

SOTERIOLOGY: DOCTRINE OF SALVATION

PART 14

KEY TERMS: JUSTIFICATION, RIGHTEOUSNESS, PART 2; IMPUTATION; BELIEF

The Septuagint used this group of words as well.

1 Kings 8:32 ³²then hear in heaven and act and judge Your servants, condemning the wicked by bringing his way on his own head and justifying [δικαιώω] the righteous [δίκαιος] by giving him according to his righteousness [δικαιοσύνη].

The next Greek word is δικαιοσύνη meaning righteousness, what is right, or justice; it is to be put right with or to be in a right relationship with.

Galatians 2:21 ²¹“I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness [δικαιοσύνη] comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly.”

The last word we will examine is δικαίωμα. It is the concrete expression of righteousness. It means regulation, requirement, or commandment and as such refers to a regulation concerning right or just action. Referring to a righteous act, it is a just deed in conformity to God's standard. It also has a forensic relationship meaning to acquit, remove guilt, set free, justification; it is the act of clearing someone of transgression.

Hebrews 9:1 ¹Now even the first covenant had regulations [δικαίωμα] of divine worship and the earthly sanctuary.

Revelation 15:4 ⁴“Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy; For ALL THE NATIONS WILL COME AND WORSHIP BEFORE YOU, FOR YOUR RIGHTEOUS ACTS [δικαίωμα] HAVE BEEN REVEALED.”

It is easy to see that these Greek and Hebrew words, in one way or another, convey the idea of conformance to a standard. Some of them also have the forensic link that connects them with justification.

The main point to all this is we have no righteousness and without it we cannot come into the presence of God. The issue is how do we get it? The answer is through Christ Jesus. In Him, we are granted perfect righteousness.

2 Corinthians 5:21 ²¹He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness [δικαιοσύνη] of God in Him.

This is an incredible truth. God put our sin on Christ Jesus and He bore in His body the punishment due the sin of the world. In exchange, God has granted us His righteousness which means we come into right relationship with the Father. This free grace gift of Christ's righteousness is available only to those who believe.

Romans 5:17 ¹⁷For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness [δικαιοσύνη] will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.

IMPUTATION

Earlier we discussed the concept that righteousness is credited to our account. Another word that refers to the same idea is imputation, ἐλλογέω. It means to charge to an account, to record, or to keep a list or record of something.

Philemon 18 ¹⁸But if he has wronged you in any way or owes you anything, charge [ἐλλογέω] that to my account;

The biblical doctrine of imputation reveals that mankind's sin, which was committed in and with Adam, is imputed to Christ and the righteousness of God is, in turn, imputed to the believer. It is obvious that Christ the sinless One had no sin; therefore, our sin had to be taken by Him in order for Him to pay the debt owed. Since He had no sin, it was a judicial act that imputed our sin to Him. Isaiah said that God caused our iniquity to fall on Him.

Isaiah 53:6 ⁶... But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him.

By judicial fiat the believer has been declared righteous in Christ. This is an alien righteousness because it is God's righteousness imputed to man. This is the truth behind the concept that Luther so clearly understood when he realized we are simultaneously righteous and sinful.

“...It is quite obvious, therefore, that this truth [the imputation of Christ's righteousness to the believer] is of great consequence to the Christian's salvation....this phase of imputation is the groundwork of the Christian's acceptance and standing before an infinitely holy God. Only this righteousness can find acceptance for salvation, and through it alone one may enter heaven. The pregnant phrase '*the righteousness of God*' (Rom. 1:17; 3:22; 10:3) signifies not merely that God Himself is righteous but that there is a righteousness that proceeds from God. Since no human being in God's eyes is righteous (3:10), it is clear that an imputed righteousness, the righteousness of God Himself, is sinful man's only hope of acceptance with the Holy One. Possessing this righteousness is the only thing that fits one for the presence of God (Phil. 3:9; Col. 1:12). When this righteousness is imputed by God to the believer, it becomes his forever by a judicial act, since it was not antecedently the believer's. It is thus patent that this demands a righteousness that is made over to the believer, just as Christ was made to be sin for all men (2 Cor. 5:21). By the believer's baptism by the Spirit 'into Christ' this righteousness is made a legal endowment by virtue of the death of Christ....imputed righteousness becomes a reality on the basis of the fact that the believer is 'in Christ.' As...one was 'in Adam' (Rom. 5:12-21), so by the Spirit's baptism (6:3-4) he is now placed in the resurrected Christ and is a recipient of all that Christ is, even of the 'righteousness of God' that Christ is....As the cross furnishes the legal basis for the remission of sin, so it furnishes likewise the legal basis for the imputation of righteousness...." [Merrill F. Unger, *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary*, s. v. "Imputation"].

Philippians 3:9 ⁹and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith,

BELIEF, FAITH, TRUST

These words are being considered together because they are closely connected one with the other. These words can be used in a variety of ways so I'm going to restrict our discussion to uses that directly bear on the doctrine of Soteriology. Trust, in very general terms, refers more to the object of belief rather than to what we do which is believe. Belief refers to accepting as truth some set of propositions about something or someone. Faith is placing our trust in that thing or person about which we have believed some set of facts. In other words, we believe some facts about a person or object and then decide to

place our trust in that person or object. I may be trying to draw too fine a distinction among these words, but I am trying to distinguish between believing some facts to be true and trusting those facts as being applicable to my life. We have to understand that simply believing some set of facts does not save us yet understanding those facts are crucial to being saved. We are saved when we understand the facts of the gospel of God's grace as it is found in the person and work of Christ Jesus and additionally when we recognize our need to be saved and trust Him to save us based on those facts. Some people try to explain this difference by way of illustration that to only believe the gospel facts is nonsalvific "head faith" as opposed to saving faith which is "heart faith." I reject this dichotomy and I will explain that in more detail later.

I want to examine a little bit of historical theology as it pertains to Soteriology in its relationship with dispensational theology. Dispensationalists are often accused of teaching different ways of salvation as they are thought or presumed to be presented between the Old Testament and the New Testament. This is, at least in part, the result of some rather inaccurate comments Scofield put into the first edition of his study Bible in which he said, or at least strongly implied, that doing the Law was what saved the Jewish people. It is also the result of other theologians simply seeking to discredit dispensational theology because it disagrees with their particular brand of theology. In his comments on John 1:17 Scofield wrote, "The point of testing is no longer legal obedience as the condition of salvation but acceptance or rejection of Christ...". What these critics of dispensationalism have seized on here is Scofield's assertion that legal obedience to the Law was the basis for salvation in the Old Testament. Scofield also wrote in the same study Bible in his comments on Galatians 3:24 that "Law neither justifies a sinner nor sanctifies a believer..." and in other venues he said that salvation was by grace through faith, but this comment in his study Bible was seized upon as proof that dispensational theology taught more than one way of salvation. This was answered and corrected in the revision of Scofield's Study Bible that was published in 1967. That revision was done by such men as Gaebelien, Feinberg, McClain, and Walvoord among others.

Here is what this accusation looks like in the words of a Covenant theologian. It is particularly noteworthy that he acknowledges the denial by dispensationalists of this accusation but he brushes those denials off as of no consequence and goes on with his denunciation despite the protests of dispensational theologians. Note

also that he criticizes the idea that we are to flee from the Law because he thinks we are still under the Law in some ways. He attaches obedience of the Law to the gospel because as a replacement theologian he hopelessly mingles Law and grace by placing the church into the Old Testament. "We have already noted that this separation [between Israel and the Church] entails the rejection of the unity of the covenant of grace and the implicit denial, despite some dispensational protestations to the contrary, that Old Testament believers were saved by the grace that is in Christ Jesus. Thus, the giving of the Law to Moses on Mount Sinai is thought, by dispensationalists, to be a divine offer of a divine plan of salvation by works which Israel was ill-advised to accept. The Old Testament in its entirety is designated 'legal ground' from which the dispensationalist is to flee....Dispensationalists cannot have it both ways. If the Old Testament people of God had no union with Christ, dispensationalists have to admit that the Israel of the Old Testament and the Church of the New are one and the same body of people, all of them in union with Jesus Christ and, as such, the true sons of Abraham. God has joined the people of God in all dispensations in Jesus Christ. Dispensationalism has divided them" [John H. Gerstner, *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth: A Critique of Dispensationalism*, 2^d ed., pp. 74-75, 151].

Chafer was also accused of teaching two ways of salvation. Chafer specifically refuted this charge in an editorial in *Bibliotheca Sacra* published in January 1945 and entitled "Inventing Heretics through Misunderstanding." "Are there two ways by which one may be saved? In reply to this question it may be stated that salvation of whatever specific character is always the work of God in behalf of man and never a work of man in behalf of God. This is to assert that God never saved any one person or group of persons on any other ground than that righteous freedom to do so which the Cross of Christ secured. There is, therefore, but one way to be saved and that is by the power of God made possible through the sacrifice of Christ.... man never contributes anything to his salvation whether he be one who keeps the Law or one who trusts Christ alone apart from human works. The colossal error which supplies any point to the contention of those who accuse others of believing that there are two ways by which the lost may be saved is just this, that neither works nor faith of themselves can ever save anyone. It is God's undertaking and always on the ground, not of works or faith, but on the blood of Christ.... when the various human requirements of the different ages are investigated it is found that they come alike in the end to the basic reality that faith is exercised in God. And that one basic element of trust in

God doubtless answers that which in every case God must require.... Once again and finally let it be asserted, that salvation of any character or of any people or upon any varied human terms is the work of God in behalf of man and is righteously executed by God on the sole basis of the death of Christ. It is puerile to intimate that there could be a salvation achieved alone by the power of either law-works or faith. It is only God's power set free through Christ's death that can save and it is always and only through Christ's death, whatever the human responsibility may be" [Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Bibliotheca Sacra* 102, no. 405 (Jan. 1945): 1-5].

If you were to read Chafer's entire editorial, it is obvious that he is very unhappy with the characterization that he, or any other dispensationalist, teaches more than one way of salvation. The fact is salvation has always been by God's grace alone through faith alone. What man has been required to believe and entrust himself to has changed through the dispensations as knowledge and revelation have been progressively increased. Ryrie explains it this way, "The basis of salvation in every age is the death of Christ; the *requirement* for salvation in every age is faith; the *object* of faith in every age is God; the *content* of faith changes in the various dispensations" [Charles C. Ryrie, *Dispensationalism*, rev. and exp., p. 115]. It cannot be expected that people before Christ knew He was the Messiah who was to come. They knew a Messiah was coming based on Genesis 3:15 but they did not know His identity. Believing in Jesus, therefore, could not be a requirement for Old Testament believers. They became believers when they entrusted themselves to Yahweh on the basis of His revelation to them at the time. The doctrinal statement of Dallas Theological Seminary says, "We believe...that the principle of faith was prevalent in the lives of all the Old Testament saints. However, we believe that it was historically impossible that they should have had as the conscious object of their faith the incarnate, crucified Son, the Lamb of God (John 1:29), and that it is evident that they did not comprehend as we do that the sacrifices depicted the person and work of Christ " [Article V].

The word translated "believed" in Genesis 15:6 is אָמַן and it can carry the meaning of certitude or assurance and belief in the sense of receiving something as true and sure. It shows that biblical faith is an assurance or a certainty. In the use of this word, belief is IN God; people believe revelation about God and consider it to be true but their faith is properly placed in God.

Genesis 15:6 ⁶Then he believed [אָמַן] in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.

Jonah 3:5 ⁵Then the people of Nineveh believed [אָמְנָה] in God; and they called a fast and put on sackcloth from the greatest to the least of them.

The word can also be translated “trust;” however, it seems to be better translated as “believe.” In 2 Chronicles 20:20, the word “belief” could just as easily been used as the word “trust.” In fact, most other Bibles besides the NASB and the NET Bible use the word “believe” rather than trust. The Holman Christian Standard Bible, the American Standard Version of 1901, the New King James Version, the King James Version, the English Standard Version, and the Revised Standard Version all use “believe.” The NIV reads, “have faith.” In the Septuagint, the Greek translators used πιστεύω which is the word for belief. In this verse, it is probably better to translate the word as “have faith” or “believe in” rather than “trust.” Belief just seems to me to better convey the sense of the verse rather than trust.

2 Chronicles 20:20 ²⁰They rose early in the morning and went out to the wilderness of Tekoa; and when they went out, Jehoshaphat stood and said, “Listen to me, O Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem, put your trust [אָמְנָה] in the LORD your God and you will be established. Put your trust [אָמְנָה] in His prophets and succeed.”

There are other Hebrew words that better express the idea of trust or reliance on something or someone. One is אָמַן which means confident trusting; it pertains to a sense of well-being and security which results from having something or someone in whom to place confidence. This word does not mean that full-orbed intellectual and volitional response to revelation which is involved in faith or belief, rather it stresses the feeling of being safe or secure. The Septuagint never translated this word as faith or belief but translated it using ἐλπίς meaning “hope.” The cause for hope is found only in God’s grace; God doesn’t owe us any sort of protection. Because He is who He is, we have a confident expectation that He will be faithful to us and trustworthy [Harris, Archer, Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, s. v. “אָמַן”, p. 101-102].

Proverbs 16:20 ²⁰He who gives attention to the word will find good, And blessed is he who trusts [אָמַן] in the LORD.

Another word for trust is **הָסֵן** it refers to seeking refuge or fleeing for protection which leads to the concept of putting trust or hope in God. It means to go to a place where one will find safety, rest, or comfort implying the place of refuge is a place to be trusted to keep one safe. The Septuagint translates this word as **ἐλπίς**, hope, in Psalm 17:7.

Psalm 17:7 ⁷Wondrously show Your lovingkindness, O Savior of those who take refuge [**הָסֵן**] at Your right hand From those who rise up against them.

The third word for "trust" I want to look at is **מִבְטָח** meaning security and safety; it is to be free from danger implying peace, rest, and safety. In a more Soteriological sense, it refers to trust and confidence in persons or things in which one places that trust.

Proverbs 22:19 ¹⁹So that your trust [**מִבְטָח**] may be in the LORD, I have taught you today, even you.

Jeremiah 17:7 ⁷"Blessed is the man who trusts [**בְּטָח**] in the LORD And whose trust [**מִבְטָח**] is the LORD.

The word meaning to believe in the New Testament is **πιστεύω** meaning faith, belief, trust; to believe in; it refers to being firmly persuaded in the veracity of something or someone. It is from **πίστις** which means faith; it refers to firm persuasion, conviction, belief in the truth, and veracity. In the Soteriological sense, we are referring to a belief in God and believing the revelation about Himself He has provided us in the Word of God. This belief then becomes effective in the life of a person when they place their trust in the object of their belief, in our case, Christ. The concept is frequently expressed as **πιστεύω εἰς**, to believe in. It does not refer to believing about; it is referring to believing in. People can know and believe everything about Christ and salvation but unless they appropriate as specifically applicable to themselves the facts of salvation, they remain unbelievers. A common criticism of Free Grace theology is that we claim one only needs to know a set of facts in order to be saved. "He [Zane Hodges] assumes that the faith spoken of in the John four text involves the mind but not the will and affections. Oozing antinomianism from every pore, he oils his way through the text with slippery 'precision.' He does not allow the possibility that Scripture may elsewhere define faith as necessarily involving the will (1 John 2:3-4) and affections (1 Cor. 16:22)" [Curtis I Crenshaw and Grover E. Gunn, III,

Dispensationalism today, Yesterday, and Tomorrow, p. 87]. Setting aside the nasty, pejorative tone these men presented, the problem is the Scriptures they use to “prove” their case concerning the will and affections are involving sanctification issues and not justification issues. They fail to make their case.

John 6:47 ⁴⁷“Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes [πιστεύω] has eternal life.

John 3:16, 18 ¹⁶“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes [πιστεύω] in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life....
¹⁸“He who believes [πιστεύω] in Him is not judged; he who does not believe [πιστεύω] has been judged already, because he has not believed [πιστεύω] in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

Romans 5:1–2 ¹Therefore, having been justified by faith [πίστις], we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ²through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith [πίστις] into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God.

A number of times the construction “believe in” is used in the New Testament.

John 12:44 ⁴⁴And Jesus cried out and said, “He who believes in [πιστεύω εἰς] Me, does not believe in [πιστεύω εἰς] Me but in Him who sent Me.

The construction “believe that” is also used.

John 20:31 ³¹but these have been written so that you may believe that [πιστεύω ὅτι] Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing [πιστεύω] you may have life in His name.

I was surprised to discover the word translated trust, *πείθω*, is only used four times in the New Testament and only twice in a Soteriological sense. The word is translated more frequently as “persuade” and that is the more common sense of the word. When used with the preposition *ἐπί*, “in,” it means to depend on, trust in, and put one’s confidence in.

2 Corinthians 1:9 ⁹indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves so that we would not trust in [πείθω ἐπί] ourselves, but in [ἐπί] God who raises the dead;