

Intro: All true teaching of the gospel must emphasize that God alone is responsible for our salvation. His part is to achieve and perform and powerfully work it for our good and our part is to simply turn from relying upon ourselves and rely upon Jesus in our stead. That is what is meant by “faith” in the Scripture. It is simply the reliance, the leaning upon, the putting your weight upon Jesus alone as your salvation. The Spirit says through the author of Hebrews, “without faith it is impossible to please God.” (11:6) And we are told through the apostle Paul that God’s righteousness is revealed “from faith to faith” (1:17) and that “by grace we have been saved through faith.” (Eph 2:8)

Now, faith does not start out strong, but God intends it to grow strong. Every day, in each moment where we are tempted to trust in our own achievements or the promise of joy from some created thing, we are given the opportunity to trust in Jesus for our joy and our righteousness. You may be a new believer today, and your faith somewhat weak. You may be a more mature believer who has walked through many valleys and grown in your trust in the Lord. Either way, God desires us to know Him and trust Him more every day. In fact, when those times of doubt or anxiety, of self-sufficiency and pride come upon us, it is vital to remember one of the central truths of the gospel: we are righteous not by our own performance, but by the performance of Another. It is Jesus’ righteousness given to us by faith that makes us acceptable to God, and that *completely* acceptable by God. It is His obedience that has earned God’s smile, and smile He does upon you, O believer united to Christ. Trust not in the perfection of your performance, the solidity of your slipping feet, or the lavishness of your love for God. Trust in Jesus in your place, the anchor that holds you within the veil in the very presence of God.

Wherever you may be, weak faith or stronger faith, remember that God cannot fail. He is completely faithful even when our faith fails in those moments. The glory of it all is that our salvation lies not in the capacity or the perfection of our faith, but in the capacity and perfection of its object: Jesus, the One whom you are growing to know more and more as our righteousness that makes us pure, holy, and blameless before Him.

1. The Christian’s Desire: “I Might be Found in Him”

- i. discovered, revealed, found
 - a) by whom?
 - b) allusion to Matt 16:24ff and Colossians 3, "whoever loses his life for my sake will find it" which is "hidden with Christ" who is our life
 - c) interesting word choice in the context, talking about loss and liability, Paul now mentions his desire to be found in Christ
- ii. in Him
 - a) union with Christ is the basis for our righteousness
 1. to Paul the gospel is of a Person who is Life
 - b) "clothed with His righteousness" (Isa 61:10)
 1. what makes Jesus the God-Man and acceptable substitute and fellow human acceptable to the Father?
 2. His perfect righteousness (Romans 5:19) is what leads to our being “set forth as righteous”
 - c) In opposition to being found in the Law
 1. The Law cannot impart life (Gal 3:21)
 2. Redemption in Christ means to be free from the law of sin and death by the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus (Rom 8:2)
- iii. True Christianity finds its center and salvation completely in Union with Christ
 - a) Rather than seek to establish righteousness of his own, he desires to be established in Jesus, the Person, and find His righteousness imputed to him
 - b) Jesus, the Almighty Son of God, left His throne in Heaven to take on the form of a man and die in our place so that we would be united with Him

2. The Christian's Hope: "Clothed in His Righteousness"

- i. not having my own righteousness
 - a) note the negative emphasis on "mine"
 - b) Paul views his righteousness as loss, excrement
 - c) He needs Another's righteousness, not his own
 1. Alien righteousness
 2. One "reckoned" or "credited" to Him by God
 3. That is the righteousness of Christ (double imputation of 2 Cor 5:21)
 4. These aren't my clothes, they are His, but they allow me into the Wedding (Matt 22)
- ii. having that righteousness that comes through faith in Christ
 - a) "having" - we possess this by faith in Jesus, it is ours
 - b) Two variations of "faith" in the world
 - i) Faith = Religion
 1. There are many "faiths" today practiced in the world
 2. "The Bhuddist faith" or "The Muslim faith"
 3. You have your "faith" I have mine, etc.
 4. Simply a synonym of religion or worldview
 - ii) Faith = subjective personal choice
 1. Not tied to particular truth or fact in any sense.
 2. "You must have faith in Jesus" is presented as a personal subjective choice from among other choices
 - a. "You must have faith in Bhuddism" or "You must have faith in Allah or Mohammed" can be alternative options
 - b. Faith becomes a simple blind leap to a variety of possible choices of which are all really the same
 3. Although the Scriptures speak of faith in different ways, none of them is every used this way! Never!
 - c) note that this righteousness is not by "faith" in general, as if the object didn't matter
 - i) it is specifically faith in Jesus Christ by which we are given the righteousness of God (that is made as if we had obeyed all of God's laws and therefore stand in His complete blessing)
 - ii) it is a forensic, or legal, standing with God based upon faith in the historical person of Jesus Christ
 - d) The object of our faith is the vital element of salvation and freedom
 1. You are only as free and as secure as that which you depend upon
 2. If I'm leaning on (faith) that which cannot or will not hold me up, then I will fall over
- iii. the kind of righteousness that comes from God
 - a) it is "God's righteousness" - sourced from Him (see Romans 1:17; all of chapter 3, and 2 Cor 5:21)
 - i) Imputed – given something that is to something that is not
 1. We have Christ's righteousness though we are not righteous
 2. The ungodly being justified (Romans 4:5)
 - a. Without the imputation of Christ's righteousness, then God would be perversely unjust
 - b. What judge would you consider just who let guilty people go away justified?
 - c. Only by the Cross of Christ where sin is actually dealt with and righteousness actually attained can we be set free
 - i. Union with Him: Our sins became His and His righteousness becomes ours (2 Cor 5:21)
 - ii. The GREAT EXCHANGE

- iii. Only as we are united to Him is God both just and the justifier of those whom belong to Christ (Rom 3:21-26)
 - ii) Not imparted – making us actually righteous
 - 1. This righteousness is not the same as sanctification, the process of becoming more like Christ in life
 - 2. This righteousness, justification, is the legal or forensic declaration of “just” and “right”, not the actual living of perfection
 - 3. In other words, simply because we come to Christ by faith does not mean that we never sin again
 - a. It means that our sins are covered by the blood of Christ and are not held against us by God (Rom 8:1)
 - b. It means that our lives are to be lived by continual faith in Him and His righteousness as our standing before God
 - i. He gets all the glory
 - ii. We get a ton of joy!
 - iii) It’s like marriage, where the two become one
 - 1. The assets and liabilities of the other become the assets and liabilities of each
 - 2. Before pre-nuptials, which is an indicator that marriage is being entered into apart from the design of God in true unity
 - 3. Marriage is meant to imitate the relationship between Jesus and the Church (Eph 5:25-27)
- b) received by faith
 - i) faith is not the righteousness
 - a. righteousness is "credited" to us, reckoned to us through our union with Christ
 - b. His righteous obedience is counted as ourse
 - c. 2 Cor 5:21 - double imputation: sin/righteousness
 - d. Rom 4 - faith credited as righteousness
 - i. the righteousness is what is credited apart from works

3. Why is This Important?

- i. All turmoil and unrest is rooted in *trying to establish our own righteousness*
 - 1) Self-Pity: we fail to establish our own righteousness
 - a) We are not accepted by God or others due to our failures or insufficiency
 - b) Anxiety and Fear
 - c) Depression
 - d) Self-pity
 - 2) Self-Righteousness: we believe that we are establishing, or have established, our own righteousness
 - a) We have not yet proved, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that we are worthwhile, significant, acceptable
 - b) Defend Ourselves: When somebody questions or attacks our righteousness we fight back, therefore losing peace and entering into unrest and turmoil
 - c) Attack Others: We attempt to tear down other people’s righteousness so that we look better by comparison
 - 3) Every relationship’s struggles are rooted in these attempts to self-justify ourselves to the point where we end up destroying our relationships through self-righteous attacks and defensiveness (prove we’re right) or a retreat into isolation of bitterness and anger due to our failures
 - a) Marriage: Do I have to defend my worthless righteousness in this situation? If my wife believes that I am a failure, am I trusting in my righteousness or the imputed righteousness of Christ given to me?
 - i) What am I trusting to make me acceptable before God?

- ii) When I trust in the righteousness of Christ, I do not need to be approved by men (Galatians 1:10)
- iii) Only when I am secure in Christ's righteousness can I truly love for the sake of another (my wife) and serve her without bitterness, blame, or fear.
- b) Employment: Why do I need to cover up my failures or blame them on another? What righteousness am I trusting to justify me as a person?
- c) Competition: How do I handle losing? Why do I respond that way? What righteousness am I trusting in to make me important, significant, or worthwhile?
 - i) Sports righteousness?
 - ii) Career righteousness?
 - iii) Hobby righteousness?
- ii. All joylessness is rooted in self-righteousness
 - 1) When I am trusting in my own righteousness and I fail, then I lose my joy
 - a) Boredom and bitterness
 - b) Self-pity and shame
 - 2) The imputed righteousness of Christ, given to me by faith, means that I am completely accepted by God!!!
 - a) There is a tremendous reason for joy in this statement
 - b) All that is Christ's is mine (2 Cor 1:19-20) and all the promises of God find their "yes" in Him.
 - c) WHAT DO I ULTIMATELY NEED FROM MAN?
 - 3) Faith in the righteousness of Christ imputed to me means life and peace
 - a) Romans 15:13 – "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope."
 - b) We abound in joy and peace through *believing the great news* which results in our hope through the Holy Spirit.

Conclusion:

I dare say that there is no more glorious or freedom-giving doctrine unfolded within the pages of Scripture than this sweet doctrine of the imputation of Christ's righteousness. For in it we learn that we are in Him, and through our union with Him we are looked upon by the Father as performing all the works of Christ. His works are seen as our works. His perfect love for and obedience to the Father is seen as ours. Not only are our sins imputed to Him and atoned for in His death, but also His obedience is imputed to us for righteousness. Just as He paid for our transgressions as if they were His own, so we receive His righteousness as if we were the ones who wove the pure and holy robes of righteousness. God considers His life to be our life. This is sweet news to the sinner's ears, isn't it?

Some of us were hell-bent on sin, destroying our relationships and covering ourselves with the filthy garments of selfishness and rebellion. We, too, are received as righteous when we put on Christ's righteousness by faith. Purified from sin and standing before God as holy, blameless, and beyond reproach through the robes of righteousness given to us by our amazing Savior. Come to Him, you are weary and heavy-laden. He gives to you rest as the prophet Jeremiah foretold.

"Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. ⁶ In his days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely. And this is the name by which he will be called: 'The LORD is our righteousness.'

-Jeremiah 23:5-