

Vespers II  
7 March 2010  
*Concordia Lutheran Mission*  
Terrebonne, Oregon

## “Christ Suffered not for His Sin but for Our Sins in Order to Save and Give Life Eternal.”

“Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken,  
smitten of God, and afflicted.”

**Isaiah 53:4**

### **Introduction**

From this passage in Isaiah it is clear again the Christ died not for His sins, but for our sins. For Christ bore the griefs and sorrows caused by our sins, God’s eternal wrath and damnation. The reason for Christ bearing our sins is that He wanted to save us from our sins.

We could not bear the penalty for our sins and live.<sup>1</sup> Christ did not have any sin so He could in fact bear it because **A**. He had no debt Himself to pay and **B**. He is the Almighty God, able to pay the infinite and eternal debt to God.<sup>2</sup>

But how could Christ pay the price for sin when He in fact had no sin and was holy and blameless? Because Christ was holy, blameless, and without sin<sup>3</sup>, God reckoned or imputed<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>“The wrath of God was inflamed by sin. This wrath was greater than what heaven and earth would be able to endure, for it was a big as God Himself.” The Rev. Dr. John Gerhard, *Seven Christmas Sermons*, p. 37.

“Johann Gerhard (1582-1637) has rightly been classified the ‘third preminent theologian after Luther and Chemnitz.’ ... However, while Gerhard is best remembered for his great dogmatics, the *Loci Theologici*, Gerhard produced a number of devotional volumes and preach [sic] many sermons to the ‘common man.’ The sermons in this volume were apparently preached when Gerhard was 31 years old and already superintendent at Heldburg and a Doctor of Divinity.” **Foreword** from *Seven Christmas Sermons*.

<sup>2</sup>“St. Paul states in Rom. 5:2: ‘We have obtained access to God in faith’ – not through ourselves but ‘through Christ.’ Therefore we must bring Christ, come with Him, pay God with Him, and carry out all our dealings with God through Him and with Him.” *Luther’s Works*, Vol. 30, p. 12.

our sins to Him purely out of His grace and goodness toward fallen man<sup>5</sup> and on this basis made Christ pay the penalty for our sin and Christ gladly and willingly paid our debt for us<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup>“For he hath made him *to be* sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” **II Corinthians 5:21.**

<sup>4</sup>**“IMPUTE.** To *charge with* sin or guilt; to *credit with* righteousness.” *The Small Catechism, Annotated by Edward W. A. Koehler*, p. 324.

Impute: “to attribute (something, especially a crime or a fault) to another; to charge with; to ascribe ... .” *Webster’s Unabridged Dictionary*, p. 918, **s.v. “impute”**.

“Christ knew no sin. In Him there was no sin. 1 John 3, 5. When God made Him sin for us, 2 Cor. 5, 21, it was by imputation. And this imputation of our sin was so real, so earnest, that it led to the condemnation of Him to whom it was imputed and to the execution of the judgment of condemnation, the infliction of the penalty of sin according to Law. Rom. 6, 23. But by the same judicial act by which He pronounced Him guilty who was the world's Substitute, God acquitted and absolved the world, whose sins and guilt He laid to the charge of the Mediator. 2 Cor. 5, 19. By the resurrection of Christ, God from His judgment-throne pronounced His Son's obedience unto death a perfect atonement and propitiation for all the sins which were imputed to Him, the sins of the world. Rom. 4, 25.” *Concordia Cyclopedia*, pp. 380, 381, **s.v. “Justification”**.

<sup>5</sup>“Therefore this imputation of righteousness consists in the grace and mercy of God, which for the sake of Christ covers the inherent ‘basis’ ..., namely, sin, so that it is not imputed to him; and a ‘basis’ not inherent in the believer is imputed to him out of grace, as though the perfection which he owes were inherent in him. ... Thus we have a complete ‘relationship.’ The ‘basis’ is in obedience and redemption, in Christ Jesus our Lord. The ‘relationship’ is the grace and mercy of God. The ‘goal’ is the believing person, to whom for the sake of Christ’s righteousness his sins are not imputed; but through Christ he is reputed as righteous before God unto eternal life, by the imputation of the righteousness of Christ. Faith, laying hold on this righteousness of Christ and thereby on the grace and mercy of God in the promise, is said to be imputed for righteousness, not insofar as faith is a virtue inhering in us, but because by this means or instrument the ‘relationship’ of God applies this ‘basis’ to the ‘goal.’” Martin Chemnitz, *Justification, The Chief Article as Expounded in Loci Theologici*, tr. J. A. O. Preus, p. 148.

“Chemnitz, Martin, Lutheran theologian. B. 1522 ... He took the leading part in getting out the Formula of Concord, and the Catalog of Testimonies, which is appended to the Symbolical Books, is essentially his work.... Together with Selnecker and Kirchner, Chemnitz, in 1582, published an Apology of the Book of Concord. ... The most learned theologian of his time was mourned by the whole Lutheran Church; his importance is seen in the Catholic saying that if Chemnitz had not come, Luther had not stood.” *Concordia Cyclopedia*, pp. 127, 128, **s.v. Chemnitz, Martin**. “‘If the Second Martin had not come, the first would not have prevailed. – 17<sup>th</sup> Century Adage.’” *The Second Martin: The Life and Theology of Martin Chemnitz*, The Rev. Dr. J. A. O. Preus, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, back cover.

And through the Gospel, the reverse happens for us: Even though we are full of blame and sin, God declares us righteous for Christ's sake.<sup>7</sup>

And now that we have the righteousness pleasing to God for Christ's sake, we also have eternal life.

Christ, then, suffered the griefs and sorrows induced by our sins because He paid the penalty for our sins in order to save us and give us life eternal.

## **I. God Imputes Man's Sin to Christ in Order that Christ Pay the Penalty for Man and Save Man.**

### **A. Man's sin was imputed to him because of his transgression of God's Word.**

While the sin that Christ suffered for was imputed to Him by God for the sake of man's salvation because it was not His own, man's sin was imputed or reckoned to him because man earned it.<sup>8</sup> Moses writes:

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<sup>6</sup>“Christ did not suffer because He was forced to, but voluntarily. Therefore the Word consented to the suffering through divine approval ... . “Behold, I come” (Ps. 40:7). ... “Christ was delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God” (Acts 2:23). ... The Word was not excluded from this counsel of the most holy Trinity. Epiphanius ... : ‘The divinity gave freely to the humanity and gave its consent to the blessings ... .’ Epiphanius again: ‘Because the Son of God wished to suffer for the salvation of mankind, since the divinity, which in itself is impassible, could not suffer, He assumed our passible body, so that in it He might consent to suffer and take on our sufferings, while the divinity was coexisting in the flesh.’” The Rev. Dr. John Gerhard, *Theological Commonplaces, Exegesis, or A More Copious Explanation of Certain Articles of the Christian Religion (1625) On the Person and Office of Christ*, tr. Richard J. Dinda, Edited with Annotations by Benjamin T. G. Mayes, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, p. 196.

<sup>7</sup>Martin Chemnitz, the “Second Martin” of the Reformation, writes: “‘imputation,’ namely, that God, out of His free mercy for the sake of Christ, regards the believers, whose nature is still contaminated by various sins, as righteous. And as righteous He awards them salvation and eternal life, not with respect to inherent righteousness but imputed righteousness.” *Justification, The Chief Article as Expounded in Loci Theologici*, tr. J. A. O. Preus, p. 148.

<sup>8</sup>Martin Chemnitz writes: “Because this matter is important and difficult, we must show the firm and unshakable foundations of what Paul means by the word ‘imputation’ in the article of justification. Indeed, Paul clearly sets forth the analysis ... of the term ..., when he says in Rom. 4:4-5: ‘To him who works, his reward is reckoned as a debt, not as grace or a gift. But to him who does not work but who believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is imputed for righteousness.’ That is, there is a certain imputation which has and looks to a basis in the

And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, and Thou shalt not eat of it ....<sup>9</sup>

There it is: *The transgression of God's command.* And the transgression of God's command is sin. St. John the Apostle writes:

Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.<sup>10</sup>

God reckoned to Adam the guilt for his sin because he earned it. And the wages of sin followed, grief, sorrow, suffering, vain toil, and death. Moses writes:

And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed *is* the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat *of* it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou *art*, and unto dust shalt thou return.<sup>11</sup>

St. Paul writes:

For the wages of sin is death....

### **B. Adam's sin imputed to his descendants.**

And so because of Adam's sin, death came upon all the children of Adam. St. Paul writes:

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person who works, to whom the imputation is made, its basis is in the grace and mercy of God, who justifies the ungodly. Therefore, when he says that the ungodly person is justified by this imputation, he is showing that in the believer to whom this free imputation is given the basis is the very opposite, that is, to this ungodly person righteousness must not be imputed, but guilt, if God should will to enter into judgment with him." *Justification, The Chief Article as Expounded in Loci Theologici*, tr. J. A. O. Preus, p. 148.

<sup>9</sup>**Genesis 3:17.**

<sup>10</sup>**I John 3:4.**

<sup>11</sup>**Genesis 3:17-19.**

Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned ....<sup>12</sup>

God imputed or reckoned to all the descendants of Adam, the sin of Adam. Again, St. Paul writes:

For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is now law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression....<sup>13</sup>

**C. Adam's sin, and, therefore, the sins of all men, are imputed to Christ in order to save men from their sins.**

God, however, purely out of His goodness and grace imputed Adam's and all his descendants' sins to Christ. Christ, therefore, suffered our griefs, sorrows, and woes.

But what are these griefs, sorrows, and woes? These are the griefs, sorrows, and woes no man can understand. For these are the griefs, sorrows, and woes of eternal separation from God and His blessings and experiencing deeply within His soul the wrath of God.

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<sup>12</sup>**Romans 5:12.**

<sup>13</sup>**Romans 5:13-14.** "It is particularly the doctrine of original guilt which has aroused the antagonism of man. Pelagians, Socinians, Arminians, Quakers, and even some modern Lutherans insist that only that can be charged against man as a transgression which he has himself committed.... The antagonism runs the whole gamut, from simple denial to outright blasphemy. ... Now, we frankly admit that human sentiment, because of the blindness of our heart (Eph. 4:18), rises in rebellion against the fact of the imputation of hereditary guilt. But that does not in the least change the fact which is set before us in God's Word, in Rom. 5:18-19, namely, that by the offense of one man judgment came upon all men to condemnation ... and that by one man's disobedience the whole multitude of mankind ... was placed before God in the category of sinners ... . And there is the further fact that all men since Adam's fall are born with hereditary corruption ... for the sole reason that they are guilty of Adam's sin. ... As to the justice of this action of God, we must bear in mind the further fact that Scripture parallels the imputation of the sin of Adam and the imputation of the righteousness of Christ to all men. Rom. 5:18-19: 'Therefore as by the offense of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of One the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of One shall be many be made righteous.' Those who reject the imputation of Adam's sin as an injustice are compelled, if they would be consistent, to declare the imputation of Christ's righteousness to be an injustice and to reject it; thus they take their stand outside the pale of Christianity." The Rev. Dr. Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, Vol. I, pp. 538, 539.

From Scripture we get a glimpse of what these griefs, sorrows, and woes are that Christ suffered for us. In Psalm 69 Jesus tells us that God forsaking Him means the loss of any and all solid footing He sinks and suffocates in the mire and darkness of God's absence and lack of God's support:

Save me, O God; for the waters are come in unto *my* soul. I sink in deep mire, where *there is* no standing: I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me.<sup>14</sup>

In Psalm 22 Christ speaks of suffering the eternal wrath of God and the eternal abandonment of God:

My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? *why art thou so* far from helping me, *and from* the words of my roaring? O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent.<sup>15</sup>

Christ cries out for help but hears nothing but silence. At night when He should rest, Christ receives no help and hears nothing but the wrath of God and condemnation of God for the sins He bears.

God's reckoning or imputing of our sins then is obviously substantial for Christ suffered the woes, grief, and sorrows of eternal damnation for us.<sup>16</sup> Indeed, so substantial is this imputation of our sin to Christ that Christ in the midst of His Passion calls them His sins:

O God, thou knowest my foolishness; and my sins are not hid from thee.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>**Psalm 69:1-2**

<sup>15</sup>**Psalm 22:1-2.**

<sup>16</sup>The Rev. Dr. John Gerhard writes: "These things were not feigned or pretended, but were all done in reality. And several facts testify to this clearly: the prophets adverb of strong assertion, ... ['surely'] ... ." *Theological Commonplaces, Exegesis, or A More Copious Explanation of Certain Articles of the Christian Religion (1625) On the Person and Office of Christ*, p. 304.

<sup>17</sup>**Psalm 69:5.** The Rev. Dr. John Gerhard writes: "Because of this taking [of our sins], He attributes them to Himself. 'O God, You know my foolishness, and my sins have not been hidden from You' (Ps. 69:5). This taking of our sins is so true, real, and effectual that Christ is forced to endure the punishments for our sins. 'He was wounded for our iniquities, He was bruised because of our crimes' (Isa. 53:5). 'He became a curse for us' (Gal. 3:13)." *Theological*

And here we see vividly and plainly the Heart of God and His mercy toward fallen men. For God Himself takes upon Himself the disgrace and humiliation of our sin in order to save us from our sin.

And furthermore, Christ in the midst of His agony thinks not of Himself but of us. In the midst of His suffering, Christ prays that we not be offended by His disfigurement of the Cross and fall away and perish. Jesus says in Psalm 69:

Let not them that wait on thee, O Lord GOD of hosts, be ashamed for my sake:  
let not those that seek thee be confounded for my sake, O God of Israel.<sup>18</sup>

Here we are granted the unparalleled look into the Very Heart and Essence of God: Pure grace, mercy, and love toward fallen man.

God reckons sin to the sinless Christ based upon His grace toward mankind to deliver man from his sin.

## **II. God Imputes Christ's Righteousness to Men by the Gospel through Faith and Grants Life Eternal.**

### **A. God does not impute men's sin to them but rather imputes Christ's righteousness to them by the Gospel through faith.**

With us, however, it is the opposite. Even though we sin daily and deserve nothing but punishment<sup>19</sup>, God does not impute or reckon our sins to us. And God does not reckon our sins to us for Christ's sake. St. Paul writes:

To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.<sup>20</sup>

And on the other hand, God does impute or reckon Christ's righteousness to us. St. Paul writes:

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*Commonplaces, Exegesis, or A More Copious Explanation of Certain Articles of the Christian Religion (1625) On the Person and Office of Christ, p. 187.*

<sup>18</sup>**Psalm 69:6.**

<sup>19</sup>“... for we daily sin much and deserve nothing but punishment.” *The Small Catechism*, p. 14.

<sup>20</sup>**II Corinthians 5:19.**

[Abraham] staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded, that what he had promised, he was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness. Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead ... .<sup>21</sup>

And this work God does through the Gospel, as St. Paul has noted already, namely, the Ministry of Reconciliation. And this Ministry of Reconciliation creates, as St. Paul has noted already, and faith saves. St. Paul writes:

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God ... .<sup>22</sup>

### **B. The righteousness of faith yields life eternal.**

This knowledge of God's reckoning our sins to Christ and His righteousness to us justifies and saves. Isaiah writes:

He shall see of the travail of his soul, *and* shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.<sup>23</sup>

And where we have this justifying knowledge of God, there we have life eternal. Christ says:

And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.<sup>24</sup>

### **Conclusion**

Christ clearly suffered grief and sorrows. But Isaiah makes it clear He did not suffer grief and sorrow because of any sin on His part but because of our sin when he writes, "Surely he hath borne *our griefs*, and carried *our sorrows* ... ." <sup>25</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>**Romans 4:20-24**, amplification added.

<sup>22</sup>**Ephesians 2:8**.

<sup>23</sup>**Isaiah 53:11**.

<sup>24</sup>**St. John 17:3**.



And because Christ bore this burden for us, we gain life everlasting life. For where the burden of our sin is lifted, there also the wrath of God is lifted from us.

And not only does Christ lift the burden of our sins, but He also robes us in His righteousness pleasing to God. And so now God not only is no longer angry with us, but delights in us for Christ's sake.

And where we have the righteousness of God for Christ's sake, there we have life eternal and the resurrection of the body.

*Amen.*

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<sup>25</sup>**Isaiah 53:4.**