

# GOD'S METHOD OF SAVING SINNERS A REMARKABLE SALVATION

this paper again.  
RECOMMENDED READING

BY DAVID HOLDEN [ALETHEIA PUBLISHING]

Dr. Ernest Kevan	“Salvation”, (Evangelical Press).
Gary Long	“Substitutionary Atonement”
Dr. Leon Morris	“The Cross in the New Testament”
B. A. Ramsbottom	“Bible Doctrines Simply Explained”
H. A. Ironside	“Full Assurance How to Know You’re Saved”
F. F. Bruce	“The Defence of the Gospel in the New Testament”
Dr. M. Lloyd Jones	“The Cross the Vindication of God”. (Booklet)

John Newton was a man who, early in his life was a slave trader; he would curse and swear and blaspheme against God. After his conversion to Christ, he was so amazed at God’s love for him he wrote the hymn, *‘Amazing Grace’*.

Another man, George Meyer, was part of the ruthless, murderous Al Capone gang He took part in robberies and drove the car for Al Capone.

A woman was involved in drugs and prostitution. Another woman was involved in witchcraft and followed the direction of Satan. They all placed their faith in Christ and were delivered from their past evil ways. From the moment they placed their faith in Christ, they stood, and continue to stand before God, with a righteousness which is greater than that of any angel in God’s sight. Whereas before, they were some of the most vile of sinners, not only in the sight of God, but of man also.

It is remarkable that a person who is a sinner in the sight of God and man can be saved, because Jesus had warned the people of the high standard of righteousness which is required before a per-

son can enter the kingdom of God, he said, *“For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heavens”* (Matthew 5:20).

In another passage we learn that no person is able to attain the standard of righteousness required. The Bible says, *“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”* (Romans 3:23), i.e. no person is able to keep the law perfectly in thought and action. You might very well ask, ***“If the standard of God is so high, how can a sinner be saved?”***

This article will endeavour to answer that question and related questions.

## A SUBSTITUTE USED IN OLD TESTAMENT TIMES

In the days before Christ, God provided a way by which first of all the believer could have his sins symbolically covered through a sacrifice: *“the sacrifice was the divinely instituted provision whereby the sin might be covered and the liability to divine wrath and curse removed.”* (1). The animal became

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symbolically the substitute for the believer. Because an animal is not under God's law, it cannot break the law, so it is without sin: a symbolical substitute. The hand of the sinner was placed upon the head of the sacrificial animal, symbolically transferring the sins of the person to the animal. The animal was then killed, symbolically bearing the death penalty for sins in place of the believer. "If his offering is a burnt offering from the herd, he shall offer a male without blemish; he shall offer it at the door of the tent of meeting, that he may be accepted before the Lord; he shall lay his hand upon the head of the burnt offering, and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him" (Leviticus 1:3-4).

See also Leviticus 16:20-22.

The sacrifice symbolically bears the sins.

## CHRIST IS THE SUBSTITUTE FOR BELIEVING SINNERS

These sacrifices pointed to the one who would not only bear fully the sins of believers, but would also live a life of perfect righteousness in their place, thus entitling them to all of the rewards due to a person meeting God's perfect standard of righteousness. The basic reward being eternal life with God. In time, God sent his Son Jesus Christ, to live a life of perfect righteousness in place of the believers then to die in his place. When a sinner places his faith in Jesus Christ, the righteousness of Christ is imputed to him, i.e. reckoned or accounted to be his (see note on imputation p.6). It was prophesied in the O.T. that one would

come (Jesus), to be righteous on behalf of the sinner. "...and this is the name by which he will be called;" The Lord is our righteousness (Jeremiah 23:6.). Today, the Christian is able to say, "Jesus is my righteousness".

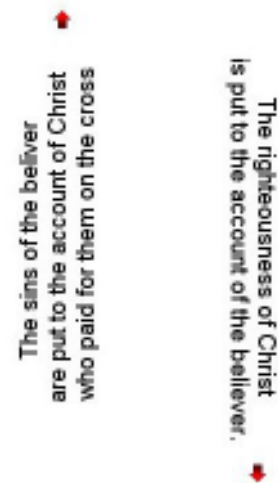
The prophet Isaiah looked forward to the day when sinners could stand before God with a righteousness which is whiter than snow. "... Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snows though they are red as crimson, their shall be like wool." (Isaiah 1:18). This is possible because the righteousness of Christ is put to the account of the believer, that is why we read in the same chapter, "Zion will be redeemed with justice, her penitent ones with righteousness." (1: 27).

The important of the righteousness of Christ is further made clear in another passage in Isaiah. He prophesied that the righteousness of Christ would be imputed to the sinner (put to his account). "He shall see the fruit of the travail of his soul and be satisfied, by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous; and he shall bear their iniquities." (Isaiah 53:11).

To be "**accounted righteous**" is to have the righteousness of Christ put to your account. Righteousness is pictured as covering the believer like a robe. "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall exalt in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has clothed me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with garland, and a bride adorns herself with jewels." (Isaiah 61:10). It is far better to wear a robe of righteousness (the righteousness of Christ) than to wear a \$1,000 suit.

the law, in this case, by declaring a verdict of acquittal, and so excluding all possibility of condemnation. Justification thus settles the legal sta-

### THE SAVING WORK OF CHRIST



### THE BELIEVING SINNER

tus of the person justified." (3).

"Baker's Dictionary of Theology" says, "There is no lexical ground for the view of Chrysostom, Augustine, the Medievals and Roman [Catholic] theologians that 'justify' means, or connotes as part of its meaning, 'make righteous'". (4). On the contrary, God declares the believer (at the moment of faith) to be righteous with the righteousness of Christ.

## END NOTES

1. JOHN MURRAY, "REDEMPTION ACCOMPLISHED AND APPLIED", (BANNER OF TRUTH, 1961) p. 25
2. C. W. HODGES, "INTERNATIONAL STANDARD BIBLE ENCYCLOPEDIA" (EERDRNANS, 1979) VOL. 2, p. 812
3. JAMES I. PACKER, "BAKER'S DICTIONARY OF THEOLOGY", ED. E. F. HARRISON, G. W. BROMLEY, G. F. HENRY, (BAKER BOOK HOUSE, 1960) p. 304.

4. "BAKER'S DICTIONARY OF THEOLOGY", p. 304.

## QUESTIONS ??

1. Are we saved by a keeping of the law?
2. Is it necessary to be righteous in order to be saved?
3. Are we saved by a righteousness from God infused into our lives?
4. Do we receive our salvation solely through faith?

## Answers...

1. Yes, not our law keeping, but by the law keeping of Christ. If Christ had not kept the law perfectly, we could not be saved. See Matt. 5:17-30. (NB v. 20).

2. Yes, the perfect character of God demands a perfect people to dwell with Him. Anything less falls short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). Jesus said, "For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 5:20).

God's demand for righteousness can only be found in Jesus Christ (Romans 5:17).

3 No, we are not saved by a righteousness within ourselves. We as saved by a righteousness outside of ourselves in the person fit Jesus Christ. A righteousness which is imputed to us (put to our account).

4. Yes, faith alone unites us to Christ and his saving work.

**If you have answered any of the above questioner wrongly, then please read through**

action is not truly faith. See James 2:17-22.

## ONLY THROUGH FAITH IN CHRIST

To those who have not put their faith in Christ, I would like to give a Warning against the temptation to put part of your faith in works or religious observance. God who is perfect, demands a perfect little for that perfect heavenly reward; putting even a part trust in yourself for acceptance before a perfect God would be like the scientist who knows that he needs pure water for an experiment but instead picks, up a glass of dirty water and basins to pour clean water into it. No matter how much water he pours into the glass, the water in the glass will never become pure; he needs to go straight to the source of pure water. Likewise, all sinners need to go to the source of pure righteousness, Jesus Christ and not put a part trust in themselves or any other source.

Salvation is solely through Jesus Christ who said, *“I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.”*

(JOHN 5:24).. SEE ALSO JOHN 3:36, 1 L :25-26, 12:46, 20:30-31, ACTS 4:12, ROM. 8:1, 1 JOHN 5:11-12.

## IMPUTATION - ITS MEANING

To Impute something to a person means to set it to his account or to number it among the things belonging to him, to reckon it to him. If something is imputed to a person, it is made his legally; it is

counted or imputed as his possession. To impute means to account, charge, credit reckon, attribute For example, put the righteousness of Jesus Christ to my account! *“It makes no difference, so far as the meaning of imputation is concerned, who it is that imputates, whether man (1 Sam. 22:15) or God (Psalm 32:2); it makes no difference what is imputed, whether a good deed for reward (Psalm 106:30ff) or a bad deed for punishment (Lev. 17:4); and it makes no difference whether that which is imputed is something which is personally one’s own prior to the imputation, as in the case above cited, where his own good deed was imputed to Phinehas (Psalm 106:30-31) or something which is not one’s own prior to the imputation, as where Paul asks that a debt not personally his own be charged to him (Philemon 18). In all these cases the act of imputation is simply the charging of one with something... when God is said to ‘impute righteousness’ to a person, the meaning is that He judicially accounts such a one to be righteous and entitled to all the rewards of a righteous person (Rom. 4:6,11)” (2).*

Because it is the righteousness of Jesus Christ which is imputed to the believing sinner, he or she stands before God with a righteousness which is greater than that of any angel in God’s sight.

## JUSTIFICATION - ITS MEANING

*“The Biblical meaning of ‘justify’ (N.T. dikaiōo) is to pronounce accept and treat as just i.e. as, on the one hand, not penally liable, and, on the other, entitled to all the privileges due to those who have kept the law. It is thus a forensic team, denoting a judicial act of administering*

## JESUS CHRIST, THE SINNER’S RIGHTEOUSNESS

Paul in explaining the gospel to the Romans says that in the gospel, the righteousness of God has been revealed, and that *“he who through faith is righteous shall live.”* (Romans 1:17. ).

Paul uses two examples to show that perfect righteousness is accounted (imputed) to the believer when he has faith in Jesus Christ.

\* The first example is Abraham.

In Romans 4:1-11, Paul shows that Abraham was accounted as righteous through faith before he was circumcised. *“The purpose was to make him the father of all those who believe without being circumcised and who thus have righteousness reckoned to them.”* (Rom. 4:11). *“But the words ‘It was reckoned to him’, were not written for his sake alone, but for ours also. It will be reckoned to us who believe on him that raised from the dead Jesus our Lord.”* (Rom. 4:23-24) .

\* In the second example, Paul shows that death (both spiritual and physical, is passed on to all through the sin of Adam, but life is passed on to all who will receive the free gift of righteousness (which is reckoned or imputed to those who have faith in Christ). *“For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God’s abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.”* (Rom. 5:17). As for the lasting benefit of this righteousness, the Bible says, *“Let up your eyes to the heavens, look at the earth beneath; the heavens will vanish like*

*smoke, the earth will wear out like a garment and its inhabitants die like flies. But my salvation will last forever, my righteousness will never fall.”* (Isaiah 51:6). See also 51:8.

Righteousness is put to the account of the believer through faith in Christ. *“But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace ...”* (Rom. 3:21-24). Jeremiah was one of the prophets who testified that Jesus Christ would be our righteousness. *“... This is the name by which he will be called: The Lord Our Righteousness”* (Jer. 23:6).

## SELF - RIGHTEOUSNESS FAILS

All forms of religious observance and law keeping on the part of man, fail to satisfy the demands of God who is perfect and has a perfect standard. The Bible tells us *“... if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothings”* (Galatians 2:21).

Paul explains that the Jews try to establish their own righteousness, and so lose the righteousness that is freely available through believing in Jesus Christ. He says, *“I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but it is not enlightened. For being ignorant of the righteousness that comes from God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God’s righteousness. For Christ is the end of the law, that everyone who has faith may*

be justified.” (Rom. 10:24). Paul is well qualified to speak of the failure of man to gain acceptance before a holy and righteous God. He was a Pharisee for many years and had sought to gain acceptance before God through zealous law-keeping. However, after coming to know Jesus Christ as his own personal saviour, Paul says of his past

“...I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my, Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ - the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.”

(Phil. 3:8-9).

A point to remember in evangelism; Christianity is the only religion in which faith is placed in another person for righteousness; all other religions require some form of law-keeping, or performance of religious duty for self-justification or self-righteousness, but on judgment day, only Christ will be found to be righteous enough and those who have his righteousness through faith.

One day a Jehovah’s Witness knocked on my door so I said to him, **“how is a person put right with God according to your religion?”** He told me all the things he believed a person should do. I then told him, **“even if you did all of those things perfectly, you can not satisfy the demands of a perfect God, you need to put your faith in Christ because only the righteousness of Christ can satisfy the demands of a righteous and perfect God.”**

## JESUS TAKES THE BELIEVER’S PUNISHMENT

Jesus Christ not only gives the believer His righteousness, but he also takes the sins of the believer upon himself at the cross. The sins of the believer are imputed to Christ (put to his account); this does not turn him into a sinner, but it does make him legally punishable for the sins of believers. These sins were legally paid for in his death on the cross. *“For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”* II Cor. 5:21 ).

## THE BELIEVER’S LEGAL POSITION

The believer’s legal position before God may be described this way. Suppose for a moment that you were called before the judge of all the earth to give account for your life, and he were to say to you, “I only let those who are 100% righteous enter heaven, how do you plead?” You then say to him. *“I do not meet that standard, but I have a substitute! Jesus Christ. I would like you to examine him in my place.”* The judge of all the earth, after looking at your substitute says, **“I have examined your substitute; he has met my standard perfectly, I must let you go except for one other matter your sins; you must be punished for your sins. How do you plead?”** You then reply, *“My sins deserve a punishment I could not bear, but I have a sub-*

*stitute, Jesus Christ. Please examine him and the punishment he has taken in my place.”* The judge of all the earth says after the examination, **“I have examined your substitute. He has taken the whipping in your place; he has died in your place. Because your substitute has met my standard and has taken your punishment upon himself, I must let you go to enjoy all the rewards he has earned for you.”**

God has secured this saving work of Christ for every believer by raising him from the dead (Acts 2:29-36) Jesus continually stands before the Father as our righteous substitute

## THE EXAMPLE OF MARRIAGE

Some people claim that acceptance with God which has a legal basis does not display the love of God; it is too cold and formal. Suppose for a moment that there Has no legal basis to marriage; a young couple just live together on the basis that they teeny a love for each other. Both partners may come and go as often as they like, as there are no legal ties whatsoever. It may seem good on the surface to base a relationship on feelings, but both partners would soon feel very insecure in such a situation. Neither person could be sure that his or her partner would not suddenly feel unhappy about the relationship, go away for a long time, or perhaps even live with someone else, Love needs to be able to express itself through law, to be able to say, **“I will commit myself to you through the bad**

**times as well as the good!”**. In like manner, God through his law commits himself to the forgiven sinner. God sent his Son to live under the law and be found righteous, and then to die in the place of transgressors of the law, and finally to bind himself to the forgiven sinner with the promise that he will not leave us nor forsake us (John 6:37-39). This is the way in which true love will commit itself. So the law of God expresses the love of God, just as marriage based on law expresses the love that the couple have for each other.

## THE OBJECTION TO GOD’S METHOD OF SAVING SINNERS

Some in the time of Paul, as in our time, objected to God’s method of justification, and made statements along the lines of, **“If it is true that we are saved by grace and do not have to work toward our salvation, then why not sin that grace may abound?”** The apostle Paul in reply said, *“What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?”*

(Romans 6:1).

Here was a golden opportunity for Paul to say, **“but you have misunderstood me; good works must accompany your faith for salvation”**. But he cannot say that; he merely says *“By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?”* (Rom. 6:2). Works are a sign of faith, they do not produce the faith that saves. Good works justify the believer before others as being saved. The book of James shouts that faith which cannot express itself in