

making things right. Therefore, as Christ's justice (his righteousness) is applied to us through obedient faithfulness we are making peace with God.

The prophecy says:

KJV Jeremiah 23:6 In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this *is* his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

Spanish: RVA Jeremiah 23:6 En sus días será salvo Judá, e Israel habitará seguro. Y este es el nombre con el cual será llamado: 'Jehovah, justicia nuestra.'

French: NEG Jeremiah 23:6 En son temps, Juda sera sauvé, Israël aura la sécurité dans sa demeure; Et voici le nom dont on l'appellera: 'L'Eternel notre justice.'

I have quoted three translations here, English, Spanish, and French to explain Christ's justice. First, He is our Justice because God's justice was done to Him on the cross and God reckons this justice for us when we believe the gospel. Second, the prophecy is set in the age to come for its final fulfillment. In those days Israel will be saved. That has not happened yet. Therefore, God is not finished writing the LORD's righteousness on our hearts yet. Yes, it is the LORD's righteousness that we are obtaining. For it is He who makes it possible for us to obey Him. It is His righteousness and holiness that we are being instructed in. Consider God's renewal of the covenant:

Jeremiah 31:33 But this is the covenant that I am making with the house of Israel: After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. 34 *And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.*

When is this fulfilled? "After those days" when "they shall teach no more" when the "iniquity" of the whole nation is forgiven, and then it will not be remembered. But right now God remembers our iniquity because we have not been fully sanctified. We are pardoned and forgiven, but not fully sanctified. Did not God promise to sanctify Israel in the end of days according to his covenant? Yes, he did:

KJV Deuteronomy 30:1 And it shall come to pass, when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before thee, and thou shalt call *them* to mind among all the nations, whither the LORD thy God hath driven thee, 2 And shalt return unto the LORD thy God, and shalt obey his voice according to all that I command thee this day, thou and thy children, with all thine heart, and with all thy soul; 3 That then the LORD

thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the nations, whither the LORD thy God hath scattered thee. 4 If *any* of thine be driven out unto the outmost *parts* of heaven, from thence will the LORD thy God gather thee, and from thence will he fetch thee: 5 And the LORD thy God will bring thee into the land which thy fathers possessed, and thou shalt possess it; and he will do thee good, and multiply thee above thy fathers. 6 *And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live.*

Review of Main Points

1. Justified means "justice-applied" (a) "to satisfy justice", "to have justice done" (b) "made righteous" (actual righteousness) or "declared righteous" (a legal recognition of actual righteousness).
2. A person has justice satisfied for him by the faithfulness of Christ – His faithful work of atonement as soon as he repents and trusts in the good news. God pardons (forgives) the penalty and promises eternal life to the sinner who faithfully trusts⁴² Him.
3. A person is only *made righteous* when his faithful trust results in his obedience to God's precepts, in spirit and truth. When he is made righteous in a matter, then God legally recognizes it by declaring him righteous. Being made righteous and *declared righteous* result from faithfulness. Starting with God's sanctifying work through the Holy Spirit, He enables us to obey Him with our faithfulness. Thus salvation is from God's "faithfulness unto faithfulness" in us. (Romans 1:17).
4. The sanctifying process of being made righteous is not perfected or complete until Christ comes back for us.

⁴² Or *firmly trusts*; The idea is completely trusting in God and entrusting oneself to God. This means we listen to His word and let it abide in us producing fruit. For if you trust God, then he will believe what He says. We must trust him to give us the ability to resist sin, and we must acknowledge our duty to resist sin when he has given us the power to do so. Trust in God is more than believing the facts of the gospel. Trust in God is trusting in God. In John 3:16, "whosoever believeth in Him" does not mean merely believing in God's existence. Even the demons believe that. In the original language, it means trusting in God, which the disobedient do not do.

5. The gospel is not a matter of acquittal (declared innocent) but pardon (forgiveness of a sinner).

6. There are three views of "being justified":

(a) The Catholic view is made righteous by the sacraments. They call this a mystery of infused perfection, which is obtainable by the sacraments. This view is not biblical.

(b) The Lutheran is God legally counts a person as perfectly righteous (before he really is righteous). This view is not biblical either, and is based on a misunderstanding of the Greek.

(c) Whenever someone made *righteous/declared righteous* in the scripture, there is always something righteous in the person. Even if it is merely the correct "belief" than that righteousness can be recognized/counted by God as righteousness. Unlike the two unbiblical views above neither *being made righteous* or *legally being declared righteous* is perfected in us and for us yet.

7. Our being made righteous and then declared righteous by our faithfulness is not what saves us from the penalty of sin. It only keeps us away from sin and death.

Repentance and the Mystery of Iniquity

How did the doctrine that God counts us as already perfectly righteous come into the Church? It was motivated by backslidden Christians living in the flesh who wanted to avoid the real issue of repentance and putting on the righteousness of Christ for real, or it was

embraced by Christians desperately looking for relief from guilt, such as Luther, but who found the relief in the wrong place. And that was a long time ago. Now this doctrine is ignorantly repeated by multitudes without any real understanding of what the Scripture really says. Not all who repeat it misunderstand the gospel, but repeating it does contribute to many misunderstanding the need for repentance. God provides every new believer with the ability to repent of those serious sins which will keep us out of the kingdom of God:

KJV Galatians 5:19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are *these*; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness⁴³, lasciviousness, 20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, 21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told *you* in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

However, we are in a covenant with God through Christ. No one is perfected yet. No believer is sin free. There are many sins of ignorance, sins of circumstance, and social sins forced on us. God has provided his people with a degree of sanctification to make a distinction between us and the world. We must take hold of this in repentance. For God does not permit us to willfully rebel. The Spirit of God in us will not permit us to rebel without convicting our heart.⁴⁴ We should heed this conviction and not put our faith in philosophies that discount the need for repentance, such as the teaching that it is impossible to leave the faith.

Also the teaching that once one is saved, then one is guaranteed to persevere and endure to the end regardless of one's subsequent actions is an error. That is not what Jesus' said. He says, "KJV Matthew 24:13 But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." He also said:

KJV Revelation 3:5 He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.

The Catholic Church was indeed corrupt, teaching that infused righteousness, penance, and sacraments were instruments of man's acquittal. Despite its teaching, Luther did not feel free and forgiven. Therefore, he

⁴³ KJV Ezekiel 18:6 *And* hath not eaten upon the mountains, neither hath lifted up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, neither hath defiled his neighbour's wife, neither hath come near to a menstruous woman.

⁴⁴ Galatians 5:17.

reinterpreted *justification by faith* to mean that God viewed him as perfect in a legal sense, even though he was not. Now Luther felt justified and obtained psychological relief from his guilt. We must remember that Luther still practiced a system of forgiveness that was not based on the gospel alone. It was based on this notion of acquittal and the sacrament of baptism and the Eucharist. These competing elements hinder the gospel, to which it seems many often pay lip service.

The Lutheran and Calvinistic Reformers were so convinced that one could not please God by any works that they developed a system of faith which had no place for pleasing God by good works. They went from one extreme to the other, from total infused righteousness, to none at all, except a legal fiction on God's books. However, the Scriptures are categorically against the idea that it is impossible to please God by doing good; God is so against this idea that He included it in the ten commandments:

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

Because of his rejection of this, Luther could not understand the book of James. He called it an epistle of straw. Nevertheless, obeying God pleases him:

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.

Where the Catholics and Reformers went off the track is that they supposed that God required perfection of his people. God never required perfection of his people, but made a covenant with them and sealed it with the gospel. If you understand the gospel, then you understand that you are forgiven, but also that you should heed the teaching of the Spirit and walk away from sin. The doctrine of *fictitious* righteousness is only appealing when one does not understand their place in the covenant through the gospel.

This false doctrine is useless for understanding our pardon in Christ and a total hindrance to focusing on sanctification and holiness. God does not care about fictitious legal righteousness. He cares about the real righteousness of Christ flowing into your life.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ The idea that the righteousness of another can compensate for transgression fails to recognize the unrepairable damage that sin does to the destiny of others. Atonement was