**So Great a Salvation: Four Amazing Results of Our Union with Christ**

 Imagine the vilest offender. As cruel as Hitler, depraved as Manson, corrupt as Jack the Ripper. Desperately wicked. Self-deceived. Anti-social. Amoral. Mr. Mass Murderer. The day his trial begins, every major news network, Internet outlet, online and traditional magazine, and newspaper around the world join the coverage with instant updates and constant tweets.

**Justification: Our New Pardon—The Judge Declares Us, “Not Guilty! Forgiven!”**

 Shocking every reporter, spectator, member of the jury, and even his own legal team, Mr. Mass Murderer pleads guilty. Begs forgiveness. Asks for mercy.

 Imagine the worldwide outrage as the judge responds, “Not guilty!”

 “What a charade! Fool! He just said he was guilty. What is wrong with you? Have you gone mad? Retrial! Ethics probe! He must pay for his crimes.”

 “His crimes *have* been paid for,” the judge retorts. “By my son. I have judged my son in place of Mr. Mass Murderer. They’ve exchanged places. My guiltless son, charged with nothing—his good standing I now transfer to Mr. Mass Murderer who is now free to go.”

 You’ve not been watching *The Twilight Zone*. Not even reality TV. But reality. Spiritual reality. *New Testament reality!*

 God our Judge justifies us, declaring us not guilty, forgiving us our trespasses, and reckoning His Son’s righteousness to our account, and our sin and guilt to His Son’s account. This is the amazing grace of *justification*.

 How does Christ bring us peace with God? We must understand and apply the change in our relationship *that has already occurred*—our acceptance by God in Christ through grace. When Satan whispers his condemning lies into our ears we need to remember the truth of Romans 8:1, “Therefore there is now no more condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.” Bask in the truth that you are forgiven by precious blood of Christ.

**Reconciliation: Our New Peace—The Father Says to Us, “Welcome Home!”**

 As amazing as the grace of justification is, we sometimes stop too soon in our understanding of amazing grace. We say, “I’m not perfect, just forgiven.” But we are not *just* forgiven. To justification, God adds reconciliation.

 Imagine the spectators in the courtroom yelling, “But he’s still evil through and through. A man like him can never change. He’s a danger to society. He must be locked up. Looked after.”

 “He will live with me,” the judge replies. “Enjoying all the privileges my son enjoyed. I’ve adopted Mr. Mass Murderer into my family. He’s my adult son.”

 God the Judge could have stopped at justification—forgiving us and then leaving us on our own. Left to our same old nurture (old relationships) we would return to our same old haunts—the world, the flesh, and the devil. We would continue our maddening quest for relationship apart from God.

 But God the Judge takes His legal robes off, replacing them with relaxed family attire, inviting us into His home, into His family, saying “Welcome home!”—*reconciliation*. Forgiveness (justification) as amazing as it is, would have been hollow had we remained separated from the Father. The Judge becomes our adoptive Father, granting us access to His home and all the privileges of adult children—sons and daughters of God. This is the amazing grace of *reconciliation*.

 How does Christ bring us peace with God? We must understand and apply the truth of the change in our relationship with God *that has already occurred*—our acceptance by God in Christ through grace. When Satan whispers that God will have nothing to do with a sinner like us, we must apply the truth of Romans 5:1. “Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Bask in the truth that you are welcomed home because of the cross of Christ.

 Justification and reconciliation address our relationship to God the Holy Judge and Loving Father. Combined they show us who we are *to* Christ—our new *nurture*. Do we truly believe and apply the reality that we are forgiven and welcomed sons and daughters loved by the God of the universe?

**Regeneration: Our New Person—The Creator Says to Us, “You’re a New Creation in Christ! Saints!”**

 The still insistent crowd hollers, “That guarantees nothing. All your good intentions, all the love in the world, all the good nurture and best environment does not guarantee that Mr. Mass Murderer will not continue his rampage.”

 “I’m not finished. Hear me out,” the judge insists. “I’ve consulted the best medical experts on the planet. Mr. Mass Murderer will receive a heart, brain, and soul transplant along with a DNA graft infusing into his very being my very nature.”

 The Judge of the criminal and the Father of the adult son becomes the Creator and Life-giver of a newborn infant—*regeneration*. Like Father, like son. We are born again of incorruptible seed. Born from above to reflect the image of our Creator. We are reborn with a new nature, a new heart—new soul, mind, will, and emotions—reborn with a renewed ability to relate (to God, others, and our self), think, choose, and feel *in Christlike ways*. God creates a new heart within us—new capacities, disposition, inclinations, purity. The old dies. The new lives. We are not only sons and daughters (reconciliation); in Christ we are *saints*. This is the amazing grace of *regeneration*.

 As the story of Mr. Mass Murderer correctly indicates, new *nurture* (justification and reconciliation) without new *nature* (regeneration and redemption) is insufficient to change us. What changes us? How do people change? Christ changes us. As new creations in Christ, we are *already changed internally* and now we help one another to live out and to grow into the new life already implanted within.

 We seek to help each other to understand and apply the reality of 2 Corinthians 5:17 and 2 Corinthians 3:18. “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!” (2 Corinthians 5:17). “And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit” (2 Corinthians 3:18). Bask in the reality of your new life in Christ.

**Redemption: Our New Power—The Victor Says to Us, “You Are More Than a Conqueror through Christ! Victors!”**

 The shrill crowd is momentarily silenced. Totally stunned. Then a hand shoots up. “But that only means he has a clean start. What about all his old acquaintances, his old habits? They will still come around clamoring for his attention, demanding his loyalty and affection.”

 “Fair question,” the judge agrees. “We’ve thought of everything. I’ve jailed all his old acquaintances. His foes are defeated. Plus, we’ve infused his new heart, brain, soul, and DNA complex with core power to remain free from and victorious over these past tempters.”

 This is the salvation grace of *redemption*. Freedom from the power of sin. Freedom from bondage and slavery to sin. We need victory. Resurrection power. The Judge of the criminal, the Father of the adult son, the Creator of the newborn infant, is also the Champion and Victor of the overcomer, of the empowered, freed, victorious conqueror.

 How do people change? Not through our own power, but through tapping into Christ’s resurrection power that has already changed us and is always available to us. We have been set free from the power of sin and death and united with the resurrection power of Christ. “But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted. You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness” (Romans 6:18-19). We have Christ’s resurrection power to be victorious over the world, the flesh, the Devil, sin, and death. Bask in the truth that you are more than a conqueror in Christ.

 We are new creations with new power because of our new *nature*: regeneration and redemption. God has implanted a new heart into the core of our being with a new capacity to live godly lives. We have a new want to (regeneration) and a new can do (redemption). Do we truly believe that we are more than conquerors in Christ?