

Salvation

Module 2.6

“For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin,
so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”
2 Corinthians 5:21

In Module 2.5 we considered both the beauty and inherent dignity all men and women have as part of God’s *very good* creation. This is specifically because they have been made in his image. Because of what God has done, every person is the bearer of His image and is to be treated with honor and dignity. For Believers, this is even more significant because, as James tells us, it is incompatible for us to bless God with our lips while also cursing those made in His image (James 3:9).

However, because of Adam’s sin, God’s very good creation was marred and subsequently has been subjected by God to futility (Rom. 8:20). As a result of Adam’s sin there now exists inherent brokenness in God’s very good creation, brokenness that includes thorns, thistles, pandemic viruses, increased pain, relational strife, and death...both physical and spiritual.

The descendants of Adam are now both conceived and born in sin (Ps. 51:5), and are dead in their sin and trespasses because they are by nature children of wrath (Eph. 1-4).

...But God.

The good news of the gospel is that in Jesus Christ, God provides for us, what cannot be supplied by us, and what He yet requires of us. As we continue throughout this module to unpack this good news, we’ll consider each part of this statement in reverse order.

What He Requires Of Us - The Triune God is perfectly holy (Ex. 3:5-6, Lev. 20:26, Isaiah 6:3, 1 Peter 1:16) and perfectly just (Deut. 32:4, Ps. 7:17, Ps. 9:7-8, Heb. 4:15, 1 Pet. 2:22) in all that He does. Because of God’s absolute holiness and perfection, all that He does is holy, just, and perfect and only those who are equally holy, just, and perfect are allowed in His presence.

These truths are demonstrated in both the consequences for sin that God administered in Genesis 3:14-19 and the removal of Adam and Eve from the Garden and the presence of God (Gen. 3:22-24). As a result of Adam’s disobedience, access to God was no longer unstained by sin, and because of God’s perfect holiness and righteousness, He had to punish sin. For Him to do anything other would have meant that God ceased to be who He is.

Throughout the rest of the Old Testament, and into the New Testament, we see that while access to God was no longer unstained by sin, it was not completely taken away. Access in the tabernacle and temple was restrained by the veil (Ex. 36:35-38; Heb. 9:1-10) and only one

person, once a year (Lev. 16), was able to enter the holy of holies and present the required sacrifice for sin on behalf of the nation of Israel.

God requires perfect holiness and righteousness to be in His presence, and because of our sinfulness, both in nature and deed, we are unable to supply this for ourselves. In fact, even our attempts to do good on our own apart from Christ are like a polluted garment (Isa. 64:6) before the Lord. Perhaps Jesus summed up this reality most succinctly when He said in Matthew 5:48, “You must be perfect even as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

What Cannot Be Supplied By Us - As God reveals in Romans 3 there is “no one righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God” (vv. 10-11) for, “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (v. 23). The righteousness we need to be with God cannot be supplied by us because of who we are by nature. Yet because He is gracious and merciful, God has provided a way for His people to have access to Him.

In the Old Testament, this was through the blood of bulls and goats. However, as we learn from the author of Hebrews, “it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins” (10:4), because the law can never make perfect those who draw near (10:1).

A greater provision and sacrifice was needed to atone for our sin. And because the problem is inside of us, and not something outside of us, we are unable to supply what is needed. Augustus Toplady beautifully wrote of our sinful condition and the inability we have to remedy this ourselves when he penned the words to the beloved hymn *Rock of Ages*. He writes,

*Not the labors of my hands
can fulfill thy law's demands;
could my zeal no respite know,
could my tears forever flow,
all for sin could not atone;
thou must save, and thou alone.*

God Provides For Us—What is foreshadowed by the law (Heb. 10:1), illustrated by the ram, provided to Abraham and Isaac (Gen. 22), and prophesied in Isaiah 53, is that God would fully and finally provide for His people what He requires of them. As we state in the CCCI, “Through our personal faith alone in the Lord Jesus Christ and His finished work, He declares Believers righteous in Him.”

Paul declares this in 2 Corinthians 5:21 where he writes, “For our sake, he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” The perfection that our holy and righteous God requires, a perfection that He alone inherently has, is what He graciously gives to those who trust in His one and only Son for eternal life.

To this end, we must understand that there is both an exchange of our sinfulness to Jesus, which He paid for on the Cross by His death (Col. 2:13-15), and an exchange of His righteousness to us, which is *counted* (imputed) to us by faith (Rom. 4:22-25). Our salvation is the result of both the perfect obedience and righteousness of Jesus credited to us, and the atoning death of Jesus which pays for all our unrighteousness. This salvation is complete, eternal, and guaranteed by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit who has been given to us as a down payment (Eph. 1:13-14, 2 Cor. 5:1-5).

The good news of the gospel is that in Jesus Christ, God provides for us, what cannot be supplied by us, and what He yet requires of us. Furthermore, so complete and so eternal is this salvation, and the victory of the Lord Jesus Christ, that God reveals to us that one day there will be a new day, unlike any other day that was before. One day there will be a day when there is no more death, sickness, or sorrow because sin and death have been completely conquered (Rev. 21-22).

Until that day, we heed the words of the Apostle Paul in Romans 8:18-25,

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

Furthermore, we join together with the Apostle John in crying, “Maranatha”, come Lord Jesus (Rev. 22:20).