

can assure you that most of them do not teach the gospel by it, because they have changed what Paul meant by it into a false doctrine. *Justification by faith*, as popularly taught is not the gospel. That is, if by this concept you think that God has somehow come to a legal conclusion that you are perfectly righteous in his sight, acquitting you of sin, then that is not the gospel. The gospel is not coming into God's court and then walking out again because in some amazing way he said according to his records you are sin free, innocent, or righteous, and the case is dismissed for lack of evidence against you. Having faith in God does not compel him to declare you innocent or righteous. That is, indeed, what a lot of teachers say *justified by faith* means!<sup>4</sup>

Let us describe the situation as it really is for the one who understands the gospel. You find that you are in God's court and He says, "You are a sinner, and guilty as charged!"<sup>5</sup> "There will be no acquittal," the scripture teaches. God does not acquit sinners.<sup>6</sup> What is to be done? You are guilty, and God cannot dismiss your case by issuing a legal declaration of your righteousness or innocence in the matter of sin. As a sinner, God commits you to death row.<sup>7</sup>

Then, the Son of God steps forward to plead for your life, and He says that He has a way for you to be delivered from the penalty. If you confess your sin, he says, I will pay the penalty myself so that your sin may be pardoned. You must trust in Me. You then accept the just decision of the judge in finding you guilty, and trust in Christ. You go forth from court ready to serve God knowing that your sins are forgiven. You realize that the basis of your salvation is God's pardon, because Christ paid the penalty.

A pardon is forgiveness, and a sinner once pardoned is still a sinner forgiven. He or she is not counted as sinless in God's eyes or on his books. You were found a legal sinner, and that is what the books say. In the penalty

---

<sup>4</sup> There is even a relatively recent doctrine that *justified by faith* means that the simple "faith" of the believer is regarded as total righteousness before God, leaving Christ's righteousness out of the picture altogether, and then this "faith" is made the instrument of acquittal. I do realize imputed righteousness is a biblical doctrine. Righteousness is imputed, and I will discuss this later. The imputation of Christ's righteousness comes with sanctification and holiness, and pertains to removal of the sin nature. Ultimately, it involves a complete transfer of Christ's righteousness to us.

<sup>5</sup> Romans 3:23.

<sup>6</sup> Job 10:14; Nahum 1:3; Exodus 23:7; Deut. 25:1;

<sup>7</sup> Gal. 3:22-23.

section of the book there is a red stamp. That's the life of Jesus' paid for you. Once you start thinking that God sees you as sinless, then you are forgetting that He pardoned you, and that the basis of the pardon is His payment of the very real penalty. We are not acquitted of sin. We are pardoned. In an acquittal, you are found legally innocent and declared righteous, and that becomes the reason why you do not have to pay a penalty in the first place. However, with a pardon, a penalty must be paid, because God assigned the penalty, because he considers you a sinner. The penalty is due precisely because God reckons you a sinner. He counts you as unrighteous in his sight. Therefore, there is a penalty to be paid.

The penalty is pardoned because of His payment, not because some think God sees no sin in your account. God did not pardon us because he views us as innocent. That idea contradicts the very idea of pardon or forgiveness. It is also unjust in God's sight and perverts the justice of God that he is trying to teach us with the gospel. In the law, it is written:

KJV Deuteronomy 25:1 If there be a controversy between men, and they come unto judgment, that *the judges* may judge them; then they shall justify the righteous, and condemn the wicked.

KJV Exodus 23:7 Keep thee far from a false matter; and the innocent and righteous slay thou not: for I will not **justify** the wicked.

This may seem trivial. But it is not. The fact is that the doctrine that God sees only Christ's righteousness in our account in heaven, and not our sin, has been around since it was introduced by a Catholic monk 500 years ago. It is a doctrine that seeks to "justify the wicked."<sup>8</sup> God declared this idea a false doctrine 3600 years ago when Israel came out of Egypt. It is unjust in his sight to declare the ungodly righteous. The matter is repeated in Proverbs.

KJV Proverbs 17:15 He that **justifieth** the wicked, and he that condemneth the **just**, even they both *are* abomination to the LORD.

---

<sup>8</sup> The Septuagint reads, "καὶ οὐ δικαιώσεις τὸν ἀσεβῆ" = "And you shall not justify the ungodly". (Ex. 23:7), and is remarkably similar to Romans 4:5, "τὸν δικαιούντα τὸν ἀσεβῆ" = "the one doing justice to the ungodly". If Paul's statement is taken to mean "justifies the ungodly" then it is a direct contradiction of God's law. The Romans passage has been mistranslated because Paul had a different meaning of the word δικαιόω in mind.

However, the teaching that salvation is by this legally fictitious righteousness for acquittal is very popular. But it is a lawless doctrine of iniquity. Salvation is based on the pardon of a sinner, who remains a sinner until God transforms him through sanctification and holiness, and legal recognition of or righteous status for us will not come until we are truly righteous.

Well then, what then does *justified by faith* mean? If it does not mean an acquittal before God by legal innocence, then what does it mean? I mean we could totally ignore the phrase and simply believe in the Gospel as described in John 3:16 and we would not be confused. You can be saved without understanding the dispute about this false doctrine. You can even be saved if you think a legally *fictitious righteousness is imputed*, but know in your heart that you are forgiven because Christ paid the penalty, and not because you received an acquittal.<sup>9</sup> There are many people, however, who believe this doctrine, and believe the right facts of the gospel. Nevertheless, they have not trusted in God, and instead have trusted in applying to this doctrine for their acquittal before God. They will not be saved, because the true gospel requires trust in the God who executes just justice against all sin, just as John 3:16 teaches, "He gave his only begotten Son." Moreover, God does not appreciate people lying about the divine court proceedings that saved sinners. We are not acquitted of sin. We are pardoned through Christ's payment of the penalty.

Now we will explain what *justified by faith* actually does mean, and show an equally powerful statement of the gospel in the correct understanding of this phrase. Paul does teach the gospel by this phrase. However, the translators and interpreters of Scripture have caused us to miss his meaning. So what does it mean?

The Greek word for *justified* means "justice is done". This sense is foreign to English, but native to Greek. The English *justified* excludes the idea of *justice being done to someone* or *justice done for someone*. English *justified* is usually taken in the sense of *acquittal, being declared in the right, receiving a favorable verdict in court*. However, in Greek *having justice done to/for* someone is possible. I will get to the technical Greek details in a

---

<sup>9</sup> One can believe in the doctrine of *forensic righteousness* and understand the gospel as long as the doctrine of *forensic righteousness* is not trusted in the heart as the legal foundation our forgiveness. Our forgiveness is based on pardon and not acquittal. *Forensic* means a legally fictitious reckoning of righteousness that one does not really have.

bit. For the moment, I just want you to understand what the word means so that you can follow the logic of my argument. For you must understand what I am saying before I prove it. After you understand what I mean, then the proof will be more appreciated.

It means "to satisfy justice" or "to have justice done". God's justice was accomplished by the death of Christ. Justice was satisfied by Him paying the penalty. In this sense, it has nothing to do with the English idea of someone *being justified*, which is acquittal. A person who is justified in English is acquitted of wrong doing in the first place, but a person who is "di-kai-oo-ed" in Greek has *justice done for him*, or has *satisfied justice* by having it done to him. To help the English reader, think of it as JUSTICE APPLIED. "Justified" is "Justice-applied" to a sinner.

Indeed, we were *justified* in Christ, because it means "justice-is-applied". God's justice against our sin was applied to Christ who died in our place as the divine substitute. Now let's get to the Greek. The entry on the page below from Thayer's *Greek-English Lexicon* explains this meaning. Read the photocopy and notice the definitions given in italics. The definition, "*to have justice done oneself, to suffer justice, to be treated rightly*" is in definition number 2. It exactly fits what Christ did for us on the cross. Romans 3:28 from Greek:

λαγίζομεθα γάρ	δικαιοῦσθαι	πίστει	ἄνθρωπον	χωρίς	ἔργων	νόμου.
λαγίζομαι	δικαιόω	πίστις	ἄνθρωπος	χωρίς	ἔργον	νόμος
νιρν-1ρ	cs νηρρ	n-df-s	n-am-s	ργ	n-gn-p	n-gm-s
We consider thus <i>justice being done</i> by faithfulness for man without deeds of law						

Indeed, we reckon that **justice is done** by [Christ's] faithfulness.

*to choose, desire, decide*: Hdt., Soph., Thuc., al. 2. with acc. of person, τὸ δίκαιον ποιῶ τινα *to do one justice, in a bad sense, viz. to condemn, punish, one*: Hdt., Thuc., Plat., al.; hence δικαιοῦσθαι, *to have justice done one's self, to suffer justice, be treated rightly*, opp. to ἀδικεῖσθαι, Aristot. eth. Nic. 5, 9, 11 p. 1136<sup>a</sup>, 18 sqq. (In like manner the German *rechtfertigen* in its early forensic use bore a bad sense viz. to try judicially (so for ἀνακρίνειν, Acts xii. 19 Luther), then *condemn*; *execute judgment, esp. put to death.*)\*

If we look in Bauer's Lexicon (BDAG), we see definition no. 1 of "dikaioo" is "to show justice, do justice, take up a cause" matches Thayer's definition no. 2:

**1** to take up a legal cause, *show justice, do justice, take up a cause* τινά (Polyb. 3, 31, 9 ὑμᾶς δὲ αὐτοὺς . . . δικαιοῦσθε 'you will (find it necessary to) take up your own cause' = you will sit in judgment on yourselves; Cass. Dio 48, 46 'Antony was not taking Caesar's side' in the matter; 2 Km 15:4; Ps 81:3) δικαιοῦσαι δίκαιον *take up the cause of an upright pers.* 1 Cl 16:12 (Is 53:11); τινί χήρᾳ (χήραν v.l.) 8:4 (Is 1:17 'take up the cause of the widow').

We can explain Paul's meaning using every one of the senses that Thayer's lexicon gives in definition no. 2, and all of the senses given in definition no. 1 from BDAG. Thayer: (a) God willed to *do one justice* by the substitutionary death of Christ. (b) God *condemned* us in Christ so that the penalty is paid. (c) We were *punished* through his sacrifice, BDAG: (e) God *showed justice* against our sin by the sacrifice of Christ; (f) God *does justice* to us in Christ; and (h) Christ *takes up our cause* before God by paying the penalty. In Christ, we *have justice done to ourselves*. We *suffer justice* by the substitute, and we are *treated rightly* when *condemned* through the divine substitute.

However, notice that the second definition of this same word is to *render a favorable verdict, justify, and acquit*.<sup>10</sup>

**2** to render a favorable verdict, *vindicate*. —⊕ as activity of humans *justify, vindicate, treat as just* (Appian, Liby. 17 §70; Gen 44:16; Sir 10:29; 13:22; 23:11 al.) θέλων δ. ἑαυτὸν *wishing to justify himself* Lk 10:29; δ. ἑαυτὸν ἐνώπιόν τινος

This second definition is the one that a multitude urges us to go by. Yet did God render a favorable verdict for us? By no means! As sinners, we were found guilty.<sup>11</sup> God will not *justify the wicked* in the sense of

<sup>10</sup> *Acquit* is further down the page not visible in the photocopy.

<sup>11</sup> Deut. 25:1; Job 10:4; Nahum 1:3; Romans 2:13; Rom. 3:19-20.