

# The Great Exchange

**Text:** Romans 5.12–21; 2 Corinthians 5.21

**Theme:** It is through the glorious exchange of our sin and Christ's righteousness that we are saved completely

## Introduction — Many find themselves in early stages of Lent

- used & viewed by many as way to purify themselves prior to Holy Week
- not really wanting to comment on efficacy of such practices not mentioned in Scripture
- what I do want us to focus upon is what God's Word does tell us
- what it tells us over & over again
- what lies at the very heart of the gospel, heart of Christian faith: the cross of Jesus
- so, instead of you giving up something you'll most likely go back to in six weeks
- let's take on truth from God's Word that will last through eternity
- have our minds stirred, our hearts moved, our faith strengthened, our witness emboldened

## To do this, going to cover only some of benefits & blessings that come thru cross of Christ

- far more than these, but we'll see if we pick them up later, another time
- each Lord's Day, we'll examine ever so briefly, these benefits & blessings
- we'll do so on Good Friday evening as well
- then, as we gather, Lord willing, on Resurrection Sunday, rejoicing in our living Lord
- we'll be charged, due to these blessings & benefits, to proclaim it clearly & loudly

## Read this week about the adman—Muslim call to prayer

- sounding from loud speakers in Minneapolis
- now sounding out in the Burroughs of New York City, five times each day
- earliest begins at 5am, calling Muslims to prayer

## Again, not going to comment on that, except to say this:

- our response should be mixed
- sincere devotion is being offered to a god (lower case "g") who cannot save
- lives of all are moving more & more rapidly toward a godless, Christless eternity
- there are image-bearers of God searching for something when in reach of God's grace
- so, I do not think we ought to be angry
- rather, I think we need to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ, who alone can save
- and that good news is God's gracious gift to us in Jesus, His Son
- who died, in accordance with the Scripture
- who was buried and raised the third day, in accordance with the Scriptures

## So, we are going to immerse ourselves in this good news: blessings of the cross of Christ

- this is what we need; it is what others need
- may God work in us all as His church known as Albion
- may He see fit to increase our joy
- build our devotion & worship of Him and prepare us to better tell forth this good news

*With that in mind, this morning I wish to begin with imputation*

### I. WHAT IS IMPUTATION?

- it sounds like one of those big, fancy theological words that most don't understand
- that may be, but without it, you cannot be saved
- not without full understanding of it, but without act of imputation you cannot be saved

### 1. Defined

- simply defined, the act of imputing is to attribute something to a person or a cause
- biblically, it means crediting something to someone else's account
- it is a legal and accounting term
- you have a bank account and you're overdrawn
- you don't have money to correct the overdraft
- but someone comes along, deposits money into your account
- that is, those monies are reckoned to your account, credited to you
- you are now out of the dark financially

### 2. Absolutely essential and central to the gospel

- Scripture presents three acts of imputation, or this crediting, reckoning to someone else
- first, there is Adam: his sin is credited to every human ever born since he sinned
- **Romans 5:12 Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned**
- Paul states this, having already declared true, but dreaded words in 3.23
- **Romans 3:23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God**
- the second act of imputation is when, on the cross, our sins were credited to Christ
- **2 Corinthians 5:21 For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.**
- Peter puts it this way
- **1 Peter 1:18-19 ...you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.**
- your account was empty beyond measure, but Christ paid the price owed due to this debt
- as if this were not enough, there is third act of imputation, most glorious, most wonderful
- your debt was paid, but Christ's righteousness is now credited—imputed—to you
- **Romans 4:22-24 That is why [Abraham's] faith was "counted to him as righteousness." But the words "it was counted to him" were not written for his sake alone, but for ours also. It will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord**
- and there is the gospel: what was once yours—sin, guilt, death—was counted toward Christ and what was His—forgiveness, salvation, and righteousness—is counted to you

*Let's see quickly how this is played out in Scripture, because we see that...*

## II. ADAM'S CLOTHING WILL NEVER DO

- time will not allow me to trace this theme of being clothed completely
- but I know if you see just these few pieces, you'll understand imputation completely
- and not only understand it, but come running to it, embrace it by faith, and rejoice in it

### 1. Start with Adam in the Garden just after "the Bite" heard throughout the universe

- we're all quite familiar with Genesis 3, where the serpent tempts Eve, who eats the fruit
- then she gives to Adam, who also eats
- immediately their eyes are opened to their nakedness
- yes, physically, but more powerfully, they know they are laid bare before God
- their guilt of disobedience and rebellion are right there & they know it full well
- the death of separation has begun and they do what man ever since has tried to do
- they try to cover themselves, seeking to bring about their own quilt removal
- it's not that fig leaves are bad, but it is their own attempt at self-righteousness
- when God confronts them, He does two things following pronouncing the curses upon them
- He promises deliverance, which He alone will provide

- and He clothes them, nearly neck to toe in His provided covering of righteousness
- this required the sacrifice of an innocent: an animal, which set the pattern thru OT age

## 2. Jump to priests, beginning with Aaron & sons

- God gave explicit commands for a priest to appear before Him on behalf of Israel
- special clothing, robes that were pure and clean
- only in God's provision in this way could priest intercede for covering people's sins
- then, when the first goat, Lev. 16, was offered, the priests clothed the people in its blood
- this blood was required and they were sprinkled to point to God as their Savior
- if this exchange was not performed, in shadowy form, there was no righteousness upon them

## 3. Beautiful example of this in Zechariah 3

- there, we see Satan standing before the Lord, accusing Joshua, high priest of his sins
- this is seen in the filthy garments Joshua was wearing
- word filthy is emphasized in original: it meant excrement-covered, to stress depth of sin
- but rather than condemning Joshua, the Lord provides
- He has pure garments put upon Joshua
- **Zechariah 3:4 And the angel said to those who were standing before him, "Remove the filthy garments from him." And to him he said, "Behold, I have taken your iniquity away from you, and I will clothe you with pure vestments."**

## 4. Skipping far ahead to Revelation 7's scene in heaven we see this in radiant beauty

- God's witnesses, martyred during great tribulation stand before throne
- how is it possible to stand before Holy God?
- **Revelation 7:14 "...They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."**
- this harkens back to Zechariah again
- **Zechariah 13:1 "On that day there shall be a fountain opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness."**
- a fountain filled with blood, as Wm Cowper wrote in his fabulous hymn
- the very blood of Christ, the Lamb of God, slain before foundation of world

## 5. All wonderful, but not sufficient in itself

- being told your sins are forgiven is great news to those who know their guilt before God
- sin of Adam imputed—credited to your account—is dealt with as Christ bears your sins
- and our sin imputed—counted to Christ—placed upon Christ on the cross
- praise the Lord, this has been done & is finished, once for all
- but now that your sin-debt account is empty, if nothing is done, what will happen next?
- remember, we are *simul justus et peccatur*: simultaneously justified, but still sinners
- which means, yes, forgiven, but not perfect, as the cheesy bumper stickers might read
- and we'll go out and throw ourselves in debt again if something more isn't done

*We can thank the Lord that this something has been done also; it comes as new clothing is put upon us:*

### III. ONLY CHRIST'S CLOTHING OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

- this is why we must always look to Christ
- He alone is sufficient to save
- **Isaiah 63:1 Who is this who comes from Edom, in crimsoned garments from Bozrah, he who is splendid in his apparel, marching in the greatness of his strength? "It is I, speaking in righteousness, mighty to save."**
- only His righteousness is sufficient to satisfy God's justice

### 1. Forgiveness needed, and so is Christ's clothing

- Christ was indeed the proper and only sacrifice for sin
- He put Himself on that cross
- **John 10:18 No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again.**
- Christ satisfied God's justice

### 2. Just & the Justifier

- **Romans 3:26: [God did what He did through Christ's work] "...to show His righteousness at the present time, so that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus."**
- God is just and must punish sin...which He does in Christ on the cross
- but we also need more than just forgiveness: we need righteousness
- God does this by grace thru faith in Jesus & His work on the cross as well
- He declares us righteous...He clothes us in Christ's clothing of pure righteousness
- Paul says it this way in Philippians 3.9
- **Philippians 3:9 and [that I may] be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith**

### 3. A most glorious righteousness

- the second Adam, Christ Jesus, has given to us something great
- greater even than what was lost by the first Adam in the garden
- the first Adam brought destruction, sin, and death to us all
- but the second Adam, Christ, has brought something far more powerful
- **Hebrews 7:25 Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.**
- those priests of old needed to be clothed in purified robes, but not sufficient
- those robes were but a shadow of Christ's righteousness
- like Joshua, the high priest, our filthy garments have been removed...praise God
- but even more, Christ robes have been put upon us
- this is the great exchange, this is imputation
- Christ put on our sin & guilt & punishment
- then, He put His righteousness upon us
- **Revelation 19:8 it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure"—for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.**

### Conclusion – So, here it is: this great exchange

- we affirm the message of the gospel and the cross of Jesus
- the sins of all God's people, as many as stars in heavens, imputed to Christ and forgiven
- He has borne them all: every speck, spot, and blemish
- there is nothing left
- you are saved because of this and nothing more, certainly nothing less
- single determining factor today of relationship with God is what happened on the cross
- nothing else matters, nothing else is relevant
- only two factors in this equation: what God did and how Christ responded
- God made Him to be sin and Christ bore it lovingly, even in great agony & suffering

### So, if you are in Christ, rejoice, worship Him, serve Him with gladness

- if you are not in Christ, I implore you: do not harden your hearts
- in light of a sin-hating God, certainty of death, in light of eternity: be reconciled to God