

Chapter 6

Reigning Grace and the Theology of Romans

“For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery” (Gal. 5:1).



ROMANS

THE THEOLOGY OF THE CROSS



REVIEW

The Book of Romans uses the *Story* in speaking to the problems within the Church of Rome. Paul uses the Storyline as foundational to very practical ends. The *Story* flows to and from the person and work of Jesus Christ. He is the *Story's* Hero. The person and work of Jesus Christ is so vast and of such limitless quality that all He does is lavish in its ability to cancel out the nature of the crime against Him by His people.

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INTRODUCTION

As one who is perhaps new to the relational truth of the Christian faith it is necessary to begin informing the mind so that one might enjoy all they are in Christ. The Bible makes a strong distinction between living under the Law and living under grace (Rom. 6:15), of being in bondage versus being set free (Gal. 5:1). The vast majority of people live quiet lives of desperation not knowing where they came from, why they are here, or where they are going.¹ Such questions as these are only correctly answered from the biblical record. Such questions form the *Story* God wrote. Apart from Jesus, all is lost. The Christian is to learn to live in the freedom Christ has set them free. Such truth moves the believer from “having to,” to “wanting to.” It moves the believer from the sphere of duty to that of desire. We are not to live in the arena of punishment, but of pardon. We are to cease our doing and begin to enjoy our resting.

One of the glaring tragedies of the Christian life is the pharisaical bondage in which most believers live. It is a subtle slavery that goes mostly undetected by the individual. The vast majority of believers have embraced a freedom from hell’s damnation, only to live in bondage to their daily sin and a performance-based acceptance before God. They have never tasted true freedom. They are like the inmate who has become institutionalized and upon gaining a complete pardon has no idea how to function in freedom and so goes back to finding

safety in the routines of their imprisonment. Or they are like the slave who has been released only to remain as a slave. Neither knows how to act or behave. They are both free but still act as if they are in bondage.

Consider the idea of “learned helplessness.” Have you ever wondered why the elephants in the zoo or at a circus do not just pull out the little stake in the ground, to which they are chained, and go on their merry way? When the elephant was small, the chain was attached to something that they could not move. Day after day, the elephant would pull on the chain wanting to be free, but it never could break the chain or pull the stake free. After several weeks of training, the elephant will quit trying to get free; it has learned to be helpless.

I read of a man who won a state lottery of 62.4 million dollars. He took a one lump sum buyout and after taxes walked away with 24.5 million dollars. Most would be thrilled to have 24.5 million. Yet this is hardly to be the case when we consider all that we have “In Christ.” In Christ, we have 62.4 million blessings. Yet most Christians walk around with only 24.5 million. And they consider this “normal.” Why as a believer should we be content with 24.5 million blessings when we have 62.4 million by right of inheritance?

Perhaps one of our current tragedies is the failure of the church to live in the theology of Romans. Because of its neglect, we have failed to understand and thus embrace the fundamental doctrines of

redemption, forgiveness, propitiation, justification, imputation, reconciliation, and adoption. To lack depth in these areas is to remove the believer's foundation for living. Without understanding our position and identification in Christ before the Father, our walk before Him becomes tentative, fragile, and desperate. It will lack the confidence, assurance, and certainty that can and should be ours. We speak of obedience, service, and the imperatives of Scripture and rightly so. Unfortunately, such speech is often in the absence of positional truth. We have made it sound as if God is absent from such activity. Our obedience has become markedly man-centered. Yet our acts of obedience as expressed through our free choices are the outworking of God's eternal purpose. If we can intellectually embrace the theology of Romans, then it will be possible to escape the roller coaster ride of uninformed emotionalism. Theology, properly understood, provides the fuel for a lifetime of obedience.

The Bible was given in order that we might know God. It was not given to be a rulebook or an end in itself. It was given so that we might see Him. Because of our self-centeredness that manifests itself in our self-sufficiency, we have the constant battle to usurp authority over Christ. **God gave us the Bible, not to tell us how to live, but that we might see what He is like.** There is a world of difference between those two ideas.

There are two books that greatly assist the believer in their pursuit of Him. The first is Romans and the second is Galatians. Both sound the

clarion call to follow Him. Throughout both letters, certain words are used to describe the movement of the believer from a position of disfavor to that of favor before God.

The Reformation of the sixteenth century . . . brought out from this fountain a new phase and type of Christianity, which had never as yet been fully understood and appreciated in the Church at large. **It was, in fact, a new proclamation of the free Gospel of St. Paul, as laid down in the Epistles to the Romans and Galatians** [emphasis added].²

When one believes in the Lord Jesus Christ for the salvation of their soul, ignorance abounds. The recipient of Christ is often completely ignorant of the tremendous theological truth that had transpired and is transpiring all around them. It is not necessary to know all of this to be saved. It is necessary, however, to know all of it in order to “know all you are in Him and He is for you.” It is only when we learn the truth that we can truly rest in His finished work.

What appears to be the Galatia problem? Apparently, the believers in Galatia were being "troubled" (5:12) by "false brethren" (2:4). The agitation created by them was real (4:17). They were "bewitched" (3:1) into leave their position of liberty to be once more entangled with the yoke of bondage (5:1). Paul saw such a move as shocking (1:6). Why would anyone abandon a position of liberty for one of bondage? They were running well (5:7), but now were being "hindered" and thus "overtaken in a fault" (6:1). Such as those who turned back had "fallen from grace" (5:4) and needed to be "restored" (6:1).

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Paul stood amazed (Gal. 1:6), afraid (4:11) and perplexed (4:20) that anyone would leave the yoke of Christ (Matt. 11:28-30) for the yoke of slavery (Gal. 5:1). How does this happen? Drifting is almost inevitable if we do not anchor ourselves to the bedrock of positional truth. This study begins to lay the foundation for resting in His finished work.

Alignment with God's *Story* is built on the person and work of Jesus Christ. His life provides the perfect sacrifice whereby His death becomes efficacious. His life and death are the means whereby God can placate His justice and pardon His people. To understand the richness of His work is to align with His *Story* and to live in His rest.

We will use the book of Romans (which I believe is an expansion on the Galatia thought) to make possible the lesson.³ There are several primary words found throughout the book of Romans that will facilitate our study.

- I. His work of redemption enables debt to be cancelled (Rom. 3:24)

“being **justified** as a gift by His grace through the **redemption** which is in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 3:24).

“In Him we have **redemption** through His blood, the **forgiveness** of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace” (Eph. 1:7).

“so that He might **redeem** those who were under the Law, that we might receive the **adoption** as sons” (Gal. 4:5).

“in whom we have **redemption**, the **forgiveness** of sins” (Col. 1:14).

“who gave Himself for us to **redeem** us from every lawless deed, and to **purify** for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds” (Titus 2:14).

“and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal **redemption**” (Heb. 9:12).

A. Defining the word

Just a simple reading of these verses carries tremendous power. The word itself is found in excellent company.

Redemption means to free someone from bondage. It often involves the paying of a ransom, a price that ensures redemption. The Israelites were redeemed from Egypt. We were redeemed from the power of sin and the curse of the Law (Gal. 3:13) through Jesus (Rom. 3:24; Col. 1:14). We were bought with a price (1 Cor. 6:20; 7:23).⁴

Redemption is defined by J. I. Packer as “Christ’s actual substitutionary endurance of the penalty of sin in the place of certain specified sinners, through which God was reconciled to them, their liability to punishment was for ever destroyed, and a title to eternal life was secured for them.”⁵

Redemption is the basis for forgiveness and propitiation.

Leon Morris says that “Paul uses the concept of redemption primarily to speak of the saving significance of the death of Christ.”⁶

The English word redemption means “repurchase” or “buy back”, and in the Old Testament referred to the ransom of slaves (Exodus 21:8). In the New Testament the redemption word group is used to refer both to **deliverance from sin and freedom from captivity.**

Theologically, redemption is a metaphor for what is achieved through the Atonement [Emphasis added].⁷

The word “redemption” presupposes debt and bondage. Inherent within the word is the idea of buying back. As it relates to our sin debt, it speaks of its complete and full cancellation. When Christ redeemed us, He paid in full our sin debt before the Father.



Christ had to pay the debt because of our own inability to do so. When He paid the debt, He did so in full. He did not leave any behind. None was left for us to consider. Never can we be a debtor to God for our sin. As far as our Father is concerned the sin issue has been addressed in full.

B. Looking at it Biblically

1. What it presupposes – debt

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Redemption presupposes captivity, slavery, bondage. When Adam and Eve chose to reject God, they sold themselves and their posterity into captivity. Whereas once there was freedom and liberty there would now be only bondage and enslavement.

2. What it provides - freedom

The work of Jesus Christ frees us from sin's slavery. Whereas once we were slaves to sin and death, now we are free in Christ.

There are two primary words used for "redemption" in the New Testament. The first (**exagorazo and agorazo**) is found in Galatians 3:13, 4:5; Ephesians 5:16 and Colossians 4:5.

"Christ hath **redeemed** us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree" (Gal. 3:13).

"To **redeem** them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons" (Gal. 4:5).

It is used of believers having been bought by the blood of Christ ([agorazo] 1 Cor. 6:20, 7:23, Rev. 5:9).

The second word for redemption (**lutroo**) is found in Titus 2:14 and 1 Peter 1:18.

“Who gave himself for us, that he might **redeem** us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works” (Titus 2:14).

“Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not **redeemed** with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers” (1 Pet. 1:18).

Each of the three words (agorazo, exagorazo, and lutroo) emphasizes a different aspect of God’s redemptive work in our behalf.

- **Agorazo** speaks of “to purchase in the marketplace.” “This verb was used of men in the Roman world purchasing slaves in the market.”
- **Exagorazo** with the prefix “ek,” “emphasizes separation of what has been purchased from the slave market altogether.” “This adds the idea of being taken *out of* the slave market.”
- **Lutroo** “carries the fullest meaning of redemption, namely, ‘To set free by the payment of a ransom.’”⁸

As can be seen from the context, the idea is to buy back, to pay a purchase price.

The word choice is telling. It means, “To buy out of or to buy back.” Relating this to salvation gives us a tremendous picture as we see Christ’s words on the cross, “It is finished” (John 19:30). “It is finished” is the translation of one word and receipts during Christ’s time often had this word written on them to indicate, “PAID or PAID IN

FULL.” When Christ said, “It is finished” (paid in full) our redemption (to buy back from/out of sin) was complete.

Consider Galatians 3:13, “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us.” Matthew 20:28 tells us He gave His life a “ransom” for many. First Timothy 2:6 stresses this same truth. Revelation 5:9 tells us the ransom price is His blood. It is for this reason 1 Corinthians 6:20 and 7:23 says, “For you were bought with a price.” **Christ, by being the infinite God-man, exhausted the penalty of the broken Law by being our substitute. Christ born under the law met the demands of the law that He might free us from the law.** Now consider the implications of His redemptive work.



C. What are the implications of such a thought?

1. The Father will never bring up the sin issue again. Why? Because He has dealt with it in full; to bring it up would be to minimize the redemptive act of Christ.
2. We now can live in a “debt-free relationship” with the Father as it relates to the sin issue. If the debt has been canceled in full, can we now once more become a debtor?
3. There is no possibility of going into debt again. We do not have to start all over again and try to keep the slate clean. There is no more slate. God is not keeping score, granting or withholding blessings on the basis of our performance.⁹

My Redeemer

Written by Philip P. Bliss Music by James McGranahan

I will sing of my Redeemer
and His wondrous love to me;
on the cruel cross He suffered,
from the curse to set me free.
Sing, O sing of my Redeemer,
With His blood He purchased me;
On the cross He sealed my pardon,
Paid the debt and made me free.

Our redemption forms the foundation from which we can praise His glorious name. Let us wrap ourselves in this truth and join the myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands of worshippers marking all of eternity.

II. His redemptive work secures His ability to forgive our transgressions against Him.

“be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, **just as God in Christ also has forgiven** [charizomai] **you**” (Eph. 4:32).

“when you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, **having forgiven** [charizomai] **us all our transgressions**” (Col. 2:13).

“I am writing to you, little children, **because your sins have been forgiven** [aphiemi] **you for His name's sake**” (1 John 2:12).

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The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines forgiveness as 'to grant free pardon and to give up all claim on account of an offense or debt'. God's forgiveness is not based on what we do, but what He does. His forgiveness of us is gracious on His part by providing the means for forgiveness to take place. He sends our sins away. This idea is captured in Psalm 103:12 and Micah 7:19.

“As far as the east is from the west, **so far hath he removed our transgressions from us**” (Ps. 103:12).

“He will again have compassion on us; He will tread our iniquities under foot. Yes, **you will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea**” (Micah 7:19).

A. What it presupposes - violation / transgression

We have committed a transgression against God. Forgiveness is very relational. It is personally. We do not forgive animals or inanimate objects. We forgive people. God forgives us. God does nothing wrong, thus He never needs to be forgiven. We wrong God and others and we need forgiveness. We have violated God's Word. Our forgiveness from God is based on the person and work of Jesus Christ.

B. What it provides - no condemnation

Forgiveness is a pardoning whereby the sentence against us is dropped. God's forgiveness of us negates sin's eternal consequence because of

the cross. Our forgiveness of others cannot negate the intrinsic demerit of sin.



C. What are the implications of such truth?

1. Because God dealt with our sin in full we never lack His immediate and unconditional forgiveness.
2. We need not ask for what is already ours in Christ before the Father.

III. The life and death of Jesus Christ enables the Father's justice to be addressed and His wrath to be propitiated (Rom. 3:25).

“whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed” (Rom. 3:25).

“Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people” (Heb. 2:17).

“and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world” (1 John 2:2).

“In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 4:10).

A. Defining the word

The word “propitiation” has to do with anger and wrath. **Only God is propitiated.** He is wrathful against the sinner’s sin. To propitiate means, “To placate, satisfy, or appease.”

God is angry with the sinner. The sinner is the object of God’s wrath (John 3:36). The death of Jesus Christ placates the wrath of God against the sinner. The sufficiency of His death satisfies the justice of God against sin.

Whereas redemption is God’s work on the cross in reference to sin, propitiation is His work on the cross in relation to Himself. Christ’s death propitiated (satisfied, appeased) the righteous wrath of God.¹⁰

Propitiation is the attitude of the judge who declares the guilty justified. A judge can be placated because justice has been served. God is satisfied because His Son’s offering meets the demands of the violated Law.

In Christian theology, propitiation is accomplished through Jesus Christ on the cross in his crucifixion and sacrifice. He fulfilled the wrath and indignation of God. The crucifixion and sacrifice of Christ conciliates God, who would otherwise be offended by human sin and would demand penalty for it.

Propitiation is translated from the Greek *hilasterion*, meaning "that which expiates or propitiates" or "the gift which procures propitiation." The word is also used in the New Testament for the place of propitiation, the "mercy seat" (Heb. 9:5). There is frequent similar use of *hilasterion* in the Septuagint (Exod. 25:18ff). The mercy seat was sprinkled with atoning blood on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:14), representing that the righteous sentence of the Law had been executed, changing a judgment seat into a mercy seat (Heb. 9:11-15; compare with "throne of grace" in Hebrews 4:14-16; place of communion, Exodus 25:21-22).

Another Greek word, *hilasmos*, is used for Christ as our propitiation (1 John 2:2; 4:10 ["atonement" in the Septuagint {Lev. 25:9}]). The thought in the Old Testament sacrifices and in the New Testament fulfillment is that Christ completely satisfied the just demands of a holy God for judgment on sin by his death on the Cross of Calvary.

God, in view of the cross, is declared righteous in having been able to forgive sins in the Old Testament period, as well as in being able to justify sinners under the New Covenant (Rom. 3:25,26; cf. Exod. 29:33). Propitiation, as *hilasmos*, is satisfying the perfect justice of a holy and righteous God; thereby making it possible for him to show complete mercy without compromising his righteousness or justice.

B. Looking at the word Biblically

The root word has three expressions (**hilaskomai, hilasmos, and hilasterion**).

“And he is the **propitiation** for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world” (1 John 2:2).

“Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the **propitiation** for our sins” (1 John 4:10).

“Whom God hath set forth to be a **propitiation** through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God” (Rom. 3:25).

“And over it the cherubim of glory shadowing the **mercy-seat**; of which we cannot now speak particularly” (Heb. 9:5).

“And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be **merciful** to me a sinner” (Luke 18:13).

“Wherefore in all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make **propitiation** (KJV - reconciliation) for the sins of the people” (Heb. 2:17).

1. What it presupposes - wrath / anger

Law has been transgressed and the Law giver executes judgment.

2. What it provides - favor

Propitiation suspends the judgment against the guilty. The work of Christ enables God to act toward us in a merciful manner.



C. What are the implications of such truth?

1. If the death of Christ sufficiently and effectually removes the object of God's wrath thus placating His anger and satisfying His justice, then God can never be angry with us again.

Where did we pick up the idea that God is mad or irritated? Knowing *God's entire* wrath was poured out on His Son at His death on the cross, how can we think like that? As a matter of fact, the reason He brought Jesus back from the grave is that He was satisfied with His Son. Ponder this: If the Father is satisfied with His Son's full payment for sin, and we are in His Son, by grace through faith, then *He is satisfied with you and me*. How long must Christians live before we finally believe that? ¹¹

2. We will never face God's anger. God will never be angry with those who participate in the propitiating work of Christ before the Father.

It isn't possible for a Christian to cause God to become angry. "There is nothing you can do that will make Him mad - nothing!"¹²

The truth was that she was pleasing to God already, and she was to work not for His favor, but because she already had it.¹³

Let us not fear such freedom, but let us tremble at the sheer joy of its glory as it is but a whisper of His voice and the hem of His garment.

IV. Because His person and work is so vast, God the Father can now declare and see those in Christ as righteous. (Rom. 3:22).

A. Defining the Word

1. The word itself means "to declare righteous." The Reformation was fought over whether or not it meant "to declare" or "to make." Protestants believe it means, "To declare."

Consider the following explanation of justification by several printed theologians.

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." "The moment the sinner, through faith in Jesus Christ, turns away from every

human resource and rests in Christ alone, the Father imputes his well-beloved Son's perceptive (active) obedience to him and accepts him as righteous in his sight. ¹⁴

To justify means to declare righteous. The concept does not mean to make righteous, but to announce righteousness. Just as announcing condemnation does not make a person wicked, neither does justification make a person righteous. Nevertheless, condemning or justifying announces the true and actual state of the person.¹⁵

To be justified means more than to be declared 'not guilty.' It actually means to be declared *righteous* before God. It means God has *imputed* or charged the guilt of our sin to His Son, Jesus Christ, and has *imputed* or credited Christ's righteousness to us.¹⁶

It is a legal act wherein God pronounces that the believing sinner has been credited with all the virtues of Jesus Christ.¹⁷

By justification we mean that judicial act of God by which, on account of Christ, to whom the sinner is united by faith, he declares that sinner to be no longer exposed to the penalty of the law, but to be restored to his favor. ¹⁸

This means that this received justice is a gift of God. It is not acquired by individual effort, good 'works' are only its manifestation and its fruit. Everything depends on the connection with Christ, like the connection of members to the head or branches to a vine. ¹⁹

Justification may be defined as that act by which unjust sinners are made right in the sight of a just and holy God.²⁰

From these authors it becomes evident that one's justification is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.

2. The word does not mean, "We have been made." Nothing has changed in us except now as we stand before the Father we are declared to be right. We are made righteous in practical sanctification and in the doctrine of regeneration, but even then such righteousness are foreign [or alien] to us.
3. Romans 1:18-3:20 declares us to be wrong whereas now (3:22) we are declared to be right. How or why can such a transaction be true, only because of our standing in Him by grace alone through faith alone.

What changed? Our position changed. Being declared right before the Father was based on no personal merit. It was freely done by His grace.

B. Looking at it Biblically

In this section we've taken the word justifies and traced it through the New Testament. Here are some initial observations.

1. Justification is appropriated by means of faith and stands in direct contrast of being attained by works (Acts

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13:38,39; Rom. 3:21, 22, 26, 28, 30; 4:2-6, 9, 11, 13;
9:30-33; 10:1-13; Gal. 2:16, 17, 21; 3:6, 8, 11, 21-26;
Titus 3:5).

“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” (Gal. 2:16).

2. Justification is based on the sinless life and sacrificial death of the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 3:24, 25; 5:18, 19).

¹⁸ “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. ¹⁹ 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” (Rom. 5:18, 19).

3. Justifying faith finds its object in the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 3:22).

“even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction” (Rom. 3:22).

4. Justification is looked upon as a provision of grace and thus a gift (Rom. 3:24; 5:16, 17; Titus 3:5-7).

“being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 3:24).

5. Justification makes us what Christ is, and He, what we are (1 Cor. 1:29-31; 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Pet. 3:18).

“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 Cor. 5:21).

In a positional sense, we are what Christ is. The practical outworking of this is the putting on of the new and the putting off the old by the renewing of one’s mind (Eph. 4:22-24). In so doing, our Lord will be seen in our earthen vessels. It is, in this sense, that we are righteous. In truth, it is His righteousness being seen in and through us. This is what Ephesians 5:9 and Philippians 1:11 are referring. Our righteousness is actually the outworking of His righteousness in us. It is as we become aware of what He is that we are desirous of putting on those qualities that will reveal Christ to others through us.

6. Justification results in a yielded life to God (Rom. 6:13-19; James 2:14-26; 1 Pet. 2:24, 25; 1 John 2:29)

¹² “Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, ¹³ and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God” (Rom. 6:12, 13).

Here is where justification and sanctification intermingle. The book of James appears to fly right into the face of the initial point of justification by faith alone. James' primary point is simply this, "A faith that does not result in a practical display of God's righteousness through it is a dead faith." It is a faith that has not produced life. It is a seed that has yet to germinate (1 John 3:9, 10). A yielded life is a fruit of the Holy Spirit. It is not something we do, but rather is being done in us and through us to those around us. This is as true of this Spirit-fruit as it is all of the other good works done in us and through us to those around us.

Justification by faith will always bring forth the fruit of righteousness (Rom. 2:13, 15). It is not the works of the Law that justify, but a justifying faith that produces adherence to the Law. Only the justified can "keep" Law. **Yet the justified keep the Law only so far as Christ kept the Law. His Law-keeping kept the Law for us.** We don't have to because He did/does. It is the enabling power of God quickening me that equips me to fulfill His demands upon me (Rom. 8:10). My conformity to the will of God is because of His conformity to the will of His Father. My conformity is a result of His conformity. **I am because He is.** It is only as we understand the nature of God's grace that we can live righteously (Titus 2:11-15).

God has made great and precious promises to his covenant people. We can rest in his trustworthiness. Jesus is the fulfillment of all God's promises to us. As we embrace his life,

God performs in us everything he requires of us. When God's promises are the issue, trust and rest are the result. When principles without promises are the issue, performance and striving will always be present.²¹

7. Justification results in having peace with God, access to God, and boldness before God ([**Read**] Rom. 5:1, 2, 9; 8:33, 34).

Because of justification, we have peace with God and an unconditional access into His presence. Such peace and access are the result of Christ's work in our behalf. Tied into this great truth is that of our reconciliation. Whereas once we were alienated from God, we now have access to God. Because the gulf has been spanned and we are now reconciled to God, we have fellowship with Him. There was nothing we could do to merit it and there is nothing we can do to maintain it. To have peace and access is a result of grace. We could never have gained it through self-effort. Why do we believe our actions will bar our access and rob our peace? Listen carefully to the following advertisement blurb.

Have you ever needed a 'that night'? Or a 'that day'? A point in time before which things were going wrong, but after which things began to go right? What are the ingredients for a 'that night'? What is mixed into the recipe? Understanding what goes into creating that moment of divine favor was Esther's ultimate secret. Ester learned how to find favor with the King! Bestselling author and internationally renowned speaker and pastor . . . reveals how intimate access to God is available to all. [Finding Favor with the King](#) is critical to preparing for your own moment in His presence.²²

Do we ever believe we have been barred from finding favor with God? Do we believe our access before the Father is maintained by what we do or fail to do? Friend, it is time for us to once more embrace the theology of Romans.

Our justification results in us having peace with God. We are no longer in a state of fear. We no longer tremble at our inability to measure up to God's unattainable standard (1 John 4:16-18). As a Christian, our depravity might want to control us and "lord" it over us. We might wish for others to feel guilty and inadequate, but God who stands in our corner as our advocate (1 John 2:1, 2) asks those who would, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of my elect whom I have declared righteous? Who is there among you that can condemn those whom I have freed?" The answer; NO ONE! We are free! Gloriously free! Jesus paid it all and now all to HIM we owe!

8. Justification frees us from sin and the wrath of God against it. (Rom. 5:9; 6:7 ["freed" = "justified"])

"much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him" (Rom. 5:9).

We have lived so long in bondage that we have to learn how to live as free men. We sin so naturally that we must learn how to live in righteousness just as we have lived in sin.

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If you belong to Christ, you are *100% justified* in Him; there is *zero* condemnation for you. Justification has no degrees!²³

This is a persistent tension in our vocabulary. Just as we were in Adam, so now we are in Christ. If our in Adam identity was controlling us, so also our in Christ identity is to control us. We must always work from what is true and not from how we feel.

C. What are the implications of such a thought?

1. Practically, nothing changed.

Justification is the sovereign act of God whereby He declares righteous the believing sinner - **while he is still in a sinning state.** ²⁴



In our practice, we are still as wrong as we were in Romans 1:18-3:20. Now, however, even though our practice has not changed, our standing before God has. We are right with God. Whereas before (1:18-3:20) we were wrong, now (3:21-26) we are right. Nothing can affect this “rightness with God.” **Nothing we did caused it and nothing we can do will cancel it. We can never through our actions undo what Christ alone has done.**

2. If justification is seen in light of the context within Romans, then to be right with God is to be justified. To

become non-right is to undermine the truth of justification by faith. To call Christians to get right with God is theologically inaccurate. Our “rightness” with God is not based on our ability to perform or obey but on our position in Christ.

3. It is impossible not to be right with God. We did nothing to merit it and we can do nothing to maintain it. To think our sin makes us not right is to fail to see the scope of our sinful condition. To think our obedience makes us right is to fail to see the scope of our justification. How can God declare us righteous and treat us as such and now treat us as unrighteous?

It's no wonder so many believers walk around seeing themselves as 'sinners.' They are double-minded about their standing before God - especially when they visit church on Sunday and are reminded to '**get right with God.**' As James 1:8 says, 'A double-minded man [is] unstable in all he does,' and this lack of understanding about the finality of the cross is spiritual instability.²⁵

4. The question concerning sinful acts by the Christian will be addressed later. Yet such actions on our part cannot change our “rightness” with God. In the doctrine of justification by faith our rightness with God has been forever settled. It is as certain as His Son.
5. Justification or being right with God is not based on how we feel. Too many believers live their daily lives based on their

feelings. As such, they experience little of the joy of being justified. We might feel like a failure because of our inability to measure up to all the imperatives (i.e. commands) in the New Testament. We might feel distant and alienated from God because of our sin nature, but the FACT of the matter is, we are right with God because we have been justified by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. Nothing can alter this glorious truth.

Listen to this insightful comment by Alva J. McClain in his commentary on the book of Romans.

A good many people think of justification as the first or initial blessing of the Christian life, its value ending at that point. But while justification is the initial blessing, it is more than that in the Christian life. Justification is not only the first or initial blessing, but justification carries with it every other blessing of the Christian life, and when a man is justified, he has everything God has to give.

So, let us never think of justification as being a small thing. It is the greatest thing in the Christian life, because it carries with it everything else. There are a great many Christians who are not enjoying every blessing. There may be some Christians who do not know what they received when God justified them and of course can't enjoy what they are ignorant of. But that does not change the fact that when God gives justification by faith, he gives with that justification everything that He has to give.²⁶

Listen carefully to the statement by New Testament Scholar N. T. Wright.

What that doctrine provides is the assurance that, though Christian obedience is still imperfect, the believer is already a full member of God's people.²⁷

Oh, what joy is ours as we consider the truth of this glorious consequence of our Lord's justifying activity.

V. God's redemptive work justifies the ungodly and removes from them all guilt before His judgment seat (Rom. 3:19)

A. Defining the Word

1. The word means "liable to punishment." Because of our sin, we are responsible to pay the penalty against it.

This word needs some careful explication, for in today's world the usual meaning of the term is guilt feelings, or the subjective aspect of guilt. What we are referring to here, however, is the objective state of having violated God's intention for man and thus being liable to punishment.²⁸

That quality which renders criminal and liable to punishment; or it is that disposition to violate the law, which has manifested itself by

some act already done. The opposite of innocence. Vide Rutherford. Inst. B. 1, c. 18, s. 10.²⁹

2. Without Christ, we are responsible to pay our sin debt before God. Without Christ's propitiatory work, we are the object of His wrath. Such a sentence against our sin is just and inescapable. We are **guilty** of our crimes against God, and we will pay for our sins.
3. Christ's substitutionary death received the sentence against our sin. He took our place. The punishment we were to receive was laid on Him. Because of His sufficiency, there is no longer any penalty against it.

B. Looking at the word Biblically

The word is used within the New Testament (Rom. 3:19).

"Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable (guilty) to God" (Rom. 3:19).

Prior to the cross we stand guilty. After the cross such is no longer the case.

C. What are the implications of such truth?



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1. We will never be punished by the Father for our sin.
2. For the Father to punish us for our sin is to declare the inadequacy of our Lord's punishment.

We will struggle with this idea for we are taught to believe every bad thing in our life is a consequence of God's chastisement. Often when something goes wrong in our circumstances we begin looking for some underlying sin problem. If we understand the work of Jesus Christ correctly, then what is the intrinsic demerit of sin cannot be looked upon as the Father's chastisement of us.

Although the quote is lengthy it deserves attention. Listen to the pastoral counsel offered by J. Dwight Pentecost in his article, "God's Answer to the Problem of Guilt."

God has to separate a sinner from Himself because He sees the sin in the sinner. But when the blood of Christ perfects us [referring to Hebrews 10] and removes every sin, there is nothing that God can find in us as a basis of condemnation. The glorious truth is that when we are covered with the blood of Christ, God looks upon us just as He looked upon His own beloved Son; and there is no more reason for God to reject the one who is covered by the blood of Christ than there is for God to eject Christ Himself.

Thus, the doctrinal argument of the apostle in Hebrews 10 shows how one passes from a guilt about sin to a guiltlessness about sin. That guiltlessness or clear conscience is the result of appropriating by faith Christ's work on the sinner's behalf. Freedom from guilt is not the result of sinless

perfection; it depends on the value of Christ's blood which cleanses us from all sin. When a child of God commits a sin, Satan can take the occasion to appear in God's presence and accuse that believer before God (1 Jn 2:1-2). Since our sonship is settled, he seeks to keep us from enjoying it. If God has dismissed from His memory every sin covered by the blood of Christ, then obviously that feeling of guilt cannot come from Him.

Some people get upset if they have guilt feelings and others get upset if they don't have them. One is as wrong as the other. The answer to both is the same. Trust God to do His work. Jesus Christ will keep on applying the benefits of His death to the believer so that he is always acceptable to God the Father. If we are guilty, then we must trust God. If we are not guilty, then we still must trust the Spirit to do the work which He has come to do. If guilt arises, it does not originate from God.³⁰

VI. The Father's justice is able to be satisfied because **He places on His Son the sins of the rebel and transfers to the rebel His Son's righteousness** (Rom. 4:6-8)

A. Defining the Word

1. Imputation means, "To credit to one's account."

In *How People Change*, Timothy Lane and Paul Tripp note the following in the chapter titled, "Married to Christ."

This is what happens when we become Christians. **Christ assumes our liabilities and graciously gives us his assets.** This is God's amazing grace.³¹

Christ's works, all of them, are imputed to the Christian for justification.³²

2. Positively considered, it means that we have the righteousness of Christ credited to our account (4:6). We are, because of Him, as righteous as Jesus Christ is. It is an **alien righteousness**. It is not indigenous to us. Because of the doctrine of imputation, we have all the necessary resources to meet any charge brought against us.

The only means by which the sinner is justified before God rests solely upon the imputation of the *obedientia active* and *obedientia passiva* of Jesus Christ to a sinner, and subsequently God's just declaration of the sinner's soteriological state based on the work of Christ.³³

3. Negatively considered, God will never credit to our account sin (4:8). Romans 4:6-8 is a quotation from Psalm 32:1, 2. David longed to be this man though such an **experience** was foreign to him. He still felt God's heavy hand against him. Truly, the man who was not credited with sin would be a blessed man.

B. What are the implications of such truth?



1. New Testament believers are blessed. Though omniscience sees sin, **God will never credit it to their**

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account. God will never count or consider sin against the New Testament believer.

2. God will always deal with us as righteous and He will never deal with us according to our sin.
3. Charles Leiter calls these realities, “The very heart of the gospel.”³⁴

VII. By placating God’s justice the rebel is **reconciled** to the Father.

“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” (Rom. 5:10).

“Now all these things are from God, who **reconciled** us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of **reconciliation**” (2 Cor. 5:18).

“yet He has now **reconciled** you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach” (Col. 1:22).

The word ‘reconciliation’ refers to the process of changing something thoroughly and adjusting it to something else that is a standard. For example, when you adjust your watch to a time signal, you are reconciling the watch to a time standard. Or when you reconcile your checkbook, the standard to which you match it is the bank’s record of your account. On rare occasions the bank must reconcile its accounts to yours.³⁵

1. What it presupposes - alienation

Reconciliation is necessary because alienation exists.

2. What it provides - fellowship, friendship

If propitiation is the negation of judgment, reconciliation is the positive embracing of the one pardoned. Reconciliation is possible because God's judgment against sin has been placated.

VIII. What we once were **in Adam** has been swallowed up by what we now are "**in Christ.**"

- A. Though the treatment of such a topic will be examined in further detail, it is necessary to note the idea of being **in Christ.**
- B. The New Testament believer is described as being in Christ. The term is synonymous with salvation (Rom. 8:1; 2 Cor. 5:19; Eph. 1:20). No one in Christ can be lost. The preposition "in" is a locative of sphere. To be in Christ is to be in the realm of His ownership, identification, association, fellowship, and presence.

"In Christ" is an expression of intimate interrelatedness,

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analogous to the air that is breathed: it is in the person, yet at the same time, the person is in it.³⁶

- C. The opposite is equally true. Not to be in Christ is to be lost. No one can be in Him and out of Him at the same time. Such a statement raises the question as to whether or not the Father ever sees us apart from His Son. The answer must be no. For Him to see us apart from His Son assures us of our lost estate. Our heavenly Father never sees us apart from being “in Christ.”

Self-righteousness shows itself in a search for one’s own identity apart from relationship. Identity is sought in performance, position, and success. But let’s face it, you will never have an identity except in your relationship with Jesus. In Christ you are important. Outside of him, you are lost.³⁷

- D. Being in Christ is a consequence of being saved. Several terms come into play as we consider the idea of being “in Christ.”

The heart of Pauline theology is our union with Christ (Rom. 8:1, 1 Cor. 6:17, Gal. 2:20). Although often overlooked in favor of an emphasis on justification by faith, Paul’s treatment of the spiritual life in Christ is central to the apostle’s understanding of religious experience. Communion with Christ is presented as synonymous with salvation, achieved by faith

and consummated in love. Christ ‘for us’ must be kept together with Christ ‘in us’.³⁸

Such language celebrates our “one flesh” standing with Christ before the Father (Rom. 7:1ff).

- E. We are in Christ through **Spirit Baptism** (I Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:27). At salvation, the Holy Spirit places us into the body of Christ. Such an action on His part guarantees our placement into His body. For us to fall outside of Him would be to negate and reverse the action of the Holy Spirit in our behalf.

Water baptism is the shadow of this reality.

- F. To be in Christ is to partake of all that He has provided through His perfect life and sacrificial death. The Book of Romans provides for us the benefits of His life and death in our behalf.
- IX. As a result of God’s **redemptive** activity His people are once more **adopted** into His family.

“so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons” (Gal. 4:5).

“He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will” (Eph. 1:5).

Westminster Confession – 34, “Adoption is an act of God’s free grace, whereby we are received into the number, and have a right to all the privileges, of the sons of God.” There is only one specific term for adoption used in the Bible.

[Adoption is the] filial and familial relationship of Christians with God. "The actions of God by which people are brought into filial relationship with Him and conferred with privileges thereof" (*ISBE*). Not in conflict with birth metaphor of regeneration, but simply connotes additional idea of kinship relationship. [It is the] new relationship with God as Father; the apex of privilege as part of God's family.³⁹

A. What it presupposes – orphan / without parentage

B. What it provides – family

Whatever existed prior to the fall is restored with a recognition that everything changed and is changing. The same idea of intimacy and purpose prior to the fall continues to this day. Adoption enables the alienated to participate in the inheritance.

This is the truth we are called upon to believe. We have drawn too sharp of a distinction between what we are in Christ and the continuing battle we have with the old nature. **We have allowed ourselves to**

make our failed experiences and submission to the old nature as our defining points. This is woefully catastrophic. Such bottom feeding robs us of all He is for us and we are in Him. Consider this thought by Miles J. Stanford, “Let the facts of your position OVERWHELM the feelings of your condition.”⁴⁰

Charles Leiter correctly notes,

Christian have both a new identity and a new power. These are *facts*, whether we believe them or not. Believing them does not make them true, and not believing them does not make them false. Reality is not changed by our faulty perception of it. What *is* changed is our *experience* of that reality.⁴¹

The purpose of this short study was to see that Jesus Christ is enough in this life and in the life that is to come. There is nothing and no one who can be for us what we are in Him. May the Holy Spirit of God be pleased to reveal this truth to us and may He than cause us to understand.

Christ Jesus has done it all. Yet we forget to rest in His provision. We forget and we fall back into self-effort. Our habit of asking for more forgiveness, more redemption, more righteousness, and more sanctification must be replaced with a habit of trusting Him. He has done everything for us. And living by faith in what He has done for us is what pleases Him.⁴²

My Passion is to Know . . .

All that He is for me	I am in Him
He is my justification	I am righteous
He is my redemption	I am debt-free
He is my propitiation	I am pleasing
He is my sacrificial substitute	I am guilt-free
	I am forgiven
	I am free to be who I am in Him
He is my imputation	I receive what He has and He receives what I was
He is my reconciliation	I am at peace w/ God

Who we are in Him is not determined by our activity or ability. There is nothing more that must be done for us to acquire what is already ours. Nothing can alter His opinion of us or His dealings with us. Why? Because He deals with us according to the merit of His Son and on the basis of grace alone. Read carefully the following statement in *The Cost of Discipleship*. Dietrich Bonhoeffer quotes Hermann Friedrich Kohlbrugge, (August 15, 1803, Amsterdam – March 5, 1875, Elberfeld), a Dutch (German father) minister.⁴³

I live, says the believer, I live in the sight of God. Through his grace I am acquitted before his judgment seat. I live in his loving kindness, his light and his love. I am wholly delivered from all my sins. There are no further unpaid accounts against my name in his debit book. The law makes no more demands on me, it pursues me no longer, neither does it condemn me. I am righteous before God, even as he is righteous. I am holy and perfect even as

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my God is holy and as my Father is perfect. The entire goodwill of God embraces me: it is the ground whereon I stand, the roof beneath which I hide. All the blessedness and peace of God raises and bears me aloft. It is the air I breathe, and the nourishment on which I thrive. There is no more sin in me, and I have ceased entirely to commit it. I have a good conscience, and know that I am walking in God's ways and doing his will; I know that my whole life is fashioned in accordance with that will, whether I walk or stand, sit or lie down, am awake or asleep. Every thought I speak and every deed I do I think and do according to his will. Wheresoever I be, at home or abroad, it is according to his gracious will. I am acceptable to him, whether I be at work or at rest. My guilt is forever wiped out, and it is impossible for me to incur fresh guilt which could not be expiated. I am preserved by his grace and can sin no more. Yea, death cannot harm me for I have eternal life like all the angels of God. No longer will my God be wroth with me or rebuke me, for I am eternally redeemed from the wrath to come. The evil one can no longer assail me, neither can the world ensnare me any more. Who can separate us from the love of God? If God be for us, who can be against us? (Kohlbrugge)

¹ "Most men lead lives of quiet desperation and go to the grave with the song still in them." "I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived." Henry David Thoreau <http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/h/henrydavid132662.html#ixzz1jea26jK0>

Thoreau understood the questions confronting us all. He failed in not allowing the Biblical text to form his worldview; thus robbing Him of lives fullest and ultimate meaning and purpose.

² Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1993), 1:204.

³ "In Romans, the most theological of Paul's Epistles, we find the most systematic development of the doctrine of grace. this is to be expected, since the heart of Paul's message was the gospel, the power of God unto salvation, and since grace is used as a synonym for gospel and salvation." Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *The Grace of God* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1963). 37.

⁴ *CARM's Dictionary of Theology*.

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- ⁵ Packer, J. I., Preface to John Owen's, *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ*, Banner of Truth, 7.
- ⁶ Leon Morris, 'Redemption' *Dictionary of Paul and his Letters* [Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1993]: 784.
- ⁷ Bruce Demarest, *The Cross and Salvation: The Doctrine of Salvation* [Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1997]: 176, 177.
- ⁸ *Understanding Christian Theology*, Swindoll and Zuck, General Editors, 834, 835.
- ⁹ Jerry Bridges, *Transforming Grace*, 21.
- ¹⁰ *Understanding Christian Theology*, Swindoll and Zuck, General Editors, 835.
- ¹¹ Swindoll, *Grace Awakening*, 61, 62.
- ¹² Steve McVey, *Grace Rules*, (Eugene: Harvest House Publishers, 1998), 148.
- ¹³ Michael Wells, *Sidetracked in the Wilderness*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1991), 82.
- ¹⁴ Robert L. Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1998), 742, 747
- ¹⁵ Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *Basic Theology* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 298
- ¹⁶ Jerry Bridges, *Transforming Grace* (NavPress: Colorado Springs, 1991), 36.
- ¹⁷ Paul Enns, *Moody Handbook of Theology* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1989), 638.
- ¹⁸ A.H. Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1907), 849.
- ¹⁹ Ceslas Spicq, *Theological Lexicon of the New Testament*, 1:325
- ²⁰ R.C. Sproul, *Essential Truths of the Christian life*, (Wheaton: Tyndale House, 1998), 189
- ²¹ Dudley Hall, *Grace Works* (Multnomah Pub., 2000), 131.
- ²² Source Unknown
- ²³ Charles Leiter, *Justification and Regeneration* (Heart Cry Resources - www.heartcrymissionary.com, 2007), 37.
- ²⁴ Swindoll, *Grace Awakening*, (Word Publishing: Dallas, 1991), 24.
- ²⁵ Bob George, *Faith That Pleases God*, (Harvest House Publishers: Eugene, 2001), 178.
- ²⁶ Alva J. McClain, *Romans*, 121.
- ²⁷ *New Dictionary of Theology*, Edited by Ferguson, Wright, Packer, "Justification," N.T. Wright, 360.
- ²⁸ Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 605
- ²⁹ www.new-york-lawyer.ws/law-dictionary/gratis.htm
- ³⁰ J. Dwight Pentecost, *Life's Problems God's Solution: Answers to Fifteen of Life's Most Perplexing Problems* (Kregel, 1998), 18, 19, 21, 22. This is an excellent article and worthy of careful consideration by all who trust in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sin.
- ³¹ [Emphasis added] Timothy S. Lane and Paul David Tripp, *How People Change* (New Growth Press, 2006), 55. This is an excellent chapter on the believer's union with Christ.
- ³² C. Matthew McMahon, "The Active and Passive Obedience of Jesus Christ," in <http://www.apuritansmind.com/justification/the-active-and-passive->

obedience-of-jesus-christ-by-dr-c-matthew-mcmahon/

³³ C. Matthew McMahon, "The Active and Passive Obedience of Jesus Christ," in <http://www.apuritansmind.com/justification/the-active-and-passive-obedience-of-jesus-christ-by-dr-c-matthew-mcmahon/>

³⁴ Leiter, *Justification and Regeneration*, 28.

³⁵ <http://www.realtime.net/~wdoud/topics/reconciliation.html>

³⁶ R. David Rightmire, "Union with Christ," in *Baker Theological Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 789.

³⁷ Hall, *Grace Works*, 87.

³⁸ *Ibid.* 789.

³⁹ <http://www.christinyou.net/pages/adoption.html>

⁴⁰ <http://withchrist.org/MJS/menus.htm>

⁴¹ Leiter, *Justification and Regeneration*, 87.

⁴² George, *Faith That Pleases God*, 96, 97.

⁴³ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (Macmillan, 1959), 322. This particular quote is notable and cited by others.