

LIFE CHANGING STORIES FROM THE BIBLE

“REDEEMED AND COUNTED RIGHTEOUS”

Today we want to look at the only way any of us will get to heaven. We have to be redeemed and counted righteous. In Romans 3:23,24, we read, “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.”

“All have sinned” All means everybody. What does it mean to sin? It means to “come short” Come short of what? “The glory of God!” What is the Glory of God? It is his glorious character, Perfect love, perfect goodness, perfect mercy, perfect justice, perfect purity and holiness. God is bright glorious blinding light, we are shade, shadow, darkness. God’s perfect shining law is summed up in two great commandments. “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.” and “love your neighbour as yourself.” Mark 12:30,31.

To love God like that means that he has first place in your love and affections before anyone else or anything else. That the great desire of your life is to please God and do his will. We only fool ourselves if we think we have kept that commandment. The truth is we are all so naturally selfish, so full of self interest that we fall far short of keeping that commandment.

To keep that commandment would naturally lead to us keeping the second commandment, to love our neighbour as ourselves. “ Our neighbour” is everyone else in the world, especially the people we have contact with. Like our family, friends, acquaintances etc.

To” love them as ourselves” means to do to them what you would want them to do for you and not to do what you wouldn’t want them to do to you. Why, holding a grudge having a jealous though about another is breaking this commandment. If we are honest we all have come short of keeping this commandment and that is sin.

Let me illustrate it this way, imagine you were in a running race at the Olympic games and you were promised a beautiful luxury home, plus 50 million dollars and be tax free for the rest of your life if you win a gold medal. Second place and third place would not count ,it had to be first place and a gold medal. You run the race and come last. That is a picture of all of us, we have all come last in the race of life that God has set out for us. No gold medal, no golden glories of heaven for us we have all come last in the race.

But there is someone else who ran the race, came first, and won the gold medal, his name is Jesus Christ the Son of God. God loved us so much that he sent his son into the world to run the race for us and win it for us.

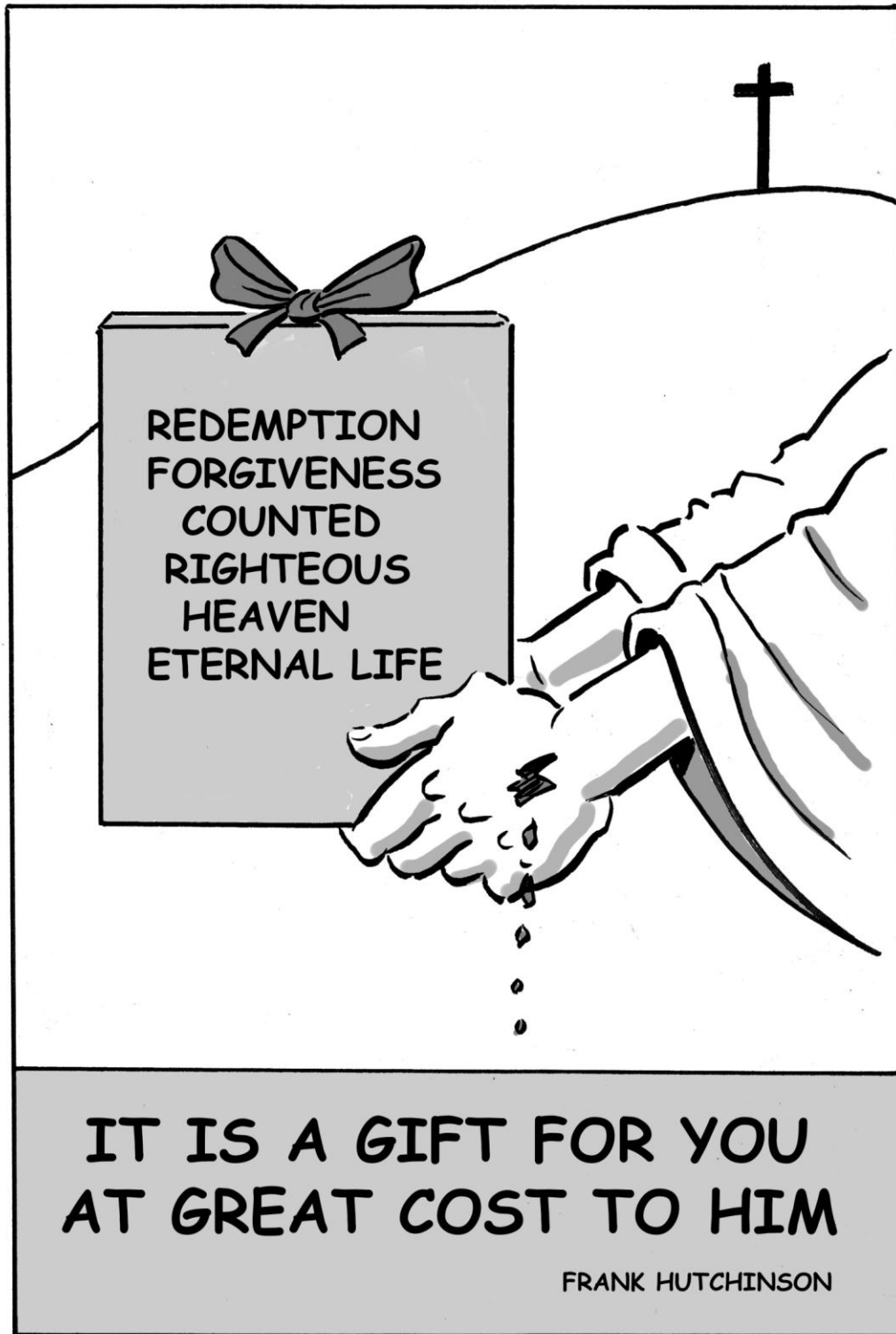
Jesus won the race because he didn't come short of the glory of God. The bible has this to say about Jesus. "In him is no sin" 1 John 3:5. "Who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin." Hebrews 4:15. "He committed no sin" 1 Peter 2:22. Jesus said about God, "I always do what pleases him." John 8:29. God said about Jesus, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." Matthew 17:5. So Jesus won the race proving he was the Son of God.

Our verse goes on to say, "Justified freely by his grace" The word justified means to be counted righteous even though we are not naturally righteous. To illustrate this, let's imagine the winner of the race in which you came last offers you the gold medal and the prize of the luxury home, 50 million dollars, and tax free for the rest of your life. All you have to do is accept it and it is yours. "But I don't deserve it," you say, "I came last!" Right, you don't deserve it and we don't deserve God's offer of being counted righteous.

This offer is given, "Freely by his grace" It's free! It's by grace, grace is favour, God's undeserved favour. It costs us nothing but it cost God much as the rest of our verse says, "Through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus." The word redemption can mean, buy back or buy out. In the old days of slavery you could buy a slave with your own money and then set them free. But it cost you to do it. The bible teaches us that we have not only come short of the glory of God but we are also slaves to sin.

In Romans 6:20-22. Paul writes about that, he says, "When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness. What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you now are ashamed of? Those things result in death! But now you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God." We were slaves to sin but at great cost, because he loved us, God sent his Son into the world to redeem us, to buy us out of the slavery of sin, not with money, but with the precious blood of Christ. When he died on the cross he set us free, and forgave our sins that we might love and serve him for the rest of our lives and for eternity.

There is an old story that goes something like this. A British traveller was passing through a certain part of Africa when he saw a slave master get angry with his slave. He was so angry he was just about to kill the slave with a spear. The traveller rushed up put out his hand to stop the slave being murdered and the spear pieced his hand saving the slaves life. As the blood spurted out the traveller said something like this, "He is now mine, I have bought him with my suffering and blood. I have redeemed him with my blood. Grudgingly the slave master agreed and walked away. The traveller said to the slave, "You are now free, I have set you free, you may go where you wish as a free man." The slave fell at the traveller's feet and said, "I will be your slave out of love and thankfulness for the rest of my life. So it should be with us, Jesus' hands and feet were pieced, his blood spurted out to redeem us, to set us free that we might voluntarily love and serve him for the rest of our lives and into eternity.



**IT IS A GIFT FOR YOU
AT GREAT COST TO HIM**

FRANK HUTCHINSON