

A Primer on the Infinite Merit of Christ

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1. The Person and work of Christ accomplishes God's ultimate purpose to display and communicate His glory to unworthy sinners by means of Christ's obedience to God's unchanging rule of righteousness. Not a single soul will be saved without the perfect satisfaction of God's unalterable rule of righteousness (Rom 10:1-4; 2 Cor 5:21).
2. By His obedience, Christ gained the necessary 'equipment' as High Priest to save to the uttermost and to communicate His glory in redeeming sinners (1 Cor 11:3; Heb 2; Heb 7). (See the covenant of redemption in Heb 10, Is 53, Ps 110, 1 Tim 3:16).
3. Redemption reveals the Trinity. Christ's work of perfect obedience is ultimately a Trinitarian accomplishment and work to display God's glory, purchase a Bride, and to complete the happiness of the elect in the view and enjoyment of God's glory forever (Eph 5; Heb 9, 10). The Trinitarian basis and foundation of Christ's work is the ultimate purpose of God.
4. Thus we understand that Christ's redemptive work is the fulfillment of God's unchanging rule of righteousness. His glory displayed to man. God enables regenerated souls to behold that glory. He makes redeemed creatures happy by communicating to them His own Trinitarian happiness by giving them the Holy Spirit. Human beings are created to reflect God Almighty. The glory of God is displayed to redeemed men and women, who as God's reclaimed image through Christ, are manifestly, *analogos* of God.
5. The fullness of the saints' happiness is the riches of God's glory in the saints in redemption. God's glory manifested to the understanding of the creature in *holiness, love, life, happiness* is the sum of all that Christ purchased for us, namely the Holy Spirit Himself that we might be partakers of the divine nature (2 Pet 1:3-4). The saints have the favor to enjoy His love, for love is the gift of the Holy Spirit.
6. The saints are not just detached observers, for God not only displays His glory but also communicates His glory to them. God's glory and the creature's ultimate good are both joined in Christ. *This is a riddle*: God seeks Himself in communicating His glory to us, but the riddle is solved in that God is doing all for His own glory, so that the highest love to the creature is God's own supreme end. Thus, God's love of His own glory is inseparable from the shining forth of that glory to the bliss of the creature. How marvelous and breathtaking is this goal of grace that our transformation at our resurrection should be to gain the glory of Christ unto that great end of having His glory communicated to us without interruption (2 Thess 2:13-15).
7. God's respect to His own glory and the creature's good is not a divided respect. They are joined in Christ whose cross is the vindication of God in the obtaining a spouse for His Son. The way the eternal Son of God is glorified in the creature is by communicating Himself to the creature; not by receiving anything from the creature (see Fuller on *The Unity of the Bible* and the exposure of the rotten core of all false religion which is the inversion of the client-patron relationship.) This is the greatest story ever told that a new innumerable humanity has been given to the Son so that God's glory and our good are joined in Christ. The saints' happiness in heaven is viewing and loving God's excellence as displayed and communicated by Christ (the *beatific vision*). We as participants in God's ultimate purpose (His glory story) will enjoy the unbroken communication of God. This is all that satisfies love as this lovely virtue of Christ is

imputed to them so that they have more and more pleasure in this knowledge of their lovely robe of righteousness. We will explore God's righteousness as partakers of His righteousness, as those wearing our new covenant robes of righteousness (this is a strong incentive to study more deeply our union with Christ). This is mutuality. The bride is complete in Christ—His perfections are communicated to her so that she has no spot or wrinkle (Eph 5). The redeemed become vessels for the communicable attributes of God. The saints must be glorified in order to experience the communication of God's glory to us. Possessing these virtues through Christ is the only way to enjoy God perfectly in glory. The lie and revolt in Eden led to this puzzling 'riddle': how can God, who is *for* His own holiness, be *for* the unholy creature (see Is 25)?

8. Through Christ, God made the free bestowal of grace consistent with His honor, holiness, justice, majesty, and authority (see Rom 3). Christ's voluntariness to fulfill all righteousness on behalf of the elect makes it love. Christ meets the demands of absolute righteousness so that God would be free to be infinitely gracious. Christ's condescension in assuming our nature as the 'last Adam' was that He might keep the terms of the covenant perfectly. He became a prisoner of vindictive justice. In His own Person, He answers for the sins of His people—this is the plan from eternity which originates out of the eternal covenant of redemption (Titus 1:1-4).

9. The sin and guilt of the elect is imputed to Him so that He pays their penalty. He could not escape; it is impossible that He should go to heaven any other way. Pure disinterested love made Him suffer. He assumes their liability, alienation, wrath, guilt, and death, and as such, He is our Mediator, Forerunner, and Advocate, Guilt-bearer, and as such He fulfills the covenant of redemption set forth in Hebrews chapters 7, 9, 10, and 13.

10. As the perfect Mediator, He mediates between: the *glory, majesty, happiness of God*, AND the *meanness, guilt, and separation of the sinner*. By the eternal covenant (though voluntarily), He is bound to assume their debt, to satisfy divine justice to accomplish the great purpose to display and communicate His glory to sinful creatures.

11. In the covenant of redemption conceived by the Father, the Son binds Himself to suffer the wrath due His people. He glorifies God in so doing. In voluntarily taking this on, He exhibits and displays the Father's love (Jn 3:16-17). His love for His sheep makes their salvation His reward. The joy set before Him is His mediatorial glory (Heb 12:1-3). He is exalted to God's right hand as Lord and Judge of all. He sends the Spirit for the salvation and glorification of the elect. How infrequently do Christians ever meditate on the fact that our salvation is Christ's reward for His obedience (as to this joy see Heb 12, we are His inheritance, see Eph 1).

12. These glorious truths are to animate our hope. For hope is the spiritual barometer revealing the state of our religious affections. Regeneration implants eyes of the heart, making this hope a reality. We are enabled to 'see and savor' Christ accomplishing the redemption of His bride. We behold the true treasure of the glory in Christ and thereby, consequently *do violence* to obstacles which oppose the interest of the beauty of holiness. There is an unbreakable hope and holiness connection (1 Jn 2:28; 3:2-3). See Heb 6.

13. The Father's unconditional love is seen in that the Son enters the covenant (in order to fulfill the terms of the covenant) of which the Father is Head. The Father redeems without injury to His justice. The Son displays the Father's love by suffering infinite wrath—satisfying the unchanging demands of divine justice. Rewards are given to the Son for His perfect obedience to the requirements of the covenant.

14. The doctrine of the Trinity is clearly revealed in the economic work of redemption. The voluntariness of the covenant is central to love—the Son voluntarily assumes the surety of His bride in a new subjugation to the Father—as the creature is subject to the Father.

15. God does everything beautifully. He sets His love on the unlovely and the unlovable. He makes them lovable by the redemptive work of Christ—then loves them for the beauty of their holiness that He may communicate to them His happiness. This is out of His own sovereign love, for He is not moved by merit in the creature. There was none. Anything less than the above constitutes an erosion in our understanding of God’s sovereign grace. Eph 2.

16. God entered a covenant of redemption with the Son from all eternity based upon His desire to communicate happiness to a bride for the Son according to His benevolent love to unlovable sinners. This is positive love far beyond the appeasement of His anger and deliverance from the deserved penalty for sin. Because the objects of His love also participate in His glory (Rom 8:29; Eph 1:4; Col 1:22; 2 Thess 2:13-14). Thus, this is a kind of favor infinitely beyond the concept of pardon for sin alone. Considering this incredible theme of participation in His glory, to view salvation as mere reset button (in cancelling our sin) is radical reductionism.

17. Redemption required a Mediator to unite the two distant parties—a middle party (Mediator) to transact for man’s place and standing. Christ stands in the place of sinners to make the purchase—thus, the necessity of the incarnation. God’s holiness cannot interact with sinners apart from the Mediator. There is no covenant between God and sinners directly. We could not make ourselves alive, or face God without the Mediator, only in Christ is there life and access. Christ is a ‘public Person’ (Federal Head) with the names of His people on His heart. His voluntary act made Him *one with us*. Thus, the gospel, the covenant of grace between God the Father and man is grounded upon the divinely appointed Mediator’s solidarity with His people.

18. Christ’s election is the foundation of ours. And His justification and glorification are the foundation of ours. By means of the covenant of redemption, we are united to Christ from all eternity. Wonder of wonders, a human being, Jesus of Nazareth, has been forever taken into the heart of the Trinity. This was necessary in order that Christ would be our *forerunner* and our *man in glory* (Heb 6; 1 Cor 15). God has promised us perfect eternal priestly intercession through Christ, because as the God-man He has made *atonement*, and by His atonement we have a God Who is, *atoned for*. The glory of Christ is bound up in Who God is toward us in Christ.

19. God wills to be known; He has a boundless propensity to share Himself, to give Himself—to extend His glory in so doing. He wills to be known by means of the satisfaction of His unchanging standard of righteousness by means of substitution planned by imputation in the eternal covenant of redemption, to save unworthy sinners, so that He might glorify His grace, and reveal and communicate His glory forever to redeemed sinners (Jn 17). This is God’s glory story, the plot for which the cosmos was created (Titus 1; 2 Tim 1; 1 Cor 16; Eph 1, 3, etc.).

20. God desires to extend His glory, that He might display His glory, so that He has an interest in respect to the fruit of His glory (the church). The fruit of His glory is bringing the elect from dust to glory through Christ—in terms of ultimate meaning and purpose, you never get beyond the cross of Christ.

21. On Judgment Day, God will appear to all to be universally righteous toward everyone. The justice of God’s moral government will at that day at once be discovered by all. All objections will be removed (Rom 3:19). Consciences will be satisfied in all verdicts; all cavils of evil will be silenced. God will be praised; how true and righteous are Thy judgments—God will be vindicated in all His judgments (Rev).

It will be seen that it is impossible for anything to be united to God and brought to enjoyment of Him which is not holy. Regarding God's unbending justice, rejectors of the gospel will experience everlasting confusion, "Asking in their tormented consciences, 'How did I get here?'" The answer is that the reprobate has radically devalued and rejected God's gift of Himself. God's gift of Himself is the great riches of the gospel! This is why Hell is God's justice in dealing with those who have spurned God's offer of love, mercy, and grace.

The saints need to know why Heaven is a place, or locale only secondarily, for Heaven is a holy Person's abode. Therefore, how poignant is this paragraph: Heaven is not merely a region described in terms of paradise; Heaven is the dwelling place of God. Thus, to be ready for Heaven, to be fitted for Heaven, to be going to Heaven is to be headed for life with God Almighty, that is in abiding near His presence, seeing the Face of the Lord (1 Cor 13). In Psalm 119, David states, "How I love Thy law." In this statement, he is indicating that he loves the God of holiness whose Law is God's character in code (the decalogue).

22. What Christ accomplished infinitely exceeds what Adam would have done by obedience. Christ's obedience was perfect; voluntary, unto death; and exalting positive righteousness. All His obedience earned exaltation. Christ accomplished the purpose of the Trinity to display and communicate the glory of God. Christ's obedience in His condescension in taking on human nature to keep the covenant perfectly; to become subject to the penalty of the law involved following the ceremonial law and ultimately the cross—by this He gained infinite merit for us. Christ laid down His life by His Father's command resulting in our justification. What Christ did in His perfect obedience on Calvary's tree is far more difficult than staying away from the fruit of a tree (Adam's probation). Christ's 'equipment' that He gained by His obedience, fitted Him to be our Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek (Ps 110; Heb 6).

23. Christ fulfilled a 'covenant of works'—His work of humiliation as Mediator was a fulfillment of the command His Father gave to Him. God's authority as Lawgiver is the ultimate authority of a divine Legislator and Judge. The Son of God fulfilled a mediatorial command (Jn 15:19, 30). Christ was not justified until He obeyed all the commands—He was justified in His resurrection. The perseverance of Christ remedies the defect of the first covenant with Adam. Christ went to heaven to make representation of what He had accomplished by His perfect obedience to God (Jn 17:4; Heb 7, etc.). The rule of righteousness is a justifying righteousness. Christ's work of substitution is the basis for the believer receiving righteousness and holiness by: derivation (God is essentially holy, believers only through Christ, 'derived through Him), donation (our right-standing as believers is all of grace), and imputation (the righteousness or merit of Christ is put upon the account of believers).

24. Because of Christ's righteousness, believing sinners are treated as if they had obeyed (Rom 5:19). All of Christ's obedience is imputed to us. The authority and honor of God's law had to be retrieved and the penalty of its breaking imposed. Positive righteousness is needed to vindicate His law—this positive righteousness is imputed to the elect.

25. To receive the reward of His obedience is to have that obedience imputed to us. In terms of righteousness, imputation is the obedience of Christ to the covenant terms of God's unchanging rule of righteousness—reckoned on our account as if we had performed it (to *impute* is like a credit transfer). Has this ever struck you in your affections, that our salvation is Christ's reward for His obedience? Christ's reward of His obedience in His gaining merit is to have that merit imputed to us.

26. In the justification of believing sinners by the righteousness of Christ, the purpose of God in the display and advance of His glory is advanced. The dignity of Christ's Person (His divine nature) gives Him all the glory of our righteousness. In that way, we are abased (self-righteousness annihilated), and we are dependent upon God for all we should be before Him is of God (note Augustine's prayer which offended Pelagius). The value of our justification rests on the dignity of Christ's Person. The dignity of Christ's Person in His preeminence is crucial to the infinite value of His work. And what is missing in all non-evangelical schemes of salvation, is that the nature of our righteousness is grounded upon solidarity with Christ, the Righteous (see Romans 10:1-4).

27. The dignity of Christ's Person determines the pedigree, the caliber, and quality of the righteousness we have. It makes man's righteousness stink. All that Christ did as Mediator for the members of His body is known as His 'mystical' work by representation and union with us. Thus, He goes to heaven as a forerunner for His church (Heb 6:19-20). He and the saints are one—He has radically identified Himself with us in His suffering, glory, and exaltation. He purchases the love of God for all who have His imputed righteousness (Jn 10:17).

Great is the mystery of godliness, that the Son of God should take on human flesh, our very nature and that by an eternal covenant should fulfill all righteousness on behalf of His people (Phil 2; 1 Tim 3:16; Heb 2). Our union with Him is a mystical union, there is no earthly counterpart (whether in any type or anti-type found in natural religion, history, or philosophy). His living obediently, His life as a perfect disciple, His dying, rising, and advocacy is all vicarious. How glorious that in the gospel revealed, we discover that this mystical union was planned in eternity past in the covenant of redemption.

28. He voluntarily took on our guilt—becoming legally guilty so that He became a debtor to justice. Christ was justified so that we would be justified; this is what His work obtained because the guilt exchange was ordained by the Father (Gal 3:13; Heb 9:27). Once He paid the debt, He became guilty no more—He was justified (Rom 4:25). He bound Himself to the terms of the covenant (Is 53; Heb 10:10, 14), fulfilled divine justice, then in the joyousness of the resurrection, rested from His redemptive work. God's testimony of His redemptive work is finished.

29. Believers are admitted to communion in justification of their Head who is our surety. Saints have the same justification as Christ—the same righteousness and are accepted by God. They have the same eternal rest and glory and participate in the accomplishments and rewards as those clothed in Christ's righteousness (Gal 4). God now stands on the side of the believer (Rom 8). Justice is appeased, the law fulfilled on our behalf (Rom 3:25-26). An act of saving faith in God requires that we must see the ungodliness of self—the unrighteousness of self and see the righteousness of Another. The very essence of our justification rests upon how Christ's merit is fully credited to believers; we have our standing by union with Him.

30. In Christ's merit for us, both the negative and positive requirements of God's rule of righteousness are met. Our full pardon and acceptance are the eternal fruits of His Fatherly kindness (Eph 1). Christ's propitiatory sacrifice is not only the satisfactory price that saves us from hell, but it is the price of our happiness and glory (Is 53:12; Jn 6:51-55; 10:17-18; Acts 20:28).

31. During the probation in the Garden there was the trial of obedience. But, creatures are not confirmed to eternal life apart from a positive display of honor to God's authority and law by positive obedience to His rule of righteousness. The last Adam by the covenant of redemption

enters to fulfill perfect obedience as surety for mankind. Christ more than repaid the honor due God's authority—He showed and supplied an infinite regard to the holiness and majesty of God. Our justification is not legislative, it is not a new law that was made apart from the fulfillment of divine justice and righteousness. It is inescapable that God can only be known by how He saves. Ultimate respect to God is respect for the way of salvation that He has inaugurated. This is why our salvation glorifies God—for the true believer loves the God who saves in the manner which He has ordained. This is why our salvation rests upon the knowledge of Him in His redeeming work. Therefore, the salvation inaugurated by God is meant to show His perfection to men and angels.

32. The dignity of Christ means that the One who obeyed for us demonstrated the most wonderful instance of submission to God's sovereignty there ever was. Christ paid so that man's salvation might be to the majesty of the glory of God's attributes. This was a holy act out of love to God. The greatness of the cost of obedience is commensurate with the greatness of respect to God's authority (Is 50:5-6; Jn 12:28). Thus, as stated above, respect for God is respect for the way of salvation that He has inaugurated—for the way of salvation shows forth His perfections to men and angels. The voluntary nature of His sacrifice is the basis of its merit.

33. Oh the wonder of blood bought grace—there is no need of righteousness originating from you. Cast yourself down at the feet of Jesus as one justly condemned (acknowledging you are clad in 'grave clothes'). Christ stands at the tree of life (Rev 22:1-5, 17). In eternity past, He undertook to stand in their place. The names of each who would be called are on His heart.

34. The capacity of the saints to enjoy God's excellent perfections is determined by their holiness and by their good works here—this is not contrary to grace. Capacity is based on four things: 1) The degree of grace and holiness, 2) The degree of glory to the Name of God and of the good done, especially to the household of faith, 3) Self-denial and suffering in the exercises of the fruits of grace, 4) Eminency in humility. There are differing degrees and capacities of joy in heaven. The measure of fruit and capacity for joy in heaven are by God's sovereign pleasure. This practical holiness is closely tied to the saint's capacity to enjoy God's excellence and perfections. How we need to include this in our teaching on discipleship (in connection with self-denial and taking up of one's cross daily).

35. The believer in Christ is rewarded out of Christ's righteousness—out of the worthiness of the Mediator. Christ's righteousness purchased our holiness and purchased that it should be rewardable. The Holy Spirit, purchased for us by Christ, produces the good works in us. On earth the Holy Spirit produces the fruit of His own character. God rewards the saints far above the proportion of the work they do. In summary, believers are rewarded out of Christ's righteousness and rewarded for the good works ordained and produced by the Spirit.

36. Consider the glory of Christ's condescension, wrath-bearing, suffering and humiliation. This is the greatest trial of obedience ever experienced. It is the greatest display of God's infinite perfections ever accomplished. The obedience of Christ in His substitutionary death is the most exalted part of Christ's positive righteousness; this work of redemption is the glory of Christ. In taking on our curse, Christ becomes the derelict man; He becomes the epitome of dereliction, ignominy, shame and reproach—alienated, cursed, hell-bound by virtue of the guilt and dis-relatedness of the elect having been imputed to Him as our Substitute. His substitution is the cause of our justification and adoption. His resurrection, glorification, and exaltation becomes the cause of our justification, glorification, and exaltation (Rom 4:25).

ADDENDUM:

The great riddle regarding the fallen, depraved state of mankind, as the image of God is: “How can God who is *for* His own holy glory be *for* the sinful creature?” Only believers comprehend how the cross of Christ answers this riddle. The recovery of a remnant of Adam’s race, chosen to be formed into a new humanity in Christ, is the glory story of God in Christ. All those who have a passion for God’s glory, long to see this divine plot written more indelibly on their hearts. The highest earthly romance is but an unfinished love poem pointing to the promise, “I will be your God and you will be my people” (Ex; Rev 21).

The grace given through Christ gives us God so that the communal life of the Trinity is exported into our experience (Jn 17). The believer’s new nature through Christ is created to behold the glory of the Lord, created to have an entranced vision of God that changes us and satisfies us. The church needs the regular revelation of the glory of Christ. Paul prays for this in Ephesians as he prays for the believers. In terms of grasping the glory of Christ, Paul incorporates phrases requesting: *a spirit of revelation and the knowledge of Him* and, requesting *the enlightening of the eyes of the heart*.

A great benefit of beholding the exalted Christ by faith (2 Cor 3:18) involves not only the promise of being increasingly transformed into His likeness. But, also seeing the infinite sovereign power He has to bring His church to perfection, subdue to Himself, and subject all of her enemies beneath His feet. Our suffering Savior is Lord of all now, beholding the glory of Christ feeds the assurance of the Church of the capability of her Head, to fulfill every covenant promise and every redemptive purpose (Eph 1:22, Eph 3:21; Heb 2, Heb 10). Note to Jay add Christ subduing all things passages.

In 1 Corinthians 1:21-23, there is a divine crushing of human wisdom by the cross of Christ. God is destroying all natural religion and philosophy that boasts in a man-centered schemes of access to the divine. This begs the question, why can God only be known in the face of Christ (2 Cor 4:6)? The answer is tied to the glory of God’s Person by means of the Mediator fulfilling the work of satisfaction. There is no knowledge of God apart from our Substitute satisfying God’s unchanging standard of righteousness by the sacrifice of Himself. Apart from this propitiation which is the heart of the gospel, men always instinctively retreat into schemes designed to protect themselves from judgement.

How thankful we ought to be “for big picture passages” which give us God’s plan of the ages in Christ. Again, we are called to the goal of the gospel, that is, *what we are saved to*. The convicting work of the Spirit in preparation for grace means that a verdict is established in the mind, heart, and conscience of the ‘awakened’ sinner. We must agree with God’s plan and diagnosis found in Colossians 1:19-22, that our hearts are foul nests of enmity and hostility. And that only a work of reconciliation from outside of us by Christ can avail.

What we are *saved to* is the goal of grace, that we might gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Thess 2:13-14). There is no greater contrast than the responses and destinies of those who will witness Christ’s glorious second advent. All middle ground is gone; there will be nothing in between—the cross of Christ as the great divider of men assured that. There will be but two responses; the horror of destruction by fire, or the marveling of the sons of God (who behold the glory of their Savior) (2 Thess 1). Only those clothed with Christ’s righteousness will be able to marvel in blissful wonder that the glory of Christ has glorified them (1Jn 3:2-3).

Those who will be destroyed will find the sight of God’s glory unbearable. For that glory, that infinite moral majesty of God will reveal their moral, spiritual, and ontological nakedness. The sight of God’s glory now is essential preparation to live with God in glory.

Those who had glimpses of God's glory as mortals found that that vision prepared them for unique and courageous callings in the face of incredible opposition (Isaiah, Moses, Ezekiel, Elijah, and the Apostles).

This all-consuming truth that we will share His holiness (Heb 12:10) encapsulates the goal of God's grace. And, this unifying truth of the goal of grace sheds great light on what it really means to actually repent. Repentance involves deep contrition over our wretchedness in not desiring to receive holiness from God. That sin is tantamount to not desiring God, not desiring a relationship with God. Thus, to not care about receiving righteousness and holiness from God is equivalent to having no desire to dwell with Him forever. Is it any wonder that in perdition, God is giving sinners their own way? And, His wrath is unleashed on those who have spurned His offer of mercy, righteousness, and holiness. For these inconceivable gifts of His grace are the essential prerequisites of living with God and forever enjoying the gift of Himself.