

may be given new life. Therefore, to stay in life we must do what is right, but to obtain life and grow in life we must depend on God's faithfulness.²³

A Little Bit of Greek

There are three Greek word roots that make all the difference in the world in explaining the gospel. The first of these roots is based on the Greek verb δικαιόω. This is the "di-kai-oo" verb translated "justified" (justice-applied) that I mentioned earlier. Thayer's *Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament* defines "dikaioo" as "to do one justice ... to condemn, punish...to have justice done one's self, to suffer justice".²⁴ The *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* includes "to secure justice for someone, ... to judge ...to punish"²⁵. Bauer's Lexicon says in the first definition, "to show justice, do justice".²⁶ TDNT notes that the word especially is applied to a death sentence. This means we are on solid ground to say that the word δικαιόω means "to satisfy Justice" "to have Justice done," or "Justice applied", through the substitutionary atonement of Jesus. The animal sacrifices God prescribed in the law demonstrate this idea.

In the Temple, the animal dies in the place of the one who brought the sacrifice, and the worshipper is forgiven a sin of ignorance. Likewise, with our transgressions, Christ dies in our place and justice is legally satisfied for us by the substitute receiving the penalty of sin. The faithful worshipper is not made innocent by the good works of the animal. Rather, he confesses his sin, and the penalty is paid. He receives a pardon, a remission of the penalty. That is what forgiveness is.

²³ Πιστίς In context: Rom 1:5 obedience of *faithfulness*; 8 your *faithfulness*; by our mutual *faith(fulness)*; 17 *faithfulness to faithfulness*, by *faithfulness*; 3:3 the *faithfulness* of God; 3:22 *faithfulness of* Jesus; 25 through *faithfulness*, by; 26 for one by the *faithfulness of* Jesus; 27 a rule of *faithfulness*; 28 by *faithfulness*; 30 by *faithfulness*, through the *faith(fulness)*; 31 through the *faith(fulness)*; 4:5 His *faithfulness*; 9 *faithfulness* was; 12 of *faithfulness*; 13 justice of *faithfulness*; 14 the *faith(fulness)*; 16 of *faithfulness*. "faith" = *faithfulness* in Rom. 4:19, 20; 5:1, 2; 9:30, 32; 10:6, 8, 17. Not every occurrence of "faith" is "faithfulness". Sometimes it is "the faith", "confidence" or "trust".

²⁴ Page 151, column 1, 20th printing, 1979. Zondervan.

²⁵ TDNT, Vol. II, page 211.

²⁶ Page 249, BDAG, 3rd Edition, 2000. Also *take up a cause* = *to do justice for*.

Likewise, when Christ pays the penalty, we are not considered innocent by transubstantiation²⁷ of Christ's works to our account. Rather we are pardoned. Jesus' atonement is not acquittal. It is our pardon. There are some who explicitly teach this doctrine of acquittal when they explain *justified* to mean "just-as-if-I-never-sinned".

Let's apply this Greek definition for δικαίωω to Romans 5:1, including also the first definition of πίστις:

Therefore having justice applied by faithfulness, we can have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Greek word for faithfulness is πίστις. The first definition in Bauer's Lexicon is "*faithfulness, reliability, fidelity, commitment*"²⁸ Therefore, God's justice is appeased for us by the faithfulness of Jesus Christ. God's justice is applied to us in Christ since he died in our place.

The Imputation of Justice

The word *imputation* means *reckoned, or considered*. The justice of God is considered satisfied for us by Jesus' faithfulness (*taking our penalty in death*) when we trust in Him. God counts the penalty paid by substitution sufficient. God's Justice is satisfied, and God continues to accept (or impute) this justice-application for those who abide in Him by faithfully trusting Him. Since God's justice-is-applied to Christ, we are forgiven our sins.

When I speak of the word "impute" I am using a now archaic word that means to "consider" or "reckon". God's justice by sacrificing Jesus' on the cross is considered sufficient to satisfy the penalty God assigned for our sin.²⁹ God records in heavenly books our sins and the due penalty. When we believe, God accepts as sufficient Christ's payment of our penalty, and

²⁷ The play on words is intentional. The 8th century Catholic doctrine teaches that God's grace is administered when the wine is turned into the actual blood of Christ. Luther's 16th century teaching of grace said that Christ's obedience was transferred to their account without them actually being righteous.

²⁸ BDAG, 3rd Edition, 2000

²⁹ Isaiah 53:10. Picture a Father who is righteously angry at a son who did something very naughty. In his anger he punches a hole in the wall of his house instead of punching his son because he loves his son too much to hit him. Like hitting the wall, the death of Christ appeases God's wrath. Only in God's case, He struck himself.

writes our name in the book of life.³⁰ Christ appeases God's wrath against us. God's justice (wrath) is applied to Jesus' and that is deemed sufficient to pay our penalty. What might be entered into the heavenly books is "pardoned, refer to entry in book of life". To be sure, the record of sin is still there. It is just pardoned. A copy of our sin was figuratively nailed to Jesus' cross (Colossians 2:14).

We can understand this *imputed justice* for us as *imputed righteousness*³¹ in the sense that the righteousness being imputed consists of the action of God the Father's sacrifice of Christ for our sins in our place. In other words, the righteousness we are speaking of is God's righteous action in making Jesus' a guilt offering (Isa. 53:10). This righteous action is God's sufficient judgment of our sin using Christ as the substitute. The reason I spell this out this way is that Christians are confused by an English limitation on the word "righteousness". Understanding *imputed righteousness* in the sense that I describe requires adjusting our understanding of what this righteousness is to the biblical idea of a particular righteous action that is justice.

English speaking people perceive this word to mean moral goodness on a personal level, and tend to exclude judicial action from its sense. French does not have this problem. French bibles translate the word "justice". Likewise Spanish is free of this difficulty since it uses the word "justicia". We say then that *justice is imputed* by the death of Christ. *Justice* includes judicial actions toward others as well as personal just action.

God's Justice in Sanctification and Holiness ***(Living a just or righteous life)***

We are now ready to unfold an additional level of meaning concerning the matter of imputation, or God's reckoning to our account. This has to do with sanctification or holiness that comes through obedience.

³⁰ Revelation 20:12-15.

³¹ Equal to *imputed justice*.

God sanctifies us through his commandments.³² The word "sanctify" means to "make holy" or to "set apart". Sanctification is the process of being set apart for good works and being separated from evil.

Sometimes when the scripture speaks in the Hebrew or Greek it is combining two teachings into one phrase. Romans 5:1 is one of those places. We would be short sighted to think that the only meaning we could get from the text is *justice being satisfied by the faithfulness of Christ*.

Romans 5:1 can be read to say more than this. The Greek word δικαιόω also has the meaning of *justice-applied*, in the sense that the person is sanctified by Christ's justice. What I mean is His justness. Christ's justness is the same as God's moral righteousness. This is being made a part of the believer through faithfulness. Let us revisit the text:

Therefore having justice applied by faithfulness, we can have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Remember that in the matter of paying the penalty, the justice consists only of the work of the cross done by the faithfulness of Christ. This is all His work of justice which is applied to us through God's faithfulness. However, in the matter of sanctification and holiness, our faithful response enters the picture. When we respond to Christ's faithfulness with our own faithfulness (that he has given us), then the justice of God (that is, his moral goodness) transforms us into his likeness. Again, we are hampered by English because "justice" is not normally thought of as righteousness.

The Imputation of Righteousness

At the technical linguistic level, the word *dikaioo* means something like "rightness-effected" and in Greek allows both the senses that the rightness-effected is a vicarious justice applied by Christ's voluntary sacrifice or the rightness-effected by living righteously. I explained the sense *to satisfy justice* first, because this is the meaning overlooked by most Christians because it is kept from them by their teachers to the detriment of the gospel. Now we are going correct the time frame of the traditional

³² Deut. 28:9.

doctrine of imputed righteousness. We are going explain it in the context of the sanctification aspect of salvation where it properly belongs.

The sense of *to be righteous* or to be *made/declared righteous* is not overlooked by Christians reading the word "justified" in English. Catholic, Lutheran, and Calvinist preachers make sure they understand this sense. However, there is something that they add to the text that is not there when they teach it this way. What they add is that this "made righteous" or "declared righteous" concept is all past tense, and that it involves a perfect, or 100% being "made righteous" or being "declared righteous." They add two elements that are not there, and end up with a philosophy of salvation rather than reality. They make it totally past tense, and they add total perfectionism to the idea.

The only aspect that is a completely past tense issue is the notion of God's justice-applied to us by the faithful atonement of Christ. This is past tense with continuing effectiveness when we put faithful trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. However, *being made righteous* or *being declared righteous* is a matter of sanctification.

One is made righteous when one obeys God's commandments, doing the good works that constitute holiness. This is actual righteousness just as the Scripture says:

KJV Deuteronomy 6:25 And it shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments before the LORD our God, as he hath commanded us.

It must be recognized that this being "made righteous" is not perfection or being innocent from sin. That would be a Roman Catholic view. The Catholics believe that a person obtains a total infusion of righteousness through the sacraments. What we mean is that a person is only made righteous in accord with his or her degree of sanctification and faithfulness, something that is not completed until the resurrection or transformation of the body at the second coming of Christ.

Martin Luther, before he left the Church, was deceived by the Catholic doctrine of *infused righteousness*³³ because the Catholics taught

³³ Called *justification* in the Catholic Catechism. You will have to look hard for assertions of perfectionism. Catholic documents are very wordy, and they hint at much of what they mean without explicitly saying it. That way when someone questions it, then they deny that they ever hinted what is questioned! That's why it is called mystery Babylon. They believe they have received (past tense) the righteousness of God in the sense of moral perfection in