

GOD'S UNSPEAKABLE GIFT

By Desmond Ford

God's incomparable Gift is Jesus. Old Testament men and women are examples of the riches we have through justification, sanctification, and glorification.



A great king gave all his citizens an invitation to a royal banquet at the palace. For admission the guests had to bring what they thought was the fairest flower that ever bloomed.

The citizens thronged to the palace but were turned away by the thousands. Only a few found entrance. Many brought the deadly nightshade of superstition and offered that at the door. Others arrived flaunting poppies of denominational pride. Still others brought the hemlock of self-righteousness.

The few admitted had chosen the Lily of the Valley, the Rose of Sharon, the blood-red Rose of Calvary. Jesus is the price of heaven, and nothing else is acceptable to infinite Holiness.

Jean Stauffacher
Paris

Jesus Is God's Unspeakable Gift

Jesus is God's "unspeakable gift" (2 Cor 9:15 KJV). Though he was rich, for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might become rich. In Christ we have all else as well: righteousness, wisdom, sanctification, and redemption.

Have you heard of Chinese boxes? You lift the box and—look!—there is another one inside. You raise the second, and there is yet another; and so on, with each box of rare beauty and usefulness. Right down to the smallest box.

So it is with Jesus. Within him is found all the fullness of God and Heaven. God be praised; there is such a thing as all fullness available! Humanity has a heart that is bigger than the world. God "hath set eternity in their hearts" that we might be contented with nothing less than Jesus.

Old Testament Illustrations

It is written of the Queen of Sheba that when she saw the provision for Solomon's servants, "there was no spirit left in her" (I Ki 10:5 KJV). When any person really perceives the wealth in Christ, the sight is overwhelming.

Let me illustrate. See that young lad Benjamin? His first name was Benoni, "the son of my sorrow." He represents every sinner born in corruption and deserving of the wrath of God. But he became Benjamin, "the son of the right hand," and by Joseph was given a blessed table portion ten times larger than normal. This is the way our Joseph, the Father's special Son, deals with us. Jesus gives us a portion ten times larger than our fondest hopes might anticipate.

Ruth, the Outcast

Consider also Ruth, the Moabitess, the outcast. By law she had no right to enter the fellowship of Yahweh's people. But the gracious lord of the harvest, Boaz, the mighty man of wealth and valor, invited her to his table. We read that "she did eat, was sufficed, and left" (Ruth 2:14 KJV).

This does not mean that after she ate, she left in the sense of departed. No. It is saying that when she had taken all she needed there was an abundance still left over. The provision

was that munificent.

So it is with our Kinsman Redeemer, our Boaz, the Lord of the Harvest who invites us to his banquet, and speaks tenderly to us. He orders his angelic messengers to "drop handfuls ... [on] purpose" (Ruth 2:16) for us that we might ever glean and be blessed. We eat at his table, and are satisfied, and there is still an abundance over.

Mephibosheth, a Cripple

Now look at Mephibosheth (2 Sam 4:4). He was the descendant of a rebel against the king. Lame in both his feet by a fall in infancy, he represents all of us crippled by Adam's fall. We just cannot walk straight. But our David (the name means Beloved) invites us to his palace and restores our lost inheritance. Our heavenly David gives us a new robe whereby we are completely covered. Ancient robes of privilege extended to the feet, not the knees. When we are seated with him, none can see our lame feet—they are covered. We are complete in him.

Lazarus Who Was Dead

Remember Lazarus? John 12:2 says that he sat at the party with Jesus. Lazarus who had been dead, who had been wept over by Christ and then raised from the dead, now dines with his Life-giver.

So it is with us. We are all dead in trespasses and sins. But Jesus wept over us, and then bled for us, thereby raising us from the grave of condemnation and spiritual death. Now we feast with him "in heavenly places" (Eph 2:6).

The Prodigal Son

So also the prodigal son of Luke 15:11-32. The father is more prodigal—prodigal in forgiving love. The son is not allowed to get his rehearsed speech fully out of his mouth. Love interrupts the penitential flow, and, instead, he receives shoes on his feet, a robe for his form, and a ring for his finger. Instead of dining on the husks of the pigsty, he is invited to a banquet.

It was a banquet indeed. Father and son did not share an undernourished chicken, but a fatted calf. They ate contentedly amid the laughter and rejoicing of many friends.

The Gospel of Forgiveness

God gives, forgives, abundantly. God does exceedingly abundantly above all that we could ask or think. God does it justly because the penalty of our sins has been discharged by the substitutionary death of our Representative.

We were ruined without asking for it by the first Adam; similarly, without any intent of ours we were redeemed by the second Adam (2 Cor 5:14).

The claims of the broken, infinitely sacred law of the universe have been honored more by the death of the Son of God than had all humanity kept the law perfectly.

Faith does not make void the law; faith establishes the law. Now God can be just as well as the justifier of the person who believes in Jesus (Rom 3:26).

Abraham, the Righteous One

See how it worked for Abraham. The first time "righteousness" is mentioned in Scripture is in Genesis 15:6. This is also the first verse containing the word "believed."

"Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness" (Gen 15:6 NIV). That's the pattern for all of us. Abraham was not declared righteous because of any of his good works, although he had done many.

He had obediently left his father's house not knowing whither he went. He had refused to enrich himself by the spoils of Sodom. He paid tithe to Melchizedek. But none of these things justified him.

Neither did ceremonial nor ritualistic works justify him, for he was declared righteous **before** his circumcision.

Nor was he justified on the ground of his faith, for it was yet imperfect. Had he not, prior to this, distrusted God and lied concerning Sarah? Did he not, after his justification, fail as regards Hagar? Abraham was not justified as a result of his fragile faith.

Abraham was justified as a result of the coming Seed, Jesus. Faith was but the hand that received. Faith is not the basis of God's gift. All are justified by means of faith, that is, through faith; but not because of, or as a result of, faith. Justification through faith means justification through Jesus.

Our Need of Justification

And how we all need justification! Not one of us is what we should be, could be, or would be. The perfect law demands not merely perfect outward performance but perfect attitude of heart, perfect motives from a perfect heart. These we have not to offer.

Even the development of a perfect character could not justify us any more than a penitent murderer's reformation could render him not guilty of his cruel crime. The reward has to be ALL of grace. Therefore, it is through faith and faith alone. It is the ungodly whom God justifies (Rom 4:5). Christ was counted as being what he is not that we might be counted as being what we are not. He was not a sinner, but was treated as one. We are not righteous, but are treated as righteous.

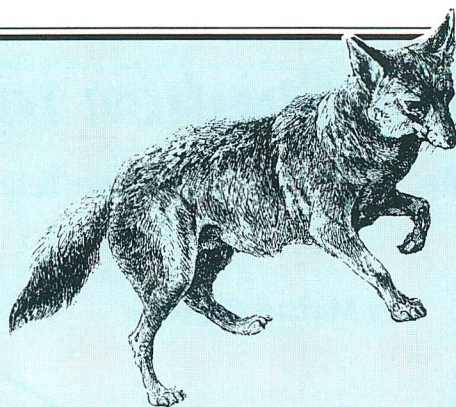
The righteousness of justification is 100 percent, but it is not inside us—it is in Jesus, only, who is by the throne of God. The righteousness of sanctification is inside us through the indwelling Holy Spirit, but it is not 100 percent for we as yet have a sinful nature. Sin remains in the regenerate though it does not reign. Ultimately, at the return of our Lord, we will experience the righteousness of glorification. Then, and then only, will we know righteousness as both 100 percent and within us.

Summary

In summary, we are justified **meritoriously** by the blood of Christ; **instrumentally** by faith; and **evidentially** by works. All this is possible only because of God's unspeakable Gift, Jesus. What shall we withhold from him who has given us all heaven, and made all things on earth work together for our good?

The Christian's chief duty is adoration. Faith does not make us see Christ. Seeing Christ gives us faith.

Repentance is not something to do in order to take hold of the Savior. Taking hold of the Savior gives us repentance. He is all we need. Let us choose that better part and sit ever at the Master's feet beholding him, hearing him, loving him, and then spontaneously obeying and serving him. Let us consider, anew, God's unspeakable Gift—the incomparable Christ. ❖



Hunting Foxes

by Charles Spurgeon

Take us the foxes, the little foxes that spoil the vines (Song of Solomon 2:15)



little thorn may cause much suffering. A little cloud may hide the sun. Little foxes spoil the vines, and little sins do mischief to the tender heart.

Ask, then, the question, "What has driven Christ from thee?" He hides His face behind the wall of thy sins. That wall may be built up of little pebbles, as easily as of great stones. The sea is made of drops; the rocks are made of grains, and the sea which divides thee from Christ may be filled with the drops of thy little sins, and the rock which has well nigh wrecked thy bark may have been made by the daily working of the coral insects of thy little sins.

If thou wouldst live with Christ, and walk with Christ, and see Christ, and have fellowship with Christ, take heed of "the little foxes that spoil the vines, for our vines have tender grapes." Jesus invites you to go with Him and take them. He will surely, like Samson, take the foxes at once and easily. Go with Him to the hunting. ❖