

Belgic Confession 22- How To Get The Benefits of Christ's Sacrifice

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: If someone were to give you a new iPhone XR, you would know it cost them a bundle. But if you don't know how to use that iPhone XR and get the benefits from it, what use is it? If you don't know how to use it, that beautiful phone becomes nothing more than a paperweight.

Christ was your atoning sacrifice when he died on the cross and he 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? **Today hear what the Bible teaches about how you are able to get the benefits of Christ's substitutionary death.**

Our headings are:

You acquire Faith from the Holy Spirit

You apply Faith from the Holy Spirit

Our goals are: **That you will grab hold of faith that comes from the Holy Spirit and that you use its benefits to serve the Lord.**

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.

You acquire faith from the Holy Spirit

1. Jesus, the incarnate Son of God who took on human flesh to meet God's requirement, was your atoning sacrifice on the cross.

Jesus fixed your relationship with God. You are no longer enemies but friends with God...even children of God.

Jesus expiated (covered over) your sins. Jesus propitiated the Father (removed his anger) for your sins. Both were necessary.

2. How do you get the benefits (expiation and propitiation of your sins) of the atonement?

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. It is that simple!

3. What is faith? (Hebrews 11)

Faith is spiritual hands by which you receive the work of Christ into your souls.

Those hands are a sure **knowledge** and a firm **confidence** that what God says is true. Once you have those hands, nothing slips out. You may have the best baseball glove, but it won't guarantee that you will catch the ball every time. The strongest bank vault is never absolutely secure. But with faith, you are sure to catch and hold on to the benefits of Christ.

3. How do you get faith?

The Holy Spirit gives faith as a gift.

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 why Christ had to live for you and die** on the cross as your 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 (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 to those in darkness.

Don't get upset if people don't understand you have received what Christ offers by faith. Be patient. They have been trained to do, do by their own strength, what it takes to please God.

Don't be surprised that some who hear the Gospel don't get faith! The Holy Spirit doesn't work in everyone.

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

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

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

6. Faith requires an object as no one can rest on nothing, so you must have something or someone on which you can rest.

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

The value of faith 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”** believe, the object. This is why Jeremiah said in Jeremiah 23: **“The Lord** is our righteousness.”

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 take 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. Feel sad for them...and move...move to them.

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 to continue to grow, otherwise it remains stagnant or dormant and you will become lethargic.

This fuel is the Word of God; it causes your faith to get stronger. You may believe in Christ, and yet not grow as you should. The knowledge of the cross can go to the background. The **gold in this life can become dim.** An increasing faith makes the gold shine again.

So continue to feed on him through his Word, for “He is the vine and you are the branches of the vine.”

You Apply faith from the Holy Spirit

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

See 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...** He gives the means by which you hold on to him.

2. After you hold on to the object of your faith, Jesus, God then declares you righteous, counting Christ’s righteousness as yours.

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 old Chinese script: **The Chinese character for "righteousness" 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.

3. Let this knowledge of your total dependence on the Holy Spirit for your faith humble you.

And then **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."

4. Based on what the Bible teaches, when you hear someone say: “God has done his part—he sent his Son to die for you, and now it is up to you to do your part,” don’t believe it; that is a lie.

This weakens and cheapens your salvation in the Lord... Depend upon God’s Word and Spirit to create and strengthen faith in you so that you can receive God’s truth.

5. Let me highlight one significant error that is taught to hundreds of millions of Roman Catholics.

They teach faith is a mental agreement with the doctrines and work of Christ. And since mental agreement is a kind of work, God rewards that good work (mental agreement) with grace...more and more...bit by bit...and God infuses more and more grace into you. They really believe in a “progressive,” or “continuous” justification.

The truth is, they confuse justification (a one-time declaration of God) with sanctification - the on-going process of becoming freer and freer from sins.

In doing this, they rob the Holy Spirit of praise for what he does for believers.

6. Let me highlight an error that has become popular in recent times among some Christians.

Some argue you are justified when God sees faith working in you of your own merit 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.** Faith is not a work you perform. Faith simply receives what God freely offers. And what does God freely offer to sinners? He offers the merits 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– 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 and hear 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. Thank God that God's Holy Spirit works through God's Holy Word to create your spiritual hands. You can **hold on permanently to the work of Jesus Christ.**

2. Continue to pray that the Holy Spirit will work in you and that you will dig into the Word of God. If you don't, you will become dormant and stagnate in your Christian life. The Sunday School chorus still rings true: Read you Bible, pray every day, if you want to grow.

3. Work that others would get faith and be saved. Take them the Word of God and pray for the Holy Spirit to work in them. 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.

For those who are not Christians: If you want to be saved, **read your Bible and ask the Holy Spirit to help you.** You will learn what Jesus did for sinners, and as his Word and Spirit work in you, you will believe and be saved.