

Teaching Series: The Glory of Righteousness

Title: Session 11 – The Great Exchange

Author: Eduard Serediuc

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Cleansing the Conscience of Sins

The Great Exchange

2 Corinthians 5:21 says the following:

2 Corinthians 5:21 (NKJV)

²¹ For He (God, the Father) made Him (Jesus Christ) Who knew no sin **to be sin** for us, that **we might become the righteousness of God** in Him.

Question: In what way was Jesus Christ made sin on the cross? Was He made sin only legally OR was He made sin vitally in His nature as well, meaning in His spirit? Then, in what way were believers made righteousness? We have already seen and proved earlier that believers had to be made righteousness both legally and vitally in their nature. Here we will focus on how was Jesus made sin on the cross and on what kind of death He experienced as a result of being made sin. Did His spirit experience spiritual death and complete separation from God together with His physical death? These are very important and complex questions that we will attempt to answer. When I talk about nature throughout this section, I will refer to the spirit of a human being, respectively to the spirit of Jesus Christ.

There are two prevalent perspectives concerning the answer to the above questions. The first perspective is that Jesus was not made sin vitally in His nature, but sin was only legally or judicially imputed to Him. By the same token, born-again believers remain sinners in their nature and righteousness is imputed to them just legally as well. The second perspective is that Jesus was made sin both legally and vitally in His nature, and He took on the nature of Satan on the cross. By the same token, born-again believers become righteousness both legally and vitally in their nature. Both these perspectives have difficulties. The problem with the first perspective is that it makes believers in Christ only legally righteous. The issue with the second perspective is that Jesus takes on the nature of Satan. The viewpoint that I will present and explain in this book is a third alternative: that born-again believers were made righteousness both legally and vitally as I have already proved earlier, but Jesus was made sin only legally, and not vitally in His spirit as well. Moreover, I will advocate that Jesus experienced only soulish death and physical death, but not

spiritual death in His spirit.

Why do I believe that sin was only imputed legally to Jesus? There are about four reasons for that. First, it's because whenever the people of Israel brought animals for their sin and guilt sacrifices in the Old Testament, and laid their hands on the animals for the transfer of guilt, those animals never became sin in their nature. It was just a legal transfer. The same happened with the *azazel* scapegoat that was sent in the wilderness in the yearly Day of Atonement, carrying legally all the sins of the congregation. The scapegoat didn't become sin in its nature. Second, we see that God credited righteousness to Abraham and the other people of God in the Old Testament only legally and in advance, before Christ came to die on the cross. In the same way, sin was imputed to Jesus Christ just legally, but in His case, it was both retroactively (in order to include Abraham as well) as well as for all time. Third, if Jesus had been made sin in His nature, meaning in His spirit, then He would not have been anymore the perfect, blameless sacrifice for humankind's sins. Let's read two passages that illustrate how the Passover Lamb of the Old Testament (Exodus 12:21) was a "typology" of Christ and how Jesus Christ, Himself, was going to become the Lamb of God (John 1:29):

Exodus 12:21 (NKJV)

²¹ Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel and said to them, "Pick out and **take lambs for yourselves** according to your families, and kill **the Passover lamb**."

John 1:29 (NKJV)

²⁹ The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! **The Lamb of God** who takes away the sin of the world!"

If we continue with this parallel, we can notice that the sacrificial lamb in the Old Testament had to be "unblemished." At the time of sacrifice, a hand would be laid on the unblemished sacrificial animal to symbolize the transfer of guilt. We can see that in many passages like Exodus 12:5, Leviticus 4:3-4, Leviticus 23-24, Leviticus 32-33, and Leviticus 22:20, but let's read just two of those passages:

Leviticus 22:20 (NKJV)

²⁰ Whatever **has a defect**, you shall not offer, for **it shall not be acceptable** on your behalf.

Leviticus 4:3-4 (NKJV)

³ If the anointed priest sins, bringing guilt on the people, then let him offer to the LORD for his sin which he has sinned a young bull **without blemish** as a sin offering.

⁴ He shall bring the bull to the door of the tabernacle of meeting before the LORD, lay his hand on the bull's head, and kill the bull before the LORD.

The sacrificial lamb didn't actually become sinful in nature, but rather sin was imputed to the animal legally and the animal acted as a sacrificial substitute. In like manner, Christ, the Lamb of God was utterly unblemished, as we can see in 1 Peter 1:19, and humanity's sin was imputed judicially to Him. He was humanity's sacrificial substitute on the cross of Calvary. The transfer of sin on Him was just legal and not vital. Let's read 1 Peter 1:18-19:

1 Peter 1:18–19 (NKJV)

¹⁸ Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers,

¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, *as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.*

The whole world is currently in sin and separated from God from birth, because of the sin nature transmitted from Adam, and not because of their own sinful actions. Likewise, Jesus becoming sin in His nature would have meant He would have been separated from God and blemished, defiled, even if He had never sinned through His actions during His lifetime.

The fourth reason for why I believe that sin was only imputed judicially to Jesus is because Jesus would not have had the right to resurrection if He was made sin in His nature. Let's read Romans 6:23 to see why:

Romans 6:23 (NKJV)

²³ For *the wages of sin is death*, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

This passage says that the wages of sin is death. If Jesus had become sin in His nature, He would not have come back from the dead and He would not have defeated death. The only people on whom death cannot reign over are righteous people. Therefore, Jesus had to remain righteous in His nature and spirit in order to have the power and legal right to come back from the dead.

Now, why do I believe that Jesus experienced pain and death only in His soul and body, but not spiritual death in His spirit? First, it's because Adam and Eve sinned with their soul and physical body before their spirit became dead. In the same way, Jesus had to experience death only in His physical body and soul that were blameless and without sin, in order to determine the resurrection and recreation of the human spirit into a brand new creation. He only tasted death with His soul and body, but didn't experience spiritual death with His spirit.

Hebrews 2:9 (NKJV)

⁹ 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.

Jesus tasted death with His soul on the cross by experiencing all the negative soulful emotions that humans can possibly go through: sadness, hopelessness, discouragement, fear, worry, depression, confusion, loneliness, boredom, anger, etc. Moreover, Jesus tasted death with His body on the cross by experiencing all the physical pains, sicknesses, and diseases that humans can possibly have, all at once at that moment on the cross, and by finally giving his breath.

Second, if Jesus had become sin in His spirit and died spiritually as well, there would have been a cosmic breach in the Trinity of God. The Godhead Itself would have been contaminated by sin. Let's not forget that Jesus was also God; He was one with the Father and the Holy Spirit in essence, and He had eternal life in His spirit. This is unconditional fixed existence without end in the life and presence of God. Jesus' spirit had to be preserved. Not only that, but if such a separation had been possible to happen, that the Son of God would enter spiritual death and lose eternal life for a moment, then there would not have been any assurance for believers' salvation and for the gift of eternal life they have received either. They could lose their salvation and eternal life at any moment as well and become eternally damned.

You may ask now: "So, if Jesus' spirit could not be made sin, then did He really have the potential to sin while He was on earth? Were Jesus' temptations real temptations or was He just pretending to be tempted like us? What would have happened if Jesus had sinned in any way?" The fact that Jesus didn't become sin in His nature on the cross doesn't mean that Jesus didn't have the full potential to sin. He was the Son of Man, He came in Adam's initial position before the fall, and He fulfilled the whole Law as a man and not as a God, otherwise God would not have accepted His sacrifice. His temptations were very real. He had the real potential to sin and enter spiritual death like Adam, otherwise His temptations would not have been real and that comes against what the Bible says in Hebrews 4:15 and Hebrews 7:26:

Hebrews 4:15 (NKJV)

¹⁵ For we don't have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but **was in all points tempted as we are**, yet without sin.

Hebrews 7:26 (NKJV)

²⁶ For such a High Priest was fitting for us, **Who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners**, and has become higher than the heavens.

I don't know what would have happened with the Trinity and the human race if Jesus had sinned in any way during His lifetime. I don't even want to think about the devastating consequences, nor do I want to speculate about it, since the Bible doesn't say anything about such repercussions or such a possibility. However, what I know for sure, according to the Bible, is that Jesus could have sinned anytime, but He didn't. He remained holy, undefiled, and separated from sinners. Praise the Lord! He is so praise-worthy to have been able to complete such a difficult and almost impossible task: to fulfill all the Law of God as a human being and then pay through His death for all the wrongdoings of humanity. The fact that Jesus could not be made sin because He was God and the fact that He had the genuine potential to sin, is probably an antinomy or a paradox that we will have to accept as it is for now, although it's uncomfortable, until we will have access to more knowledge into the mystery of Trinity and Godhead. An antinomy is a contradiction between two beliefs or conclusions that are both true and reasonable in the same time.

What are some of the implications of Jesus' sinless life on earth? The fact that Jesus lived for thirty-three years a sinless life on earth and then died on the cross, while having the complete opportunity and potential to sin, accomplished at least three important things. First, it made Jesus the perfect, blameless sacrificial Lamb. The Bible tells us in Hebrews 2:10 that He was perfected through the sufferings of temptations and the sufferings of death on a cross, in order to become the High Priest and the blameless Lamb.

Hebrews 2:10 (NKJV)

¹⁰ For it was fitting for Him, for Whom are all things and by Whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation **perfect through sufferings**.

No one can achieve righteousness or be called righteous and blameless without having the opportunity and temptation to be unrighteous. On one hand, Jesus was born perfect, and yet on the other hand, He had to be perfected, in the sense of using and applying His perfection from birth in real life. He was born holy and He was both the Son of God and the Son of Man. Yet, He learned obedience through sufferings, as we see in Hebrews 5:8-10:

Hebrews 5:8-10 (NKJV)

⁸ Though He was a Son, yet **He learned obedience** by the things which He suffered.

⁹ And **having been perfected**, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him,

¹⁰ called by God as High Priest "according to the order of Melchizedek."

Jesus' sufferings before the cross, while living on earth, never consisted in things belonging to spiritual death and darkness, like physical sickness, lack, poverty, depression, sadness, confusion, weakness, failure, fear, worry, hopelessness, or discouragement. He destroyed all these wherever He went and refused to accept them in His life. He was never subject to them. His sufferings were rather temptations and persecutions from other people and from the devil, and finally, death on the cross. Can you imagine how much faith Jesus had to exercise in the garden of Gethsemane, and on the cross as well, that the Father would accept His sinless life and His sacrifice, and that He would really come back from the dead? Hebrews 5:7 says this:

Hebrews 5:7 (NKJV)

⁷ Who, in the days of His flesh, when **He had offered up prayers and supplications**, with vehement cries and tears to Him Who was able **to save Him from death**, and was heard because of His godly fear.

Sometimes, we, as believers, are so encouraged during a sermon or a devotional time and then when we face a trial, it's like we forget everything we know from the Word of God. It seems like nothing can encourage us during those times. What Jesus experienced in Gethsemane and on the cross is similar. Being in the midst of suffering, His perception of reality was not that fixed and clear, and He had to fight the fight of faith, just as we have to do, all the way to the end. That is why in the garden He asked the Father, if it was possible, to remove the cup of the cross from Him. The passage we read said that He offered up prayers and supplications with vehement loud cries and tears to be saved from death by His Father. You cannot but love and cherish Jesus for eternity, when you grasp even a little of what He had to go through for you and me.

The second thing that Jesus' sinless life accomplished was that it assured His resurrection; it gave Him the right to be resurrected from the dead back to life. Have you ever wondered what would have happened with Jesus if He was not killed on the cross? If Jesus had not been killed by people on the cross, He would have continued to live forever. Death could not have touched Him, because He never sinned. Death has a claim only over sinful people. Moreover, if Jesus hadn't chosen to let go of His life of His own accord, He could not have been killed, no matter what the Romans did to Him. Let's read John 10:17-18:

John 10:17-18 (NKJV)

¹⁷ "Therefore My Father loves Me, because **I lay down My life** that I may take it again.

¹⁸ **No one takes it from Me**, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father."

After Jesus died, He was resurrected back to life not because He was God, but because He lived a sinless life as a human being while on earth. Death could not hold Him and had no choice, but to “spit” Him out. If Jesus had remained in death, that would have meant He was sinful as well, because only those who sin die. That would have meant His sacrifice had not been accepted by the Father, and consequently, all believers had remained still in their sins, because there was no longer a substitutionary payment for the sins of the fallen humanity, as we see in 1 Corinthians 15:12-19:

1 Corinthians 15:12–19 (NKJV)

¹² Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?

¹³ But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen.

¹⁴ And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty.

¹⁵ Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, Whom He didn’t raise up—if in fact the dead don’t rise.

¹⁶ For if the dead don’t rise, then Christ is not risen.

¹⁷ And if Christ is not risen, ***your faith is futile; you are still in your sins!***

¹⁸ Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. *(the people of the Old Testament)*

¹⁹ If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.

Jesus’ death without the resurrection would not have been enough to atone and pay for humanity’s sins and for its justification. By His resurrection, Jesus Himself was justified first, and through His justification, the rest of the people in Christ were justified. People need to believe in His resurrection for salvation as well, and not only in His death.

Romans 4:25 (NKJV)

²⁵ Who ***was delivered up*** because of ***our offenses***, and ***was raised*** because of ***our justification***.

Romans 10:9–10 (NKJV)

⁹ That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart ***that God has raised Him from the dead***, you will be saved.

¹⁰ For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

The third thing that Jesus’ sinless life accomplished was that it gained the righteousness that was going to be given to believers. He fulfilled the whole Law and obeyed God to the end. Jesus was sinless and yet, He died physically. That was not right according to God’s justice. So, God reconciled that innocent death with His justice, by crediting it as payment for humanity’s sins. Now, after believers’ sins had been remitted, they would have been back to square one, where Adam was initially created, and left to earn their righteousness by works, as Adam was supposed to do. Jesus’ sacrifice paid humanity’s debt of sin (the negative side), and brought it to zero. However, God took a step forward and put believers on the positive side forever: He credited to believers not only Jesus’ death and resurrection, but also His sinless life, that

He lived on the earth. The righteousness that Jesus earned by His works, He gave to believers freely, as a gift, both legally and vitally. First, He declared them legally righteous, then He made them vitally righteous in their nature. As a result of Jesus' righteousness, He also gave believers eternal life as a gift, the same life from the tree of life found in the initial Garden of Eden. That is why believers are now in a much more elevated and better position than Adam was, and that is UNCONDITIONAL FIXED STATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS AND ETERNAL LIFE. Christians don't have to try anymore to be holy in order to gain God's favor, or God's righteousness, or to be more blessed, or to maintain their salvation. The believers' work of holiness is now for the pleasure of God, for living a good life on earth by fulfilling all their God-given destiny, and for rewards in the future life. Manifested holiness is also possible effortlessly because the believers' nature has been changed into righteousness.

This Great Exchange was possible because, at the Last Supper, in Matthew 26:28, Jesus entered into a new blood covenant with His disciples, and with all other humans that will ever live and believe in Him respectively:

Matthew 26:28 (NKJV)

²⁸ For this is *My blood of the New Covenant*, which is shed for many *for the remission of sins*.

Everything that the disciples and the believers in Christ of all time had, was going to belong to Jesus now, and everything that Jesus had, was going to belong to the disciples and to all believers in Christ of all time. Jesus and the disciples together with all believers of all time became ONE in that moment. That's why, when Jesus Christ went on the cross, believers went on the cross with Him, they died with Him, and were raised with Him.

Christians are not sinners saved by grace. We cannot say we are just sinners saved by grace. We could say that we WERE sinners, but now we are saved by grace or, even better, that we are saints saved by grace. We can no longer sing songs that affirm brokenness and weakness, or sing lyrics that don't align themselves with God's present truth of the New Testament, such as: "renew a right spirit within me," "cast me not away from thy presence," "don't take the Holy Spirit from me." These things will never happen to us, Christians. They were true for David in the Old Testament in Psalm 51, but not for Christians today. You might argue that we all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). Yes, but that was before salvation, not after. Now, we have become the glory of the Lord in our spirit and we are transpiring

that glory to our body and soul the more we look in the mirror of the Word of God and behold that glory of the Lord from our spirit:

2 Corinthians 3:18 (NKJV)

¹⁸ But we all, with unveiled face, ***beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord***, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.