

Belgic Confession 22- How To Get The Benefits of the Atonement

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: If someone were to give you a new SLR camera, hold it carefully and say “thank you.” You know it cost them a bundle. But if you don’t know how to use an SLR camera and get the benefit from it, what use is it? So you must learn about shutter speeds, f-stops, and aperture to get the full benefits. Your camera must not be a paperweight.

Christ was your atoning sacrifice when he died on the cross, gave you the greatest gift you could ever hope to have. But how do you get the benefits of Christ’s substitution? How does the atonement benefit come from the cross to Canada? Do you have to do anything? **The Bible teaches you how you are able to get the benefits of Christ’s substitutionary death** for you.

Our headings are:

Faith Required

Faith Applied

Our goals are: **That you will grab hold of the knowledge and benefits of the atonement of Christ.**

We believe that, to attain the true knowledge of this **great mystery**, the **Holy Spirit kindles in our hearts an upright faith**, which embraces Jesus Christ with all His merits, appropriates Him, and seeks nothing more besides Him. For one can conclude, either that all things which are necessary to our salvation are not in Jesus Christ, or if all things are in Him, that then those who possess Jesus Christ through faith have complete salvation in Him. Therefore, for any to declare that Christ is not sufficient, but that something more is required besides Him, would be too gross a blasphemy; for hence it would follow that Christ was but half a Savior.

Therefore we justly say with Paul, that **we are justified by faith alone, or by faith apart from works**. However, to speak more clearly, we do not mean that faith itself justifies us, for it is only an instrument with which **we embrace Christ our righteousness**. But Jesus Christ, **imputing to us all His merits**, and so many holy works which He has done for us and in our stead, is our righteousness. And faith is an instrument that keeps us in communion with Him in all His benefits, which, when they become ours, are more than sufficient to acquit us of our sins.

我们相信为要得着这伟大奥秘的知识，圣灵在我们心中发起正直的信心，叫我们接受耶稣基督并他一切的美德，接受他¹，除他以外别无所求²。如果我们借着信得着了耶稣基督，我们就在他里面得着救恩³。因此，若有什么人说基督是不够的，必须在他以外还需要一些东西，那就是最大的亵渎；也就等于说基督只是一半的救主。因此我们要如同保罗说：“我们惟独因信称义，靠信心而不靠行为⁴。”然而，再清楚一点说，我们并不是说单靠信心就使我们称义，因为信心只是一个工具，借它我们接受基督为我们的义。但耶稣基督既将一切的功德归给我们以及他为我们所作的，就成为我们的义⁵。而且信心也是一个工具，使我们与基督有交通，得着他一切的恩益，当我们得着了以后，就足以赦免我们的罪。

Faith Required

1. Jesus Christ was your atoning sacrifice. He made amends with God for you. He was the one who expiated赎罪 (covered over) your sins. He was the one who propitiated the Father (removed his anger) for your sins. Both were necessary. Jesus Christ atoned for your sins by dying for you.

2. Faith is the means by which you are able to receive the benefits of the atonement. If you don’t have faith, you can’t receive Christ’s atonement.

3. What is faith? Faith is spiritual hands by which you receive the work of Christ into your souls.
Faith is a gift of the Holy Spirit. Those hands are a sure **knowledge** and a firm **confidence** that **what God says is true**. Nothing slips out of your hands when you have faith. Nothing is more secure. You may have the best baseball glove, but it won’t guarantee that you will catch the ball every time. The strongest bank vault can be broken into. But with faith, you are sure to catch the blessings of Christ.

3. How does the Holy Spirit give faith to receive the benefits of the atonement?

Faith starts in your heart **when you hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ.**

Romans 10:17 So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

The **Holy Spirit helps you to see your sin and therefore why Christ had to live for you and die** on the cross as your sacrificial substitute. Without his work, the things of God, which are in the Word of God, are unintelligible.

1 Corinthians 2:14 - but the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are **spiritually discerned**.

With union of the Word and Holy Spirit in your heart, faith is produced, and the benefits of Christ's redeeming work are imputed 归算 (credited) to you. Therefore you are no longer under the just condemnation of God.

2 Corinthians 5:18,19,21 - Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, 19 that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, **not imputing their trespasses to them**, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. 21 For He made Him who knew no sin to become sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

4. This knowledge of how the Holy Spirit works through the Word of God to give you faith is a mystery 奥秘 to those who are in darkness. Don't get upset if people don't understand that you receive what Christ offers by faith.

5. This faith that is critical for your salvation is a gift – it is free.

Philippians 1:29 For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake,

Being a gift

- a. It cannot be bought.
- b. It cannot be earned.
- c. It means that you have no right to it.

6. Faith requires an object. No one can rest on nothing... You must have something on which you can rest.

Galatians 3:26 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

The value of faith 信心的价值 is not found in the act of faith, but in the object of faith.

The issue is not that you believe. The issue is "in whom do you place your trust?" The object. This is why Jeremiah said in Jeremiah 23: "The Lord is our righteousness."

7. Therefore, you can say that faith is an instrument. (Faith is not a verb but a noun!)

Acts 3:16 "And His name, **through faith in His name**, has made this man strong..."

Ephesians 2:8-9 For by grace you have been **saved through faith**, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.

8. Faith needs fuel. This fuel is the Word of God; it causes your faith to get stronger. On the other hand, a Christian's continuing faith can become dormant 休眠. He can become lethargic. He may believe in Christ, but he doesn't grow. The knowledge of the cross can go to the background. The gold in his life can become dim. An increasing faith makes the gold shine again.

9. Lessons:

a. Knowing that faith is a gift (It is noun, not a verb.) will take away any desire to boast; this humbles you.

b. After you become a Christian you are able to continue to feed on him for “He is the vine and you are the branches of the vine.”

c. Since those of other religions or of no religions do not have faith in Jesus Christ, they don't have the benefits of the atonement and are all therefore heading for hell. This must not make you say, “At least I am okay.” Rather, be motivated to bring the message to the lost. Invest your wealth and prayer in sending others to the lost. The Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists, and atheists do not have faith. They cannot have faith. It is a gift of the true God only.

Faith Applied

1. Faith moves you to embrace, hold on to, and rest on Jesus Christ (the object) with all His merits.

(Read about how millions of men responded to God in Hebrews 11.) You hold on by faith – for faith is the bond which makes you stick to Christ's life and death. Holding on to Jesus makes his gifts yours. By yourself you do not have any means by which you can hold on to Christ...except that which you have been given.

3. You are then declared 被宣告 righteous by God and given a new record, and a new life. It is like if God used a “white-out” correction fluid to cover over your many errors.

Christ's righteousness is counted as yours, just like if you look through red glass, everything is red. So when God looks at you through perfect Christ he sees you as perfect.

This is illustrated in Chinese script: **The Chinese character for "righteousness 義" is composed of two separate characters** -- one standing for a lamb, the other for me. When "lamb" is placed directly above "me," a new character – "righteousness" is formed. It is the Lamb of God that makes you clean.

Romans 3:25-26 whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, 26 to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

Romans 3:28 Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law.

4. Lessons:

a. Let this knowledge of your total dependence on God for faith humble you. And let it make you praise him.

1Corinthian 1:30 But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption—31 that, as it is written, **"He who glories,** let him glory in the LORD."

b. You might hear: "God has done his part—he sent his Son to die for you, and now it is up to you to do your part." This is a lie. Don't believe it. This weakens and cheapens your salvation in the Lord...Learn to depend upon God's Word and Spirit to create and strengthen faith in you so that you can receive God's truth.

c. There was a significant difference between what the Bible teaches and what Roman Catholicism does. RC's teach that faith is a mental agreement with the doctrines and work of Christ. And since mental agreement is a kind of work, God must reward that good work with grace...more and more...bit by bit...as God infuses more and more grace into you. They really

believe in a “progressive, continuous” justification 称义. They confuse justification (a one-time declaration of God) with sanctification 成圣 - the on-going process of becoming freer and freer from sins.

d. Others think justification is when God sees faith working in you of your own and is therefore compelled to reward it. They believe that you are not saved by faith (as a gift) but by your covenant faithfulness – by your actions. They teach that faith includes works. This is a dangerously false doctrine that is close to the Roman Catholic doctrine and it robs Christ of his glory. But faith is not a work you perform. Faith simply receives what God freely offers. And what does God freely offer to sinners? He offers us the merits 功劳 of Jesus Christ, which are more than sufficient to justify even the worst of sinners. Your works are nothing!

Galatians 2:16 "knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.

Conclusion:

Christ had to receive a full measure of God’s wrath 愤怒 – wrath that he should have put on you. He was your faithful substitute. But he was more. He sent his Holy Spirit to work through his Word (as you study it) to create faith in you that you can receive and rest upon his work. When you do this you are declared free from all sins by God. You are justified. Nothing else could or would make God justify you.

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ:

1. In order to get the benefits of Christ’s atonement for you, you need safe spiritual hands – the hands of faith. God’s Holy Spirit works through God’s Holy Word to create your spiritual hands.

2. Do you pray for God’s Holy Spirit to work in you? **Do you dig into the Word** of God so the Holy Spirit might work through you? The Sunday School chorus still rings true: Read you Bible, pray every day, if you want to grow.

3. Do you want to see others saved? Take them the Word of God. If you don’t give people the Word of God it means you are not interested in their salvation. So when was the last time you gave someone the Word of God? Let me encourage you to do so. And if you don’t pray for the Holy Spirit to work in them, it means you don’t care if they are saved or not. But I trust you are.

And a word to those who are not Christians: Christ’s justification is for all who are willing to receive it. If you want to know **why you need it, read you Bible.** If you **need help believing what you read, ask the Holy Spirit** to help you. I know if you do these things with a sincere heart you will receive these needed benefits that none can take away. But this offer does not go on forever.