

G R A C E

REFORMED BAPTIST CHURCH

SOLI ◇ DEO ◇ GLORIA

HOW GREAT A SALVATION, Part 4
Understanding the *Ordo Salutis* [Order of Salvation] of God
Justification by Faith Alone

Romans 8:28-30

July 13, 2008

- Like so many members of GRBC, I grew up in a “conservative” Southern Baptist Church. In these churches, I was taught that God loved me; Jesus Christ died for my sins on the Cross; and if I accept Jesus Christ as my Savior and Lord, I will be forgiven of my sins. God would declare me “not guilty.” This was the Gospel I knew.
- Although there is a good deal of truth in this message it is certainly not the whole truth. It may be good news; but, to borrow a phrase from R.C. Sproul, **it is not the Gospel**. In fact, a biblical understanding of the doctrine of Justification would correct such a belief. Yet, in my “conservative” upbringing I can never remember hearing a sermon on Justification or Adoption.
- In fact, in most mainstream Protestant churches today, man is never viewed as depraved as the Scriptures declare we are. God is never viewed as great and sovereign as the Scriptures declare He is. Consequently, salvation [particularly in Justification] is never viewed as miraculous as the Gospel reveals it is.

- 1.) The Covenant of Redemption [Decrees of God]
- 2.) Election
- 3.) The Outward Gospel Call
- 4.) Regeneration
- 5.) Conversion [Faith / Repentance]
- 6.) Justification
- 7.) Adoption
- 8.) Sanctification
- 9.) Perseverance
- 10.) Death
- 11.) Glorification

I. Man's Helpless Position Before God: He is Sinful

- Before one can even begin to understand the nature of Justification; he must first realize the helpless position that man is in before God, apart from Christ. The Scriptures are absolutely clear regarding our standing before God [apart from Christ].

Genesis 6:5: “Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”

- First of all, **we are spiritually DEAD.**

Ephesians 2:1,5: “And you were dead in your trespasses and sins,... even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),”

See also **Colossians 2:13**

- Not only are we spiritually dead, but we are **enemies of God.** There is no such thing, biblically, as a state of neutrality with God.

Romans 8:7: “because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so,”

See also **Titus 3:3-5.**

- Consequently, since we are spiritually dead, enemies of God, the Apostle Paul writes that we were “**by nature children of wrath**” [Ephesians 2:3]. That is, the infinite wrath of God [who is infinitely holy] was upon us because we sinful.

- Yet, not only are we, apart from Christ, enemies of God who are spiritually dead in our trespasses and sins, but we were **born sinful.** That is to say, we were not simply born with an inclination to sin; we were born with a sinful nature.

Psalm 51:5: “Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me.”

- This truth brings to the forefront a concept that is absolutely central if we are to understand justification by faith alone. That concept is **IMPUTATION.**
- The term **imputation** “denotes an attributing of something to a person, or a charging of one with anything, or a setting of something to one's account.”

International Standard Bible Encyclopedia

Another way of defining **imputation** is “to reckon” or “to charge to one’s account.”
The Evangelical Dictionary of Theology

- When seeking a biblical understanding of Justification, then, we observe, Scripturally, **three times imputation is significant to the believer:**

- | |
|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Adam’s Sin is Imputed to His Posterity2. The Sin of God’s People [the Elect] is Imputed to Christ3. The Righteousness of Christ is Imputed to God’s People [the Elect] |
|---|

- Thus, we are born sinful because **the sin of Adam is imputed to us.**

“Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all 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 until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come. But the free gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many. The gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned; for on the one hand the judgment arose from one transgression resulting in condemnation, but on the other hand the free gift arose from many transgressions resulting in justification. 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 there resulted justification of life to all men. For as through the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One 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.”

Romans 5:12-21 [emphasis added]

- Wayne Grudem rightly states, “The conclusion to be drawn from these verses is that all members of the human race were represented by Adam in the time of testing in the Garden of Eden. As our representative, Adam sinned, and God counted us guilty as well as Adam...God counted Adam’s guilt as belonging to us, and since God is the ultimate judge of all things in the universe, and since his thoughts are always true, Adam’s guilt does in fact belong to us. God rightly imputed Adam’s guilt to us.”
- Systematic Theology*, p. 495

“They [Adam and Eve] being the root, and by God’s appointment, standing in the room and stead of all mankind, the guilt of the sin was imputed, and corrupted nature conveyed, to all their posterity descending from them by ordinary generation, being now conceived in sin, and by nature children of wrath, the servants of sin, the subjects of death, and all other miseries, spiritual, temporal, and eternal, unless the Lord Jesus set them free.”

Second London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689,
Chapter 6: Of the Fall of Man, Of Sin, And of the Punishment Thereof

“Man, in his state of innocency, had freedom and power to will and to do that which was good and well-pleasing to God, but **yet was *unstable***, so that he might fall from it.”

Second London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689, Chapter 9: Of Free Will

- In other words, Adam was our representative and he acted just as every one of us would have acted in the Garden, since man, even in his state of innocency, was **unstable**, thus wholly dependent upon God, His Creator.

* * * * *

- So, apart from Christ, all men [without exception] are **spiritually dead**, and **enemies of God**, with **no ability to do anything which pleases God**. In fact, we are all born that way, for the guilt of Adam’s sin was imputed to us.
- Moreover, God’s divine justice demands that sin be punished. Therefore, God does not simply “wave a cosmic magic wand” and forgive everyone simply out of His love; as this would violate His own divine nature.
- Thus, the **full penalty of sin must be paid**...and finite, sinful man can never fully satisfy the infinite wrath of God toward his sin.

II. God’s Redemptive Plan: Justify the Sinner

a. God is the Author and Justifier

Romans 8:33:

“Who will bring a charge against God’s elect? God is the one who justifies;”

Galatians 3:8-9:

“The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, ‘ALL THE NATIONS WILL BE BLESSED IN YOU.’ So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer.”

See also **Romans 3:25**.

- Consequently, since it is God who justifies, we are *technically* speaking not justified *by* faith; but rather **by God** [or, God’s grace] *through* faith.

Romans 3:24

“being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus;”

b. The Means, or Instrument, through which God Justifies us is Faith *in* the Person and Obedient Work of Jesus Christ Alone

- Throughout the New Testament, the concept of “justification” takes on a meaning that places it **at the center of the Gospel**.

For God to *justify* His people means that He declares them righteous because of the work of Christ on their behalf. It is a forensic, or legal term; whereby God, as the great Judge declares His people righteous. Therefore, our righteousness, as God’s people, is a foreign righteousness, not from ourselves, but from Christ alone.

- The New Testament explicitly states that we are justified through faith in Christ alone.

Philippians 3:9

“and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith,”

Romans 4:5

“But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness,”

Romans 3:21-22

“But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction;”

Romans 10:4

“For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.”

- **Therefore, there is nothing we can *do to earn or attain* righteousness on our own.**

* * * * *

- Yet, one may ask, “***How*** are we justified through faith in Jesus Christ?”
- The answer, biblically, is clear: The righteousness of Christ is **imputed** to us.
- Once again, the concept of “imputation” is one that means “to reckon” or “to charge to one’s account.”
- Yet, to fully understand the imputation of the righteousness of Christ, it is helpful to first understand **the nature of Christ’s righteousness**.

Active and Passive Obedience

- Theologians often make a distinction between the *active* and *passive* obedience of Jesus Christ [although, technically speaking, Christ did nothing *passively*]. The *active* obedience of Christ was all that Christ *actively* did in His life which not only demonstrated an obedience to the Law, but a fulfillment of all the Law, the Prophets and the Psalms [Luke 24:44] (that is, all the Old Testament). The *passive* obedience of the Lord Jesus Christ was His obedience in sufferings and death, as the only one who suffered the full penalty required by the Law of God against those Christ came to save. That is, in His *passive* obedience, Christ fully exhausted the [infinite] wrath of God [the Father] towards *all* the sins of His people.

- Louis Berkhof correctly writes:

“If Christ had merely obeyed the law and had not also paid the penalty, He would not have won a title to eternal life for sinners; and if He had merely paid the penalty, without meeting the original demands of the law, He would have left man in the position of Adam before the fall, still confronted with the task of obtaining eternal life in the way of obedience. By His active obedience, however, He carried His people beyond that point and gave them a claim to everlasting life... His passive obedience consisted in His paying the penalty of sin by His sufferings and death, and thus discharging the debt of all His people... The active obedience of Christ was necessary to make His passive obedience acceptable to God, that is, to make it an object of God’s good pleasure.”

Systematic Theology, pp. 380-381

Active Obedience

Matthew 5:17-18

“Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. “For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished.”

“Passive” Obedience

1 Peter 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.”

1 Peter 3:18

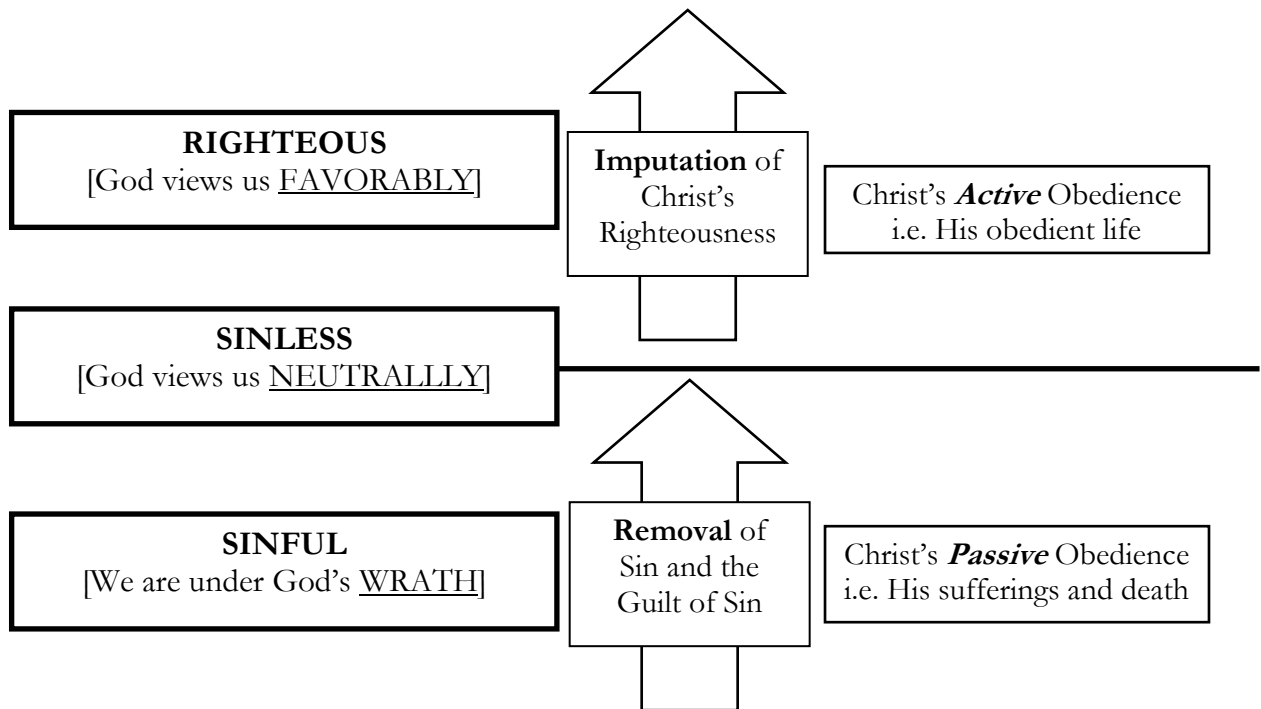
“For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit;”

Isaiah 53:6

“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.”

“The Lord Jesus, by his perfect obedience and sacrifice of himself, which he through the eternal Spirit once offered up unto God, hath fully satisfied the justice of God, procured reconciliation, and purchased an everlasting inheritance in the kingdom of heaven, for all those whom the Father hath given unto Him. (Hebrews 9:14; Hebrews 10:14; Romans 3:25, 26; John 17:2; Hebrews 9:15)”

2nd London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689 [as well as the Westminster Confession of Faith]



□ **Therefore, through Christ’s active and “passive” obedience, He earned much more for His people than just forgiveness of our sins!**

“Those whom God effectually calls, he also freely justifies, not by infusing righteousness into them, but by pardoning their sins, and by accounting and accepting their persons as righteous; not for anything wrought in them, or done by them, but for Christ's sake alone; not by imputing faith itself, the act of believing, or any other evangelical obedience to them, as their righteousness; but by imputing Christ's active obedience unto the whole law, and passive obedience in his death for their whole and sole righteousness by faith, which faith they have not of themselves; it is the gift of God.”

Second London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689

□ Once again, it is through the imputation of Christ’s righteousness that we are justified.

1. Adam's Sin is Imputed to His Posterity
2. The Sin of God's People [the Elect] is Imputed to Christ
3. The Righteousness of Christ is Imputed to God's People [the Elect]

❖ **As we have already seen, Adam's sin was imputed to all of his posterity. Yet, it does not end here. The reason is that, the sin of all God's people was also imputed to Christ; and the righteousness of Christ was, in turn, imputed to God's people – this is the "Great Exchange."**

The Sin of Adam was Imputed to Us:

Romans 5:18a

"So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men,"

Our Sin was Imputed to Christ:

2 Corinthians 5:21

"He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

Romans 3:21-22

"But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction;"

Isaiah 53:5, 10-11

"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.

But the LORD was pleased

To crush Him, putting Him to grief;...
As a result of the anguish of His soul,
He will see it and be satisfied;
By His knowledge the Righteous One,
My Servant, will justify the many,
As He will bear their iniquities."

- This powerful truth is also reflected in the Hymn, *It Is Well*:

**"My sin, not in part, but the whole, is nailed to the Cross, and I bear it no more,
Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord! Oh, my soul!"**

The Righteous of Christ was Imputed to All who Believe

Romans 5:18b

“even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men.”

2 Corinthians 5:21

“He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

Galatians 2:16-17

“nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified. But if, while seeking to be justified in Christ, we ourselves have also been found sinners, is Christ then a minister of sin? May it never be!”

- Once again, the *means* or *instrument* through which we are justified is faith alone:

Romans 1:16-17

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘BUT THE RIGHTEOUS MAN SHALL LIVE BY FAITH.’”

Romans 4:4-5

“Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due. But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness,”

Romans 5:1-2

“Therefore, having been justified 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.”

c. The Benefit [to the Justified Sinner] of Justification is the Favor of God

- It must be noted; however, that, as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, we are united with Christ.
- In other words, we are no longer *in Adam*; but, rather, we are *in Christ*. In fact, the phrase *in Christ* [along with its different variations] more than **160 times!**

- In his book, *The Holy Spirit*, Sinclair Ferguson writes, “Every element in the classical *ordo salutis* is thus a further perspective on the one reality of the believer’s union with Christ. Christ becomes our covenant partner, as the Holy Spirit binds us to him. **Everything that is his as the one for us becomes ours.** We become one with Christ in the mysterious union of which becoming one flesh in marriage is an analogy (Ephesians 5:30-32). The closeness of the union is dependent upon our mutual possession by, and possession of, the Holy Spirit. By him, Christ bestows on us all his goods... **The central role of the Spirit is to reveal Christ and to unite us to him and to all those who participate in his body.** Just as the indwelling of Christ and the indwelling of the Spirit are two aspects of one and the same reality in the New Testament, so to sustain us ‘in Christ’ is the heart and soul of the Spirit’s ministry.”

“The doctrine of justification means then that in God’s sight the ungodly man, now ‘in Christ,’ has perfectly kept the moral law of God, which also means in turn that ‘in Christ’ he has perfectly loved God with all his heart, soul, mind, and strength and his neighbor as himself. It means that saving faith is directed to the doing and dying of Christ alone and not to the good works or inner experience of the believer. It means that the Christ’s righteousness before God is *in heaven* at the right hand of God in Jesus Christ and *not on earth* within the believer. It means that the ground of our justification is the vicarious work of Christ *for* us, not the gracious work of the Spirit *in* us.”

Robert Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*, pp. 742-743

- John Calvin, commenting on 1 Corinthians 1:5, states, “...since we have been made one with him [Christ], **he [Christ] shares with us all that he has received from the Father.**”

Galatians 3:13-14

“Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us...in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.”

- Consequently, as a result of the righteous declaration, we share in the blessing of Christ – blessings that we receive NOT because of *our* righteousness, but because of ***His* alone!**

III. What Justification by Faith is NOT

1. Justification by faith alone denies that we are declared righteous by anything that we can *do*.

- Contrary to the doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church, the righteousness of justification is **completely a foreign righteousness – it is all, 100% Christ’s righteousness.**

- Thus, we are not justified by faith plus anything else, to include “good works” or the sacraments [such as baptism and communion]. NONE of these, in anyway, “earn” the favor of God.

In 1994, a group of “Evangelical Protestants” and Roman Catholics drafted a document known as *Evangelicals & Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium*. In this document, both groups affirm the following statement:

We affirm together that we are justified by grace through faith because of Christ.

- Yet, as subtle as it seems, this statement is not the ***whole*** truth. The reason is that, biblically, we are “justified by grace through faith in Christ **alone**.”
- Any attempt at *being* righteous, in and of ourselves...any of our “righteous deeds” are but “filthy garments” [Isaiah 64:6]. In fact, in the context, here, Isaiah is saying that our righteousness is like a “menstrual cloth.”

2. Justification by faith does NOT mean that we are inwardly changed in any way by the “infusing” or “imparting” of Christ’s righteousness; rather, the righteousness of Christ is imputed to our account.

- That is, justification does not mean that we are “made righteous.” Furthermore, it does NOT speak to our inward condition [through an “infusion” or “impartation” of righteousness].
- This is why Martin Luther referred to the justified sinner as “snow covered dung.”
- In the same way, when our sin was imputed to Christ, He did not become, inwardly, sinful; rather, He was, on the cross, reckoned as such, in order to pay the full penalty that our sin was due.
- Thus, when we are justified; we are legally declared “righteous.”
- John MacArthur correctly states, “Justification is a forensic, or purely legal, term. It describes what God *declares* about the believer, not what He *does to change* the believer. In fact, justification effects no actual change whatsoever in the sinner’s nature or character. Justification is a divine judicial edict. It changes our status only, but it carries ramifications that guarantee other changes will follow.”

Many here today know that on Friday [July 11, 2008], Kimberly and I received a Referral for adoption for two 3 ½ year old Ethiopian children named Yalfal and Kinetibeb. They are first cousins, and they have both, already in their young lives, experienced loss that few of us here can even comprehend. Both of them have been abandoned by at least one parent; and Kinetibeb’s mother died in March of this year. They are, currently, without a family [except each other]. They are, essentially, orphans, without hope. However, in possibly as little as a few weeks, a representative from our adoption agency will go into an Ethiopian court and request that the court declare Kimberly I to be the legal parents of these two beautiful children. Lord willing, the judge will make the declaration, and before we even arrive in-country, the children will be legally ours. What is interesting is that nothing will change internally with these children. They will still possess the same biological and genetic make-up that they possessed prior to the declaration. Racially, they will remain African. Yet, they will be our children...they will be Baggetts...and, as a result of this declaration, their lives will never be the same.

And so it is with us. This is why the biblical concepts of Justification and Adoption are so closely related.

3. Justification is not simply a declaration of innocence. The “high court of heaven” does not simply declare the justified sinner “NOT GUILTY.”

- The Father’s will for the Son involved much more than mere innocence...The Father’s will was that the Son act righteously.
- In other words, the Father did not send His Son into the world and say, “Whatever you do, just don’t break any of my laws...”
- Consequently, Christ did not simply walk around this earth seeking to avoid breaking the Law of God. Rather, every step Christ took, He did so **actively, intentionally and purposefully** in accordance with the will of His Father.

* * * * *

- There is possibly no greater comfort, therefore, in the life of a believer, than to understand the truth of our alien righteousness which is found in Christ alone!

“The confession of divine justification touches man’s life at its heart, at the point of its relationship to God. It defines the preaching for the Church, the existence and progress of the life of faith, the root of human security, and man’s perspective for the future.”

G.C. Berkouwer

Romans 8:1

“Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”