

Defining and Being Defined by the Gospel

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[0 : 01] Well, we will be in 2 Corinthians today, in chapter 5.

This is a message that never wears out. The title of which, Defining and Being Defined by the Gospel.

2 Corinthians 5.21. We'll be there in just a moment. But let me ask you, what do Christians mean by the Gospel? Now, I'll put you in a context where you are with someone, and they're not quite certain about this talk of Christianity and the Gospel and Jesus, and they're wanting clarification from you.

At the heart of all of this, what is it about? What's going on? And so the question comes, what do Christians mean by the Gospel? I actually had a relative of mine, an uncle, one day in conversation many years ago.

He had been attending a church, kind of out of the blue. Everybody was afraid of Uncle Stanley. He was a great big old ball guy, and he was a highway patrolman in Florida, and he had the voice and the looks and everything to go with it.

[1 : 24] And so knowing that I was in seminary, and out of the blue he's going to church, and he asked me one day, what is all this talk about the Gospel?

And I just looked at him. I'm like, am I getting thumped? Am I going to say something, and that's going to be an excuse for him to put me in headlocks because he liked to do that? So it took me a little bit by surprise.

Well, I don't want you to be taken by surprise. If there's anything as Christians that we need to be sure of, certain of, and well-versed in, it's how to talk to people about the heart of why we are who we are, the Gospel.

Why did Jesus come to earth? Why did he become a man? Why did Jesus die on the cross? Why did it have to be so bloody?

Why do you Christians go on and on about the blood? You people are obsessed with blood. Why do Christians call Jesus' suffering and death and bloody death good news?

[2 : 31] Are you people morbid? Are you crazy? Well, these questions get us to the heart of being a Christian, of living in a right relationship with God.

Bottom line, that's what it's all about. The bottom line of Scripture is that we are enemies of the cross of Christ. We are born into sin, and before we ever commit our first sin, we're sinners in the eyes of the Lord.

So what do we do with that reality that we are separated from God, we are not in a right relationship with Him from the get-go?

Christianity is all about the Gospel because the Gospel is the good news of what it is that puts us into a right relationship with Jesus. If you think of it in those terms, you'll get started on the right foot as you begin to talk with someone about the Gospel.

We never want to assume or take for granted that people in our church family know and understand and can articulate the Gospel. We don't want to throw that term around, talk about it, and use Christianese in ways where people are kind of looking at us like, I know I'm supposed to know that, but I'm too embarrassed to ask, what does that mean?

[3 : 45] It is always okay at Grace Church for you to say, and what does that mean? Always. And where do we find that in Scripture? Those are good questions.

Last Sunday, I completed an exposition through 2 Peter. And as Peter closed his letter in chapter 3, he took great pains to call his readers to reflect on and then to keep the main thing, the main thing.

And there are certain passages in Scripture that just seem to reflect and gravitate toward us being able to understand this is a passage that deals with the main thing being the main thing.

All of Scripture is wonderful, but there are just those few. The one that we're going to look at today is one of those few that just really zero in on the heart of what the Gospel is.

That was the main thing.

[4 : 51] I'm going to say it again. This is what Peter was talking about, keeping the main thing the main thing. According to Peter, the main thing is Jesus is coming again, so give all that you are to being godly people so that what we see of you is Jesus in you.

To be godly is to be godlike. It is to reflect the character of God in your life, which is a miracle, isn't it? That you and I would be able to reflect the character of the God of the universe, the creator of all things, lives in us.

And so spiritually we can reflect him to other people. That's the main thing. Live for Jesus in a total life commitment to living holy, godly in all things.

To please him in all respects. That's Peter's main thing, keeping the main thing. Now, to live like that, we need to live the Gospel.

But to live the Gospel, the Gospel needs to first live in us. That's the entire issue that centers around all that we do as disciples of Jesus, that the Gospel is living in us.

[6 : 14] That good news that Jesus is salvation. Did you hear what I said just then? I didn't say a plan. I said a person.

Listen, we are not asking you to put your faith in a plan. We're asking you to put your faith in a person. It's very personal.

If you miss the personal aspect of Jesus dying for you on a cross, you miss the entire message of the Gospel and the purpose of why Jesus came.

He came to die. He came to die to purchase you to heaven. Let it be personal. I shared with you not too long ago, some of you, it might have been on a Wednesday night, I don't remember, that in a counseling appointment not too long ago, there was someone that we were working with from outside of our church, and this was our second meeting.

And this person said all the right things about the Gospel, but we didn't take that for granted. So we always, in the first couple of sessions in counseling, no matter who we're working with, even if it's one of you that comes to us, God willing, you will, we're always going to cover the Gospel with you in the first sessions.

[7 : 30] We're always going to do that. We're just not going to take for granted. And to make a long story short, in sharing with this woman in our second session, we opened the Bible and started walking through a few passages to make sure, is this the reality in your life?

Are you clear, 100% certain, that this is living in you, and you are a Christian? And as we moved through it, Suzanne and I began to realize she wasn't, something was not hitting right.

One eye was this way, and one eye was that way. And I'm like, we need to get those things focused. So we went a little bit further. And the point of the whole thing is this. We finally came to the place where she realized Jesus died for my sins.

And she had gone for so long, not recognizing and realizing that this was personal. She always thought of it in general terms. Jesus died on the cross for our sins.

But what about Jesus died on the cross for my sins? What am I doing with that cross? What am I doing with that Savior? Why do I need him?

[8 : 45] That was missed. And I'll never forget the moment when that settled on her soul, and her face changed, and the tears came, and she sat back, stunned, realizing, I have never made Jesus personal to me.

I've always thought about all that he's done in generic terms. An everybody, and an us, and a we, and not a me. Friends, don't let that.

I'm laboring on that because I don't want that to be you. Greg and I want to take great pains to make sure that you understand and are living in the truth of the gospel, or we're missing the point of the Christian life.

So let me put it up here this way. I want to be sure then, as I've been saying, that we are thinking and living biblically, truthfully, and accurately about Jesus being crucified and raised as God's plan to save all who come to trust in Jesus for forgiveness for their sins.

We're not putting our faith in the plan. We're putting our faith in the person. Now, as a Christian, how are you to understand and how are you to live, live, in light of the Bible's teaching on the atonement?

[10 : 10] We are now going to talk about the atonement. Here it is. The atonement is that aspect of the work of Christ, particularly his death, which makes possible the restoration of fellowship.

Relationship between individual believers and God. You see that? That restoration of fellowship is where this thing becomes very personal. That's when you step into the picture.

Have I been restored into right relationship with God because of my sin? As Jesus died for me, am I putting my faith in him?

Now, let's go to 2 Corinthians 5, and I'll begin reading in verse 17. So much here. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature.

Yours might say new creation. The old things passed away. Behold, new things have come. Now, all these things are from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.

[11 : 18] Namely, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them. And he has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us. We beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

And now the verse that we'll center in on for this morning. He made him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf so that we might become the righteousness of God in him.

So 2 Corinthians 5:21 is our focus for today. And this verse speaks powerfully, very, very precisely to the atoning work of Jesus.

But this verse has also been misunderstood and misapplied to the point of heresy in the teaching of some.

[12 : 23] And I'm sad to say that. That heresy teaches that Jesus... Now here, please hear this carefully. This is not semantics.

This is the heart of sound doctrine and theology. That heresy teaches that Jesus actually became sinful on the cross.

And you might say, well, I thought that's what had to happen so that he could take on our sins. He became sinful, all right? The idea is that Jesus took our sins into himself so that he exchanged his divine and righteous nature for the nature of Satan.

Joel Osteen teaches this. I am not afraid to call out names. Don't listen to that man. Don't listen to anything he says.

Please, beloved, don't do it. Don't read his books. Don't listen to his messages. Please don't. Don't listen to his books.

[13 : 37] Don't listen to his books. Joel Osteen is a very popular and widely read teacher of this view. He says, and I quote, Not only did Jesus pay for the punishment of your sins, the Bible says he actually became sin.

He took sin upon himself and into his being so that you could take God's righteousness upon yourself and into your being.

It's the great exchange. That sounds very clever. That sounds theological. That has a semantic ring to it. It preaches well.

It's heresy. The issue is compounded when we see that there are other verses in Scripture that seem to say this as well.

Seem to say it as well. Let me take you to a couple of places. Galatians 3, 13. Galatians 3, 13. I'm just going to go quickly and read this.

[14 : 39] Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us. For it is written, Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree.

And then in 1 Peter, 1 Peter of all places, 2, 24. And he himself bore our sins in his body on the cross so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness.

For by his wounds you were healed. Those are a couple of passages that seem to suggest to us that Jesus did in some way take into his nature sin and become sin himself.

Well, in this message, I'm addressing, I'm addressing in what way or ways did Jesus become sin for us, become a curse for us, bear our sins in his body.

So as we use 2 Corinthians 5, 21, we're going to use it as a way of establishing for ourselves three critical biblical facts about Christ's atoning death.

[15 : 54] We'll just touch on three. There's so much in this verse. The first fact that we're going to look at concerning Jesus's atonement, the way that he purchases us, purchases us away from sin and into righteousness, the way that he atones for our sin, pays for our sin, is this.

Jesus the Son, God sent his Son to atone for sins. The first fact concerns Jesus the Son. The Son.

He made him to be sin who knew no sin. Now, what I want to point out to you right off the bat is God is acting.

God is initiating. God is moving in to the morass and mess of sin and doing something about it. He's being God by doing what only God can do.

He made him. That is clearly speaking of God the Father and Jesus the Son within the context of the passage.

[17 : 05] The previous context makes this clear for us. If you'll go back and look with me again at verse 17. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature.

The old things passed away. New things have come. Now, all these things are from God. See, God is working. God is initiating.

God is acting. Who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation. Namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them.

What a miracle. And he has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Therefore, we now are ambassadors for Christ.

As though God were making an appeal through us. And so we beg you on behalf of Christ be reconciled to God. Why? Because God made him, Christ, who knew no sin, to be sin on our behalf.

[18 : 13] This is what the work of the Lord is all about in that initiating action of love on the cross. The issue in the passage that we're detailing is how God reconciles sinful people to himself.

How does he do that? How does he do that? He can't just overlook sin. He can't just act like you didn't do it and say, well, that's a mulligan.

You get another shot at that. God's not like that. So how can God do all of this? How can he reconcile us to himself? All right.

God, God must, must act towards us and in us because in our sin, we are spiritually dead to God.

We are not alive to God in spirit. We do not seek for God. As dead people, why would we seek? We're spiritually dead.

[19 : 17] We're not seeking spiritual things, spiritual life. We're spiritually dead. We then are helpless to help ourselves. And I list a couple of passages there.

We won't turn to those this morning, but there they are for you. So reconciliation, beloved, is a rich doctrine and it means essentially that sinners who were once dead to and separate from God are now brought near or brought into friendship with him.

Spiritual enemies have been made friends. There is no man, no religion, or no human wisdom that had anything to do with God sending his son to become sin for us.

This is all a God thing and only God could pull this off. While every other religion in the world is miserably failing at trying to get God to love them, forgive them, and bless them.

We have this. God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Boy, that is our hope, isn't it?

[20 : 27] That is where we ground ourselves for life on this earth. Friends, that has always been God's plan and he put it into motion and is now carrying it forward to completion in and through his son, Jesus Christ.

So our text says, God made Christ to be sin who knew no sin. Jesus was and remains sinless.

So critical. Now I realize that this little phrase can trip us up. He made him to be sin. That can be misleading if we're not careful students of scripture.

So we're going to be careful students. There are other scriptures that make plain what this phrase cannot mean and is not teaching.

Scripture, helping us to interpret scripture. Jesus did not become sin in his person so that his nature became sinful. If Joel Osteen is right, it turns the truth of the gospel on its head and we have no hope.

[21 : 40] That's what's at stake. I can't think of anything he could not have. He couldn't have got it more wrong. There are many, many passages and verses which clearly teach the divinity and sinless perfection of Jesus.

And I want to take you to a few to show you that this was the case as Jesus went to the cross, was on the cross, and as he was raised again. Let me show you. Hebrews 4.15.

Hebrews 4.15. Hebrews 4.15. For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.

Yet without sin. Then in Hebrews 7.26. For it was fitting for us to have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens.

That's our Lord and Savior. 1 Peter 1. Verse 19. But with precious blood as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.

[23 : 17] As he's speaking here about what Christ had done for us and how these people are putting their faith in Christ. How they were redeemed, freed from sin. So we see Jesus here living a sinless life and going to the cross as a sinless, innocent man.

Then we have chapter 2, verse 22. Jesus who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in his mouth.

Chapter 3, verse 18. For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust. Now I want you to see that.

The just for the unjust. Jesus was righteous so that he might bring us to God. That is the critical point of Jesus being righteous.

That he might bring us to God. The just died for the unjust that the just might bring us to God. Now we ask, well, how did he do that?

[24 : 26] How did he, in his righteousness, bring us to God? Well, it's not because in his nature, he became sin.

He remained righteous. Are you tracking with me? I need to see some. You tracking with me? Okay. This is critical. Let me take you a little bit more.

This is the last one. In 1 John, chapter 3, verse 5. You know that he appeared, Jesus appeared, in order to take away sins.

And in him, there is no sin. Did you notice that it said, in him, there is no sin. So now, either the Bible is contradicting itself, or we need to understand 2 Corinthians 5, 21, in light of many other verses that help us interpret it correctly.

Interpret properly what's being said here. Theologically, what are we being taught about the gospel? Jesus did not become a sinner as we are in his nature.

[25 : 42] The second fact is going to help us understand what this phrase, he made him to be sin, does mean. So let me throw this second one up here for you. Jesus the Son, God sent his Son to atone for sins, and Jesus the substitute, God sent his Son to stand in our place.

Critical. God sent his Son to stand in our place. Now, this is often referred to as substitutionary atonement. You might also read it in some of the more technical theological works as penal substitution.

Penal has the idea of penalty. You hear that in the word, penalty, because it has to do with punishment, or penitentiary comes from that word, a place of punishment.

Penal substitution, then, emphasizes that Jesus put himself in our place as sinners to pay our penalty due to our sins.

Our sins. So God's substitute for our sins had to be human because we are human.

[26 : 58] A human had to pay the human price for human sins and suffering against God. but not just any human, right?

God's substitute had to be sinless, spotless, blameless, righteous because if he wasn't, the substitute, then, would also be in need of having his sins atoned for.

Correct? You with me? Now, the question comes, then, where in the world is God going to find a person, a human being, without sin, without a sin nature, a person who's never sinned, a person who's perfect in every way to offer himself as the perfect sacrifice, the righteous, holy sacrifice for sinners?

Where's he going to find a person like that? Well, he had to find him right next to him. And so, the son of almighty God became a human being.

Now, you're starting to see and understand why doctrines like the virgin birth are hills to die on. Because if Jesus was born of a man, it means he was born with our sin nature.

[28 : 20] But he was born of the Holy Spirit, wasn't he? From a woman. Amen. All of this starts to come together as we try to understand the righteous nature of our Lord and Savior acting as our substitute on the cross.

So, it wasn't just any human. It was God's own son. Sinless and perfect. That's where he found our sacrifice. And how?

Here's another one. How can Jesus stand in place of sinners and yet not be sin himself so that he remains a perfect sinless sacrifice which will be acceptable to God?

You see the dilemma? Jesus is going to come to the cross. He is going to bear our sins. All of the sin that you and I commit are going to be placed on him.

How does he remain righteous and spotless and blameless before the Father and yet take on our sin and it not corrupt him? How can he remain the sacrifice that we need him to be for us?

[29 : 28] How can God pull all of that off? Well, that's where the power and the beauty and the wisdom of God shine brightest in a single word. And I could choose a number of different ones right now that would give you the doctrines that we hold dear according to the atonement.

But here's the word that we need. It's the word imputation. Don't let that word scare you off theologically. We're going to deal with the word imputation.

This is absolutely the critical epicenter of how we're to understand the atonement and how that atonement makes us righteous in the sight of Almighty God.

To understand better what this means, we're going to go back to Isaiah and let him help us just a little bit. This is why we chose Isaiah for this morning's reading in our call to worship.

Isaiah 53. I want you to see this in your Bibles beginning in verse 4. We're reading this because we are wanting Isaiah to help us understand the theological implications of imputation.

[30 : 38] imputation. He says in verse 4, surely, now note, I've underlined these words, these pronouns in my Bible, surely our griefs he himself bore.

Does it say there that he bore his own sin? Or does it say that he bore someone else's sin? Someone else's, ours. Surely our griefs he himself bore.

Our sorrows he carried. Yet we ourselves esteemed him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted, smitten and stricken on behalf of whom? Not his sins, on behalf of ours.

But he was pierced through for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities. The chastening for our well-being fell upon him and by his scourging we are healed.

All of us like sheep have gone astray. Each of us has turned to his own way. But the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on him.

[31 : 52] Now what are we talking about as we turn to this? Notice that in 2 Corinthians, back if you would, 2 Corinthians chapter 5 verse 19. Notice there's a little phrase there in 19, not counting their trespasses against them.

These are not Jesus' trespasses being discussed here. They're ours. Not counting their trespasses against them. God should count your sins against you.

Can you say amen to that? Because you're thankful for his mercy, aren't you? God should count my sins against me and your sins. Because why? We're guilty. We truly are criminals in the sight of Almighty God, aren't we?

No question about that. He should hold you to account. He should hold me to account so that you and I are answerable to God for our sin crimes against him and against his laws for living before him.

But this says that God's reconciling work, his bringing you near to himself work means that he does not count your sins against you.

[33 : 09] How is that possible when you are guilty, when I am guilty and when God is holy and our sin separates us from him? How can he then not count us guilty?

In a word, imputation. Imputation. Here's what it means.

To think of as belonging to someone and therefore to cause it to belong to that person. Man, God can do that. And he did it.

God thought of your sins as belonging to his son, Jesus. Jesus bore your sins.

He carried your sins. Your sins were laid upon him by imputation. In other words, God credited or imputed your sins to Jesus.

[34 : 13] God made Jesus guilty for your sins, not his. not his. God did not inject your sins into Jesus' nature.

God imputed, counted, credited, or caused your sins to belong to Jesus. Jesus then was your sin bearer. I hope you're seeing this is not semantics.

We're not splitting hairs here. The gospel stands or falls with what we're talking about right now. Jesus was your sin bearer. But he was not in any way changed into a sinner in his nature.

Jesus Christ was God bearing our sins for us on the cross. He was still God the Son in his being. You understand? He never stopped being the righteous Son of God on the cross.

Amen? He never stopped being God's righteous Son. Jesus did all of this as your substitute.

[35 : 22] As my substitute. He became sin for you in the sense of becoming your substitute with your sins laid on him by the Father.

Do you remember for those of you who have read Pilgrim's Progress? Do you remember how sin was represented in Pilgrim's Progress on Christian?

She's pointing at her back. A big burden, a sack of burden and it bowed him over and he carried it if you've ever seen it illustrated right? And he carried that through.

If you picture that and then picture that sack of sin, burden, and you're carrying it, that thing being lifted off of you by God, you didn't lift it off of you.

Boy, this is important, isn't it? I didn't take my sack off and hand it to God, did I? No, no, I'll tell you what I did. As God drew me, I held on to my sack and ran the other way.

[36 : 27] But God lifted that sack off of me and put it and laid it on the back of his son and then he crucified him and the death that he died was the death for my sins, my penalty, my debt.

sin did not corrupt the righteous son of the living God. He remained the righteous son of the living God from that moment forward and was raised as the righteous son of the living God.

And now we're going to see what's at stake if that's not true. That's why we preach this good and faithful gospel. Jesus did all of this and he did it as our substitute.

Jesus' death was personal in that he died to pay in full the death penalty you deserve for being guilty of sinning against God.

So in the person of Jesus Christ righteousness and sinlessness had to die in the place of unrighteousness and sinfulness.

[37 : 36] sinfulness. Now the third fact is going to help us understand that not only does Jesus free us of guilt and punishment but God laid our sins on his son so that we might become the righteousness of God in him.

That's one of the it's not that God stopped at lifting our sin off of our back to put it on the back of his son and then crucify him and now we just kind of stand there in neutral territory.

We're not righteous yet are we? He took I need righteousness now. I don't have any of my own. So I need God to give me righteousness so that I can stand before him cleansed spotless blameless full of the holiness of Jesus.

And that's exactly what he did in his son. So the third one did I put it up there yet? The third one is Jesus the Savior. We have Jesus the son Jesus the substitute Jesus the Savior.

God sent his son to rescue us, redeem us, deliver us. We could use all kinds of words there from sin and death. I had the great privilege on Friday of joining Jeremy and his extended family, his mom and his dad, in the death of his grandmother and she lived for Christ.

[38 : 57] Miss Margaret lived for Jesus. And I love these kinds of opportunities to go and do funerals like this just for the simple fact that I get to brag on Jesus in somebody's life.

And they make me doing the funeral pretty easy, pretty simple and straightforward. All I have to do is stand up there and talk about how Jesus lived in this person's life and blessed other people.

Jesus gives us life. He conquers sin and death. So the whole funeral I was standing up there bragging on Jesus being the one who conquers sin and death. And telling all of them, one day you'll be laying in this same context.

Mortality is going to catch you. It'll overtake you. But only for a brief moment because then you're going to be raised to life. The question then at that point isn't if you're going to die.

You're going to die and it's not if you're going to live again. You're going to live again. It's where. It's where. Where will you spend? See, it just comes right out as we brag on the Lord.

[39 : 58] God sent his son to deliver us from sin and death. Notice we could translate this the on our behalf part from our verse. We could translate that for our sake on our behalf is for our sake.

He made him who knew no sin to be sin for our sake so that we might become the righteousness of God in him in him.

We might become the righteousness of God. Well, folks, we cannot become the righteousness of God in him if in him is sin. Can't happen.

He's got nothing to offer me. He needs someone to atone for his sins. Only what if he doesn't have any sins? What if the sins he died for weren't his?

And that's what happened. This is imputation. this is spiritual life by grace through faith in spiritual union with Jesus.

[41 : 05] Imputation makes that union possible, but there's so much more. He made him, he made him to be so that in him we might become.

God punished Jesus for something he was not, a sinner, so that God could bless us with something we are not righteous.

Jesus lived a perfect, sinless, and law fulfilling life before God. So Jesus' life of perfection was imputed to you just as your life of sin was imputed to Jesus.

As Jesus hung on the cross, God imputed or credited your sin to his son. That's him taking the sin off your back and putting it on his son.

He credited it to his son as if his son had lived it. So that you could have God credit his righteousness to you. So Jesus lived that perfect, sinless, law-fulfilling life before God.

[42 : 15] Joel Osteen spoke of the great exchange, the great exchange. That's not at all a bad way to talk about what happened on the cross for us.

Not at all. We can see something of that idea in the biblical view of imputation. Certainly. But Osteen missed the point of the gospel by making Jesus to be a sinner like us in his nature, in need of God's forgiveness for his supposed sinful failure.

Jesus was not in need of God's forgiveness, was he, folks? Jesus was bearing our sins, not his own. He didn't need the father's forgiveness. That is just so wrong in every way, and it destroys the meaning of the true biblical gospel.

So let me put this up here so you can see it. The entire point of the spiritual exchange on our behalf is that Jesus bore our sins while remaining sinless himself.

Again, I say, God counted you righteous. How in the world? He credited or imputed Jesus' perfect, sinless nature to you and counts you righteous, spotless, blameless.

[43 : 43] Why? Because you have been given the righteous nature of his son. He died paying our penalty, and not for anything he did wrong, and certainly not because he became sinful in himself.

That's heresy. If Jesus had become sinful in his own nature, he would not have had any righteousness to give to us so that we could be holy as he is holy.

Now look, here's where it all hinges. Our holiness depends entirely on Jesus' holiness. Entirely.

If it's possible to be 110%, it's 110%. Not a little bitty percent of my goodness and then all the rest of his. No, it's all his.

It's an all his or it's nothing. As you believe in Jesus, by God's gifts of grace, through faith, God imputes to you the sinless nature of his son.

[44 : 55] In the moment of your belief, your salvation, God makes you a new creature, a new person, as Jesus Christ comes to spiritually live in you.

Now, folks, in that moment, in that moment of your salvation, a legal transaction takes place in heaven. Legally, Jesus has freed you of your sin debt, paid by Jesus on your behalf.

And we have a word for that too. What is it? What is it that when God declares us righteous and that legal transaction happens? justified, justification, justification.

God justifies you. Oh, it's beautiful. Justification means that in that moment, the legal reality of heaven opens to you.

And that legal reality is this. God declares you not guilty. Based on Jesus' righteousness being credited to you.

[46 : 08] And so now you deserve no punishment in the eyes of the law and the lawgiver. Hallelujah. That's the gospel.

If our Lord and Savior became sin in his nature, he would have no righteousness to offer us. we would not be able to be declared by heaven to be righteous.

Where would we get it from? Let's conclude with the way the Bible helps us know and understand the need for Jesus to act as our substitute on the cross.

I just want to read from Romans, just a couple of passages and I'll have a comment and we'll be finished. Let's go to Romans, if you would. Romans chapter five. Let's just let this ring in our hearts.

Now, folks, this is in preparation for the Lord's table. In just a few moments, I'll conclude my message and we'll take the table together. Let these passages in Romans help prepare your heart for what we're about to do.

[47 : 19] Romans five, beginning in verse one. Therefore, follow the argument here that Paul makes. Therefore, having been justified by what?

Faith. Amen. Having been declared righteous by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Through whom? Also, we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand and we exult in hope of the glory of God.

God. And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance, perseverance, proven character, proven character, hope.

And hope does not disappoint because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us. For while we were still helpless, at the right time, Christ died for the ungodly.

[48 : 30] For one will hardly die for a righteous man, though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. But God demonstrates his own love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Much more than having now been justified by his blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through him. Hallelujah. For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his son, much more having been reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.

And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.

reconciliation. Then if you'll go over to verse 17. For if by the transgression of the one death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the one Jesus Christ.

So then, as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness, righteousness, there resulted justification of life to all men.

[49 : 54] For as through the one man's disobedience, Adam, the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the one, Jesus Christ, the many will be made righteous.

The law came in so that the transgression would increase, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that as sin reigned in death, even so, grace would reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Folks, that is the point of Jesus being righteous and remaining righteous. We'd have to rewrite the greatest theological treatise ever written, the book of Romans, if Jesus became a sinner in his nature.

It's just glorious. Now, here's the quiz before we take the table. what is the gospel? The gospel is the good news that on the cross, God treated Christ as if he sinned all the sins of everyone who would ever believe in him so that he could treat them as if they had lived Christ's perfect life.

That's the exchange. That's imputation. That's justification. that's what Paul means in 2 Corinthians 5:21 for our sake on our behalf so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

[51 : 26] He made him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf for our sake. Glory be to God. Well, so I thought after I read through some of this this week, what if the Lord takes me on this airplane ride?

I want to make sure this will be ringing in your ears. Well, we'll give him this. He let us have the gospel before the Lord took him.

Well, I hope that's every Sunday. I hope every Sunday we're bragging on the gospel of the Lord Jesus as the heart of why we are, who we are, why we're here and all of that.

But I wanted to be super clear about that. We'll never get tired of that message, will we? Well, let's prepare our hearts to take the Lord's table together as we commune together in the Lord Jesus and memorialize the time that Jesus spent on the cross suffering for us and then dying to pay our penalty.

That's what this Lord's table moment is all about. So as the men come forward, may I please invite you to bow your heads and just offer a brief prayer to the Lord.

[52 : 46] asking God to help you take the table in a worthy manner. That is, that you have confessed your sin, you don't have any known unconfessed sin in your life, and the men will begin to pass the elements even as you are in prayer.

God blesser. Hirsut matted and can achieve all the things like other toes, will solve your walls.