

The Great Exchange

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[0 : 0 0] I want us to look together at the passage we read from 2 Corinthians 5, 11 to 21. In the ESV it is entitled The Ministry of Reconciliation and it describes how God has gone about bringing a lost world back to himself. By nature the Bible teaches that we're aliens and strangers, rebels even against God without hope and without God in the world. And God reaches out to us and brings us back into his family so that we're no longer aliens and strangers, foreigners. We are fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God. God brings us in from the outside, from the cold and we find ourselves sitting at the table in the family. We're reconciled to him. But how does a righteous God become reconciled to sinful men and women? Does he just turn a blind eye to our sin?

Does he not care how we behave as long as we enjoy ourselves? This cannot be. This cannot be. Because God is a pure horizon to look on iniquity and cannot look on wrong. And we know that he's appointed a day when he will judge the world and we will be there. And how will we stand on that day?

Since all have sinned, all of us, and come short of the glory of God. How will we face him on that day? Well, the answer is that God has made a way. And we are going to look at that way now.

The message that Paul preached was such good news and excited him so much that some people thought he was off his head. In verse 13, for if we're beside ourselves, it is for God. If we're in our right minds, it's for you. They thought he was too excited. And he said, no, I'm not off my head.

But the love of Christ controls me. The old authorized version used to say, the love of Christ constrains me. It pushes me to preach this message of reconciliation, this good news.

[2 : 3 6] And we have, this morning, we're going to be thinking about this great exchange. The saving father, the sinless substitute, the sin imputed, and the saints righteousness.

First of all then, let's think about the saving father. In verse 18 of our passage, we read, All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.

That is, in Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.

Now, most false religions, when they are thinking about how to approach their God or God, they start with man.

They teach that we must work our way up to God by going on pilgrimages or fasting or following the rules of their religion. And so, if all goes well, God will accept them.

[3 : 5 5] Or they'll make themselves better and somehow more acceptable to him. But the good news of the gospel is that reconciliation doesn't start with me, doesn't start with you.

It starts with God. Because we're incapable of doing anything to make ourselves more acceptable with God. We're dead in our trespasses and sins.

Dead men can't do anything to help themselves. But, but, God showed his love for us. And while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

You see, God is the designer of our salvation. In Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself. The old hymn writer wrote, Oh, the love that drew salvation's plan.

Oh, the grace that brought it down to man. Oh, the mighty gulf that God did span at Calvary. It was God who so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, our Lord Jesus, for you, for me.

[5 : 08] Jesus died on the cross because it was his father's will. He didn't go to the cross because Judas betrayed him.

Or the priests plotted against him. Or because of the cowardice of Pilate. No. Acts 2.23 tells us he went to the cross because it was God's plan.

It was his father's will. He could have escaped. He could have called ten legions of angels and got off that cross. His enemies could never have held him.

But he didn't. He didn't because it was his father's will that he should be there. You know, Isaiah 53 verse 10 says, It was the will of the father to crush him.

It was the will of the father to crush him. God the father who several times during Jesus' ministry said, This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, planned to crush him on the cross.

[6 : 19] The Son, Jesus, the Son of God, who sits enthroned in heaven today in equal glory with his Father, was willing to go to the cross to be crushed for us.

Before the world began, God had made his plan of salvation. And Jesus was carrying it out. And that plan was that Jesus would be our substitute.

And it was the father's plan. It was God's will. God's will. All through the Old Testament, God the Father had taught that he was prepared to accept as substitute in the place of the sinner.

And all the offerings and sacrifices in the Old Testament were models of what Jesus was going to do. And Jesus was that sacrifice.

So we have, first of all, the saving father who was planning it all and organizing that redemption's plan.

[7 : 33] But then we have the sinless substitute. In verse 21 of our passage, we read, For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin.

So that we might become the righteousness of God. He knew no sin. Jesus was perfect. He was the spotless Lamb of God.

John, verse 22, tells us, He committed no sin. No sin. Neither was deceit found in his mouth. No sin. In John 8, verse 46, Jesus could challenge his enemies and could say to them, Which of you convicts me of sin?

And they couldn't. They couldn't. The apostle Peter, in his epistle, in 1 Peter 2.22, after three years of living with Jesus, he wrote, He committed no sin.

Neither was deceit found in his mouth. He never sinned. He never sinned. In thought, in word, in deed.

[8 : 41] He always did what was pleasing to his father. And because of that, he was a fitting sacrifice for our sins. The Old Testament sacrifices, goats and lambs, had to be perfect.

They had to be without spot. And they had to be perfect. But they were all models of Jesus. Because only he could take away sin. Only a sinless Savior was sufficient to take away our sin.

You see, if Jesus had sinned, he would have to pay for his own sin. But no, he hadn't sinned. He was a lamb, a perfect lamb, without spot.

Our Passover lamb, sacrificed for us. He was a sinless substitute. The true lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.

The saving father, the sinless substitute. And now we have our third point, the sin imputed. Going back to verse 21, which I gave the children to learn, we read, For our sake he made him to be sin, who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

[10 : 08] He, the loving father, made Jesus, the sinless son, to be sin on our behalf. He made him to be sin on our behalf.

Now what does that mean? Does it mean that Jesus became a sinner on the cross? No, that's impossible. He was always God, always holy, always harmless, and undefiled, and separate from sinners.

He couldn't become a sinner. So how did he become sin for us? Well, on the cross, on the cross, the father imputed to Jesus the sins of the world and treated him as if they were his sins.

To impute something to another is to consider the other person responsible for whatever it is. When you impute sins to Jesus, he becomes responsible for those sins.

To impute blame for someone who's done wrong, and he takes the blame. to impute credit for someone who hasn't done, doesn't deserve it, gives him the credit.

[11 : 37] To impute blame is to impute blame, rather, for someone who hasn't done wrong. It's giving them something that they haven't done. Or giving them credit for something that they don't deserve.

Imagine a court of law, and I stand condemned of some crime, and my friend stands up and says, I'll take the blame for that crime. Well, I don't think you'll get away with it in our courts, but that's what taking someone else's blame is about.

The story is told in the American Civil War of a young man who was part of an execution squad, and he was, he lined up and took aim at the man who was to be executed as a deserter.

And as he looked at him, he realized he knew him. He was a neighbor back home, and he had a wife and three children. And this young man called out to the officer and says, Stop!

I know that man. He says, I'll take his, can I take his place? It is said that the officer said, Well, somebody has to be executed. I suppose you could, yeah, if you want to, if you're willing to.

[12 : 56] And he took the place of the man who was to be executed. And he was executed in his place. And the, the other man, the man who was guilty, he was freed, and he was allowed to go home to his wife and family.

That's the situation here. Our sin imputed on Jesus. He takes it and he pays the price. Martin Luther once wrote to a monk in distress about his sin.

And he said this. He said, Learn to know Christ and him crucified. Learn to sing to him and say, Lord Jesus, you are my righteousness.

I am your sin. You took on you what was mine and you set on me what was yours. You became what you were not that I might become what I was not.

You became what you were not that I might become what I was not. You see, God, the Father, treated the Son as if he, the Son, was guilty and had committed all our sins even though he had committed none of them.

[14 : 15] For us to pay for our sin would have taken an eternity in hell. But he, the infinite Holy Son of God paid the debt.

Isaiah, 700 years before Jesus' crucifixion, explained what was happening on that day. He said, He was pierced for our transgression. He was crushed for our iniquities.

Upon him was a chastisement that brought us peace and with his wounds we are healed. Jesus was crushed for our sins and God the Father was pleased with the sacrifice.

And now, you see, because of Jesus' sacrifice, God can legally forgive sins without condoning them and not count them against us because our substitute was punished in our place.

Christian friends, do you really believe this? Does it thrill your heart? You know, sometimes we Christians go through life as if we were still trying to earn our salvation, afraid that not everything is forgiven, doubting the greatness of his love and doubting the wonder of our salvation.

[15 : 35] Friends, all our sins were put on Jesus. None were left off. All were covered by his death. Let us never doubt that his death was sufficient for us.

And when the devil comes along and he whispers in our hearts that your sins aren't all forgiven, that they're too big or that last one was too awful, remember the sinless substitute and that your sin was dealt with 2,000 years ago when Jesus died.

Again, the hymn writer put it well. He wrote, When Satan tempts me to despair and tells me of the guilt within, upward I look and see him there who made an end of all my sin.

Because the sinless saviour died, my sinful soul is counted free. For God the just is satisfied to look on him and pardon me.

God the just is satisfied to look on him and pardon me. Sin imputed. And finally, the saint's righteousness.

[16 : 56] righteousness. Jesus' death did more than deal with our sins. Again, let's look at verse 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.

You see, not only are we washed clean of our sins, not only are sins cast away from us and forgotten because they've been dealt with by Jesus, but we are clothed in his righteousness.

Clothed in his righteousness. We have no righteousness of our own, only sin. Without holiness no one will see the Lord, but how will we ever gain holiness?

holiness, we who are weak and failing and always sinning, how can we gain holiness? You know, this here is the great exchange.

[18 : 05] The great exchange. He made him to be sin who knew no sin so in him we might become the righteousness of God.

The filthy garments of our sin wrapped around Jesus. The robe of righteousness that is his given to us to wear.

So God looked at him on the cross and saw him wearing our sins as it were. God looks at us now in him, in Christ as our Savior and sees the robe of Christ's righteousness.

God has laid my sins, your sins on Jesus and punished him as if he had lived our lives.

And he looks at me and treats me as if we, treats you as if we have lived Christ's life. you know, we're very aware of our sins, very aware of our feelings as Christians, but in Christ we are as righteous as he is before God.

[19 : 23] Our sins have been washed away, we have been made righteous in Christ. God looks at you, God looks at me, and he sees the righteousness of Christ.

How wonderful is that? Horatius Boner put it like this, he said, mine is the sin, but thine the righteousness. Mine is the guilt, but thine the cleansing blood.

Here is my robe, my refuge and my peace. Thy blood, thy righteousness, O Lord, my God. Mine is the sin, but thine the righteousness.

So we've got the saving father, the sinless substitute, the sin imputed to Jesus, and the saints' righteousness, Christ's righteousness imputed to us.

What a wonderful salvation we have in Jesus. What a wonderful savior he is. I wonder if anyone's listening, and this isn't your assurance, this isn't your experience.

[20 : 40] You haven't found Jesus as savior. You haven't bowed the knee to Jesus. You are not reconciled to God. You're still holding him away to you.

I say, don't stay there. That way leads to destruction. Come to him. He will not turn you away. he died for you.

Verse 20 of our passage says, we are ambassadors for Christ. God making his appeal. It's God's appeal. Through us, through me today, we implore you, on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

It's God's appeal, not ours. God is appealing that you would come and be reconciled to him. may God bless his word to all our hearts this morning.

Let's pray. Father in heaven, how we thank you for our Lord Jesus, the sinless substitute who has taken our place.

[21 : 44] And how we thank you that you have called us to yourself, that you made salvation's plan because you so loved the world.

Father, how great is your salvation. And how we thank you that we who know you share it and have come to be your children, no longer aliens and strangers, but now members of the household of God.

We thank you, Father, and we pray you'll bless your word to all our hearts now today. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.