

Doctrine, Passions, and Practices **What has Jesus done for us?**

"The central question to which the whole New Testament is addressed is the question of how weak, perverse, estranged, and guilty sinners may gain knowledge of God's gracious pardon, acceptance, and renewal." J. I. Packer

Doctrine

1. Last week we saw the extent of our sinfulness. Even though we fully knew God's goodness and perfections, we all refused to worship and trust Him (Rom 1:18ff). Nothing we did was good, everything was sinful, because nothing is good unless it is done in reliance on God and for the glory of God (Rom 3:10-11; Gen 6:5). Our sin is infinitely wicked because it dishonors the infinite glory of God Himself (Lev 22:31f).
2. So how should a holy and righteous God respond to people who continually dishonor His glory? God's passion for His glory stirs Him to righteous wrath. As a result, each of us faces an all-powerful God who is full of anger towards us. Unless something changes -- God will punish us forever for our sin.
3. But what God most delights in is mercy, not wrath, since mercy most greatly displays His glory (Psa 115:1; 138:5-6; Eph 1:6,12,14). And so God has chosen to save a huge number of men and women that no one can count from every nation, tongue, and tribe (Rev 7:9-12).

In order to save me God must accomplish two things:

- a. Punishment: there must be complete punishment for all my sins, endured by someone else.
- b. Perfection: there must be perfect righteousness given to me, accomplished by someone else.

Picture your life as a chalkboard with all your unrighteous thoughts, attitudes, and actions written on it. For God to accept and welcome you two things must take place. First, all the unrighteousness must be erased from the chalkboard. And second, perfect righteousness must be written on the chalkboard.

How can God do that?

4. God gives us hints throughout the Old Testament. God warned that He would bring judgment upon wicked Egypt by killing every first-born son. But this judgment of God "passed over" those Israelite families that had killed a lamb, and painted their doorposts with the lamb's blood (Exodus 12). From that time on every Israelite family celebrated the Passover meal every year. This is a picture of how the death of another enables God's judgment to pass over us.
5. Another picture is given in the animal sacrifices commanded by God: the guilty person symbolically transferred his guilt onto a blameless animal, and then cut the animal's throat (Leviticus 4). So every time someone sinned, there would be a graphic picture of how our sins are transferred to another, and punished on another, so God can forgive us.

6. Another picture is given in Zechariah 3:1-5 –

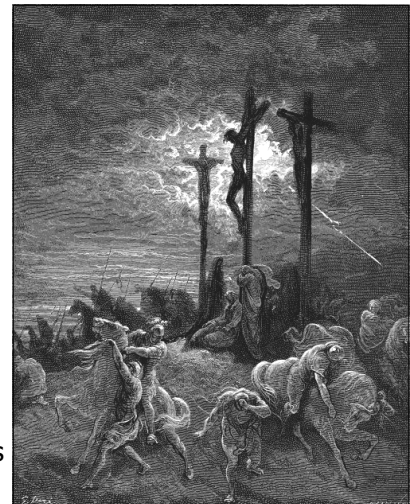
1 Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him. ² And the LORD said to Satan, "The LORD rebuke you, O Satan! The LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is not this a brand plucked from the fire?" ³ Now Joshua was standing before the angel, clothed with filthy garments. ⁴ And the angel said to those who were standing before him, "Remove the filthy garments from him." And to him he said, "Behold, I have taken your iniquity away from you, and I will clothe you with pure vestments." ⁵ And I said, "Let them put a clean turban on his head." So they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him with garments. And the angel of the LORD was standing by.

Note the two actions that God does for Joshua: God takes Joshua's filthy garments (sin) away from Joshua, and God gives clean clothes (perfect righteousness) to Joshua.

7. In Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12 God gives us a detailed description of how our punishment would be paid by His Servant (Jesus), and how Jesus would make us to be accounted perfectly righteous.

Isaiah 53:4-6 -- Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned--every one--to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Isaiah 53:10-11 -- Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. ¹¹ Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities.



Note these crucial truths:

God lays our iniquity on Jesus (53:6); Jesus bore our iniquities (53:11).
Jesus is smitten, crushed, and wounded for our transgressions (53:4,5).
It was God himself who smites and crushes Jesus for sin (53:4,10).
Jesus – the righteous One -- makes us to be accounted righteous (53:11). This sounds like what's clearly taught in the New Testament: our sins are credited to Jesus, and Jesus' perfect righteousness is credited to us.

8. Moving to the New Testament: 2,000 years ago Jesus was born of a virgin (Matt 1:18-23). Jesus had always existed as fully God, equal to God the Father in every way (John 1:1). But – in order to save us – Jesus willingly took on human nature (John 1:14). So Jesus was both fully God and fully man.

9. Jesus' humanity is seen in the way he got tired (John 4:6) and needed food (Mark 11:12). Jesus' deity is seen in how he healed the sick (Mark 2:1-12), calmed storms (Matt 8:23-27), forgave sin (Mark 2:1-12), and multiplied food (Mark 6:30-44).
10. What we see in Jesus is someone who perfectly trusts and obeys His Father (John 6:38), perfectly cares about everyone he meets (Luke 7:13), is fiercely angry when God is dishonored (John 2:13-17) or when people hurt others (Mark 3:5), speaks truth regardless of what people want to hear (Mark 12:14), and forgives those who brutalize him (Luke 23:34). No one has ever lived like Jesus. Jesus lived perfect righteousness.
11. Jesus taught that He Himself was the only way that anyone could come to God:

^{ESV} **John 14:6** Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

12. John the Baptist announced the main purpose of Jesus' coming. Imagine how an Israelite familiar with animal sacrifices would have felt in hearing this:

^{ESV} **John 1:29** The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!

13. Throughout Jesus' ministry he told his disciples about His upcoming death and resurrection. This was the main reason He came to earth:

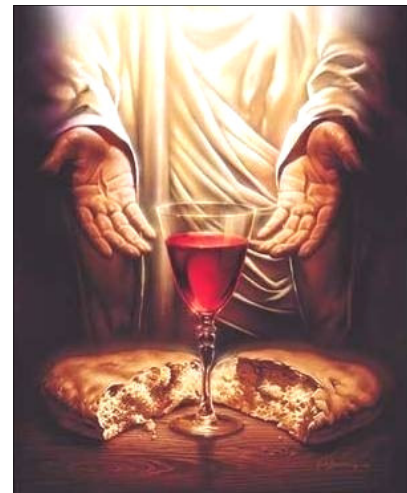
^{ESV} **Mark 8:31** And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again.

^{ESV} **Mark 10:45** For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

(See also Mark 9:31; 10:33-34; 12:8.)

14. Before he was crucified, Jesus celebrated the Jewish Passover feast with his disciples, and urged them to regularly remember His death – with the bread and wine picturing His broken body and shed blood (Matt 26:26ff; Mark 14:12-25; Luke 22:14ff).

^{ESV} **1 Corinthians 11:23** For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread,²⁴ and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me."²⁵ In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."²⁶ For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.



15. Just as Jesus taught, He was betrayed, beaten, mocked, scourged, and crucified. Crucifixion was a horrifying way to die, so bad that it was illegal to crucify Roman citizens. But as horrifying as that was, what was infinitely worse was that Jesus was forsaken, punished by God the Father, on account of our sin that was placed on Him:

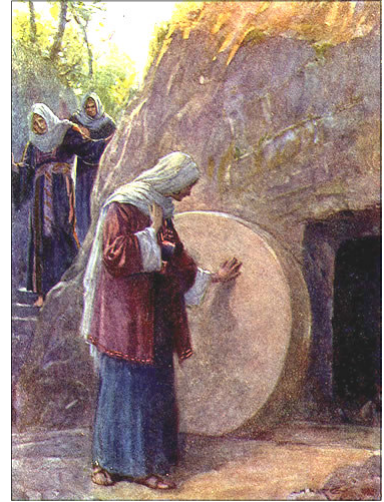
^{ESV} **Isaiah 53:10** -- Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief.

^{ESV} **Matthew 27:46** And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" that is, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

(See also Isa 53:4; 2 Cor 5:21; 1 Peter 2:24.)

16. Just before He died, Jesus said "It is finished" (John 19:30), which means that everything needed for us to be saved was accomplished. Then he died, was buried, and after three days, God raised Him from the dead — literally, physically, bodily.

^{ESV} **Luke 24:5-7** And as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, "Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise."



17. So Jesus accomplished all that was necessary for our salvation. First, he took upon Himself all our sins, and was completely punished for them. A crucial word to understand is "propitiation." It means that Jesus' death "propitiated" (appeased, assuaged) God's wrath against us, by receiving God's wrath upon Himself. Since God's wrath was poured out upon Jesus, there's no more of God's wrath to be poured out upon those who are trusting Jesus.

^{ESV} **Hebrews 2:17** Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

^{ESV} **1 John 4:10** In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

(See also Romans 3:21-25; I John 2:2.)

18. Second, Jesus lived a life of perfect righteousness, which is credited to us by faith. This is called "justification." It is also true that when God saves us He starts to make us actually righteous ("sanctification"). But justification refers to God making us legally (not actually) righteous, by crediting us with Jesus' perfect righteousness the moment we first trust Jesus.

^{ESV} **2 Corinthians 5:21** For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

^{ESV} **Philippians 3:9** ... and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith--

(See also 1 Corinthians 1:30; Romans 4:4-6; Romans 5:16-21; Romans 10:3.)

Passions and Practices

1. When we take seriously God's holiness and our sin, we are left with a burning question – how can we be accepted, loved, and cared for by God? How can we receive the all-satisfying joy of knowing God?
2. In astonishing love and mercy, God provided the answer in the person of His own Son, Jesus. Jesus experienced the complete punishment we deserve, and Jesus lived the perfect righteousness we should have lived.

3. So how can our sins be credited to Jesus, and Jesus' righteousness be credited to us? There's only one way. By faith. By trusting Jesus as Savior, Lord, and all-satisfying Treasure.

^{ESV} **Genesis 15:6** And [Abraham] believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness.



This is not just how we begin the Christian life. This is how we live the Christian life (Gal 2:20). By trusting Jesus, we are always completely forgiven and counted perfectly righteous in Him.

It's not that you have been good enough to deserve God's acceptance. It's not that your faith is righteous enough to deserve God's acceptance.

It's that your faith connects you to the One who IS righteous enough to deserve God's acceptance – and you are accepted by God because you are united to Jesus by faith.

4. So if you are trusting Jesus, then ALL your sins have been completely punished in Jesus, and ALL Jesus' perfect righteousness has been credited to you. Which means that, if you are trusting Jesus, you are completely accepted, loved, and cared for by God now and forever. Which means:

You can admit that you have indwelling sin without thinking this weakens God's love for you.

You can know that God is now and always will be passionately loving you: rejoicing to do you good – taking care of every need — working every circumstance in your life to bring you the joy of knowing Jesus now and forever.

When you sin, you don't try to make up for it by doing something good. You don't wait until you are feeling spiritual before you come back to God. No, you immediately turn to trust Jesus; you understand that your faith connects you with the One who is fully accepted by God; and so you know that you are immediately and fully accepted by God.

You don't have to obey to a certain level before God fully accepts you. No, you trust Jesus right now – and as a result you are immediately and fully accepted and loved by God.

And when, by faith in Jesus, you know that you are fully accepted and loved by God with a love that is as certain and unchanging as the Cross, you will be freed to obey — to live a life of radical, sacrificial love – serving everyone around you -- because you know that God loves you and is completely for you now and forever.

For further discussion

1. Prior to this teaching, how did you think you could be accepted by a holy God? How did this teaching impact you?
2. Read Zechariah 3:1-5 (p.2). What does God do when Satan accused God's people for their sins? Why is this so crucial to understand?
3. Read Isaiah 53:4-6 and Isaiah 53:10-11 (p.2). Then read the summary of crucial truths right below the passages (p.2). Which of these truths is new to you? Which is most precious to you? Which do you need to hear right now? Why?
4. In times past, how have you responded when you realized you had sinned? Did you immediately turn to trust Jesus? Why or why not? Did you try to be good so God would accept you? What's wrong with that?
5. Why is it important to understand that it's not our faith that is righteous, but our faith connects us with the One who is righteous? (How often is your faith weak? How often is it imperfect? Who gets the glory if it's all about the righteousness of our faith? Who should get the glory?)
6. Is there ever any reason not to turn to Jesus and trust Him?
7. Can you see how a radical life of sacrificial love is produced by understanding that you are completely accepted, forgiven, loved by an all-powerful and good God? How does this work?

For further reading

Buchanan, James. The Doctrine of Justification.

Edwards, Jonathan. "Justification by Faith Alone," Works. 1:622-653.

Jeffrey, Steve, Michael Ovey, and Andrew Sach. Pierced for our Transgressions: Rediscovering the Glory of Penal Substitution.

Packer, J. I. and Mark Dever. In My Place Condemned He Stood: Celebrating the Glory of the Atonement.

Piper, John. Counted Righteous in Christ: Should We Abandon the Imputation of Christ's Righteousness?