

that total sanctification came as a result. Luther however knew that he was a rotten sinner, and try as he might, he could not bring himself to believe in his total sanctification by penance and sacraments. What was the "light" that went on in Luther's head? He thought that he needed 100% righteousness to please God.³⁴ Therefore, he jumped to the conclusion that God *declared him righteous by faith* even before he was actually righteous! No doubt, this concept gave Luther a good deal of psychological relief from his guilt, but it was not the gospel!

God does not acquit sinners on this basis. Luther had put the cart before the horse. The legal declaration of righteousness always follows actual righteousness, and actual righteousness is sanctification, which follows the gospel. Luther's timing was wrong. Moreover, so was his notion of the degree to which God considers us righteous at the present. Despite his relief, because of the confusion in his doctrine, he was plagued his whole life with doubts.

The real distinction between being *made righteous* and being *declared righteous* is a matter of difference between personal reality and God's taking notice of that reality. When Abraham "believed in the

the inward man, but Catechism canons are often written in a timeless present tense to obscure this belief. The confusion means that not all Catholics get the hint. But the hint is the spirit that pervades their doctrine, even if it is often not explicit.

³⁴ But is this really the case? Abraham and David pleased God, but they were far from perfectly righteous. Luther's assumption that He must be perfectly righteous is correct for an unbeliever seeking acquittal, but for one who is supposed to understand the gospel, this belief shows ignorance of God's covenant and the gospel. Blamelessness is the highest goal one can attain in this life, but even Noah and Job were sinners and had to repent. If you understand the gospel, then you will understand that God will not condemn you because imperfection remains. Christians who do not understand our Covenant with God typically respond to our professions of loyalty to God's law with statements like Luther's, such that no one can please God by observing his laws, and then they require us to accept their anti-law gospel by accepting their assumption that (a) God requires 100% righteousness for the believer, that (b) it is 100% legally imputed into our account, and (c) be like them and be disloyal to God's law so that they can all see that you have put your trust in this doctrine.

Whenever such Christians intimate that we don't have the true gospel because we urge them to love God by obeying His commandments, and they argue that we cannot be good enough, we should point out that they speak like unbelievers seeking acquittal, and if that is their goal, then indeed they cannot be good enough for God. We point out to them in turn that we have received a pardon and not an acquittal, and that God's pardon is the meaning of the gospel, and not acquittal, because no one is acquitted of sin.

LORD"³⁵ or better "firmly trusted in YHWH" he affirmed God's promise. Abraham's faithful trust was righteousness.³⁶ Even if his faithful trust is reduced to a mere act of belief, his willingness to believe was righteousness. This was the reality. He was made righteous by his faithfulness and by every good deed that resulted from it later in life. First, comes the reality of righteousness, and then comes God's legal recognition of it. For after Abraham trusted God, then God "counted it to him for righteousness". First, we are *made righteous* and then it is *imputed* or *counted* to us as *righteousness* in God's sight.

Therefore being *declared righteous* is legal recognition of real righteousness that one has through their faithfulness. *Imputed righteousness* in this sense follows from sanctification. It begins with a believer's initial repentance and faithful trust in the good news of the gospel, but it is not perfectly complete at that time, nor, indeed, until the resurrection at the end of the age, and the transformation of the body when Christ returns.

James teaches the incompleteness of *imputed righteousness* without later works:

James 2:20 But wilt thou know, O vain man, that trust without works is dead? 21 Was not Abraham our father made righteous by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? 22 Seest thou how trust wrought with his works, and by works is³⁷ trust completed? 23 And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham firmly trusted in God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. 24 Ye see then how that by works a man is being made righteous, and not by trust³⁸ alone.

³⁵ Genesis 15:6.

³⁶ Yes, even believing something that God commands us to believe is righteousness. Trusting in God is righteousness. This is why the notion of "faith without works" as applied to our faith is nonsense. Our faith is a righteous decision. It is a good work in the heart. The "faith without works" that is the instrument of our salvation is Christ's faith. It is his "faithfulness," just as it is written, "the faithfulness of Jesus Christ". For it was all done for us, and our works have no part in atonement. There is no penance we can do. Not even our "faith" or "trust" in God can be counted as righteousness unto acquittal.

³⁷ The Greek aorist is best translated with the simple present tense, a source of constant difficulty with many English translations. It means "undefined" in Greek.

³⁸ Notice that James is not denying that our "trust" is righteousness. He is only saying that this 'alone' is not sufficient for righteousness. We must add works to our trust in order to be further sanctified. What most people don't realize is that Paul never said "faith alone"! Paul taught justice-is-applied by the faithfulness of Christ without our works of the law. So, he does teach forgiveness of sin by faithfulness alone, as long as he means Christ's faithfulness. But, he never excludes the concept of good works in sanctification by saying that righteousness is by our trusting alone. The only place you will find "faith/trusting

James is using *justified* in the sense of *made righteous*:

08281 [קָדַשׁ, קָדַשׁ] vb. denom. **be just, righteous** -- Qal 1. *have a just cause, be in the right*; in complaint; c. קָדַשׁ pers. (of Tamar). 2. *be justified*, in one's plea; c. קָדַשׁ (man with God); קָדַשׁ; by witnesses; by acquittal; by condemnation of opponent. 3. *be just*: of God, in his government, in charging with sin; of קָדַשׁ . 4. *be just, righteous*, in conduct and character: of men, c. קָדַשׁ comp. (more than God). Niph. *be put right*, in a right condition. Pi. *justify, make to appear righteous* (all c. קָדַשׁ comp.). Hiph. 1. *do justice*, in administering law. 2. *declare righteous, justify*, c. acc. קָדַשׁ (קָדַשׁ); *justify accusers*, by recognizing charge as just. 3. *justify, vindicate the cause of, save*, c. acc., (of God), c. לְ of obj. (of servant of קָדַשׁ). 4. *make righteous, turn to righteousness*. Hithp. *justify ourselves*. (pg 842)

He is talking about sanctification, and he is refuting the notion that holiness is something that comes from a faithfulness that is not expressed by works. James says that Abraham's obedience in the matter of sacrificing Isaac fulfilled the Scripture that says "and it was considered unto him for righteousness" (Gen. 15:6). What he means is that divine recognition of Abraham's righteousness followed his obedience. Therefore, *being made righteous* comes first, and then after comes God's *counting it as righteousness*. This is the divine *declaration of righteousness*. Faithfulness, or faithful trust in God, is completed with obedience.

For James, the imputation of righteousness was something that was not complete. One must add good works to firm trust in God. The firm trust is the first step of obedience that is recognized as righteousness. Further steps of obedience are counted as righteousness as the believer grows. Therefore, when Abraham obeyed God in the matter of Isaac's offering, he was righteous, and then afterward this is legally recognized in him as righteousness. Let us prove that the imputation of righteousness follows the righteous act of actual righteousness. Of the Priest Phinehas it is written:

alone" is in James' negative statement. The supposed contradiction between Paul and James is settled when we realize that Paul spoke about Christ's faithfulness, and James' speaks of our 'trusting'!

KJV Numbers 25:6 And, behold, one of the children of Israel came and brought unto his brethren a Midianitish woman in the sight of Moses, and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, who *were* weeping *before* the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. 7 And when Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw *it*, he rose up from among the congregation, and took a javelin in his hand; 8 And he went after the man of Israel into the tent, and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel, and the woman through her belly. So the plague was stayed from the children of Israel. 9 And those that died in the plague were twenty and four thousand. 10 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 11 Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, hath turned my wrath away from the children of Israel, while he was zealous for my sake among them, that I consumed not the children of Israel in my jealousy. 12 Wherefore say, Behold, I give unto him my covenant of peace: 13 And he shall have it, and his seed after him, *even* the covenant of an everlasting priesthood; because he was zealous for his God, and made an atonement for the children of Israel. 14 Now the name of the Israelite that was slain, *even* that was slain with the Midianitish woman, was Zimri, the son of Salu, a prince of a chief house among the Simeonites.

And, in the book of Psalms it says:

KJV Psalm 106:28 They joined themselves also unto Baalpeor, and ate the sacrifices of the dead. 29 Thus they provoked *him* to anger with their inventions: and the plague brake in upon them. 30 Then stood up Phinehas, and executed judgment: and so the plague was stayed. 31 And that was counted unto him for righteousness unto all generations for evermore.

This is the very same thing God said when Abraham, "trusted in YHWH" (Gen. 15:6). "It was counted to him for righteousness". So we see that the legal declaration of righteousness follows righteousness in the person and does not precede it. The time frame of being *made righteous* and then *declared righteous* is during the life of the believer as he or she grows in the Lord in holiness and steadfast obedience to the will of God.

Returning now to Romans 5:1:

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

This time faithfulness includes our obeying God. It starts with Jesus' faithfulness, this time his righteousness, which becomes part of us when we obey, and ends up as our faithfulness. When we learn to obey God's law we are *having righteousness applied by faithfulness*. And so, we can continue in a state of peace with God:

KJV John 15:10 If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.³⁹

KJV Exodus 20:6 And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.

KJV 1 John 2:2 And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for *the sins* of the whole world. 3 And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.

Being righteous by faithfulness is not something that is perfected when we first believe the good news. The process of Christ's righteousness being imputed to us is a gradual process of increasing holiness as we learn to submit our flesh to the rule of God's laws. This is what we call sanctification. The imputation (reckoning or transfer) of God's righteousness to us is something that takes time, and involves God's faithfulness cooperating with our faithful response.

For this reason, it is significant to note that the main verb in Romans 5:1 is not in the past tense. It is *we have peace* or better *we can have peace*.⁴⁰

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

"Having justice applied" precedes "peace with God" in time.⁴¹ In other words, Christ paid the penalty for us, and therefore, his wrath is appeased. We have peace concerning the penalty of our sin. However, "Having righteousness applied" is a process of Christ's faithfulness becoming our faithfulness. This also results in peace with God. That is why "we can have peace" is in the present subjunctive, which includes a progressive idea of obtaining peace. The Hebrew word for *peace* does not just mean making peace between estranged parties. The word is *Shalom*. *Shalom* means "wholeness," "completeness", and includes healing and

³⁹ This text is especially important to me because it was what my mother taught me while I was still a boy.

⁴⁰ ἔχωμεν ἔχω vsπα--1p Wallace, page 518, 464. The subjunctive is the better reading, but the present makes little difference since it has the sense of present progressive: *we are having peace*. See Wallace, page 518.

⁴¹ Δικαιωθέντες δικαίω vsπαρnm1p. The sense is *justice being applied*.