

Salvation—Justification (6th)

(We continue studying the subject of justification in this podcast by introducing the topic of imputation.)

Thus far in studying the subject of justification we have defined the term and proved from a few passages of the Scriptures that the ground of our justification is the righteousness of God as worked out in the Person and work of Jesus Christ. In other words, Jesus Christ fulfilled the law in every aspect and made payment for the sins of each elect child of grace. Furthermore, we pointed out that the common conception that justification by faith is more than the act of belief. However, justification by faith is a term that identifies the Person and work of Christ. This was demonstrated by comparing four passages of the Scriptures. They are as follows:

Romans 3:28, “Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by *faith* without the deeds of the law.”

Romans 5:9, “Much more then, being now justified by his *blood*, we shall be saved from wrath through him.”

Galatians 2:17, “But if, while we seek to be justified by *Christ*, we ourselves also are found sinners, *is* therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid.”

Titus 3:7, “That being justified by his *grace*, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”

These passages declare that we are justified by *faith, blood, Christ, and grace*. In other words these terms (faith, blood, Christ, and grace) are testifying of the same thing—the Person and work of Christ. Therefore, the term *justification by faith* does not mean that we are justified by man exercising faith in Christ. The word *faith* is used as the words *blood, Christ, and grace* to reflect the Person and work of Christ. Additionally, the word *faith* is used as an evidence of one being justified, but, the Lord willing, we will discuss that in the future. Just as the grace of God or obedience to the law of God revealed in the life of someone is an evidence of a person who is redeemed or justified, even so faith exhibited in the life testifies that he is justified by the imputed righteousness of Christ. It must be kept in mind that regardless of the purpose or use of faith and/or imputation regarding justification and the righteousness of Christ that the payment for sin for the elect being made righteous was accomplished by Christ in His person and work and not based on anything accomplished by man. We remind you again of the truth of II Corinthians 5:21 whereby Christ was made sin for us so that we were made the righteousness of God in Him. I John 3:5 equally affirm that Christ was “manifested to take away our sins.” Isaiah 53 clearly testifies that we are justified because Christ bore “our grieves,” “carried our sorrows,” was “wounded for our transgressions,” “bruised for our iniquities,” made His “soul an offering for sin,” and “bear our iniquities.” Many other such-like passages could be presented to prove that the justifying righteousness was accomplished and our justification was ratified in the finished work of Christ. This truth, as previously set forth, is also identified as the law or principle of faith as stated in Romans 3:21-27. Verse twenty-seven concludes: “Where *is* boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith.” It is essential that we understand that faith is a principle or law or we will go astray on the meaning of being justified by faith as did Albert Barnes. Barnes said, “Faith is always an act of the mind. It is not a created essence which is placed within the mind. It is not a substance created independently of the soul, and placed within it by almighty power. It is not a *principle*, for the expression *a principle of faith* is as unmeaning as a principle of joy, or a principle of sorrow, or a principle of remorse. God

promises; the man believes; and this is the whole of it. While the word faith is sometimes used to denote *religious doctrine*, or the system that is to be believed, (**Ac** 6:7; 15:9; **Ro** 1:5; 10:8; 16:26; **Eph** 3:17; 4:5; **1Ti** 2:7, etc.) yet, when it is used to denote that which is required of men, it always denotes an *acting of the mind* exercised in relation to some object, or some promise, or threatening, or declaration of some other being. Cmt. on Mr 16:16.” (Comments from *Sword Searcher* Bible program on Romans 4:3.)

This brings us to another topic that is often misunderstood—it is the matter of imputation. This is often the case because of a modern concept of the meaning of impute or the subject of imputation. Imputation is considered at times as being the cause of something. According to the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* as found on the internet, the definition for impute is as follows: “1. to lay the responsibility or blame for (something) often falsely or unjustly; 2. to credit or ascribe (something) to a person or a cause.” However when we study the Greek word for impute we find a different idea. Like justification, imputation does not make a person righteous but it declares or reveals one as being under the justification of God. The Greek word for impute is used over forty times in forty verses. The word is λογίζομαι (*logízomai*) and means as follows:

1. (*rationes conferre*) to reckon, count, compute, calculate, count over; hence **a.** to take into account, to make account of: metaph. to pass to one’s account, to impute: [A. V. lay to one’s charge; a thing is reckoned as or to be something, i.e. as availing for or equivalent to something, as having the like force and weight. **b.** i. q. to number among, reckon with. **c.** to reckon or account, and treat accordingly. **2.** to reckon inwardly, count up or weigh the reasons, to deliberate, [A. V. reason]: one addressing himself to another, with myself, in my mind. **3.** by reckoning up all the reasons to gather or infer; i.e. **a.** to consider, take account, weigh, meditate on: a thing, with a view to obtaining it. **b.** to suppose, deem, judge: anything relative to the promotion of the gospel; to think better of one than agrees with what etc. [‘account of one above that which’ etc.]. **c.** to determine, purpose, decide, [cf. American ‘calculate’]. (See *Thayers Greek-English Lexicon*.)

You can see from the definitions given above this word does not cause or make something to be what it is. It concludes or thinks something or someone to be either what it already is or supposes it to be somewhat. You will notice that the base meaning is to *count*, *compute*, or *calculate*. If one counts or calculates a column of figures, the sum or answer does not make the column of figures to be the sum total of the column; it only declares the value or worth of the column of figures. For a brief example, the value of two plus two is four. The sum of four only declares the worth of two and two, it does not make the value of two plus two to be something other than what it is. While someone could *reckon*, *count*, or *impute* the wrong value of two plus two, it does not change the true value of two plus two.

You may ask, “What is the purpose for this line of reasoning?” The answer is, “Because it clearly demonstrates that imputation does not cause one to be righteous; imputation simply declares a person to be righteous.” Romans 4:3-5 says, “For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.” (Remember that the words “counted” and “reckoned” are the same Greek word as translated “imputed.”) The average belief regarding this passage is that when Abraham believed he was made righteous by God because of his faith. Notice the words of Albert Barnes on Genesis 15:5-6:

The word “it” here evidently refers to the *act* of believing. It does not refer to the righteousness of another—of God, or of the Messiah; but the discussion is solely of the *strong act*

of Abraham's faith, which *in some sense* was counted to him for righteousness. In what sense this was, is explained directly after. All that is material to remark here is, that *the act* of Abraham, the strong confidence of his mind in the promises of God, his unwavering assurance that what God had promised he would perform, was reckoned for righteousness.

This is a contradiction of the passages previously quoted showing that the righteousness accounted to us is that of the Messiah or the Seed as Paul plainly declared in Galatians chapter three. There the Lord inspired Paul to write about this same issue regarding the law and faith and discusses the issue revolving around Genesis 15:6 as quoted in Galatians 3:6: "Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." In verse sixteen, we are told that the promise was to Abraham and his Seed and that the Seed is Christ. Therefore, the "it" that was accounted (imputed or reckoned) to Abraham as his righteousness was the Seed of Genesis 15:5 which is Christ as testified throughout the Scriptures.

The Lord willing we will have more to say about this in our next podcast, but our time is exhausted for today. Farewell.