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"Nggandhol Yesus": A New Perspective to Functional Model of Atonement of

Jesus Christ

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ABSTRAK

Pandangan tradisional tentang penebusan dosa memberikan beberapa sudut pandang tentang peran Kristus dalam keselamatan, tetapi pandangan tersebut sering kali tidak sepenuhnya menjelaskan bagaimana hal ini memengaruhi kehidupan sehari-hari orang percaya. Makalah ini mengambil isyarat dari karya George L. Carey tahun 1980, "Anak Domba Tuhan dan Penebusan Yesus Kristus," untuk menyarankan cara berpikir baru tentang penebusan dosa fungsional berdasarkan Roma 1:17 dan kebenaran Allah. Analisis Carey menunjukkan kekurangan sudut pandang saat ini. Kami berpendapat bahwa isu utama di jantung penebusan dosa adalah kurangnya kebenaran manusia. Tidak seorang pun dapat memenuhi kebenaran sempurna yang dituntut Bapa. Dengan demikian, pengorbanan Yesus di kayu salib bertindak sebagai sarana bagi orang percaya untuk membungkus diri mereka secara rohani dengan darah-Nya. Usulan untuk "berpaut" ini memungkinkan orang percaya untuk berpegang pada kebenaran Kristus di hadapan Bapa, yang memungkinkan mereka untuk dilihat sebagai orang benar oleh-Nya. Frase "*Nggandhol Yesus*" (berpegang teguh pada Yesus), yang ditemukan dalam sebuah lagu penyembahan Kristen dalam bahasa Jawa, lebih dari sekadar simbol; itu adalah kenyataan yang dijalani. Pendekatan fungsional ini menarik perhatian pada dampak praktis penebusan dosa dalam kehidupan orang percaya, yang menggarisbawahi keberpautan yang terus-menerus pada pengorbanan Kristus untuk status mereka yang benar di hadapan Tuhan, yang memungkinkan mereka untuk berada di hadapan Tuhan bukan berdasarkan nilai mereka sendiri, namun berdasarkan nilai Yesus yang sempurna. Makalah ini akan membahas konsep ini lebih lanjut, meneliti dasar alkitabiah dan implikasinya bagi kehidupan Kristen, serta mengembangkan tema berpegang teguh pada Yesus sebagai makna sejati penebusan dosa baik di dunia ini maupun di kehidupan kelak.

Kata kunci:
Kristologi, spiritual Kristen,
penebusan, atonement

ABSTRACT

The traditional views of atonement provide several angles on Christ's role in salvation, but they often do not fully clarify how this affects believers' everyday lives. This paper takes cues from George L. Carey's 1980 work, *"The Lamb of God and Atonement of Jesus Christ,"* to suggest a new way of thinking about functional atonement based on Romans 1:17 and God's righteousness. Carey's analysis points out the shortcomings of present viewpoint. We argue that the key issue at the heart of atonement is humanity's lack of righteousness. No one can meet the perfect righteousness that God requires. Thus, Jesus's sacrifice on the cross acts as a means for believers to cover themselves spiritually with His blood. This "holding on" proposition permits believers to "borrow" Christ's righteousness in the sight of God the Father, allowing them to be seen as righteous by Him. This concept of *"Nggandhol Yesus"* (holding on to Jesus), found in a Javanese Christian worship song, is more than just a symbol; it is a reality lived out. It signifies the believer's ongoing dependence on Christ's righteousness, enabling them to be before God not by their own worth, but by Jesus's perfect worth. This functional approach brings attention to the practical effects of atonement in the believer's life, underscoring the constant reliance on Christ's sacrifice for their righteous status before God. This paper will explore this concept further, examining its scriptural basis and implications for Christian living, developing the theme of hanging on to Jesus as the true meaning of atonement both in this world and in the next.

Keywords:
Christology, Christian
spirituality, redemption,
atonement

INTRODUCTION

The concept of atonement, the reconciliation between God and humanity through Jesus Christ's sacrifice, has been interpreted through various theological lenses. However, they often struggle to bridge the gap between theological abstraction and the lived experience of believers. *"Atonement"* is a word unique to English, meaning "to make one," deriving from the Middle English *"at-onement"* (Finland, 2011). In Christian theology, atonement usually refers to the saving effect of the death (and resurrection) of Christ. Numerous explanations of how Christ brought about salvation have been offered, based on ideas of sacrifice, substitution, appeasement, ransom, reconciliation, and deification (Aulen, 1931; Finland, 2011;

Nguyen, 2018). There is seemingly a lack of genuine dialogue on the meaning of atonement based on local cultures, and the reality is probably that most Christian believers do not feel connected in one way or another with atonement theories, partly because such theories are based on continental philosophy which does not correspond with their way of experiencing Christian faith (Bevans & Schroeder, 2004). Secondly, part of the problem is that the atonement theories themselves are quite abstract and may have been made so because of the influence of the redaction-critical approach to New Testament hermeneutics (Telford, 2014; Treat, 2023; Wenham, 2018). Therefore, it seems quite worthy if we begin to come up with an alternative perspective grounded in contemporary worship songs as practiced in various areas by local Christian believers in Java island; in this regard, local worship songs can be considered as part of religious folklore (Anderson, 2000; Pals, 2024). Such an approach aligns with the growing recognition of contextual theology as a means of making faith accessible and meaningful to diverse cultural contexts.

The present article seeks to explore an alternative functional model of atonement, focusing on the Javanese concept of "*Nggandhol Yesus*" – holding on to Jesus – as a powerful metaphor for the believer's continuous reliance on Christ's imputed righteousness. This concept resonates with biblical themes of clinging to God's promises, as seen in passages like Deuteronomy 30:20 and Psalm 63:8. Meanwhile, for sure we do not want to neglect the traditional meaning carried out through

texts such as Romans 1:17-18, etc.(DeMarco, 2011; Hwang, 2011; Keller, 2014; Wenham, 2018).

Furthermore, the metaphor of "holding on" reflects a dynamic relationship between divine grace and human response, echoing insights from both classical and contemporary theologians (Barth, 1958; Moltmann, 1974; Volf, 1996). By grounding this exploration in the lived piety of Javanese Christians, we aim to describe how local expressions of faith can enrich global theological discourse, especially through worship songs.

Research Question: With regards to *The Inadequacy of Existing Models*, is there an alternative perspective to the atonement of Jesus Christ?

According to Carey (1980), it seems that present atonement models frequently emphasize the *how* of salvation, elucidating the workings of Christ's sacrifice, while ignoring the *so what*, or the real-world consequences for the believer's everyday existence. Despite providing useful theological frameworks, these models may seem removed from the lived reality of faith, especially in developing countries such as in Asia (Anderson, 2000; Hwang, 2011; Hwang, 2024; Maxwell Whyte, 1973; Maxwell Whyte, 2002). They may cause believers to question the practical implications of Christ's sacrifice for their battles with sin, quest for purity, and relationship with God (Carey, 1980; Fiddes, 1989; Grenz, 2000). Let us examine in more detail the particular flaws in a few well-known models:

Penal Substitution

This paradigm highlights how Christ died in order to atone for humanity's sin. It can occasionally feel like a legal transaction, treating the believer as a passive beneficiary of forgiveness even if it effectively emphasizes God's justice and the price of sin (Jeffery, Ovey, 2007; Stott, 1986). The "so what" may get confused. In what ways does everyday sanctification result from this legal transaction? In what ways does it enable the believer to live a moral life and withstand temptation? The relational component of atonement may be obscured by the emphasis on legal blame and satisfaction, giving the impression that it is a transaction rather than a life-changing experience (Green, 2010; Murray, 1955).

Critics argue that penal substitution risks reducing atonement to a forensic exchange, neglecting the transformative power of Christ's work in the believer's daily life (Boersma, 2009; Jenson, 1997). While it underscores the seriousness of sin and God's justice, it often fails to address how believers are empowered to overcome sin and grow in holiness.

Ransom Theory

According to this perspective, humanity was set free from Satan's grasp when Christ died as a ransom. Although it conveys the idea of humanity's

enslavement to sin, it also calls into question how God handles evil and has the potential to unintentionally give Satan nearly equal authority (Aulén, 1969; Olson, n.d.) And the "so what" is still a mystery. What is the effect of being "ransomed" on a believer's current life? Does it enable people to overcome the power of sin now, or does it only promise liberation in the future? The deeper relationship healing provided by Christ may be obscured by the idea of a transaction with Satan (Hart, 2001; Routledge, 2015). While ransom theory effectively communicates the cosmic conflict between good and evil, its focus on liberation from external forces can overshadow the internal transformation required for sanctification (Tanner, 2001; Volf, 1996).

Christ's Triumph

This concept centres on Christ's triumph over the forces of evil on the cross, which freed people from sin and death. Although it depicts Christ's triumph with great force, it occasionally fails to provide a clear explanation of how this triumph relates to specific Christians (Aulén, 1969). Abstracting the "*so what*" is possible. In what ways does a believer's personal triumph over sin mirror Christ's victory over the cosmos? How does it enable them to resist temptations and hardships? The internal conflict with sin can be eclipsed by the cosmic battle's big tale (Moltmann, 1974). Critics note, for instance, that while Christus Triumph interpretation offers a compelling narrative of cosmic redemption, it often lacks a mechanism for personal application, leaving

believers unsure how to appropriate Christ's triumph in their daily lives (McGrath, 1990).

Redemptive Work (Comprehensive Model)

This paradigm highlights how Christ's work—which included His life, death, and resurrection—was all-encompassing and how it served as a means of human redemption. Although it offers a comprehensive perspective on salvation, it occasionally lacks a particular emphasis on the experiences of individual believers (Barth, 1958). It is possible for the "so what" to become generic. In what ways does the believer's daily battle with sin, quest for holiness, and desire for a closer relationship with God become addressed in this overall redemptive work? The concept's scope can sometimes overshadow the cross's transforming and individualized power (Gunton, 1988; Volf, 1996).

While this model may provide a robust framework for understanding salvation, its broad scope can make it difficult for believers to see how Christ's redemptive work applies to their unique struggles and aspirations (Williams, 2005).

The aforementioned models, while presenting useful theological insights, often struggle to reconcile the *how* of Christ's sacrifice with the *so what* of the believer's lived experience. They might leave believers with unresolved questions regarding the practical consequences of atonement for their daily struggles with sin, their pursuit of holiness, and their relationship with God

(Fiddes, 1989; Grenz, 2000)). Here, the idea of "*Nggandhol Yesus*" might be a potent and useful alternative perspective for the atonement models currently in use.

Results

Various interpretations of Romans 1:17 on God's righteousness

Romans 1:17, as the foundation of Pauline theology, "*For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last: as it is said, 'The righteous shall live by faith,'*" has sparked centuries of interpretation and discussion. The core of the letter to the Romans is introduced in this verse: the gospel of Jesus Christ reveals God's righteousness (DeMarco, 2011; Hwang, 2024; Hwang, 2011; Keller, 2014). Nonetheless, there are a number of different interpretations of what "the righteousness of God" actually means, and each has important ramifications for our conception of salvation.

1. God's Covenant Faithfulness

According to one's reading, God's own righteousness—that is, His fidelity to His covenantal promises—is emphasized. According to this perspective, "the righteousness of God" is essentially God's steadfast devotion to His people rather than a trait ascribed to mankind. The words "Know therefore that the Lord your God is God; He is the faithful God, preserving His covenant of love to a thousand

generations of those who love Him and observe His laws" are taken from Deuteronomy 7:9. Throughout history, God has shown His righteousness via acts of salvation, which culminated in the work of Christ. "But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify," states Romans 3:21–22. All who believe get this righteousness by their trust in Jesus Christ. This viewpoint emphasizes God's initiative in providing salvation and His unwavering nature. "Let us keep unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful," as Hebrews 10:23 states (O'Brien, 2010). As Romans 3:26 makes clear, "He did this to demonstrate His righteousness at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus," the Gospel shows how God continues to fulfil His promises to save humanity.

2. God's Justice and Holiness

A different interpretation emphasizes the justice and holiness of God. According to this perspective, "the righteousness of God" refers to God's flawless moral code. "Speak to all the congregation of the people of Israel and say to them, You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy," according to Leviticus 19:2 (Barth, 1958; Hafemann, 2007). This righteousness condemns all sin and demands full obedience. "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God," argues Romans 3:23. Therefore, the gospel shows how Jesus Christ's sacrifice satisfies God's justice. Our sins are atoned for by Christ's death on the cross, which also makes it possible for

us to be made right with God. According to the explanation in Romans 3:25–26, "*God offered Christ as a sacrifice of atonement by spilling his blood*—to be received by faith." He did this in order to prove his righteousness because, in his patience, he had spared the sins that had been done before. He did this in order to prove his righteousness now and to be the one who justifies people who believe in Jesus. "God caused him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God," is another verse that supports this idea, cf. 2 Corinthians 5:21 (Rutledge, 2015; Stott, 1986). In addition to providing a means of human reconciliation, this sacrifice satisfies God's just judgment.

3. Imputed Righteousness

According to this view, which was fundamental to the Protestant Reformation, "the righteousness of God" is a gift that people get when they believe in Jesus Christ. According to this perspective, humans are essentially unable to meet God's flawless standard of righteousness. "As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one," according to Romans 3:10. Further explanation is provided in Romans 3:23, which states, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." Therefore, those who believe are credited with Christ's righteousness by God in His favour. Romans 4:5 states that "the faith of the one who does not work but believes in the one who justifies the wicked is considered for righteousness." This assumed righteousness is obtained only by faith and is not merited by human deeds. The statement, "For by

grace are you saved by faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any one should boast," is emphasized in Ephesians 2:8–9. This viewpoint emphasizes God's mercy and grace in saving people. According to Romans 5:17, *"If one man's sin caused death to rule over another, then those who receive an abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness will rule over one Jesus Christ in life."* "And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith," concludes that explanation in Philippians 3:9. Therefore, God's righteousness is a gift given via faith.

4. Transforming Righteousness

According to some academics, "the righteousness of God" alludes to a transformative force that renders believers virtuous. This point of view highlights the ethical aspect of salvation, emphasizing how trust in Christ leads to a change in behaviour and character. "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are gone away; behold, all things are become new," according to 2 Corinthians 5:17. Galatians 5:22–23, which discusses the fruit of the Spirit, provides additional evidence for this internal change. It states, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law." Therefore, sanctification— the continuous process of becoming more like Christ—and justification are both aspects of the gospel. The

phrase "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" is reaffirmed in Philippians 2:13.

This viewpoint emphasizes the progressive character of spiritual development and the active role that God plays in moulding Christians into His likeness. It is crucial to remember that this perspective places more emphasis on God's internal, transformational action than it does on the idea that believers are passively "wrapped" or "held" in the Spirit as though they are only holding to Jesus.

5. A Combination of Meanings

It is also possible that Romans 1:17 encompasses multiple meanings. "The righteousness of God" could refer to God's covenant faithfulness, His justice and holiness, the imputed righteousness received by faith, and the transforming power that works within believers. This holistic understanding recognizes the complexity of the concept and acknowledges the various dimensions of salvation (Williams, 2005).

Jesus' Salvific Work: Functionally Covering Us with His Blood

The various interpretations of Romans 1:17 find their focal point in the redemptive work of Jesus Christ on Calvary. His sacrifice on the cross can be understood as the ultimate demonstration of God's righteousness in action. Consider how the different

interpretations intersect with the imagery of Christ's blood covering us (Boaheng, 2022; Finland, 2011; Maxwell Whyte, H.A., 2002; Treat, 2023)

- **God's Covenant Faithfulness** : Jesus' death fulfills God's covenant promises to redeem humanity from sin and death. His blood is the seal of the new covenant, guaranteeing forgiveness and eternal life for those who believe.
- **God's Justice and Holiness** : Jesus' sacrifice satisfies the demands of God's justice. His blood, shed on the cross, becomes the atoning sacrifice that covers our sins, appeasing God's wrath and reconciling us to Him.
- **Imputed Righteousness** : When we believe in Jesus, His righteousness is imputed to us. We are clothed in His righteousness, as if covered by His blood, making us acceptable to God. This is not a literal covering, but a spiritual reality where Christ's perfect life and sacrifice are credited to our account.
- **Transforming Righteousness** : The blood of Christ also symbolizes the power of the Holy Spirit, who transforms us from the inside out. As we abide in Christ, we are cleansed and renewed by the Spirit, empowered to live a life of righteousness. The imagery of being washed in the blood of the Lamb suggests a purification process that cleanses us from sin and empowers us to live a holy life (Gunton, 1988) (Tanner, 2001).

In conclusion, Romans 1:17 is a rich and multifaceted verse that reveals the heart of the gospel. Through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, God's righteousness is revealed, offering salvation to all who believe.

Whether we emphasize God's faithfulness, His justice, the imputed righteousness we receive, or the transforming power at work within us, the cross of Christ stands as the centre of it all, the place where God's righteousness and His love meet in perfect harmony. The imagery of being covered by Christ's blood serves as a powerful symbol of the cleansing, protective, and transformative power of His sacrifice, offering us forgiveness, reconciliation, and new life

Within this context, the declaration "the righteous person will live by his faithfulness" takes on significant meaning. The "righteous" are not necessarily those who have achieved perfect moral standing, but rather those who maintain their trust in God amidst challenging circumstances (Bruce, 1982; Longman, 2002). Their "faithfulness" (or "faith" in some translations) is not merely intellectual assent, but a steadfast reliance on God's promises, even when those promises seem delayed. It's a posture of waiting, trusting that God will ultimately act according to His righteous character. This waiting itself is an act of faith (Moo, 1996; Schreiner, 1998).

Let us now discuss a local worship song found among several Christian churches, namely *Nggandhol Gusti*, as follows:

Nggandol Gusti,¹
Nggandol Gusti,
Nggandol Gusti.....
Saben Dino,
Rino Wengi Nggandol Gusti

Nggandol Gusti,
Nggandol Gusti,
Nggandol Gusti.....
Saben Dino,
Rino Wengi Nggandol Gusti

Reff
Kulo amung pracoyo
Ora bakal ciloko
Nanging uripku mulyo selaminyo

Atiku ayem tentrem
Atiku roso seneng
Saben dino kulo nggih nggandol Gusti

¹ [Lirik Lagu Nggandol Gusti – GKP B MDC JEMBER](#)

Shortly speaking, the essence of the above contemporary worship song known in Javanese language (in particular in East and Middle Java areas), is : we shall believe truly in Jesus Christ, in fact we shall hold on to Jesus's salvation and redemptive work. And in daily life of common believers of Jesus, their simple belief is that:

Kulo amung pracoyo

Ora bakal ciloko...

(meaning: I only believe, and I will not be in any disaster / trouble.)

In the next section we shall discuss how such an interpretation can be found quite in line with the Book of Habakkuk's message, which then it has been developed further for instance in St Paul's letter to Rome.

From Habakkuk's Vision to Paul's Gospel: An In-Depth Look at the Righteous Living by Faith

The prophet Habakkuk, grappling with injustice and God's seemingly inactive response, received a divine revelation that echoes through the centuries,

culminating in Paul's powerful declaration in Romans 1:17. Habakkuk 2:4 states, *"...the righteous person will live by his faithfulness"* (cf. Keller, 2014). This seemingly simple statement carries profound theological weight, foreshadowing the core of the Christian gospel. This article will explore the meaning of "believers" in Habakkuk 2 as developed further in St. Paul's Romans 1:17-18, focusing on how Jesus Christ's redemptive work on the cross covers us with His righteousness through believing faith.

A. Habakkuk's Context: Waiting in Faith

Habakkuk's prophecy arises from a time of national turmoil. He cries out to God about the rampant wickedness in Judah and the impending judgment by the Chaldeans. God's response, while assuring Habakkuk of His sovereignty, doesn't immediately alleviate the prophet's concerns. Instead, God instructs him to record the vision, emphasizing its future fulfilment: "For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it will speak, and it will not lie. Though it tarries, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not delay" (Habakkuk 2:3, NKJV).

Within this context, the declaration "the righteous person will live by his faithfulness" takes on significant meaning. The "righteous" are not necessarily those who have achieved perfect moral standing, but rather those who maintain their trust in God amidst challenging circumstances. Their "faithfulness" (or "faith" in some translations) is not merely intellectual assent, but a steadfast reliance on God's promises, even when those promises seem delayed. It's a posture of waiting,

trusting that God will ultimately act according to His righteous character. This waiting itself is an act of faith.

B. St. Paul's Interpretation: The Gospel Revealed

Centuries later, the Apostle Paul picks up this thread in Romans 1:17, declaring, "For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last: as it is written, 'The righteous will live by faith'" (NIV). Paul's use of Habakkuk 2:4 is not a mere quotation; it's an interpretation. He connects the prophet's statement to the core of the gospel message: the revelation of God's righteousness through Jesus Christ (Dunn, 1998; Wright, 2009).

Paul's understanding of "righteousness" differs from a simple adherence to the law. He argues that human efforts to achieve righteousness through works are futile (Romans 3:20). Instead, the righteousness of God is offered as a gift, received through faith in Jesus Christ. This "righteousness of God" is not simply God's righteous character, but also the status of righteousness imputed to believers through Christ (Gunton, 1988).

C. The Connection: Covered by Christ's Righteousness

The bridge between Habakkuk's "righteous living by faithfulness" and Paul's "righteousness by faith" is Jesus Christ. Christ, through His perfect life and sacrificial death, becomes the embodiment of God's righteousness. His crucifixion is not just an act of suffering; it's the pivotal moment where God's justice and His mercy meet.

Christ bore the penalty for our sins, offering Himself as the propitiation, the atoning sacrifice (Rutledge, 2015; Stott, 1986).

When we place our faith in Jesus Christ, we are, in essence, "*covered*" by His righteousness. This is not a literal, physical covering, but a spiritual reality (as experienced by many believers in Jesus Christ). Just as the blood of the Passover lamb protected the Israelites from the angel of death (Exodus 12), so Christ's blood, symbolically representing His sacrifice, covers us from God's judgment. This "*covering*" signifies the imputation of Christ's perfect righteousness to us. We stand before God not on our own merit, but clothed in the righteousness of Christ (Volf, 1996).

D. Believing Faith: The Key

The act of "believing" is crucial. It's not merely an intellectual acknowledgment of Christ's existence, but a deep, heartfelt trust in His saving work. It's the same kind of trust Habakkuk called for—a reliance on God's promises even in the face of adversity. This believing faith is the instrument through which we receive the gift of God's righteousness. It connects us to Christ, allowing His sacrifice to become our own (Grenz, 2000).

E. Romans 1:18 and the Need for Righteousness

The verse immediately following Paul's declaration about the righteousness of God (Romans 1:17) speaks of God's wrath against all ungodliness and unrighteousness (Romans 1:18). This verse highlights the very reason we need the righteousness of God. Humanity, in its fallen state, is subject to God's just judgment. Only by being covered with Christ's righteousness through faith can we escape this judgment and experience the fullness of God's grace (Green, 2010; Murray, 1955).

Habakkuk's call for the righteous to live by faithfulness finds its ultimate fulfillment in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Through believing faith, we are united with Christ, and His righteousness becomes our own.

This "covering" by Christ's righteousness is the heart of the Christian message, offering hope and salvation to all who believe. It's a testament to God's grace, His justice, and His unwavering love for humanity. From Habakkuk's vision of waiting faith to Paul's revelation of the gospel, the message rings clear: the righteous, those who believe, will live by faith.

Discussion and Implications

Nggandhol Gusti Yesus: A Functional Model of Atonement

The Javanese phrase "*Nggandhol Gusti Yesus*" encapsulates the essence of this alternative functional model of atonement. It's not merely a passive acceptance of Christ's sacrifice, but an active, ongoing clinging to Him (Gunton, 1988; Volf, 1996).

It speaks to a deep awareness of our inherent lack of righteousness and a constant reliance on Christ's perfect righteousness to stand before God. This "holding on" isn't a one-time event, but a continuous posture of faith throughout the believer's life.

This concept finds its roots in Romans 1:17, which declares that "the righteousness of God is revealed in the gospel." This righteousness is not something we achieve through our own efforts, but a gift offered through faith in Jesus Christ (Moo, 1996; Schreiner, 1998). It is an imputed righteousness, meaning that God credits Christ's perfect righteousness to us, covering our sin and making us acceptable in His sight. This is the very essence of "*Nggandhol Yesus*" – holding to the source of true righteousness.

Atonement in This World

In this world, "*Nggandhol Yesus*" translates into a life of continual dependence on Christ. It's not a passive acknowledgment of His existence, but an active, moment-by-moment reliance on His presence and power (Pannenberg, 1994). It's a recognition that the Christian life isn't a solo journey, but a partnership with the Savior. This constant connection shapes every facet of our existence, transforming us from the inside out.

- **Seeking His Guidance:** "Nggandhol Yesus" means bringing Christ into the everyday decisions, both big and small. It's about cultivating a habit of prayer, not just for emergencies, but for guidance in the mundane. What job should I take? How should I handle this difficult conversation? What's the best way to use my time and resources? These questions, and countless others, become opportunities to seek His wisdom, trusting that He has a plan for our lives (Proverbs 3:5-6). This dependence isn't about abdicating responsibility, but about recognizing that God's perspective is far greater than our own, and that His guidance leads to a life of purpose and fulfillment (T Keller, 2012; Ortberg, 2002).
- **Relying on His Strength:** Life is full of challenges – moments of weakness, temptation, and overwhelming pressure. "Nggandhol Yesus" means turning to Christ in these times, knowing that He is our source of strength. It's about acknowledging our limitations and casting our burdens upon Him (Matthew 11:28-30). This reliance isn't about passive resignation, but about actively drawing strength from the One who has already overcome the world (John 16:33). It's about believing that His power is made perfect in our weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9), empowering us to persevere through trials and emerge stronger on the other side.
- **Finding Forgiveness and Restoration:** As we strive to live a life pleasing to God, we inevitably stumble. We fall short of the mark, succumbing to temptation and making mistakes. "Nggandhol Yesus" means finding

forgiveness and restoration through His grace when we stumble. It's about confessing our sins to Him, knowing that He is faithful and just to forgive us (1 John 1:9). This isn't a license to sin, but a recognition that even in our failures, God's grace is sufficient. It's a reminder that His love is not conditional on our perfect performance, but is freely offered to all who turn to Him. This grace empowers us to get back up, learn from our mistakes, and continue the journey of sanctification(Williams, 2005).

- **Our Sufficiency in Christ:** The core of "Nggandhol Yesus" lies in the understanding that we are not sufficient in ourselves. As 2 Corinthians 3:5 states, "Not that we are competent to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God" (NIV). This isn't a statement of self-deprecation, but a liberating truth. It frees us from the pressure of self-reliance and allows us to rest in the knowledge that our sufficiency comes from Christ. He is the source of our strength, our wisdom, and our righteousness. This recognition fosters humility, preventing us from becoming arrogant or self-righteous.
- **Transformation into Christ's Likeness:** This constant reliance on Christ has a transformative effect. As we abide in Him, we begin to reflect His character. His love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control become more evident in our lives (Galatians 5:22-23). This transformation is not an instantaneous event, but a gradual process of

sanctification, as the Holy Spirit works within us to conform us to the image of Christ (Pannenberg, 1994).

- **Striving, Not Achieving Perfection:** "*Nggandhol Yesus*" is not about achieving perfection in this life. It's about striving for it, knowing that even in our failures, Christ's grace is sufficient. It's about running the race with perseverance, keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus (Hebrews 12:1-2). It's about embracing the journey of faith, with all its ups and downs, trusting that God is working all things together for our good (Romans 8:28). It's in this constant striving, this continual dependence on Christ, that we truly discover the meaning of "*Nggandhol Yesus*" – a life lived in the embrace of divine grace.

Atonement in the Next Life

The concept of "*Nggandhol Yesus*," clinging to Jesus, isn't confined to our earthly existence; its implications extend far beyond the present, reaching into eternity. It shapes not only how we live *now*, but also how we will stand before God in the future. This eternal perspective adds a profound dimension to our understanding of "*Nggandhol Yesus*," providing a powerful motivation for a life of faithful obedience.

The reality of judgment is a sobering truth. The Scriptures teach that all humanity will stand before God to give an account of their lives (Hebrews 9:27). This prospect can be daunting, especially when we consider our own imperfections and shortcomings. The comforting truth of "Nggandhol Jesus" is that when we stand before God in judgment, we will not be judged on our own merit. Our good deeds, our religious practices, and even our best efforts will fall short of God's perfect standard.

Clothed in Christ's Righteousness

Instead of our own flawed record, our acceptance into God's presence hinges on the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ. This is the heart of the gospel message. Through His life, death, and resurrection, Jesus earned the righteousness that we could never attain on our own. When we place our faith in Him, this righteousness is imputed to us, covering us like a garment. It's as if we are clothed in Christ's perfect life, making us acceptable to God. This is the ultimate expression of grace – not earning God's favour, but receiving it as a free gift through faith.

Nggandhol Jesus: The Basis of Our Acceptance

Our "holding on to Jesus" in this life becomes the very basis of our acceptance into God's presence in the next. It's not a mere intellectual assent to a set of doctrines, but a deep, abiding relationship with Christ. It's a continuous clinging to

Him, a reliance on His grace, and a surrender to His Lordship. This relationship, cultivated in this life, is what qualifies us to enter into eternal life. It's not about achieving a certain level of perfection before death, but about living a life of faithful dependence on Christ, knowing that He has already secured our eternal destiny.

Inheriting Eternal Life

Eternal life is not simply an extension of our earthly existence. It's a new reality, a life in perfect communion with God, free from sin, suffering, and death. This eternal life is promised to those who "*Nggandhol Yesus*," to those who have placed their faith in Him and continue to cling to Him throughout their lives. It's an inheritance, a gift freely given to those who are united with Christ (Tanner, 2001).

This understanding of "*Nggandhol Yesus*" and its eternal implications provides a powerful motivation for living a life of faithful obedience. Knowing that our eternal destiny depends on our relationship with Christ should inspire us to live each day with purpose and intention. It should motivate us to seek Him diligently, to obey His commands, and to share His love with others. It's not about earning salvation through works, but about living a life that reflects the reality of our salvation. Our actions, our words, and our attitudes should flow from a heart that is grateful for the gift of eternal life and committed to living in a way that honours Christ.

Implications for Christian Living

The "*Nggandhol Yesus*" model of atonement has profound implications for Christian living. It emphasizes the importance of:

- **Humility:** Recognizing our own inadequacy and need for Christ's righteousness.
- **Dependence:** Constantly relying on Christ for strength, guidance, and forgiveness.
- **Transformation:** Allowing Christ to shape our character and conform us to His image.
- **Hope:** Trusting in Christ's promise of eternal life.
- This motivation isn't born out of fear of punishment, but out of love for Christ. We obey Him not because we're afraid of hell, but because we love Him and desire to please Him. Our obedience becomes an expression of our gratitude for His sacrifice and our commitment to His Lordship. It's a natural outflow of a heart that is connected to Him.

Concluding remark

Habakkuk's call for the righteous to live by faithfulness finds its ultimate fulfillment in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Through believing faith, we are united with Christ, and His righteousness becomes our own.

This "covering" by Christ's righteousness is the heart of the Christian message, offering hope and salvation to all who believe. It's a testament to God's grace, His justice, and His unwavering love for humanity. From Habakkuk's vision of waiting faith to Paul's revelation of the gospel, the message rings clear: the righteous, those who believe, will live by faith.

The concept of "*Nggandhol Yesus*" transcends the boundaries of this life, extending into eternity. It reminds us that our relationship with Christ is not just for the here and now, but has eternal consequences. By clinging to Him in this life, we secure our place in His eternal kingdom. This understanding provides a powerful motivation for living a life of faithful obedience, a life that is grounded in the assurance of God's grace and the hope of eternal life. It's a life lived in the light of eternity, a life that truly matters.

Summarizing, "*Nggandhol Yesus*" offers a compelling alternative to traditional atonement models, providing a more relational and experiential understanding of Christ's salvific work. It emphasizes the believer's ongoing reliance on Christ's imputed righteousness, both in this world and in the next. This continuous "hanging on" is not just a symbolic act, but a lived reality that shapes our daily lives and secures our eternal destiny. It is a powerful reminder that atonement is not just a theological concept, but a transformative experience that empowers us to live lives of faith, hope, and love.

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