

Rev Shawn Arndt
Sunday, January 29, 2023
Become!

In 2004, a young, 18 year old man walked into Kronoberg prison in Stockholm, Sweden, to visit his brother in jail. Actually, he was there to break his brother— his identical twin brother, out of jail.

Somehow, while no one was looking, he switched clothes with His brother. And so He exchanged places, wearing prison clothes and going to a cell while dressed in his own clothe, his brother walked free! (At least for a few days)

That brotherly love and amazing exchange pales in comparison to the infinitely greater love and immeasurably more amazing exchange described in 2 Corinthians 5:21:

God made him, who did not know sin, to become sin for us, so that we might become the righteousness of God in him.

We were the ones imprisoned and condemned and it was all our fault, our own grievous fault. Just like our first human parents, we have the crime of rebellion against our good and gracious Creator.

And so God says do this and we act like we know better than God and want to do the opposite. He says: “Be content, let my grace be sufficient” the Lord of love says, but we grumble “not till I get more of *whatever...*” He says: “Love your neighbor...” but we argue – not unless I think he or she deserves it or I will get something out of it...

He says don't do this and the old corrupt sinful heart within leads us to reach for the forbidden fruit. And so our inborn, rebellious sinful nature we have had since the start of our life makes itself known in countless ways, showing just how *familiar* we are with sin by doing it – how well our lives **know** sin – in sinful thoughts, attitudes, actions, words, sins we know and sins we don't even notice – each sin earning eternal ruin, everlasting darkness, forever shut out from God and His goodness.

But then the shocking thing happened. God chose to save us. Not because He owed us something. Not because we were naturally part of his family like the brothers in Sweden, no our sin means we forfeited that right.

Even though we are by nature His enemies and have only repaid all His goodness to us with evil, yet He chose to love us with an undeserved love and save us.

And so God the Son, eternal God, chose to become our identical twin brother so to speak – the Word becoming flesh, God becoming fully human, yet remaining God – the miracle we celebrated at Christmas—the Word, God's Son becoming flesh!

And this God-man, this Jesus was so perfect; it says He is the one **who did not know sin...** We're not talking about head knowledge here, but heart, experience knowledge. Jesus never **knew** sin as something He **experienced**, that is He never did it. He always hit God's goal of perfection. He always did the right and never did the wrong. He didn't just avoid evil, but He never left the good undone. He could not even imagine giving into the devil's temptation to sin!

But then **God made him... to become sin for us**. That means all our countless sins became His. Jesus never sinned, and yet by taking our place He took all of our sin, and all it deserved, and He took the blame. He put on our 'prison clothes' so to speak – what the Bible describes as our filthy rags and He took our place condemned instead of us. The **iniquity** (the sin and guilt) **of us all** was placed on Him.

So every lie and half-truth you've ever spoken, Jesus said that's mine now. Every selfish impulse of your heart and mine, Jesus said, that belongs to me, and I will suffer its punishment.

And so He cried out on the cross ***My God, My God why have you forsaken me...*** because He took on Himself the punishment for all my sin and yours and suffered the pains of hell and death it deserved. He became *the sinner* and suffered instead of us!

And why? **For us**. So that we walk free, because He puts the robes of His sinless life on us, His record of doing the right thing on us to such a degree that just as He became the sinner in our place, **we become the righteousness** (that is right with God, perfect, sinless, holy blameless, having all we need for heaven) **we become the righteousness of God in Him** (in Jesus, through Spirit given faith in Jesus).

Now just as Jesus said your sin is mine, you can say Jesus' holiness is yours. His record of never giving into temptation, that is yours now. His loving His enemies and praying for those who persecuted Him – it's yours. His perfect life of prayer – yours. In **we become the righteousness of God** – that is the holiness God requires, which is the holiness Jesus freely gives you!

The result is we don't just walk free for a day or two... we live forever with our now Risen Savior in everlasting joy, where there will be no more sorrow, no more death, no more pain, no more disappointment, only life and joy with God forever!

And His saving work has already made us become something else now – we are no longer separated from God, but we are His holy, chosen people, who are now able to praise, worship and glorify Him with our lives - weak and imperfect now, but glorious and fully then in heavenly joy.

All this because God's Son holy Son became what He was not, to make us what we had no right to be: the children of God, righteousness in Him! Amen.