

# The Great Transaction

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[ 0 : 00 ] I want us to come to the last verse of that passage again this morning, 2 Corinthians chapter 5 and verse 21.

Now I know that if I was going to obey all the rules of preaching, I would first of all have to give an introduction, and I would have to tell you what the context of this passage was, the chapter, perhaps even tell you where the Apostle Paul was.

It was Paul, of course, who wrote 2 Corinthians. I'll tell you a little bit about the Corinthians and what their background was and so on and so forth if I was going to keep all the rules, but I'm not going to today because that would probably take up at least 20 minutes, and we don't have that kind of time. I want to suggest to you this morning, this is one of the many occasions in the Bible of the gospel in one line, the gospel as a one-liner.

There are many of them. I think of many of them. For example, John 3, 16 is the most, probably the most notable, the most famous one-line gospel. God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son so that whosoever believes in him shall not perish but have everlasting life.

[ 1 : 16 ] That's the gospel in one line. I'm not saying that it takes in all of the teaching of the New Testament, but it just presents us with an encapsulated version that we can take away and we can dwell on.

Another one is this, he bore our sins in his body on the tree. That's another one where the gospel is summarized. Well, here's another summary of the gospel.

The last verse of 2 Corinthians chapter 5, verse 21. Here's what it says, God made him who had no sin to be sin for us so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Now, let me take a couple of shortcuts before we start trying to unpack this great verse. Let's talk about a couple of presuppositions or assumptions.

I'm going to assume, first of all, that we know the identity of who is being spoken of. You'll notice, it's a bit cryptic, isn't it, this verse, especially if you take it by itself like we are doing.

[ 2 : 32 ] It's a bit cryptic at first sight. I mean, who is he? And who is him? Well, the he is God the Father.

And the him is God the Son. And the other question that begs to be answered is, where is all this taking place?

When did all this take place? Whatever it means, what are we looking at here? Well, let's take another shortcut and just say right away, we are looking at Calvary.

We're looking at the cross. We are there. This is one of these places that just brings us all the way back 2,000 years and brings us all the way across to Palestine and outside Jerusalem on that one singular day when three crosses with three men on them.

And we're looking at this man in the middle dying on a Roman cross. Now, that's ugly enough. It must have been... Can you imagine what it must have been like to be a spectator at these events?

[ 3 : 43 ] I would think it would be absolutely horrific. I can't imagine anybody getting any pleasure out of watching somebody suffering in such a horrendous way.

And yet, it appears that people did show up to these events. It's the same in Scotland, by the way. Executions were public events, which meant that people wanted to go to them, which meant that they got something out of watching.

And I guess that there's one good thing about our culture is that we would find that abhorrent. Rightly so, I think.

But it's bad enough to actually watch what's happening on the outside, the cruelty and the pain, the suffering, the unimaginable suffering that it was for anybody to be crucified.

And by the way, it's really important for us to watch this, even from the outside perspective. But what the Bible does, what the New Testament does, is it allows us to go behind the scenes so that not only are we watching what's happening on the outside, not only are we imagining the incredible pain that there must have been, but we are taken behind the scenes to understand what God is doing on the inside with His Son, Jesus Christ.

[ 5 : 18 ] Because that's who we are watching, dying on the cross. And that's what this verse is about. So as we imagine that we are at Calvary, watching Jesus, giving His life, I want to read that verse again.

God made Him. That's what's happening. God made Him who had no sin, to be sin for us. God made Him who had no sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God. Let's make it as simple as possible this morning.

Let's boil this all down to three questions about this verse. The first question is this. What does this one-liner tell us about Jesus?

Now there's loads of things that the Bible tells us about Jesus, but this is what this verse tells us, that He had no sin.

[ 6 : 23 ] All right? So that's what we're focusing on. There's loads of things we could talk about, His miraculous powers. We could talk about His parables. We could talk about His miracles. But the one thing that this verse wants us to concentrate on is this one single feature of Jesus' life, which is a fundamental feature.

In other words, if it's not true, there is no gospel. And here is what it is, that Jesus was sinless. Think about that. Let's think about that for a moment in time. Have you ever met anybody who is sinless? Well, of course, that's a rhetorical question. The answer is 100% no.

We have never met anybody. But have you ever wondered what it must be like to meet somebody who has never gone wrong?

And when I say never, I'm not talking about, you know, the major wrongdoing that you can think of, the crimes, the violence, and whatever. I'm talking about somebody who has never in his whole life put a foot wrong.

[ 7 : 32 ] Who is absolutely 100% morally perfect. I wonder what it would have been like to have dinner with Jesus.

Have a conversation with Him. Is that something that you would look forward to? Do you reckon that you would be made very quickly to feel awkward?

Because you'd be on your toes all the time. You'd be thinking, This man is going to show me up within seconds. I wouldn't be able to survive three seconds without some defect in my character being brought to the surface just in one conversation.

And I often wonder, Was it like that when Jesus, When He spoke to people? Did people feel awkward? Well, I reckon I probably, I can imagine how you would feel awkward.

Imagine Him being a child. Imagine Him growing up. Now, we've all grown up, haven't we? I mean, I don't know if you're like me, But I'm sure you are.

[ 8 : 48 ] And most of you anyway. Those of you who care to admit it. But, I mean, we all did wrong things. And we still do wrong things. But, when you were a child, You mucked about with others.

I mean, I remember the street I was brought up on. There was, I mean, Dozens of people, Families on my street. And we all kind of clubbed around together. We did things together.

And we spoke a certain way. And a lot of it was dodgy. It was wrong. It was immature. It was unkind. Kind of unkind things you would say to one another.

Kind of things you would do that you knew you shouldn't be doing. And so on and so forth. I remember this one guy. I won't name him just in case. He might be still around.

And he was different. Because, I don't know how he was brought up. I think I had a pretty normal, I had a fairly sheltered. My dad was a minister and brought up in a Christian home.

[ 9 : 45 ] But even then, We were still full of mischief and full of wrongdoing at some times. Well, this guy in my street, He must have been brought up completely different. Because, He was only polite all the time.

Right? If everybody else was rude and impolite, This guy would not be. He was always, Always respectful In everything. Do you know what happened to him?

He was marginalized. And people didn't want anything to do with him. Because he felt so different. He showed you up.

He showed everyone up. You think that? I wonder if that's how Jesus was when he was young. I don't know. I don't know. I'm not sure. But what I do know is this.

What he was like when he was old. The fact is, Amazingly, You didn't feel awkward. Crowds of people followed him.

[10:41] They wanted to be in his company for days on end. Remember when they run out of food at the shores of the Lake of Galilee. That's because people wanted to hear him.

They wanted to speak to him. They wanted to be with him. Even though he was, There was something compelling about Jesus. His perfection oozed.

This was somebody they had never met before. They'd never seen anyone like this. They'd never seen such wisdom. And yet it was compelling.

There was something deeply attractive about Jesus. Even though you would be shown up. The disciples were shown up loads of times.

For their wrongdoing. And yet they didn't want to be anywhere else. But in the company of Jesus. Now here's why it's so important.

[11:42] To remember that Jesus was perfect. He had no sin. Because if there was even the slightest hint.

Of sinfulness about Jesus. He could never have saved us from our sin. Because he would have been guilty himself. He would have needed a savior himself.

So it had to be. That Jesus. Was without. Sin.

Now. Maybe somebody's asking this morning. Well. How could he have been truly human? I mean come on. I mean. You know. You say on the one hand.

The New Testament says on the one hand. That Jesus was truly human. Right? Well how can you be truly human. If you're sinless. I mean surely. Everyone. Who is truly human.

[12:42] Sins. They go wrong at some point. So. How can you say that Jesus was truly human. If at least. And some people say that. Some people have said this.

That. At least. Surely. It was possible. For Jesus. To go wrong. Surely. Even theoretically. Or hypothetically.

It was at least possible. For Jesus to sin. And I'm saying quite categorically. One hundred percent. It was not. Possible. It was a very famous. And I can just take you into the.

Realms of Scottish history here. Very famous. Preacher. In the early part of the nineteenth century. By the name of Edward Irving. Some of you may have heard of him. He's one of the most colorful.

Probably quite eccentric preachers. That the Church of Scotland has ever. Well of course. There was only the Church of Scotland. Well that was the main church. The free church hadn't been. Hadn't been invented in those days.

[13:38] And. Irving was. He was. He was a very very notable preacher. And he ended up down in London. Getting a congregation down in London. And he had all these people. Flocking to hear him.

Usually sort of upper class people. Coming to hear him. In his church in London. And. In any. In any case. He. Went. Kind of off the rails. After a bit. And he started teaching.

Something that got him into. Big trouble. Rightly so. He started teaching. That it must have been. Theoretically possible. For Jesus.

To have sinned. He never said. Give him his due. He never said. That Jesus actually sinned. But he said. That if he had true. Human nature. It must have been. Sinful.

Human nature. And what stopped. Jesus sinning. Was. The presence of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit kind of. Kept him. From sinning. Otherwise. He could have.

[14:37] Theoretically. Committed sin. It's an interesting. Proposition. Isn't it? Interesting theory. And. And. And the way he argued it was. Otherwise. He couldn't have been truly human.

But what Irving. Lost sight of. Was this. That although Jesus had two natures.

He had human nature. And he had divine nature. He was. Essentially. God. In his person. So. If you're going to say. That it was possible. For Jesus to sin. What you're saying is. That it was possible. For God. To sin. And that's absurd. That's a contradiction.

In terms. You can't have. God. Sinning. That's like. It just doesn't. That just doesn't happen. So.

[15:32] Unfortunately. Edward Irving. Was. He got into trouble. For this. And eventually. He was. He was actually deposed. From the ministry. For teaching. The potential.

Sinfulness. Of. Of. Amongst other things. There were other stuff. That was going on. As well. But he was eventually. Put out. Of the ministry. I'm not. Trying to say.

That Irving. Wasn't a true believer. I'm sure he was. Robert Murray. McChain. Said of Irving. After his death. I look back. Upon him with awe. As on the saints. And martyrs. Of old. A holy man. In spite of all. His delusions. And errors. He is now. With God. His savior. Whom he wronged. So much.

And yet. I'm persuaded. Loved. So sincerely. So while I'm critical. Of Irving. I'm not. Suggesting for a moment. That he was.

[16:25] Not a believer. What's wrong with. What's wrong with. Irving's theory was. That. That. He was losing sight. Of the fact. That Jesus.

Was God. God. So. As God. He couldn't. Possibly. Have sinned. And that's. What is key. To this. Verse.

That we're looking at. This. This morning. He. Was. Without. Wrongdoing. Or sin. Now that's the first question. The second question. I'm looking at the time. I'm looking at. The second question. Is this. What. Did. God. The father. Do. To Jesus. Now remember. Where we are. We are. At the cross. We're. Gazing. At Calvary. We're.

Watching. This. Awful. Sight. Of. Jesus. Laying. Down. His. Life. In. Agony. For. Us. And here. Is. What's. Happening. Behind.

[17:18] The. Scenes. God. Made. Him. Who. Had. No. Sin. To. Be. Sin. For. Us. Now. On. The surface. That appears. To be. A contradiction. Doesn't it?

I love. These. Apparent. Contradictions. In. The Bible. They're. There. Deliberately. To get. Us. To think. You think. About. The contradiction. Of Jesus. Dying.

On the cross. And you remember. That this is. God. In the flesh. God. Has. Died. And that. They're taking.

Down. This. Dead. Body. From the cross. And they're. Wrapping. Up. This. Body. Lifeless. And limp. And. This. This. This. Jesus.

Who has. Done. So. Much. And. And you're. Thinking. How can. These. Two. Things. Be. Be. The. Same. How can. God. Be. Wrapped. Up. In. Linen. And. Placed.

[18:11] In. A. Tomb. It's. A. Contradiction. Isn't it? It's. A. Paradox. And. Here's. Another. One. God. Made. Him. Who. Had.

No. Sin. To. Be. Sin. For. Us. So. It's. Important. That. We. Try. To. Understand. What. Is. Being. Said. Here. And. What. Happened. On.

The. Cross. Well. Here. Is. What. Happened. It's. A. One. Off. It's. A. Historic. Event. What's. Happening. Here. Is. Pivotal. It's.

Foundational. In. Other. Words. This. Is. The. Very. Heart. Of. The. Gospel. This. Is. What. God. Is. Doing. To. Save. Us. To. Rescue. Us. From.

Our. Condemnation. And. What's. Happening. Here. I believe. Can. Only. Be. Understood. When. We. Go. Back. Into. The. Old. Testament. And.

[19:04] When. We. Remind. Ourselves. Of. What. Happened. As. The. People. Of. Israel. Used. To. Worship. Remember. Used. To. What. Happened. In. The. Old. Testament. That. That. They. Used. To. Bring.

An. Animal. And. The. Animal. Would. Be. Typically. A. Lamb. Or. A. Goat. And. The. Lamb. And. The. Goat.

Must. Be. Without. Blemish. Which. Meant. That. There. Must. Be. A. Boil. Or. A. Scar. Or. Wound. Or. Whatever. The. Lamb. And. The. Goat. Must. Be. Without. Blemish. Again.

The. Tabernacle. And. This. Animal. Was. Destined. To. Be. Put. To. Death. But. Do you. Remember. What. Used. To. Happen. Just. Before.

The. Slaying. Of. The. Animal. Do you. Remember. Just. Before. This. Is. Crucial. The. Person. Who. Owned. The. Animal. He. Would. Put. His. Hands. On. The. Animal's. Head. And.

[20:03] That. Was. A. Deep. On. To. The. Animal.

Then. The. Animal. Was. Put. To. Death. And. Sacrificed. On. The. Fire. Only. Then. Only. After. The. Guilt. Of.

That. Man. Was. And. His. Household. Was. Transferred. That. Was. What. Sacrifice. Was. All. About. The. Animal. Became. A. Substitute. The.

Animal. Died. Instead. Of. The. Man. Who. Had. Sinned. And. Who. Was. Confessing. His. Sin. Before. God. And. Whose. Guilt. Was. Being. Transferred. On.

To. The. Animal. And. That. Is. What. Is. Happening. Here. God. Is. Literally. Doing. This. He. Is. Transferring.

[ 20 : 56 ] If. You. Can. Imagine. God. Is. Laying. His. Hands. On. The. Head. Of. His. Son. And. In. That. Moment. The. Entirety. Of.

Our. Guilt. Is. Transferred. Jesus. Becomes. Our. Substitute. Jesus.

Takes. Our. Guilt. And. Becomes. Guilty. Of. All. Our. Filth. And. All. Our. Wrongdoing. All. Our. Deceit. And. Pride. And. Lust. And. Anger. And. All. The. Ways. In. Which. We. Have. Wronged. God. So. Much. In. Our. Hearts. And. In. Our. Lives.

All. Of. The. Guilt. Is. Transferred. On. To. Jesus. And. He. Takes. It. Then. God. Punishes.

[ 21 : 51 ] Because. God. Has. To. Punish. Sin. That. Is. What. Justice. Divine. Justice. Is. All. About. God. Can't. Just. Shrug. His. Shoulders. God. Says. The.

Wages. Of. Sin. Is. Death. And. So. He. Punishes. But. Instead. Of. Punishing. Those. Who. Were. Guilty. He. Punishes. His. Own. Son.

Who. Has. Now. Become. Guilty. Instead. Of. Us. Can. you. Imagine. That. Can. you. Imagine. I. Can't. Even. Imagine. The.

Entirety. Of. My. Guilt. Let. Alone. The. Guilt. Of. Thousands. And. Millions. Of. People. In. The. World. And. Yet. That.

Is. What. Happened. When. God. Made. Him. Who. Knew. No. Sin. To. Be. Sin. For. Us. He. Transferred.

[ 22 : 44 ] Our. Guilt. Onto. Him. Isn't. This. Wonderful. That. Means. That. That. Means. That. All. Of. The.

Stuff. That. I. I. I. Am. So. Conscious. Of. Of. Having. Of. Having. Gone. Against. God. In. So. Many. Ways. A. Lot. A. lot. Of. I. Can't. Even. Face. Because. It's.

So. It's. So. Ugly. And. So. Shameful. I. Can. Now. Go. To. This. Verse. And. I. Can. Be. Reminded. That. God. Has. Taken. It. All. Jesus. Has. Taken.

It. All. Upon. Himself. So. Here's. The. Third. Thing. As. We. Close. The. Third. Question. Is. What. Does. This. Verse. Tell.

Us. About. What. God. Did. To. Us. The. Same. Moment. It. Tells. Us. So. That. Here's. The. Purpose. Here's. The. End. Result. So.

[ 23 : 35 ] That. In. Him. We. Might. Become. The. Righteousness. Of. God. Now. Here's. What. Here's. What. This. Means. As. Far. As. You. And. Me. Are. Concerned. It.

Means. First. Of. All. That. Our. Guilt. Is. Removed. Means. That. God. Has. Taken. All. The. Awfulness. And. The. Deceitfulness. That. We. Are. Guilty. Of. And. He. Wiped. The. Slate. Clean. He. Has. Purged. Us. He.

Has. Made. Us. Whiter. Us. The. Psalm. Tells. Us. That. We're. Whiter. Than. The. Snow. That's. What. It. Means. To. Be. Cleansed. And. Washed. Because.

Jesus. Has. Taken. The. Punishment. And. It. Has. Been. Paid. In. Full. We're. Set. Free. We. Can. Say. To. Stand. But.

[ 24 : 33 ] You. know. It. Doesn't. End. There. And. Let's. Beware. Let's. Beware. Of. Just. Thinking. That. A. Person. Who. Believes. In. Jesus. Is. Only. Cleansed.

It. Goes. Miles. Beyond. That. That's. Not. What. This. Verse. Says. So. That. In. Him. We. Might. Be. Cleansed. Doesn't. Say. That. It's. True. But.

It. Goes. Way. Remember. We. Started.

Off. By. Talking. About. The. Sinlessness. Of. Christ. Well. Another. Word. For. Sinlessness. Is. Righteousness. And.

So. What. This. Verse. Is. Telling. Us. Is. Something. Most. Extraordinary. It's. Telling. Us. That. Somehow. We.

[ 25 : 27 ] Having. Believed. In. Jesus. Possess. The. Righteousness. That. Belongs. To. Him. His. Sinlessness. His.

Righteousness. And. What. God. Has. Done. Is. Because. Jesus. Has. Taken. Our. Guilt. On. Himself. God. Has. Placed. He. Has. Taken. Remember. How. We. Talked. About. The. Transfer. Of. Our. Guilt. On. To. Jesus. Well. There's. Another. Transfer. And. That. Is. The. Righteousness. Of. Jesus. Has. Been. Given. To. Us. Now. That. Doesn't. Mean. That.

We've. Been. Made. Perfect. We. Haven't. We. Still. Sin. You. Sin. And. I. Sin. Nonetheless. As. Our. Judge. God. Has. Declared.

We. Are. Righteous. He. Has. Taken. The. Goodness. The. Perfection. The. Sinlessness. Of.  
 Jesus. And. He's. Saying. It's.  
 [26:22] Yours. It. Belongs. To. You. That. Is. How. I. Regard. You. From. Now. On. Do. you.  
 Know. What. This. Means. You. Know. What. This. Means. For. For. Me. For. Example. It.  
 Sometimes. Feels. So. Often. Feels. I'm. Ashamed. To. So.  
 Conscious. Of. My. Failures. How. Am. I. Going. To. Pray. After. Losing. My. Temper. Or. How. Am.  
 I. Going. To. Pray. After. After. Acting. In. Such. An. Ungracious. Way.  
 To. Towards. Somebody. And. You. Go. To. Pray. And. You. Think. Oh. No. How. How. In. The.  
 World. Is. God. Going. To. Accept. Me. I. I. I. Tell. You. How. He. He. He. Going. To. Accept. You. He.  
 He. Going. To. Accept. You. Because. You. Stand. Before. Him. In. The. Righteousness. Of. Jesus.  
 And. That. Doesn't. Change. Nobody. Can. Take. It. Away. From. You. It. A.  
 [27:16] Status. That. Belongs. To. You. And. That. Will. Never. Be. Altered. So. It. Should. Give.  
 Us. The. Confidence. I. Know. Believe. Me. Trust. Me. I. Know. What. Having. To.  
 Confess. Our. Own. Wrongdoing. Is. To. God. I. Do. All. The. Time. I. Have. To. Do. All. The. Time.  
 And. I. Hope. You. Do. As. Well. Nonetheless. We. Come. Both. What. Was. It. We. Sang. Bold.  
 I. Approach. God. Why. What. What. Gives. Us. What. Right. Do. We. Have. To. Approach. God.  
 Boldly.  
 There's. Only. One. Place. Because. I. Have. The. Righteousness. Of. Jesus. That's. What.  
 Theologians.  
 Call. Our. Justification. Please. Learn. That. Word. It's. The. Most. Marvelous. Word. I. Can. Think.  
 Of. It's.  
 [28:11] Where. My. Sin. Has. Become. Jesus. And. Where. His. Righteousness. Has. Become.  
 Mine. And. In. That. Righteousness. I. Can. Live. And.  
 Rejoice. It's. An. Incentive. For. Me. To. Live. Obediently. And. To. Put. To. Death. Everything. That.  
 Is. Ugly. And. Shameful.  
 It's. An. Incentive. For. Me. To. War. Against. Temptation. But. When. I. Do. Fall. And. When. I.  
 Stray. It's. What. Gives.  
 Me. The. Boldness. To. Come. Straight. Back. To. God. And. Say. Lord. For. Jesus. Sake. In. His.  
 Name. By. His. Righteousness. I'm. Asking. For. Your. For. For.  
 I. Want. To. Live. For. You. As. Never. Before. So. Here's. A. Reminder. Of. What. God.  
 [29:03] Has. Done. For. Us. The. Gospel. In. One. Line. God. Made. Him. God. The. Father.  
 Made. God. The. Son. Who. Had. No. Sin. To.  
 Be. Sin. For. Us. So. That. In. Him. And. That's. What. Paul. Describes. As. Our. Relationship. To.  
 Jesus. As. We. Believe. In. Him. Today. That. We.  
 Are. In. Him. So. That. In. Him. We. Might. Become. The. Righteousness. Of. God. Let. Me. Take.  
 30. Seconds. To. Speak. To. Anyone. Who. Isn't. A. Christian. I. Don't. Know. Don't. Know.  
 Perhaps.  
 . Somebody. Watching. Or. Even. Somebody. Here. And. You're. Not. A. Christian. You. Haven't.  
 Come. To. Faith. In. Jesus. Yet. Well. Here. Is. The. Greatest.  
 Message. In. The. World. That. That. Righteousness. Can. Be. Yours. You. Can. Have. A.  
 Relationship. With. God. In. Which. Your. Sin. Is. Absolutely. Wiped. Clean. And.  
 [29:55] In. Which. You. Have. He. Will. Give. You. That. Purpose. And. That. Direction. Which.  
 Will. Serve. Him. And. Rejoice. In. Him. And. You. Will. Have. Eternal. Life.  
 Who. Could. Walk. Away. From. That. I. Don't. Understand. Anybody. Who. Walks. Away. From.  
 Such. A. Gift. It's. Free. You. Can't. Work. For. It. You. Can't. Earn. Your. Way.  
 Into. God's. Favor. You. Can't. Do. It. It's. Not. Like. Tesco. Points. It's. All. What. God. Has. Done.  
 For. You. The. Only. Question. Is. Are. You. Going. To. Accept. It.  
 Or. Not. Let's. Pray. Our. Father. In. Heaven. We. Pray. That. You. Will. That. You. Your. Word.  
 Will. Will. Come. To. Us. In. Great. Power.  
 The. Status. That. Belongs. To. All. Of. Your. People. In. Which. We. Can. Come. Boldly. To. Your.  
 Throne. And. Which. We. Can. Know. That. God. Loves. Us. With. An. Everlasting.  
 [30:57] Love. Because. Of. What. He. Did. For. Us. What. You. Did. For. Us. In. The. Lord. Jesus.  
 Christ. We. Ask. That. You. Will. Hear. Us. Now. And. Bless. The. Rest. Of. This. Day. To.  
 Us. In. Jesus. Name. Amen.