salvation*, or what Christians frequently speak of as *being saved* or *born again*. Our past, present and future sins are not only forgiven, but we receive a new identity—a new life! And it's a free gift that can never be lost.

Ephesians 2:4-5 says:

But because of his great love for us, God who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.

For no other reason than for love, God gives us the identity of Jesus. Paul goes on to say in Ephesians 2:8-9:

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.

Then, because we have Jesus' life in us, we can perform good works. Ephesians 2:10:

For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

The good works come only through Jesus Christ and are impossible apart from Him. We learned in the last lesson that we don't have true faith unless it produces good works. Christianity is a lot more than what God can do for you—it's about performing those *good works, which He prepared in advance for us to do*.

Charles Colson, in his book, *The Faith*, says: "In a sincere conversion, however, we will soon experience changing affections and habits. Things that used to seem appealing no longer do; things that weren't appealing now are. If your faith is alive you will experience increasing discontent and conviction over sins of the past

Suffering is rightly called: the school of faith, for it is only through trouble, difficulties, and setbacks that we are brought to the end of ourselves. The normal human tendency, particularly for strong-willed people, is to rely on our own strength and resources. But when those are not available to us, when everything has failed, when we have to abandon every other hope, we are forced to trust God alone.

—Charles Colson,
The Faith

I would never have known the meaning of the various psalms, come to appreciate certain difficulties or known the inner workings of the soul; I would never have understood the practice of the Christian life and work, if God had never brought afflictions to my life.

—Martin Luther's Wife

and will respond with a genuine desire to turn away, to be changed. If you do not experience ‘hatred of sin and love of holiness,’ Charles Spurgeon said, God has ‘done nothing in you of a saving character.’”

In an *exchanged* life, Christ died for us and we die for Him! Can you imagine what truly “good news” this was for Martin Luther and the other reformers? After crawling around on concrete floors and brick steps, and making long, never-ending journeys to visit relics. Perhaps you have been engaged in relentless tasks in order to please God. You can relax—because they are meaningless. Only when you *die* and Christ takes over can you ever please God!

Jesus explained the principle of dying preceding fruit to His disciples in John 12:24-25:

I tell you the truth unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. The man who loves his life will lose it...

The problem with *dying* is that it usually hurts. There is suffering involved. Peter, who later was crucified upside down, knew this principle well. In I Peter 2:21 he says:

To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.

Living an *exchanged life* generally involves at least some suffering. In the devotional classic, *Streams in the Desert*, devotional writers speak of: “a divine mystery in suffering, a strange and supernatural power in it which has never been fathomed by human reason. There has never been known great saintliness of soul which has not passed through great suffering. When the suffering soul...does not even ask God to deliver it from suffering, then it has wrought its blessed ministry; then patience has its perfect work; then the crucifixion begins to weave itself into a crown.”

The thoughts for this week are:

Synthetic Justification

Erasing Sin

Defining Justification

Synthetic Justification

This one is heavy—so get ready! Philosophers often talk in terms most of us don't understand. In philosophy there is what is known as the *analytic-synthetic* distinction. It is used to divide ideas into two types:

- **Analytic propositions**—They are true simply by virtue of their definition or meaning. The subject and the predicate of the sentence are alike. The predicate *does not* offer any new meaning. An example is: A bachelor is an unmarried man. The information offered by both the subject and the predicate is the same because *all* bachelors are unmarried. Nothing new there!
- **Synthetic propositions**—Their predicates *do* add new information to the subject. An example is: The bachelor is bald. In addition to knowing he is unmarried we now know he is also bald. This is new information because although all bachelors are unmarried they are not all bald.

How does this apply to theology? The Roman Catholic view of justification is *analytic*. It states that God only offers justification to those who are already just. When we say that the Roman Catholic doctrine of justification is analytical, we mean that God declares the believer just because, under analysis, he is just. Nothing new happens. God only declares those who are already just to be just. He doesn't add anything to their inherent righteousness to make them just.

The reformers, on the other hand, believed in *synthetic* justification. They believed when a believer became justified, something was added that had not been there before. They believed that through justification Christ's righteousness had actually been added to the believer's account. That is the only reason that God sees him as just. The only righteousness that matters to God is Jesus' righteousness. Remember that our best righteousness is like *filthy rags* (Isaiah 64:6).

When a person becomes justified, he is declared righteous by God. He is seen as not guilty. Justification is made up of *two* aspects:

- First, it means that God declares that we have no penalty to pay for our sin. This includes all our sin—past, present, or future. All sin is forgiven. This puts us in a place of moral neutrality like Adam, in the Garden, before he had done anything right or wrong.
- In the second aspect of justification God must declare us not to be merely neutral but actually righteous in His sight. Merit for Jesus' righteousness is actually credited to our account.

Whereas the Roman church believed that righteousness could be imputed with the righteousness collected from the saints and others who had gained extra *credit*, the reformers believed *only* Christ could make someone just.

1. Read Romans 4:4-6. What does Paul say in this passage about how a person receives righteousness into his account?

*The problem is, Christianity is about a lot more than what God can do for you. Rick Warren got it right at the beginning of his extraordinary book **The Purpose Driven Life**: it's not about you; it's about God. Changing affections and Bible study must inevitably cause us to be restless, not to get more out of faith but to give more back to God. The more we learn about Him, the more we want to be like Him."*

—Charles Colson,
The Faith

2. (a) Review the *Getting Started* for this lesson. If, when we are saved, we actually take on the life of Christ, and are imputed with His own righteousness, does it make sense that we would also take on Christ's suffering? What does it mean to you to live an *exchanged* life?

(b) Read Jesus' words in Luke 9:21-25. How would you apply His words to your own life?

(c) How do Jesus' words conflict with the *prosperity Gospel* which is so popular in modern culture?

Analytic Justification adds no new righteousness to the believer following salvation.

- *Synthetic* justification imputes Christ's own righteousness into the life of the believer following salvation.
- In an *exchanged* life we not only receive Jesus' righteousness but expect His suffering.

Truth for Today: ...you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.
Colossians 2:9-10

Erasing Sin

When a believer is justified his sin (past, present, and future) is removed and is replaced with Christ's righteousness. The state of justification is *just-as-if-I-never sinned*. Justification involves the *remission* of sin. The root word of remission means *to send*. The words *missionary* and *missile* are derived from the same root. In the most basic sense the remission of sin means *to send it away*.

1. What does Psalm 103:12 say that God does with our sin?

In the Old Testament on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16:18-22) the high priest transferred the sins of the people onto a live goat and *sent the goat outside the camp*, carrying the people's sin on it, to represent the removal of sin that Jesus would one day accomplish. The goat was known as the *scapegoat*.

2. (a) In Leviticus 16:21 what kind of sin does it say was to be removed?

- (b) Has there been sin in your life that you believed cannot be forgiven or removed? Explain. If so, do these verses remove your guilt and concern?

Sproul says: "As the Lamb of God, Jesus is our sin-bearer, taking our sins away and bearing them for us. On the cross Christ fulfills what is symbolized both by the slain lamb of Old Testament sacrifices and by the scapegoat on whom the sins of the people are transferred." The *lamb* symbolizes Jesus' *propitiation* for our sin. This may be seen as a vertical act of Christ directed to the Father. The scapegoat symbolizes Jesus' *expiation* and may be seen as the horizontal act of Jesus removing or carrying away our sin.

3. Read Romans 4:2-8. What is the *vehicle* by which God imputes His righteousness to believers both in the Old Testament and the New Testament?

4. (a) Read Isaiah 43:25. What promise does this verse give about God and our sin? For what reason does God make this promise?

- (b) Have you ever been guilty of continuing to ask God to forgive you for something that he has already *removed* and sent away? Explain.

For repentance, remorse, and knowledge of sin, though necessary, is not enough; faith in the forgiveness of sins in the name of Christ must be added. But where there is such a faith, God no longer sees any sins; for then you stand before God, not in your name but in Christ's name. He adorns you with grace and righteousness, although in your own eyes and personally you are a poor sinner, full of weakness and unbelief.

–Martin Luther

*In Scripture, **repentance** means 'to undergo a change of one's mind.' This change of mind is not a mere switching of minor opinions, but of the entire direction of one's life. It involves a radical turning **from** sin to Christ.*

–R.C. Sproul,

Essential Truths of the Christian Faith

(c) Do you have a fear that you will commit a sin in the future for which you might not be forgiven? Explain your answer. How does I John 2:1-2 speak to you?

R.C. Sproul says: “Repentance is not the cause of new birth or regeneration; it is the result or fruit of regeneration. Though repentance begins with regeneration, it is an attitude and action that must be repeated throughout the Christian life. As we continue to sin, we are called upon to repent as we are convicted our sin by the Holy Spirit.”

5. (a) According to I John 1:7-10 what part does the recognition of our sin play in the remission of that sin?

(b) Read 2 Corinthians 7:8-10. How would apply Paul’s words to your own life, and the life of your family, church, friends, and others?

6. Read Psalm 51:10, 17. How does you own heart line up with these verses?

7. Think of standing before God on the Day of Judgment. Do you think it is enough to have your sins forgiven or would you also feel a need to have the righteousness of Christ reckoned to your account? Why or why not?

- When a believer is justified his sin (past, present, and future) is *removed* and is replaced with Christ’s righteousness.
- The root word of remission means *to send*.
- Repentance is a prerequisite, a necessary condition for salvation.

Truth for Today: *I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more. Isaiah 43:25*

Defining Justification

As we saw in Lesson 6, of the five cries of the Reformation, two were central. *Sola Scriptura*, “by Scripture alone” was the *formal* cause and *Sola fide*, “by faith alone,” was the *material* cause. The reformers believed that the Roman Church was perverting God’s Word when it came to the doctrine of justification. The reformers believed that justification occurred by *faith alone*. The Roman Church believed that justification occurred from both faith and works. The reformers believed believers are justified by receiving Christ’s righteousness, while the Roman Church believed that believers had their own righteousness and Christ’s righteousness as well. These were huge differences. Both sides understood that something central to Christianity was at stake. See the chart below for more information on the Catholic and Protestant differences on the doctrine.

Doctrine of Justification	
Roman Catholic View	Reformed View
Instrumental cause: baptism	Instrumental cause: faith
Infused righteousness	Imputed righteousness
Inherent righteousness	Alien righteousness
Analytical justification	Synthetic justification
Grace plus merit	Grace alone
Faith plus works	Faith alone
No assurance of salvation	Assurance of Salvation

It was of supreme importance for the reformers to convey this doctrine. Burdensome traditions resulted from the Catholic beliefs. Just one example (addressed in Lesson 6) was the visiting of relics associated with a saint in order to obtain some of the extra righteousness he had accumulated. It must have been a relief to learn that only Jesus could impart righteousness. He was the only One who could make a deposit into a believer’s account.

Even the early church had difficulty believing and adhering to the correct doctrine of righteousness. It was difficult for them to believe that salvation was achieved by faith alone.

1. (a) Read Galatians 1:6-10. What was Paul upset about?

- (b) Do you believe you have reason to be upset about the same thing today?
If so, how do you personally respond to the problem?

Charles Colson gives this illustration of faith and works. “God credits righteousness apart from works” (Romans 4:6). Think of the term credit in this way: God treats Jesus’ substitutionary, atoning death as provision of the righteousness that is, in a

In January of 1998, through an organization called Evangelicals and Catholics Together (ECT), Protestant and Catholics came together signing an article agreeing that justification is by faith alone which ended a 300-year debate.

We agree that justification is not earned by any good work or merits of our own; it is entirely God’s gift, conferred through the Father’s sheer graciousness out of the love he bears us in his Son, who suffered on our behalf and rose from the dead for our justification.

–Charles Colson,
The Faith

sense, deposited in the bank. Your act of faith is to believe that God has done this, whereby that righteousness is credited to your account. From then on, you begin drawing on it as you live a new life you invest it by producing good works. (Colson, *Faith*)

2. In what way are you using the righteousness that God provided to you when you were saved?

The Roman Church had perpetuated their beliefs for over a thousand years. When the reformers challenged them a special council was called—the Roman Catholic Council of Trent, which was held in 1545 in Trent, Italy (see Chart 3). This council condemned the selling of indulgences, immorality of clergy, appointing family members to church offices, and Protestantism. This was one year before Martin Luther died.

3. Examining the chart above, describe ways you believe people would behave differently according to which side they were on with this doctrine?

- The reformers believed that justification occurred by *faith alone*.
- The Roman Church believed that justification occurred from both faith and works.
- The Roman Catholic Council of Trent of 1545 condemned the Protestant Doctrine of Justification.

Truth for Today: ... *we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified.* Galatians 2:15-16

Notes:
