

*(Rocky - Lesson 4 – 08/18/2024 - Handout) ADAM’S SIN, ATONEMENT, AND IMPUTED RIGHTEOUSNESS:
The Doctrine of Imputed Righteousness
(Romans 3:21-26; 2 Corinthians 5:14-15, 21; Ephesians 2:1-10)*

This is the FOURTH LESSON of the FOUR-PART SERIES: ADAM’S SIN, ATONEMENT, AND IMPUTED RIGHTEOUSNESS.

This morning we will begin with two OPENING SCRIPTURES:

He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him – 2 Corinthians 5:21.

I will rejoice greatly in THE LORD; my soul will exult in my God; for He has clothed me with garments of SALVATION, and He has wrapped me with a robe of RIGHTEOUSNESS – Isaiah 61:10⁴.

The verse from Isaiah 61 is the Old Testament companion of 2 Corinthians 5:21 because both attribute POSITIONAL SANCTIFICATION, not to human merit, but to IMPUTED RIGHTEOUSNESS.

[READ EPHESIANS 2:1-10] ... We also must recall 1 CORINTHIANS 15:22: “For as IN ADAM all die, so also, all who are IN CHRIST will be made alive.” These passages (2 CORINTHIANS 5, ISALAH 61, AND EPHESIANS 2) inform us of two things, both of which are *‘positional’* in nature.

The Corinthian passage tells us we are born IN ADAM. A couple of weeks ago, I associated ‘IN ADAM ALL DIE’ with the position into which – *because of ADAM’S TRANSGRESSION* – each of us is born – And I said the word ‘IN’ is ‘A RELATIONSHIP TERM.’ Every human being either is identified with ADAM or identified with CHRIST. There are no exceptions and there are no alternatives; it is one or the other.

We can think of ‘IN CHRIST’ and ‘IN ADAM’ as ‘SPIRITUAL POSITIONS.’ So how do we explain these *‘positions’*? There are two theological terms that may help explain this: (1) POSITIONAL SANCTIFICATION, and (2) TEMPORAL SANCTIFICATION.

... (1) BY POSITIONAL SANCTIFICATION we will mean: ‘A COMPLETED WORK’ and ...

... (2) BY TEMPORAL SANCTIFICATION we will mean: ‘A WORK IN PROGRESS.’

One term is ‘HEAVENLY’ (POSITIONAL SANCTIFICATION) and the other term is ‘EARTHLY’ (TEMPORAL SANCTIFICATION).

One of the reasons some denominations believe a Christian can lose his or her salvation is because they have a confused and incomplete understanding of the distinctions that exist between these two concepts.

The distinction is between (1) *what God has done*, and (2) *what God is doing in the lives of believers*. So let’s take a minute to think about these two concepts.

There are a number of things that happen *instantaneously* the moment we respond with positive volition to the gospel. It is these things that fall under the heading, POSITIONAL SANCTIFICATION.

Now the following is not an exhaustive list of the things that take place the instant we are saved ... but I will cite a sufficient number of examples to clarify what is meant by POSITIONAL SANCTIFICATION.

Let’s think first of some characteristics of POSITIONAL SANCTIFICATION – and since POSITIONAL SANCTIFICATION is only available to us ‘IN CHRIST,’ let’s consider the positions Jesus Christ holds as King of kings and Lord of lords – as fully God and fully man, united in one person forever – as such:

- **JESUS CHRIST IS ETERNAL** and according to John: ‘God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son (this is the same as being ‘in Christ’) has (eternal) life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have (eternal) life – *1 John 5:11-12*.
- **JESUS CHRIST IS THE ETERNAL SON OF GOD**, and according to Galatians, we share in His Sonship, “For you all are **SONS OF GOD** through faith in **CHRIST JESUS**” – *Galatians 3:26*.
- **JESUS CHRIST IS ELECT FOREVER**, and according to *Ephesians Chapters 1–4*, we who are called to faith by the Spirit of God share in His Election.
- **JESUS CHRIST PREDESTINED US THROUGH ADOPTION TO SHARE HIS DESTINY ACCORDING TO THE KIND INTENTION OF HIS WILL** – *Ephesians 1:5*.
- **JESUS CHRIST IS GOD’S ETERNAL HEIR**, and according to *Romans 8*, we are ‘fellow-heirs of God and fellow-heirs with Christ’ – *Romans 8:16-17*.
- **JESUS CHRIST IS OUR HIGH PRIEST**, and according to *1 Peter*, every believer is a priest – *1 Peter 2:5-9*.

Beyond these things, the moment we believe in THE LORD JESUS CHRIST FOR SALVATION, *our sins, past, present, and future are forgiven, and put as far away as the east is from the west (Ephesians 1:7; Psalm 103:12)*. At that moment we receive A NEW BIRTH (REGENERATION) and A REVIVED HUMAN SPIRIT (BORN AGAIN) – (*Titus 3:5, John 3:5-6; Ephesians 2:1, 5*).

Remember, the instant ADAM sinned, DEATH was imputed to the entire human race. There are two aspects to this: (1) On the one hand, ADAM died spiritually the instant he sinned, and ... as a result of dying spiritually, (2) physical death followed for ADAM and EVE and for their progeny as the tangible expression of their spiritual deaths.

[SIDENOTE: ADAM was created as A TRIPARTITE BEING. ‘*Tripartite*’ simply means, ‘consisting of three parts,’ these three parts being: BODY, SOUL, and SPIRIT.]

Listen to what PAUL says in 1 Thessalonians:

Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit, and soul, and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ – 1 Thessalonians 5:23.

(A) The function of THE HUMAN BODY is obvious and needs no further explanation.

(B) THE HUMAN SOUL operates *horizontally*, meaning it is the part of man that has the capacity to interact with the physical world and with other human beings. *It is the part of you that can share an appreciation for art and music with the rest of the human race.*

(C) THE HUMAN SPIRIT operates *vertically*, meaning it is the part of man that has the capacity to interact with God, understand Scripture, and be led by THE HOLY SPIRIT.

When PAUL writes in 1 Corinthians 2:14: “*But the natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned,*” the reason is because the natural man is spiritually dead. He is without a living human spirit. When we use terms like, ‘*regeneration,*’ or the phrase, ‘*born again,*’ what is in view is the rebirth of the human spirit, moving us from spiritual death unto life.

At the instant a sinner believes the gospel, he or she receives the indwelling of THE HOLY SPIRIT (*1 Corinthians 6:19*). At that time, the new believer is ‘SEALED’ BY THE HOLY SPIRIT,’ granting to him ETERNAL SECURITY, making it impossible for him to lose his salvation (*Ephesians 1:13*;

4:30). It is at this moment THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT occurs as a result of UNION WITH CHRIST (*1 Corinthians 12:13*); and it is at this time that God gives spiritual gifts to the believer.

At this instant, new believers are protected from eternal judgment (*Romans 8:1*) and NO CONDEMNATION – is assured to them (*1 Corinthians 1:2, 30*).

Now there are misunderstandings about POSITIONAL SANCTIFICATION that abound and we need to clarify what it is and what it is not.

POSITIONAL SANCTIFICATION IS NON-EXPERIENTIAL – This means it is not known by means of a feeling or by some external experience of any sort; the only means by which we know anything about POSITIONAL SANCTIFICATION is from THE WORD OF GOD.

Let me give you an example of what I mean. When I lived in OKLAHOMA, occasionally I performed wedding ceremonies. Now there are things about marriage that are experiential, and there are things that are non-experiential. The wedding ceremony is experiential, the cake is experiential, and the honeymoon is experiential, but the thing that makes a couple ‘*married*’ in the eyes of THE STATE OF OKLAHOMA is non-experiential.

The day following the ceremony, I had to go downtown to THE COURT HOUSE and file the completed marriage license with the state. Also, there was a book I had to sign, and I had to enter into a ledger a number that had been assigned to me by THE STATE OF OKLAHOMA, giving me the authority to conduct that ceremony. Once those steps were completed, the clerk would stamp the ledger indicating that all the required steps had been completed. It was at that moment the marriage became legal in the eyes of the state.

Now, do you think the couple received some sort of *experiential jolt* when I signed that book? NO! They had no idea it had happened until they returned from their honeymoon and I told them what I had done – letting them know their marriage was registered and legal in the eyes of the state.

A lot of theological confusion exists when people try to make POSITIONAL SANCTIFICATION experiential. They may look for an emotional expression of some kind, or perhaps they believe they are supposed to speak in tongues or have some other tangible experience. They may try to invent a non-biblical event such as ‘*a second anointing*’ or something that can be touched and felt as tangible assurance of God-acting. But our assurance isn’t in a feeling; it is in THE WORD OF GOD.

Now, lest you think I have chased a rabbit here, let me mention something else that happens at the instant a person believes the gospel: *At that very moment, THE ABSOLUTE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD HIMSELF IS IMPUTED IN FULL, ETERNALLY, TO THE BELIEVER.* This is why PAUL ends that verse in 2 CORINTHIANS with the phrase, ‘*that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*’

JESUS CHRIST POSSESSES ABSOLUTE RIGHTEOUSNESS AS A DIVINE ATTRIBUTE and according to 2 Corinthians 5:21 and Isaiah 61:10 and Ephesians 2:1-10, that very righteousness – that ABSOLUTE RIGHTEOUSNESS – is imputed to believers at the instant they believe the gospel.

[Now let’s think about this because here we need to acknowledge the distinction between what happens positionally in heaven in the eyes of God and what takes place temporally among believers still living on the earth in unredeemed bodies, and who still possess OLD SIN NATURES.]

According to Scripture, the instant we put our faith in Christ-alone for salvation, God imputes to us THE ABSOLUTE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF CHRIST. But do we become experientially righteous at that

moment? NO! OF COURSE NOT! In fact, JUSTIFICATION does not mean, 'to be made righteous,' it means, 'to be declared righteous.'

On this earth, in our unredeemed bodies, we still must deal with temptation and failure, as we 'continually fall short' of God's righteous standard, which as we have seen, is His own Perfect Nature. NEVERTHELESS ... We have been 'DECLARED RIGHTEOUS,' meaning 'we are positionally righteous, having received the imputed righteousness of Christ as a result of faith in Him alone.'

TEMPORAL SANCTIFICATION, unlike POSITIONAL SANCTIFICATION, is a process by which THE HOLY SPIRIT brings the believer ... *progressively* ... into conformity with the image of Christ.

ROMANS 8:29 says, 'God has predestined us to be conformed to the image of His Son, Jesus Christ.' Then 2 CORINTHIANS 3:18 says, "and we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into His likeness, from one degree of glory to another, for this comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit."

Notice the difference:

- POSITIONAL SANCTIFICATION is an instantaneous event that takes place (*for lack of a better way to say it*) in heaven, *while* ...
- TEMPORAL SANCTIFICATION is a process that is taking place in each one of us experientially here on the earth as THE HOLY SPIRIT conforms us ... *changes us* ... into conformity with the likeness of JESUS CHRIST.

Obviously, this goal is not achieved fully until the redemption of our bodies, either at death or at the rapture.

EXEGESIS – Let's continue our examination of THE DOCTRINE OF IMPUTED RIGHTEOUSNESS by considering PAUL'S WORDS written to THE CORINTHIAN CHURCH.

For Christ's love for us controls us, having concluded that one died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all so they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf. He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him – 2 Corinthians 5:14, 15, 21.

Now I want you to notice something; notice the pronoun 'us' at the beginning of this passage; THIS PRONOUN SETS THE CONTEXT FOR THE PASSAGE.

The group-in-question is defined by the word 'us.' PAUL is talking about THE ELECT, not the entire human race. Even the word 'they' is clarified by the phrase, "they who live ... live no longer for themselves." This observation is re-enforced by the recurrence of the words 'all' and 'we' throughout the passage. In this short section, these words ('all' and 'they' and 'we' occur 7X ... and the phrase, 'on their behalf' and 'on our behalf' occur once each ... both times referring to THE ELECT).

The significance of this is unmistakable: The benefits of the Cross are bestowed upon THE ELECT, not upon the entire human race – and they are conferred on the basis of GRACE under THE DOCTRINE OF SOVEREIGN ELECTING GRACE, not on the basis of HUMAN MERIT.

So let's examine the phrase, 'One died for all, therefore, all died.' This is similar to ROMANS 5:19 – "Through one man's disobedience, the many were made sinners." Now THE CORINTHIAN PASSAGE refers to CHRIST, who died for the sins of the world, while THE ROMANS PASSAGE refers to ADAM ... in whom, 'all died spiritually' as a result of his disobedience.

The contrast is between THE DOCTRINE OF ORIGINAL SIN (*The ROMANS Passage*) and THE DOCTRINE OF DIVINE SATISFACTION (*The CORINTHIANS Passage*). The reason these passages sound similar is it is the same principle at work in each case: THE PRINCIPLE OF DIVINE IMPUTATION.

And furthermore, we see in each THE CONCEPT OF ‘FEDERAL HEADSHIP.’ *ADAM and CHRIST were our representatives in their respective acts performed on behalf of two groups.*

Now this is where things can get a bit ‘sticky’ because *now we must deal with how the benefits of the Cross are applied to the human race* – for not all men will be the recipients of salvation.

Here we must consider 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” – 2 Corinthians 5:21.*

IN THIS VERSE, TWO OF THE THREE IMPUTATIONS ARE MENTIONED: PAUL does NOT mention THE IMPUTATION OF ADAM’S SIN because this already has been discussed so it is assumed here. But he DOES mention THE IMPUTATION OF SIN TO JESUS CHRIST. He says: *“He made Him, ’i.e., ‘God the Father made God the Son’ ... to be sin on our behalf.”*

JUSTIFICATION involves SUBSTITUTION. JESUS did not go to the Cross without reason. He did it FOR US and ON BEHALF OF US. And HIS PURPOSE is stated explicitly in the last part of VERSE 21 ... *“so we might become the righteousness of God in Him” ... ‘That we might become’ ...* The word ‘become’ is the Greek word *γίνονται* (pronounced *ginomai*). It means, ‘to be born, or created.’

Creation always is a divine act ... it is something God alone does.

In this very chapter where PAUL said, *‘that we might become’ ...* he also said: *“if anyone is in CHRIST, he is A NEW CREATION ... the old things have passed away and behold all things have become new” – 2 Corinthians 5:17.* So what is it we have in CHRIST that is new ... what do we possess that we did not have in ADAM? **WE HAVE ‘GOD’S RIGHTEOUSNESS’ BY IMPUTATION.**

Now ‘GOD’S RIGHTEOUSNESS’ is different from ‘MAN’S RIGHTEOUSNESS.’ Someone who understands the Scriptures defined ‘GOD’S RIGHTEOUSNESS’ this way: *“THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD is that RIGHTEOUSNESS, which HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS REQUIRES HIM TO REQUIRE.”*

In other words, ‘GOD’S RIGHTEOUSNESS’ is so PERFECT that BY ITS VERY NATURE, it requires THAT SAME RIGHTEOUSNESS – (*i.e., Absolute Righteousness*) – from every aspect of God’s creation. But man cannot produce *‘the Righteousness God’s Righteousness requires Him to require,’* so there must be another means by which a righteousness that is acceptable to God can be attained ... and there is.

‘GOD’S RIGHTEOUSNESS’ IS OURS IN CHRIST BY MEANS OF IMPUTATION. You cannot work for it or produce it or earn it. It is A FREE GIFT that costs you nothing ... but cost JESUS everything.

For God made JESUS, who knew no sin, to become sin for us, that we might become THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD in Him – 2 Corinthians 5:21

At the moment we believe and accept the gospel message, *we are DECLARED RIGHTEOUS as A FREE GIFT under THE PRINCIPLE OF DIVINE IMPUTATION ... and THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF CHRIST HIMSELF is imputed – credited – to believers as if it were their own. JUSTIFICATION IS THE ACT OF BEING DECLARED RIGHTEOUS BEFORE GOD’S THRONE ON THE BASIS OF FAITH-ALONE IN CHRIST-ALONE.*

Something has happened! And what has happened is recorded in Romans 3:25-26: *God has publicly displayed HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS in THE PERSON OF JESUS CHRIST, who is the SUBSTITUTIONARY SACRIFICE FOR THE SINS OF THE WORLD –*

JESUS is the One who through His death SATISFIED all that GOD'S RIGHTEOUS STANDARD required' ... And He accomplished this on the Cross at Calvary. And though God NEVER could be satisfied with you or with me ... GOD IS COMPLETELY SATISFIED WITH JESUS. And He is willing ... on the basis of faith-alone ... TO IMPUTE THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF CHRIST to you and to me by DECLARING US RIGHTEOUS before THE VERY JUDGMENT SEAT OF GOD ALMIGHTY.

WHY would God do this? And **HOW** can He impute to you and to me THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF CHRIST?

THE 'HOW QUESTION' IS ANSWERED BY THE CROSS: Because of what JESUS did at Calvary, GOD THE FATHER'S PERFECT JUSTICE HAS BEEN COMPLETELY SATISFIED. THE DEBT is paid. THE PROBLEM OF ORIGINAL SIN is resolved. The issue of PERSONAL SINS is settled.

Apart from the Cross, all we can offer to God is RELATIVE RIGHTEOUSNESS ... *an 'I am better than you are' – RIGHTEOUSNESS – or a 'you are better than I am' – RIGHTEOUSNESS. A RIGHTEOUSNESS that is 'better than some but worse than others' ... RIGHTEOUSNESS. A RIGHTEOUSNESS that comes up short of the mark.*

Man cannot, under any circumstances, produce *'that Righteousness that God's Righteousness requires Him to require.'*

But JESUS could ... and JESUS did ... and God the Father is satisfied with JESUS.

THE 'WHY QUESTION' IS ANSWERED IN JOHN 3:16-21:

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.

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He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

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This is the judgment – that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil.

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For everyone who does evil hates the Light and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.

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But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God.

THIS IS THE GOSPEL – THIS IS WHAT GOD HAS DONE. SALVATION IS OFFERED TO ANYONE WHO WANTS IT. BELIEVE ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST AND YOU WILL BE SAVED. IT IS AS SIMPLE AS THAT.