



WWW.SECONDTREE.net

The Bible And Christianity Explained

By Chuck Porritt dcporritt@gmail.com

THE FORGIVENESS OF GOD

IS GOD UNRIGHTEOUS?

The Bible says that God loves justice and hates false judgment:

He that justifies the wicked, and he that condemns the righteous, even they both are an abomination to the Lord. Proverbs 17:15

And yet the Bible says that God has condemned a righteous man to death (Jesus) so that He might forgive sinners:

For He has made Him (Jesus) to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. 2 Corinthians 5:21

In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace. Ephesians 1:7

Is God breaking His own rules? How can God take a perfectly righteous Man and treat Him like a criminal, and then turn around and tell a wicked man that his sins are forgiven as a result? What is the connection here? Where is the justice in this?

DYING WITH CHRIST

God does not break the rules of justice. He is able to forgive a sinner for two reasons:

- 1) The sinner has judged and condemned himself to death, and has believed the truth; that the Son of God has come into the world in a human body, has died for sinners, and has been raised from the dead.**
- 2) The sinner has been united with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection.**

To be a Christian is to be put to death, and then raised from the dead to a new life. This is what baptism under water symbolizes; death, burial and resurrection with Christ. By dying together with Jesus, two necessary things are accomplished for the sinner:

- 1) The Law's sentence of death is carried out, and its just requirement for punishment is satisfied. In the Bible this is called 'propitiation' or 'atonement'.**
- 2) The sinner's body, which is owned and controlled by Sin, is destroyed. The sinner is delivered from his inability to obey God's Law, because his old body has been crucified with Christ, and his new body is now owned and inhabited by the Holy Spirit.**

Christians are not forgiven, pronounced righteous and justified simply because God says so, but because God has made it so.

GOD DOES NOT FORGIVE SIN BY AVOIDING JUSTICE, BUT BY CARRYING IT OUT.

The Christian's death with Christ is a primary truth of the Gospel:

Know you not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. Romans 6:3-4

For the love of Christ constrains us, because we thus judge; that if One died for all, then were all dead. And that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them, and rose again. Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh. Yes, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him no more. Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. 2 Corinthians 5:14-17

For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ. Nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me. And the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me. Galatians 2:18-20

Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes you were healed. 1 Peter 2:24

God cannot justify a person who has not been crucified with Christ. He is a righteous judge, and He pronounces judgment according to what is actually true. He cannot simply declare that someone is forgiven, or impute righteousness to someone who is actually guilty (see [The True Nature of Original Sin](#)):

Now the Lord descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord. And the Lord passed before him and proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty." Exodus 34:5-7

HOW MERCY AND TRUTH MEET

If Christians have died for their sins, then how can it be said that Christ died in their place? Where does the mercy of God come in? The answer is seen in the difference between Christ's death and the sinner's death. Only Jesus experiences the physical pain of the cross. A similar difference existed between Adam and the rest of mankind. The apostle Paul referred to this difference when, while declaring that all of us sinned

with Adam, he alluded to a difference between the way that Adam committed that sin, and the way that the rest of us committed it:

Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure (or pattern) of him that was to come. Romans 5:14

When Paul wrote that Adam was a "figure" (or pattern) of another man who was to come, he meant that there is an important similarity and correspondence between Adam and Jesus. In fact the apostle Paul has described Jesus as the second or "last Adam":

And so it is written, "The first man Adam was made a living soul". The last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy. The second man is the Lord from heaven. 1 Corinthians 15:45-47

When Adam sinned in Eden we were all inside of him, choosing to commit the same sin that he did. But only Adam experienced the act physically; only he knows what the Fruit actually tasted like. And just as Adam tasted the forbidden Fruit for all mankind, Jesus has tasted death for all:

But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone. Hebrews 2:9

So it is possible to say two things about a Christian:

- 1) He has been crucified with Christ.
- 2) Christ has suffered in his place.

The main point of this web page is that God's way of forgiveness is one of righteousness, truth and justice. God does not impute sins to people who have not sinned, or righteousness to people who have not in fact been made righteous. It is while being absolutely truthful, that God has also found a way of introducing mercy, grace and forgiveness into His relationship with us.

Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other. Psalm 85:10

And the Word (Jesus) was made flesh, and dwelt among us. And we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father; full of grace and truth. John 1:14

THE NEW BIRTH

Being crucified, buried and then raised from the dead with Jesus is called 'regeneration', or being 'born again'. Jesus is the first 'born-again' man. Although He was the eternal Son of God and Creator of the universe before He came into the world, He voluntarily took upon Himself human nature, including a human body. And it was as a 'flesh-and-blood' human being that He died and was 'born again':

For whom He (God the Father) did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.
Romans 8:29

And He (Jesus) is the head of the body, the church. Who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things He might have the preeminence. Colossians 1:18

And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the earth. Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, Revelation 1:5

Jesus taught that one must be 'born again' to be able to see or enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

But as many as received Him, to them He gave power to become the sons of God; to them that believe on His name. Who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. John 1:12-13

Jesus answered and said unto Nicodemus "Truly, truly I say unto you, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Nicodemus said to Him "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb, and be born?" Jesus answered "Truly, truly I say to you, except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit." John 3:3-6

BAPTISM BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

This new birth, where one is crucified with Christ and then 'reborn' through resurrection from the dead with Him, washes away the guilt and the power of Sin from the sinner. Being baptized in water (going completely under the water, and then being 'resurrected' up out of it) symbolizes this washing action of the new birth. Water baptism, however, cannot save us. It is only symbolic.

Those who trust such symbolic rituals to save them are committing an error called 'sacramentalism' (see [Baptism and Pentecost](#)). John the Baptist, who introduced water-baptism to the world, was always careful to point out that the true baptism, or cleansing, is the work of the Holy Spirit:

I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance. But He that comes after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear. He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit, and with fire. Matthew 3:11 (also Mark 1:7-8, Luke 3:16, John 1:33)

For by one Spirit we have all been baptized into one Body (of Christ); whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.
1 Corinthians 12:13

THE ORDER OF SALVATION

Among students of the Bible, the series of things that occurs when a person becomes

a Christian is called 'the order of salvation'. Christian salvation involves a five-step process. These five steps are seen in Jesus' own baptism by John the Baptist:

And it came to pass in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And immediately coming up out of the water, John saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon Jesus. And there came a voice from heaven, saying "You are my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." And immediately the Spirit drove Jesus into the wilderness. Mark 1:9-12

The five steps to salvation are:

1) REPENTANCE To 're-pent' means to 're-think' or have a change of mind about what we are, and about our relationship with God. It means coming as self-condemned sinners to someone who can wash away our sins; the 'baptizer'. This is how the people of Jesus' day came to John the Baptist; confessing their sins.

Jesus was not a sinner, but He allowed Himself to be baptized by John because He was identifying with sinful humanity, showing that God's salvation would be achieved through an experience that Jesus and sinners would share.

Today the 'Baptizer' that sinners must come to is Jesus Himself. He is the heavenly 'Baptizer', who works through the Holy Spirit to unite us with Himself. We must come directly to Him, by faith; not trusting in rituals, sacraments, church membership or anything else to accomplish what He alone, through the Holy Spirit, can do. Saving us is something that He is very eager to do. The Holy Spirit searches the earth constantly, looking for repentant sinners to help:

The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose hearts are right toward Him. 2 Chronicles 16:9

2) REGENERATION (WASHING AWAY THE PENALTY AND POWER OF SIN) Once a repentant sinner has come to Christ, the Holy Spirit unites him with Jesus in His death, burial and resurrection. This is the 'washing of regeneration', symbolized by going underneath water and then coming back up. To be regenerated is to become a brand new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17, Galatians 6:15)

3) RECEPTION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT After regeneration, the sinner's body is now an acceptable place for the Holy Spirit to dwell. The Holy Spirit enters the sinner's new body at this point. This is the beginning of a new spiritual life, through the 'renewing of the Holy Spirit'.

Jesus told Nicodemus 'Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God' (John 3:5). When Jesus spoke of water, He was referring to something that the Jewish people were very aware of; the need to be morally clean in order to have a right relationship with God. Jesus was not telling Nicodemus that he needed to be baptized with water, but that he needed what water symbolizes; a real washing through union with Himself. It is this same combination of 'inner cleansing' and receiving the Spirit that the apostle Paul referred to in his words to Titus:

Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy God saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit. Titus 3:5

4) JUSTIFICATION (AND ADOPTION) After the sinner's reception of the Holy Spirit, God the Father acknowledges the change that has occurred, declaring the new Christian to be His own well-pleasing child. The new Christian is not only pleasing to the Father because his sins are forgiven, but also because he now has a new ability to fulfill God's Law through the fruit of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

5) A WILDERNESS TRIAL The Christian now enters into the wilderness of life's challenges, trials and hardships. Christian conversion is not deliverance to life upon a 'bed of roses', but to a wilderness journey of testing, trials and service to God that will ultimately lead, if the Christian remains faithful, to eternal life (see [The Necessity of Christian Perseverance](#)). Those who encourage people to become Christians because all of their problems will be solved, are not presenting a realistic picture of the Christian life. Their most important problems will be solved, but life will still present many challenges.

This same order of salvation is also seen in the apostle Paul's letter to the church in Corinth:

Know you not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you are washed, but you are sanctified (by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit), but you are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

1 Corinthians 6:9-11

Two things are missing from these words of Paul in 1 Corinthians: 1) the primary step of repentance, and 2) the final step of a tested faith and obedience 'in the wilderness'. But the repentance of the Corinthians is implied in Paul's statement "and such were some of you". And the necessity of the Christian's perseverance 'in the wilderness' is pointed out by Paul later in this same epistle:

Moreover, brethren, I would not that you should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea. And they did all eat the same spiritual meat, and did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ.

But with many of them God was not well pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. Neither be idolaters, as were some of them. As it is written "The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play". Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and twenty-three thousand fell in one day. Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents.

Now all these things happened unto them for examples, and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Therefore let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. 1 Corinthians 10:1-12

JESUS, THE ARK

Noah's ark provides a picture of salvation in Christ. The Bible tells us that God's judgment was coming upon the earth, but that Noah 'found grace in the eyes of the Lord'.

And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him at His heart. And the Lord said "I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repents me that I have made them". But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. Genesis 6:5-8

God would send powerful storms and a great flood upon the earth, resulting in the destruction of mankind. But Noah would not be removed from the earth in order to avoid this judgment. God instructed Noah to build an ark, so that he himself might experience the same judgment, and yet be delivered safely through it. When Noah followed God's instructions, both he and the ark experienced all of the force of God's righteous anger; but the ark made it possible for him to come out a year later and begin a new life.

How about you, my reader? Do you believe that God must judge us, or do you scoff at His warnings as the men of Noah's day did? Do you not know that sin must be punished? We can bear the punishment of our sins alone, or we can pass through the punishment while hiding within the One who has endured the force of the storm for us. God commands us to believe in His crucified Son and enter the 'ark' of His mercy. The punishment must be meted out, the death must be inflicted, the blood must be shed. Will you choose to endure it alone, insulting the One who has already endured it for you?

A TRINITARIAN UNION

In John chapter 6 Jesus told His people that He is bread, and that He must be eaten in order for anyone to have life:

And Jesus said unto them "I am the bread of life. He that comes to Me shall never hunger, and he that believes on Me shall never thirst." John 6:35,48

I am the living bread, which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever. And the bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." The Jews therefore discussed among themselves, saying "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" Then Jesus said unto them "Truly, truly I say unto you; except you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, you have no life in you". John 6:51-53

The Jews asked "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" It's a good question, and the answer is as follows. When we eat food, it enters every cell in our bodies; the proteins, carbohydrates and fats become a part of us. We are united with our food, and become 'one' with it; we truly are what we eat. In a similar way, people who repent of their sins are united with Christ. They become one with him in His death and burial, and thus also experience His new resurrection life as a result. This is why Jesus called Himself "the bread of life" (John 6:35,48). Union with Him gives our souls life, just as union with ordinary food gives our bodies life.

Jesus described the union between Himself and His people three different times; it is like the union between Himself and His Father:

As the living Father has sent Me, and I live by the Father: so he that eats Me, even he shall live by Me. John 6:57

Yet a little while, and the world will see Me no more; but you will see Me. Because I live, you shall live also. At that day you shall know that I am in my Father, and you in Me, and I in you. John 14:19-20

That they all may be one; as you, Father, are in Me, and I in You, that they also may be one in Us: that the world may believe that You have sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them; that they may be one, even as We are one. I in them, and You in Me, that they may be made perfect in One; and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them, as You have loved Me. John 17:21-23

THE NATURE OF TRUE REPENTANCE

How can we be united with Christ? The answer to that question is straightforward. We broke off our relationship with God by going out through the door of rebellion, not believing God. Now we must come back through that same door, condemning ourselves for our rebellion and believing God's gospel message. Jesus' message was...."Repent and believe the Gospel" (Mark 1:15). To re-pent means to re-think, or to have a change of mind. We usually try to defend and justify ourselves through good deeds and excuses, but God calls us to confess our sins, and to pass honest judgment upon ourselves.

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, you will not despise. Psalm 51:17

Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. Matthew 16:24

In the Bible the cross is a 'tree' where criminals are executed (Galatians 3:13, Deuteronomy 21:22-23). In Matthew 16:24 (above), when Jesus said we must 'take up our cross', He was not talking about Christian service or martyrdom. He was talking about a death that all sinners must experience in order to have their sins forgiven. Throughout the New Testament epistles Christians are never told to take up their cross; they are told that they have already been crucified with Christ, and that they are to view the cross as a 'past experience' (Romans 6:2-11, 2 Corinthians 5:14-15, Galatians 2:20).

For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor (lawbreaker). For I, through the Law, am dead to the Law, that I might live unto God.
Galatians 2:18-19

And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts.
Galatians 5:24

A perfect example of 'taking up one's cross' is the thief who was crucified with Christ. Because he owned his guilt and the death he deserved, eternal life became possible for him:

And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying "If you are the Christ, save yourself and us". But the other answering rebuked him, saying "Do you not fear God, seeing you are in the same condemnation? and we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man has done nothing wrong". And he said unto Jesus "Lord, remember me when You come into your kingdom". And Jesus said unto him "Verily I say unto you, today shall you be with me in paradise".
Luke 23:39-43

**WE CANNOT HAVE A PART IN JESUS' DEATH,
IF WE HAVE NOT CONDEMNED OURSELVES TO THAT DEATH.**

It is impossible to truly believe (from the heart, and not just intellectually) in the historical death, burial and resurrection of Christ, if we have not seen the reality of our own sins, and the death that we deserve. The world is full of 'moral' and 'religious' people, some of whom have made 'decisions for Christ', have prayed prayers, have walked down church aisles, and have made public professions of Christian faith. Many have admitted to making mistakes and to committing some sins. But until we understand the true gravity of our sins, we can never understand why moral reformation cannot help us, and that our only hope is to cast ourselves upon the atoning blood of Christ:

And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples "Why does your Master eat with publicans and sinners?" But when Jesus heard that, He said unto them "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. But go and learn what that means 'I will have mercy, and not sacrifice': for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.
Matthew 9:10-13 (Hosea 6:6)

A person is better off rejecting faith in Christ, than to make a false profession of faith. When we make false professions, we only deceive ourselves and move further away from God. God can work with honest sinners; He cannot work with dishonest 'saints' (i.e. hypocrites). God does not ask us to manufacture self-loathing or a poor self-image. He does not want anyone to be suicidal. He simply asks us to be honest.

For those who do not see themselves as sinners, and do not believe that the claims of Christianity apply to them, God provides an answer. He says 'Here is the Law. The

person who obeys it shall live' (Leviticus 18:5). God knows that if we acquaint ourselves with His commandments, and sincerely strive to do what is right, we will discover whether or not we need a crucified Savior. For an explanation of how this works, I would encourage you to look at my web page titled **Testing Christianity**.

God does not expect us to believe something that He cannot prove to us. We can test His claims, and find out whether or not they are true in the 'here-and-now' of our everyday lives.