

# † The Miracle of the Cross

## **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.***

As we come this Lord's Day to worship our Risen Savior Jesus Christ, one might ask, "Why the does the title of the sermon read, 'The Miracles of the Cross'? Are we not here to be reminded that Jesus is risen from the dead? Why would we focus on the cross of Christ rather than the empty tomb?" As I contemplated a text for this day and settled on 2 Corinthians 5:21, I was reminded that what was accomplished on the cross of Christ is very substance and meaning behind why Jesus rose from the dead.

Let me put it to you this way; why is it that we do not celebrate something called, "Translation Day" – a day in which we remember how two men, Enoch and Elijah were translated up into heaven, never to face death? That is a rather extraordinary event, is it not? Why do we not celebrate it? Or, why do not have a "Lazarus Day" – a day to commemorate the rising of Lazarus from the dead? Again, that is impressive; a dead man come back to life. And Lazarus is not the only one raised from the dead according to the Scriptures. Isn't that worth celebrating?

As I was out driving one day, I heard two well-meaning Christian radio hosts make the following comment and commend it repeatedly. They said that Jesus Christ is the only man to have risen from the dead. Period. End of sentence. But that, I we just noted, is not true. There is not only Lazarus but there is also people like the Widow of Zarephath's son who was raised by Elijah (1 King 17:17-24), there was Man tossed into Elisha's tomb (2 Kings 13:21) raised by the Spirit of God, and others raised by Jesus Widow of Nain's son (Luke 7:11-16), and Jairus the Synagogue ruler's 12-year-old daughter (Mk 5:35-43). Additionally, Peter raised Tabitha also known as Dorcas (Acts 9:36-41), and Paul raised Eutychus (Acts 20:7-12). Jesus is not the only man to have been risen from the dead. However, there is something wonderfully unique about Jesus' resurrection, something that sets it apart even from these other extraordinary events. Jesus is the only man raised from the dead never to die again.

As extraordinary these events are, they were but isolated happenings that did not have a lasting impact or benefit to the human race. What makes the resurrection of Jesus Christ even more extraordinary than that which I have spoken is not only that Jesus rose from the dead never to die again (unlike Lazarus and others who were raised from the dead who did die again), but that His resurrection proved, validated, revealed as truth the fact that His death on the cross had meaning and benefit to humanity itself.

It has been rightly said that the resurrection of Jesus from the dead is the hinge upon which the door of Christianity swings. In other words, if there is no resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, then there is no true Christianity. That is how important this event is. For even Paul acknowledged to the church at Corinth, "***if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain***" (1 Corinthians 15:14). But notice something about what Paul said there pointing to the fact that the resurrection of Christ gives Paul's preaching substance. If Jesus did not rise from the dead, then his preaching is empty and meaningless. In other words, the resurrection of Jesus from the dead is extraordinary not only because Jesus became the first man to be raised never to die again; but also because His death, as well as His work on the Cross become truly beneficial to all who trust and believe on Him. The glory of this day is not simply that Jesus rose, but that His resurrection proves all that He said; that there is

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reconciliation with God, forgiveness of sin, the hope of eternal life, the promise of the Holy Spirit; all of these and more are confirmed by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Now, let me read the text to you again, making sure that we hear who is doing what as we begin to unravel its significance for us; *“God the Father made Jesus, who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Jesus.”* This is one of the most magnificent verses in the all the Bible.

Spurgeon called it the heart of the gospel. In a real sense, it is the gospel in just one verse. Everything you need to know about how to go to heaven can be found in these 24 words. There is an amazing simplicity here – 21 one-syllable words, touched with 2 two-syllable words and top off with just 1 three-syllable word (righteousness). It does not get any simpler than this and yet libraries of books have been written on this theme; that all our sin has been laid upon Christ; He took it upon Himself; it is what we bring to Him; our only contribution to salvation; our sin; and in exchange, He gives us all of His righteousness; His rightness, that which made Him worthy of being raised from the dead and by faith in Him makes us fit for heaven as well.

This verse, 2 Corinthians 5:21 is one of the most important theological verses of Scripture. If you do not understand this verse, you do not understand the gospel of Jesus Christ, the reason why He came from heaven to earth, the reason why He lived His righteous life, the purpose of why He died and the very reason God the Father raised Him from the dead. We live in such a time of so much confusion regarding who God is, what the Bible is about, what is true spirituality, and how one can be saved and assured of eternal life, that we must be firmly settled on truth of the gospel message. This is our only message. God has not called us to deliver a message concerning political power or military might. We chief purpose is not to seek to right all the wrongs in the world or to pass judgment on every cultural fad and trend. We have but one key task and that is to preach the gospel to every person on earth. In Mark 16:15 we read the words of Christ who said, **“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation!”** In effect, Mark’s gospel says, “If it moves, preach the gospel to it!”

Since this is our duty and privilege given to us by God, it is imperative that we know the answer to the question, “What is the gospel?” Our text this morning helps us answer that question. Each phrase of this simple verse speaks of a miracle, a miracle that took place on the cross, something that was to our benefit, and something that was confirmed to be true by God’s raising Jesus from the dead. These miracles form the very ground upon which the gospel rests, the very foundation of our faith. Believe these miracles; by faith receive them as God’s truth, and you have the hope of eternal life; the hope of being raised from the dead even as Jesus was raised. So then, let us begin by considering the first miracle, the very character of the One who was crucified on our behalf.

## I. Christ’s Character: He knew no sin.

*[God the Father] made Him who knew no sin...*”

With regard to the moral character of Christ, Paul begins with one extraordinary fact saying that Jesus *“knew no sin.”* The stress here is that Jesus had no sin; that His life, internally and external never possessed and never exhibited any sin. We might rightly say that Jesus had a sinless nature; no inclination to give into sin. He had no sin inwardly of thought or heart, and thus He had no sin outwardly. That is the first miracle of the cross, that there was One who was punished who had nothing in Himself for which to be punished. As Jesus walked on this earth, He was perfectly righteous; never thought wrong, never did wrong. Stated negatively, He was without

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fault, without sin, without malice, and without any evil intent. This means he never did anything wrong, never violated one of God's commands, nor did He ever in the slightest deviated from the path of God's will. What is so miraculous about that? Is there even one among us, even one of the most unspiritual people you know that would claim or could claim to be without fault, flaw, failure or sin? No, not one. Yet here is One who was perfectly sinless.

However, this begs a question; Why is it important that Jesus "**knew no sin**"? Beloved, if Jesus had sinned, even just once, He could not be our full and perfect Savior. A sinner could not pay for the sins of another sinner. Psalm 49:7-8 tells us, "**No man can by any means redeem his brother or give to God a ransom for him — For the redemption of his soul is costly, and he should cease trying forever...**"

The point is that any sacrifice for another must be made by One who was without spot or blemish—like the lambs slain on the night of the of the Passover Egypt (Exodus 12). God ordained that the lambs must be one-year-old males, in good health, free from any disease and physical defect. The lambs that were slaughtered in Egypt pictured the coming "Lamb of God" who by His sacrificial death would and could take away the sin of the world (John 1:29).

But how can we know that Jesus "knew no sin." For the Scriptures are replete with statements revealing that humanity is sinful, full of sin, even from birth. What is it that sets Jesus apart? We could speak here of the Virgin Birth of Jesus, how Jesus was miraculously born, not of the will or exercise of man, but by the Holy Spirit of God supernaturally coming upon Mary, implanting the sinless seed of Divinity into her womb so as to bring into the world Him who would be the God/Man; sinless God now become sinless flesh. But we can also see the sinless of Christ from the testimony of His own adversaries. Consider the testimony of the Roman governor Pontius Pilate, who, upon examining Jesus, declared, "I find no guilt in Him" (John 19:4). And then there is Herod and the Jewish leaders, who, upon putting Jesus on trial, could find no witnesses against him. So what did they do? They knowingly had to round those up who would give a false testimony against Jesus; those who were willing to lie under oath.

### **Matthew 26:59-60**

**59 Now the chief priests and the whole Council kept trying to obtain false testimony against Jesus, so that they might put Him to death. 60 They did not find any, even though many false witnesses came forward.**

And even as Jesus was hanging on the cross, the Roman centurion, upon reflection of the life of Christ, cried out, "Truly this was the Son of God" (Matthew 27:54).

The point is this, Jesus knew all about sin, He knew all about its power over humanity, its ability to influence and sway the human heart; but the miracle is that Jesus Himself never sinned—not even once. Can you imagine the power of that? Jesus lived in a sinful world, just like our own, but never did the stain of sin diminish and damage His character. Of all the countless billions of people who have lived on earth, Jesus is utter unique as the only One of whom it can be said that He never sinned in any action or attitude; in heart or in mind, by His hands or by His mouth. There is nothing in recorded history, in either the Scriptures or elsewhere that even gives a hint of any moral contamination. In fact, the Scriptures unblemished and spotless (1 Peter 1:19).

The Scriptures teach us that with regard to sin and the temptation that comes from sin, that inclination that each of us feels to give into sin; well, Jesus was put under every conceivable pressure to sin; the weakness of the flesh due to fatigue and emotional stress; the fear of man,

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the desire to be accepted; the direct interaction and conniving of the devil himself; and yet, being under the influence of the full weight of sin, Jesus never gave in, never gave up, and never gave over to sin. Jesus never had to confess a single sin because never transgressed even on sin. Jesus never asked for His own forgiveness because He never transgressed even one of God's commands. Jesus Himself said this to His adversaries, "**Which one of you convicts Me of sin?**" Can you imagine yourself saying that to your spouse, your pastor, or of your enemies? Could something be dragged up? Yet no one could drag up anything but false accusations against Jesus. As one church historian has rightly noted,

*Christ's character [is] the greatest moral miracle of history. Such was Jesus of Nazareth,—a true man in body, soul, and spirit, yet differing from all men; a character absolutely unique and original from tender childhood to ripe manhood, moving in unbroken union with God, overflowing with the purest love to man, free from every sin and error, innocent and holy, teaching and practicing all virtues in perfect harmony, devoted solely and uniformly to the noblest ends, sealing the purest life with the sublimest death, and ever acknowledged since as the one and only perfect model of goodness and holiness! All human greatness loses on closer inspection; but Christ's character grows more pure, sacred, and lovely, the better we know him.<sup>1</sup>*

I love that – that the character of Christ is a moral miracle. It is for this reason that the author of Hebrews would write, "**For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin**" (Hebrews 4:15). The first miracle of the cross is that hung on that piece of rugged wood was the only One who "**knew no sin.**"

## II. Christ's Sacrifice: He became sin for us.

*...to be sin on our behalf*

This is the second miracle of our text. Jesus, the sinless, perfect, Son of God became sin for us. What does this mean, that Jesus was made "**to be sin on our behalf?**" In what way was Jesus made sin? That sounds troubling. Let me tell you that Paul is not suggesting that Christ literally became a sinner. The text does not say that Jesus became a sinner. As we just noted, this would not even be possible since the Scriptures teach that Jesus was sinless and remained personally sinless even while hanging on the cross. Since Jesus never committed a sin, He never became a sinner. So then, what does this mean that Jesus was made "to be sin on our behalf? I have to tell you that in some ways, I cannot fully grasp the meaning and magnitude of this statement. But this is what I do understand, that through the work of the cross, God the Father treated His Son as if He were a sinner, even though He was not. Jesus so identified, so aligned Himself with sinners that He could be, in the words of Isaiah 53:12, be "**numbered with the transgressors.**" In other words, it was not simply that Jesus died between two sinners, but that He was numbered with them, counted as one of them, and died as even as they died; a criminal's death on a cross.

Let us note what this means, that Jesus was made "to be sin on our behalf"? There are two things this phrase teaches us; both of which are miracles in themselves.

<sup>1</sup> Shaff, Phillip – THE PERSON OF CHRIST: THE MIRACLE OF HISTORY.

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**First**, JESUS TOOK OUR PENALTY. We read that Jesus was “**made...to be sin...**” On the cross, Jesus, the sinless Savior became the great Sin-Bearer. God treated Jesus on the cross, the way each one of us deserves to be treated by God because of our sin. Jesus paid the ransom we owed to God, the debt we could never pay. And somehow, by the mind and will of God, the death of Jesus as our Sin-bearer, satisfied God’s righteous decree that sin must always be punished by death.

In the Old Testament days of the Temple and the Levitical Priesthood, the high priest, yearly, on the Day of Atonement, would take the blood of a goat and sprinkle it on the Mercy Seat of the Ark of the Covenant that was placed in the Holy of Holies (Leviticus 16). That sprinkled blood pictured the covering of the sins of the people for one more year. That was the blood of one goat, but there was a second goat involved on the Day of Atonement. The first was slain to make this blood sacrifice and the other was left alive. After the priest offered the blood of the first goat, he then placed his hands on the head of the second goat, confessing the sins of the people. In Leviticus 16:21 we are told what is to happen,

***Then Aaron [the high priest] shall lay both of his hands on the head of the live goat, and confess over it all the iniquities of the sons of Israel and all their transgressions in regard to all their sins; and he shall lay them on the head of the goat and send it away into the wilderness by the hand of a man who stands in readiness.***

As we read, the goat was taken into deep into the wilderness and then released. This visualized the removal of sin from the people as the high priest symbolically transferred them on an innocent victim. This goat was called the scapegoat because he representatively took the sins of the people on himself (Leviticus 16:20-22). Now understand this; what that goat could only do symbolically, Jesus did literally. Jesus literally was the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29). It was Jesus who removed from us our transgressions “**as far as the east is from the west**” (Psalm 103:12).

Consider the familiar words of Isaiah 53:6 that tells us, “**But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him**” or as the ESV puts it, “**the LORD laid on Him [Jesus] the iniquity of us all.**” I would like you to imagine a book in which every one of your sins has been recorded. A big book? What would be in that book? Think about it; ever evil, hurtful, mean-spirited word you ever said; in that book! Every evil, rotten, hateful thought or imagination; in that book. Every lustful fantasy; in that book! Recorded from the day of your birth until the day you die, every bad attitude and every sinful action; in that book! Not one detail left out. Not one minutia of description mitigated out. How heavy would that book be? How devastating to stand before God, the great Judge of whom it is said in Psalm 130:3, “**If You, LORD, should mark iniquities, O LORD, who could stand?**”

There you are, holding this massive book and standing next to you is Jesus; the holy, perfect, pure, and good One. You notice that He has no book with Him because He has never sinned. What would you like for than anything? To be rid of your book. But there is nowhere to put it. But now you see Jesus on a cross; and you see countless books upon His bloody back. You see the weight of the books crushing Him literally to death. As you look more closely, you realize that each book belongs to a person. All of a sudden you look down to see that your book is no longer in your hands, but is upon the back of Jesus. Your sins crushed the Savior. This is what it means for Jesus to be made sin. He took all your sins; the massing of every evil deed and

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thought, taking it upon Himself when He died on the Cross. This is Jesus taking our penalty, what we deserve. This is the LORD laying upon Jesus the iniquity of us all. But there is more...

Not only did Jesus take our penalty, but **second**, JESUS TOOK OUR PLACE. This is what is meant by the last word of the phrase, **“to be sin on our behalf.”** When Jesus died on the Cross, He took our place; my place and yours. We call this the doctrine of penal substitution; the teaching that Christ died in the place of guilty sinners taking upon Himself their deserved punishment. Let us be graphic; the nails that were driven into His hands and feet; they were meant for you! The crown of thorns on His head, should have been on your head. The spear that pierced Jesus’ side, should be thrust into your side. The mockings and insults hurled at Jesus, should be hurled at you. The being forsaken by God the Father, should be your eternal position. It should be you on that cross, eternally bearing the punishment for loving your sinfulness and rejecting God. But here we learn that Jesus died in the place, in the stead of, on our behalf. On the cross, Jesus was dying in your place, if you believe.

How can this be? It seems offensive to think that God would do that to His own Son. It seems offensive that just because of some sin I may commit that I should be punished eternally. It seems offensive that there is nothing I can do, even if I wanted to, to correct this. That is natural thinking and the Bible teaches that the truth of God’s ways is an offense to the natural mind. 1 Corinthians 1:21 is clear that by the world’s wisdom, God cannot be understood or known.

***For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.***

The purpose and meaning of the cross has always been a stumbling block for naturally thinking people. The bloody, barbaric death of Jesus offends the sensibilities of those who want a cultured, bloodless religion. Yet, in the wisdom of God, the Bible, from the beginning to the end, is a bloody book. If you take the blood out of Bible, you have taken away any possibility of salvation. As the author of Hebrews declares in 9:22, **“without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.”** This may not be what man wants, but is what God has willed and revealed in His word. There is no way to avoid the doctrine of Christ’s substitutionary death on our behalf. It permeates the very pages of the New Testament. Jesus death on the cross was not simply the result of evil men so grossly mistreating Him, but it was also the God-ordained means by which salvation would come to those who believe in Jesus. The miracle is this; that when Jesus died on that cross, He did so taking the place, on behalf of the very people who were responsible for putting Him there; sinners like you and me.

I do not know that we will ever fully grasp this wisdom of God. I have had people tell that that it just doesn’t make sense, either that God did it this way; or how the death of Jesus could be so beneficial to all who believe. May I say, I agree, it does not make full sense to our human minds; but it is what God has said is perfect, holy, right and what we must believe! Our human minds struggle with how it is that one man could die in the place of another, bearing his penalty, and through this act, grant him a right standing with God. We struggle with seeing how the death of one man can have eternal benefits; but beloved, this is what our God has communicated to us in His Word. At stake then is not whether or not it makes perfect sense to us, but rather, do you

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believe it? This is not to say that our faith in what Jesus has done is not rational and reasonable, but we must know that it also goes beyond what we can fully rationalize and requires faith.

We tend to worry about what the world thinks about us and our faith. Yet the Bible is clear that the world does not know God and cannot know Him apart from what has been revealed in the Word. And what does the Word reveal; that Jesus Christ died for our sins and that in His death God in the flesh has suffered for us and paid the penalty on our behalf. We believe that God made Jesus to be sin on our behalf; for our benefit, and that man, in Christ, is now made something miraculously extraordinary, according to the end of our text, we become the righteousness of God. Like what we have already considered, a miracle cannot be fully explained or rationalized; it can only be believed or denied. But I get ahead of myself. Consider these two great truths concerning the sacrifice of Christ: 1) Sin must be exceedingly sinful to necessitate such extraordinary means for remedy; and 2) God's grace, His undeserved favor and ability to deal with our situation is beyond all comprehension. How much God must love us to do something like this! This brings us to the third and final miracle of the cross I present to you this morning...

### III. Christ's Gift: We might become the righteousness of God.

*...so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*

Anyone who has become aware of his or her own sinfulness before the Creator and Lover of our souls desires nothing else but to be made right with God; to know that we are forgiven and that there is nothing hindering the relationship we were created for, knowing and loving God as our Father.

This final phrase of our text has come to be known by theologians (and so as you know this you are a theologian) as "The Great Exchange." It means this:

Jesus bore our sin and died for sin that we might be made right and live for God.

Jesus paid the price that we might be redeemed.

Jesus was made sin, that we might be made righteous.

Theologians have a term for this exchange. It is called imputation. Do not get overwhelmed by the word. It is simply a banking term that means that when we trust Christ as our Savior; our sin is credited, counted [imputed] to Christ's account and that His righteousness is credited or imputed to our account. He takes our debt of sin upon Himself and we get the credit of His righteousness. He paid what we owed (and could never repay) and He gives us what He has (and we could never earn); His perfect righteousness.

Spurgeon noted that you could easily find 100 books that say this is impossible. The skeptics speak of this as legal fiction. They ask, "How can the righteousness of one man be given to another?" There is no way, humanly speaking, that I can literally take your sin from you and you can literally take my righteousness. So who do we answer this? By faith, we take God at His word, that **"With people this is impossible, but with God all things are possible" (Matthew 19:26)**. For those who say they cannot believe this, my only response is this, "Then you will never be saved!" Beloved, there is no salvation apart from receiving the righteousness of Christ as your own by faith. That is what salvation is; faith that Christ has done everything for you that you could not do for yourself. There is no other option, any other way, no other Savior, no other hope. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved (Acts 16:31). Do not believe and

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condemn yourself to hell. You either come to the Father by way of the cross of Jesus or you do not come at all.

Let me be blunt and perfect clear here: there is nothing except your sin that stands between you and God. Either believe that God's wrath against sin was turned away in the death of His Son; that God's justice was satisfied by Christ death alone; that God's love has been poured out for you to receive or reject it. At this moment, the choice is yours; choose your sins; your sinful life and die, continue to drift further from God, the hope of eternal life, of the promise of eternal joy and blessing; or choose Jesus Christ and truly live; live with meaning; live with hope. It is as simple as damnation or salvation! Come to the Father through Jesus and His work on the cross on your behalf, receive His righteousness and perfection as your own, and you are accepted. If you do not receive this by faith, you will not be accepted. Will you believe this or not?

I would like to close on this important word "believe." What must we "believe" about our text and what does the Bible mean by "believe"? We answer simplistically with the apostle Paul, **"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved..."** (Acts 16:31). Yes, beloved, it is that simple. But "believe in what" still remains? Believe what about Jesus? What is the content of the gospel? Beloved, from the evidence and content of Scripture, we know that it means to believe on the Lord Jesus. Let me walk you through it:

First, believing means knowing oneself to be a sinner, and Christ to have died for sinners (Romans 5:6-8<sup>2</sup>; 1 Peter 3:18<sup>3</sup>);

Second, believing on the Lord Jesus means abandoning all self-righteousness and self-confidence, and casting oneself wholly upon Him for pardon and peace (Romans 4:4-5<sup>4</sup>; Philippians 3:10<sup>5</sup>);

Third, it is believing that there has been an exchange of your own natural enmity and rebellion against God for a spirit of grateful submission to the will of Christ through the renewing of your heart by the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:3-7<sup>6</sup>; Romans 8:6-8<sup>7</sup>).

<sup>2</sup> **Romans 5:6-8** - 6 For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. 7 For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. 8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

<sup>3</sup> **1 Peter 3:18** - For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit...

<sup>4</sup> **Romans 4:4-5** - 4 Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due. 5 But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness...

<sup>5</sup> **Philippians 3:8-9** - 8 More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, 9 and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith...

<sup>6</sup> **Titus 3:3-7** - 3 For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another. 4 But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, 5 He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, 6 whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

<sup>7</sup> **Romans 8:6-8** - 6 For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, 7 because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so, 8 and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.



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This is what it means to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. In addition, let me remind you, that those to whom God grants this belief, these do not believe just once, sometime in the past, and then go on to live however they please. The act of believing is ongoing! In Christ we have become and continue to be the righteousness of God. We must continue to believe and act upon this. Thus, it is not enough to say you prayed a prayer, or walked an aisle, or were catechized as a child. The question is this, do you continue to believe that Christ became sin on your behalf to make you presently and forever the righteousness of God? Does Christ continue to change and transform your life?

But someone may ask me, “Preacher, how am I to go about believing on Christ and repenting, if, as you say, I have no natural ability to do these things?” To such a question I reply, “Look to Christ, speak to Christ, cry to Christ, just as you are; confess your sin, your impenitence, your unbelief, and cast yourself on His mercy; ask Him to give you a new heart, working in you true repentance and firm faith; ask Him to take away your evil heart of unbelief and to write His law within you, that you may never again, from this time forward, stray from Him. Turn to Him and trust Him as best you can, and pray for grace to turn and trust more thoroughly; use the means of grace expectantly, looking to Christ to draw near to you as you seek to draw near to Him; watch, pray, read and hear God’s Word, worship and commune with God’s people, and so continue till you know in yourself beyond doubt that you are indeed a changed being, a penitent believer, and the new heart which you desired has been put within you.”<sup>8</sup>

This is what it means to believe biblically. This is the essence of the New Testaments teaching on what it means to believe. Will you believe these miracles of the cross; that Jesus Christ was the sinless Savior, that He became sin for you, taking your penalty and place; and that He grants us His righteousness, perfection, and wholeness, making us right with God? Do you believe this? And just how do we know that all these things are true about Jesus? Because He is risen from the dead. To know what is declared in Romans 1:4, that Jesus “...was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead...” These then are the miracles of the cross, validated by Jesus being raised from the dead. Will you be impacted and changed by these truths or will you reject these truth and remain unchanged? I pray that the Holy Spirit of God will open your eyes to who you are to be in Christ and that today can be for you a day of resurrection, of coming to life; to live for and to the glory of God.

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## *Soli Deo Gloria*

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<sup>8</sup> This section of the sermon is based off of J.I. Packer’s Introductory Essay to John Owen’s “The Death of Death in the Death of Christ.”