

“The World’s Solution, Part Two” The Benefits Of Our Redemption In Jesus Christ

Years ago I had the privilege of serving as a counselor at a small Christian camp in rural Nebraska in the heat of the summer. This meant that I stayed in a small cabin with six elementary aged boys in the middle of a sweltering heat wave of 95-100 degree days. When I walked into the cabin, looked around, and thought about trying to sleep in there with all that energy and heat present, I knew that it wouldn’t be easy. The nights would not cool down that much. But at least I saw a fan, so we would have some help.

After a fun-filled first day we all retired to our cabin to sleep. One of the first things I did was turn on the fan. The only problem was that when I moved the switch to “On,” nothing happened. I tried it three or four times and then unplugged it and plugged it back in and tried it again. Still nothing. That night we slept without the fan. Well, at least I finally went to sleep after sweating in bed for a couple of hours.

The next morning the first thing I did was to take the fan to one of the leaders of the camp to see if someone could look at it during the day. Before we jumped into bed for the second night, the fan was working. The only problem had been that the plug didn’t work. Once it was replaced, the fan could receive the power it needed to carry out its intended function. Ah, how refreshing that fan was and what a difference it made!

That experience reminds me of what people are like who have never come to trust Jesus Christ as their Savior. Just like that fan was made to circulate air, yet couldn’t carry out its function, so also mankind has been created to honor God by fellowshiping with, loving, and obeying Him (cf. Gen. 1:26-28; Psalm 8:5; Mark 12:30; John 14:15; 15:8-10), yet, because of our sin and separation from God (Is. 59:2; Rom. 5:10)—our brokenness, we are also unable to carry out our purpose (John 15:5).

Yet, there is good news. Because Jesus Christ died in our place and satisfied divine justice, our certain “repair” has been accomplished in and through Him. Once this work is applied to us, we have some amazing benefits which not only enable us to fulfill the purpose for which we were created, but also help

Genesis 1:26-28: “Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish...the birds...the livestock and over all the earth. So God created man in his own image...male and female he created them. And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion....”

Psalm 8:5: “Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor.”

Mark 12:30: “You shall love the Lord...with all your heart...soul...mind and... strength.”

Jn. 14:15: “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.”

Jn. 15:8-10: “By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit.... Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love....”

explain why a truly saved person becomes a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17). Let's consider some of these benefits.

Justification

The fact that we are justified means that God forgives us of our sins and legally declares us to be righteous before Him only because of the righteousness of Jesus Christ that He counts to us and which is received by faith alone (Rom. 3:24-26; 4:5; 5:1). In other words, "God thinks of Christ's righteousness as belonging to us, or regards it as belonging to us."¹ This righteousness consists both of the perfect obedience of Jesus Christ and His death which was a payment for sin's penalty (2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Peter 3:18). Once we are in Jesus Christ, God counts us as perfect (Mt. 5:48) and thus the very thing which formed a chasm between us and God is gone.

Reconciliation

The reality that the separation has been removed means that God has reconciled us to Himself (2 Cor. 5:17-18; Eph. 2:11-22). What this removal of condemnation and union with God makes plain is that His Spirit is in us to confer upon us and to accomplish all His benefits and promises (Rom. 8:1-17). As a result, just as a fixed fan now can be truly plugged into the source of energy and can function, so the Christian can be plugged into the source of true spiritual power and life—and he can now function as he was intended.

Adoption

Part of the reason why all God's promises and benefits now belong to the Christians is because he has been adopted into the family of God since divine justice has been satisfied, he has been forgiven and declared righteous, and reconciled to God. (Rom. 8:15; 1 John 3:1) This means that we now have a right to all the privileges of those who are true children of God (Gal. 3:29).

Growth in Christ-likeness

Because the Holy Spirit of God is in us and accomplishes His work in us, we love, have joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Gal. 5:22-23). In other words, we have all we need for a life of godliness (2 Peter 1:3-4). We can now love God, trust in Him, obey Him; we can say, "Yes" to Him and "No" to sin. What is more, we

Westminster Shorter Catechism Q. 32. What benefits do they that are effectually called partake of in this life?
A. They that are effectually called do in this life partake of justification, adoption, and sanctification, and the several benefits which in this life do either accompany or flow from them.

WSC Q. 36. What are the benefits which in this life do accompany or flow from justification, adoption, and sanctification?
A. The benefits which in this life do accompany or flow from justification, adoption, and sanctification, are, assurance of God's love, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, increase of grace, and perseverance therein to the end.

¹ Wayne Grudem, Systematic Theology, 726.

are transformed into those who resemble Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 3:18)

Certain Future Perfection

Because God's work and resources are so complete in us, we will continue to grow and persevere until death (Rom. 8:31-39; Phil. 1:6), at which time our souls will be perfected (Heb. 12:23). At the resurrection our bodies will be perfected and from that point on we will be without sin and will live as perfect, whole, holy embodied persons for all eternity (Rom. 8:30; 1 Cor. 15:42-44; Jude 24; Rev. 21:4, 8; 22:3). Such a certainty demands that God will do in us what is necessary between now and then to preserve us, keep us in Christ, and to grow us (cf. Rom. 8:29-30).

So What?

Why is all this significant for us? For this reason, if we understand how salvation works and what it is that God does in us, we will understand that we are new people and it is no longer simply us living by our own power or ability, but instead Christ who lives in and through us and His Spirit is transforming and giving us all we need to follow Him. Our true and chief identity, then is as those who are in Christ. (Gal. 2:20)

None of this means that I will not or cannot sin (1 John 1:8; 2:1-2). However, it does mean that we don't have to live in the realm of sin where we are chiefly characterized, defeated, and enslaved by it (cf. Romans 6). This is why the New Testament makes it clear that the person whose life has not been changed and is not, at least to some degree, different is most likely not a true Christian (1 Cor. 6:9-10; James 2:14-16).

Discussion:

1. Why is it important to understand the benefits that come to us because of Christ's work?
2. Are you sure that you have trusted Christ as your savior? Why or why not?
3. What parts of this reading do you struggle with, if any?