

DUAL IMPUTATION: THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF
JESUS CHRIST CREDITED TO THE BELIEVER
EXEGETICALLY DEFENDED

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Introduction

It is no understatement to say that in today's current evangelical scholarly world, justification by faith is much debated. There are adherents on many aspects of the spectrum holding to various views – some traditional and others are mere old views dressed in new garb. It behooves the biblical interpreter to be precise and thorough in his hermeneutics so as to be faithful to the biblical text.¹ With the plethora of attacks on justification and its various facets, it is the goal of this paper to identify the problem that some scholars have with the doctrine of the imputation of Christ's righteousness to the believer at the moment of salvation and to give a precise, though brief,² treatment attempting to prove exegetically the doctrine of imputation of Christ's righteousness to the believing sinner.

Getting Facts Straight

Justification by faith alone is a doctrine which has been held dear to many Christians for centuries even to the current day.³ Yet one topic that has been of no small disagreement is that of the perfect (“active”) obedience of Jesus Christ imputed to the sinner at the moment of

¹ In this paper, it must be noted at the forefront that the author believes the Bible is inspired by God (2 Tim 3:16-17), inerrant (2 Pet 1:20-22) and infallible (Isa 55:11) even down to every single word (Matt 5:18). This is a foundational presupposition for the remainder of this paper. It is not the purpose of the paper (or the introduction) to give a thorough discourse to prove the trustworthiness and sufficiency of Scripture; but it is assumed from this point forward.

² Unfortunately, this is not the place to delve into every issue currently attacking the traditional, Reformed doctrine of justification by faith alone. If there is a significant issue that is related to the topic at hand, it will be briefly noted in the text or cited in a footnote.

³ For good summaries of the history of justification and imputation including some of the Creeds of Christendom, see: Michael F. Bird, “Incorporated Righteousness: A Response to Recent Evangelical Discussion Concerning the Imputation of Christ's Righteousness in Justification,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 47, no. 2 (Jun 2004): 253-56; Brian Vickers, *Jesus' Blood and Righteousness: Paul's Theology of Imputation* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006), 23-69; and Steve Jeffery, Michael Ovey, and Andrew Sach, *Pierced For Our Transgressions*, (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2007), 161-204.

justification. For this reason, it is appropriate to observe the terminology used in justification texts.

Old Testament Terminology

Justification in the Old Testament stems from the Hebrew noun צַדִּיק⁴ meaning “to be righteous” and the verb צַדֵּק meaning “to make or declare righteous.”⁵ צַדִּיק can even “describe the righteous standing of God’s heirs to salvation, with no charge to be laid against them. This righteousness, actually possessed by Messiah, is bestowed by him, thus pointing toward the NT doctrine of Christ our righteousness.”⁶ More specific to the topic at hand is the Hebrew root חָשַׁב. This root is found 124x in the Hebrew Bible and most often is translated “to think,” or “to account.”⁷ The root חָשַׁב occurs with the preposition ל and can refer to something “reckoned” to someone (cf. Num 18:27, 30).⁸ It can even be used to refer to “imputing righteousness to a person” (Psa 106:31).⁹ The root when used with an accusative of a thing or person can mean “to

⁴ The root actually occurs 523x in the Hebrew OT (excluding proper names).

⁵ Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs. *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 2003), 842-43.

⁶ See Harold G. Stigers, “צַדִּיק,” *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, eds. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980): 2:754.

⁷ BDB, 363.

⁸ See D. A. Carson, “The Vindication of Imputation: On Fields of Discourse and Semantic Fields, In *Justification: What’s At Stake in the Current Debates*, Mark Husbans, and Daniel J. Trier, eds (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 58. Cf. footnote 9 below.

⁹ וַתַּחֲשֵׁב לּוֹ לְצַדִּיקָהּ

reckon something to someone as...”¹⁰ Furthermore, in the OT, the Septuagint uses λογίζομαι for the Hebrew **בַּשֵּׁר** many times as “counting something to someone with a personal and emotional overtone alien to the individual.”¹¹ Most scholars are in agreement that **בַּשֵּׁר** most often has the meaning of “to think, reckon, or account.”

New Testament Terminology

When coming to the New Testament there are two primary words in need of brief study. First, is δικαιόω. δικαιόω is found 39x in the New Testament and means “I am righteous” or “I make [cause to be] righteous.” BDAG notes that δικαιόω can be used “to render a favorable verdict of an experience or activity of transcendent figures, especially in relation to human beings (See Rom 3:24; 5:1).”¹²

The second word to be understood is λογίζομαι. This is also pertinent to the topic of imputation for it is found 40x in the New Testament.¹³ λογίζομαι is used when Paul asked Philemon to account or credit¹⁴ Onesimus’ debt to him (Philemon 18). In Rom 4, Paul quotes

¹⁰ W. Schottroff, “**בַּשֵּׁר**,” *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann, eds. Trans. by Mark E. Biddle (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004), 2:481-82.

¹¹ See H. W. Heidland, “λογίζομαι,” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. ed. Gerhard Kittel. Trans. and ed. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006), 4:284.

¹² Walter Bauer, W. F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich, and F. W. Danker. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*. 3rd edition. ed. Frederick William Danker (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 249.

¹³ 19 of which occur in the book of Romans.

¹⁴ εἰ δέ τι ἠδίκησέν σε ἢ ὀφείλει, τοῦτο ἐμοὶ **ἐλλόγα**; *But if he has acted unjustly or owes anything, this reckon to me.*

David who says that the man is blessed to whom “the Lord does not take into account” (4:8).¹⁵ λογίζομαι is most best translated “to determine, to reckon, or calculate.”¹⁶ For simplicity’s sake, to be counted something is synonymous with imputation.¹⁷

Justification Defined¹⁸

Justification is “a judicial act of God, in which He declares, on the basis of the righteousness of Jesus Christ, that all the claims of the law are satisfied with respect to the sinner.”¹⁹ John Calvin defines justification as “He who is both reckoned righteous in God’s judgment and has been accepted on account of his [Christ’s] righteousness.”²⁰ As just observed,

¹⁵ Gk. μακάριος ἄνθρωπος οὗ οὐ μὴ λογίσῃται κύριος ἁμαρτίαν. Note also the immediately preceding verses: καθάπερ καὶ Δαυὶδ λέγει τὸν μακαρισμὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ᾧ ὁ θεὸς λογίζεται δικαιοσύνην χωρὶς ἔργων· μακάριοι ὧν ἀφέθησαν αἱ ἀνομίαι καὶ ὧν ἐπεκαλύφθησαν αἱ ἁμαρτίαι· (Rom 4:6-7).

¹⁶ See BDAG, 597. BDAG also notes that in Romans 4 it is used “to place to one’s account; or to credit” (597).

¹⁷ See Jerry Bridges and Bob Bevington, *The Great Exchange: My Sin for His Righteousness* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 2007), 99.

¹⁸ For the purposes of this paper, the New Perspective definition of “justification” as how one is able to tell who belongs to the covenant community of the true people of God including its threefold division: first, it is covenant language; second, it is law-court language; and third, it is eschatological language will be brought up at various points, but it is not the intended goal to accomplish this (See N.T. Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said*, 117-19). For adequate critiques, Guy Prentiss Waters, *Justification and the New Perspective on Paul*, 151-90; D. A. Carson, “The Vindication of Justification,” 46-78; *Justification and Variegated Nomism*, D. A. Carson, Peter T. O’Brien, and Mark A. Seifrid, eds. 2 vols (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2004).

¹⁹ Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Edinburgh, U.K.: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2005), 513. See also John Owen, *The Doctrine of Justification by Faith Through the Imputed Righteousness of Christ: Explained, Confirmed and Defended* (Whitefish, Mont.: Kessinger Publishing, 2007), 33-63.

²⁰ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. The Library of Christian Classics. ed. by John T. McNeill. trans. by Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia, Penn.: The Westminster Press, 1960), 1:726. Calvin continued, “Justified by faith is he who, excluded from the righteousness of works, grasps the righteousness of Christ through faith, and clothed in it, appears in God’s sight not as a sinner but as a righteous man” (ibid., 1:726-27). And again, “We are justified before God solely by the intercession of Christ’s righteousness. This is equivalent to saying that man is not righteous in himself but because the righteousness of Christ is communicated to him by imputation” (ibid., 1:753)

in the Old Testament, the Hebrew word used to translate “make righteous” or “justify” is צַדִּיק.²¹

In the New Testament, the Greek word used to translate “justify” is δικαιωω.²² It is these terms that are most often used in the Scriptures to denote the concept of declaring a person right before God.

Imputation Defined

The doctrine of imputation is “simply the act of setting to one’s account; and the act of setting to one’s account is in itself the same act whether the thing set to his account stands on the credit or debit side of the account, and whatever may be the ground in equality on which it is set to his account.”²³ It is not the concept of imputation that some scholars take umbrage with, for most evangelical Christians hold to imputation in some form. For sake of clarity, there are traditionally three acts of imputation expounded in the Scriptures.²⁴ First, there is an imputation of Adam’s sin to his posterity after him (cf. Rom 5:12-19). Second, there is an imputation of the sins of God’s people at the moment of saving faith imputed to Christ as the sin bearer (Isa 53:5-6). And third, there is an imputation of the righteousness of Christ to His people (2 Cor 5:21). It is these last two where the concept of dual imputation comes from. On the one hand, the sins of

²¹ When צַדִּיק occurs in the Qal verb form it means to “be right;” or “be just” (Gen 38:26; Ez 16:52). When it is used in the Niphal it has the idea of “being put in the right” (Dan 8:14). When used in the Piel verb form it means “to justify” or to “make something appear righteous” (Jer 3:11). The Hiphil verb form is used often in the OT and this has the idea of “causing one to be righteous;” that is, “to justify one” (Deut 25:1; Dan 12:3). It is also used in the Hithpael in Gen 44:16 when people ask how to “justify themselves” having the reflexive nuance.

²² This will be observed in more detail as we observe specific verses in the exegetical portion of this paper.

²³ Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield, *Biblical and Theological Studies*. Ed, Samuel G. Craig (Philadelphia, Penn.: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1968), 263.

²⁴ See Warfield who elaborates more on these points and proves that these three points have been central in Christian theology since Augustine from the 5th century A.D. (*Biblical and Theological Studies*, 263).

believers are imputed to Christ; on the other hand, the righteousness of Christ is imputed to the believing sinner.²⁵ This is at the heart and center of the Reformation doctrine of justification by faith. As Phillips well notes,

The Reformed faith teaches that a double imputation occurs via Christ's death on the cross. First, we believe our sins are imputed – that is, transferred by reckoning – to the crucified Lord Jesus. Our sins are recorded under our names before God and we have to answer for them. But God takes our debt and reckons it to Christ's account.²⁶

It is, however, important to see the distinction here between the imputation of the believer's sin to Christ and the righteousness of Christ to the sinner. Though they are related, there is a distinction between the two. For the purposes of this paper, imputation will be seen as the counting of an alien, real, moral, perfect righteousness, namely Christ's as ours.²⁷

The Problem

There are those who argue that the imputation of Jesus Christ's perfect ("active") righteousness to the believer is nowhere stated in the New Testament and, hence, is an unbiblical doctrine.²⁸ There are some who are more adamant than others in promoting this, but nonetheless,

²⁵ John Owen aptly notes, "This is that imputation in both branches of it, negative in the non-imputation of sin, and positive in the imputation of righteousness" (*Doctrine of Justification by Faith*, 120); cf. R. C. Sproul, "Justification by Faith Alone: The Forensic Nature of Justification," In *Justification By Faith Alone: Affirming the Doctrine By Which the Church and the Individual Stands or Falls*. ed. Don Kistler (Morgan, Penn.: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 1995), 36-50.

²⁶ Richard D. Phillips, "A Justification of Imputed Righteousness," in *By Faith Alone: Answering The Challenges to the Doctrine of Justification*. Gary L. W. Johnson and Guy P. Waters, eds. (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 2006), 76. He explicates the point by noting: "Evangelicals all affirm the imputation of our sins to Jesus Christ, since we believe that he died for us while he was himself perfectly sinless. If he did not participate in our sins and if our sins were not infused into him, then he could only have received them by imputation. What some deny is that a double imputation takes place in our justification" (*ibid*).

²⁷ See John Piper, *The Future of Justification: A Response to N.T. Wright* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 2007), 171. He further notes that "imputation is not the conferring of a status without a ground of real imputed moral righteousness. This is perhaps where many NT scholars who deny dual imputation go wrong (*ibid*).

²⁸ Robert Gundry notes that this "doctrine of imputation is not even biblical. Still less is it 'essential' to the Gospel ... And the doctrine that Christ's righteousness is imputed to believing sinners needs to be abandoned"

many scholars attempt to dismiss this very important truth with the broad-sweeping argument that it is simply “unbiblical.” The main opponents to the doctrine of the imputation of Christ’s righteousness to be dealt with *in this paper* will be that of N.T. Wright²⁹ and Robert Gundry³⁰ who deny the dual nature of imputation. That is to say, though they may agree that Adam’s sin is imputed to all of humanity, they would deny that the active righteousness of Christ is imputed to believers. Wright and Gundry will be brought into the discussion fairly frequently as well as other New Perspective proponents when it is appropriate to do so.

It is understood that no one can stand before God the Judge as neutral, that is, neither perfectly righteous or radically unrighteous, Scripture shows that the positive obedience of Christ is credited to the believer so that when he stands before the Judge, it is the perfect active righteousness of Christ which pardons God’s wrath in the sinner’s stead.³¹ Thus, the attempt of this paper is to give an objective and exegetical look at this doctrine and a few (of the plethora)

(Robert Gundry, “Why I Didn’t Endorse ‘The Gospel of Jesus Christ: An Evangelical Celebration,’” *Books & Culture* 7, no. 1 (Jan/Feb 2001): 9.

²⁹ Who will be cited throughout this paper as well as other New Perspective scholars who deny the imputation. See N.T. Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said: Was Paul of Tarsus the Real Founder of Christianity?* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997); idem. *Paul In Fresh Perspective* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 2005); idem, “On Becoming the Righteousness of God,” in *Pauline Theology, Volume II*, ed. D. M. Hay (Minneapolis, Minn.: Augsburg Fortress, 1993).

³⁰ See Gundry, “Why I Didn’t Endorse ‘The Gospel of Jesus Christ: An Evangelical Celebration,’” *Books & Culture* 7, no. 1 (Jan/Feb 2001): 6-9; cf. idem. “On Oden’s Answer,” *Books & Culture* 7, no. 2 (Mar/Apr 2001): 14-15, 39; idem., “The Nonimputation of Christ’s Righteousness,” *Justification: What’s at Stake in the Current Debates*, Mark Husbands and Daniel Treier, eds. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2004), 17-45. Though Gundry denies that his argument is motivated by a commitment to Arminian theology, in fact, it is this Arminian position that he articulates in his writings (See Phillips, “Justification of Imputed Righteousness,” 79).

³¹ James White notes: “If the righteousness that is imputed to the believer were a bare pardon or forgiveness, then he would be left at a *neutral point*, having no active obedience to the law of God to plead before the holy Judge. But since the elect are joined with Christ, their Head, His active, positive obedience to the Father is imputed to them as part of His righteousness just as His suffering in their stead provides them with redemption and release” (*The God Who Justifies* [Minneapolis, Minn.: Bethany House, 2001], 95).

of Scriptures to prove that “it is an unavoidable logical conclusion that people of faith are justified because Christ’s righteousness is imputed to them.”³²

Exegetical Proof of Imputation

Though much work has been done in the area of justification, the book of Romans and the New Perspective, it is profitable to delve deep into a few of the significant texts in order to understand whether the doctrine of dual imputation is indeed taught in the Scriptures.

Romans 4:3

Greek: τί γὰρ ἡ γραφή λέγει; ἐπίστευσεν δὲ Ἀβραάμ τῷ θεῷ καὶ ἐλογίσθη αὐτῷ εἰς δικαιοσύνην.

Author’s Translation: *For what does the Scripture say? Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness.*

It would not be pressing the point if it were stated that the book of Romans is about God’s righteousness put on display. Furthermore, Romans chapter four is of monumental importance in this study for λογίζομαι is found 11x in this chapter³³ of the 40 total occurrences³⁴ in the NT. After clearly demonstrating that all humanity is sinful and, hence, under the wrath of God (1:18-3:20); and after giving a superb definition and explanation of the righteousness of

³² George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*. Revised ed. edited by Donald A. Hagner (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1974), 491.

³³ Rom 4:3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 22, 23, and 24. As Vickers puts it, the word λογίζομαι appears more often in Romans 4 than in any other single text in the Bible and thus it brings the subject of imputation to the foreground (*Jesus’ Blood and Righteousness*, 71).

³⁴ Luke 22:37; John 11:50; Acts 19:27; Rom 2:3, 26; 3:28; 4:3ff, 8ff, 22ff; 6:11; 8:18, 36; 9:8; 14:14; 1 Cor 4:1; 13:5, 11; 2 Cor 3:5; 5:19; 10:2, 7, 11; 11:5; 12:6; Gal 3:6; Phil 3:13; 4:8; 2 Tim 4:16; Heb 11:19; Jas 2:23; and 1 Pet 5:12.

God which is received by the sinner through faith in Christ Jesus, the propitiatory sacrifice (3:21-26), Paul asks this simple question, Ποῦ οὖν ἡ καύχησις. He responds to this by noting that all boasting is excluded (ἐξεκλείσθη) because of verse 28: λογιζόμεθα γὰρ δικαιούσθαι πίστει ἄνθρωπον χωρὶς ἔργων νόμου. All boasting is excluded, Paul notes, because a man is justified by faith *apart from* or *without* (χωρὶς) works of the Law. Subsequently, Paul logically gives an illustration from the Hebrew Scriptures of a man of faith, *par excellence*, namely, Abraham.

In Rom 4:3, Paul quotes a familiar Hebrew text from Gen 15:6³⁵ noting that Abraham believed God and because of his faith in God, he was credited with righteousness.³⁶ Yet N. T. Wright is quick to assert that traditional readings of Paul have perverted the true Pauline understanding of the relationship between the righteousness of God and the death of Christ.³⁷ Essentially, the church has gotten it all wrong, according to Wright. By way of critique and rebuttal, it is profitable to exegete this verse.

Notice that verse three begins with the causal conjunction γὰρ, signifying the reason why Abraham had no cause for boasting before God, for this salvation was *all* God's doing. The phrase to be observed is ἐλογίσθη αὐτῷ εἰς δικαιοσύνην. The aorist passive verb ἐλογίσθη is

³⁵ This is not the place to give a detailed discussion of this verse in the Hebrew: בִּיהוּגָה וַיִּחְשְׁבֶהָ לוֹ צְדָקָה, וַיִּזְכְּרֶהָ. For this, see Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1-17*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament. R. K. Harrison and Robert L. Hubbard, Jr., eds. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990) 423-27; Vickers, *Jesus' Blood and Righteousness*, 72-88.

³⁶ John Owen clearly sees this verse as teaching the imputation of Christ's righteousness. "He believed in the Lord, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. It was accounted unto him, or imputed unto him for righteousness. It was counted, reckoned, imputed" (John Owen, *Doctrine of Justification by Faith*, 113). He continues by noting "There is an imputation unto us of that which is really our own, inherent in us, performed by us, antecedently unto that imputation, and this whether it be evil or good" (115)

³⁷ See N. T. Wright, "Romans," *The New Interpreter's Bible* (Nashville, Tenn.: Abington Press, 2002), 467; cf. Guy Prentiss Waters, *Justification and the New Perspectives on Paul: A Review and Reponse* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P & R Publishing, 2004), 128. See also the excellent (and lengthy!) footnote by D.A. Carson similarly critiquing Don Garlington along these lines, "The Vindication of Imputation," 68, n.46.

most often translated “credited,” “counted,” or “reckoned” in the translations and should be recognized as a divine passive.³⁸ This divine passive signifies that it is God’s work and God’s action which produces the result.

Furthermore, the prepositional phrase εἰς δικαιοσύνην needs to be properly understood. The preposition εἰς is used with the accusative δικαιοσύνην in substitution for the predicate nominative reflecting a Semitic influence (most often with the Hebrew לְ).³⁹ The preposition εἰς signifies result with the idea that Abraham believed God and it was credited to him *resulting in* righteousness.⁴⁰ The meaning is unmistakable; Abraham’s faith was counted by God for his righteousness.⁴¹ In this phrase, Paul links God’s reckoning righteousness with God’s not reckoning sin,⁴² or to state it another way, with forgiveness.⁴³ Therefore it is valid to deduce that because of Abraham’s faith in God, God credited righteousness to Abraham. This righteousness was imputed to him. The righteousness of God was reckoned to Abraham’s account.⁴⁴ The idea

³⁸ Or as Fitzmyer puts it, ἐλογίσθη is to be understood as a “theological passive;” Abraham’s faith was counted *by God* as uprightness, because God sees things as they are (Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans*, The Anchor Bible, William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman, eds. [New York: Doubleday, 1993], 373).

³⁹ See Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 47-48. Though this is noted regarding the Hebrew לְ, the accusative, הַיְיָ, stands alone in the Hebrew text without the לְ of possession preposition.

⁴⁰ See Wallace, *Grammar Beyond the Basics*, 369-71 for the various usages of the preposition εἰς with the accusative.

⁴¹ Gundry does not see this as valid. He weakly argues that λογίζομαι often occurs with an εἰς-phrase and means “consider to be,” as in Romans 3:28, for example. But then as his support he simply notes, “See the Greek lexicons” (“The Nonimputation of Christ’s Righteousness,” 21).

⁴² Cf. Rom 4:6-8 quoting Psalm 32:1-2.

⁴³ Vickers, *Jesus’ Blood and Righteousness*, 101.

⁴⁴ Schreiner notes, “The Righteousness was not inherent in Abraham. Righteousness was extrinsic to him and counted as his because he believed. In [this] sense righteousness was imputed to him. It follows, then, that Abraham was unrighteous, and needed an alien righteousness from God” (Thomas R. Schreiner, “Interpreting

here is that the reckoning of Abraham's faith as righteousness means that God accounted to him a righteousness that does not inherently belong to him.⁴⁵ Thus, Romans 4:3 is a key text in demanding the doctrine of imputation.⁴⁶

Romans 5:19

Greek: ὥσπερ γὰρ διὰ τῆς παρακοῆς τοῦ ἑνὸς ἀνθρώπου ἁμαρτωλοὶ κατεστάθησαν οἱ πολλοί, οὕτως καὶ διὰ τῆς ὑπακοῆς τοῦ ἑνὸς δίκαιοι κατασταθήσονται οἱ πολλοί.

Author's Translation: *For just as through the disobedience of one man the many were appointed as sinners, so also through the obedience of one man shall the many be appointed righteous.*

Romans 5:19⁴⁷ is another text which supports the active imputation of Christ's righteousness to believers. In context, Romans 5:12-21 is comparing and contrasting the first Adam with the last Adam; the first Adam bringing sin to all men and the last Adam bringing life to all men. But the verse under observation is v.19 which begins with the comparative conjunction ὥσπερ, signifying the first statement is to be compared with the one to follow. The phrase διὰ τῆς παρακοῆς τοῦ ἑνὸς ἀνθρώπου delineates the truth stated in v.12 that through the disobedience of one man, namely, Adam, sin came to all men.⁴⁸ Verse 19 puts it ἁμαρτωλοὶ

Romans 4:1-8: The Theological and Exegetical Contribution of Psalm 32," *Unpublished Paper Presented at the 2002 Evangelical Theological Society in Toronto* <http://www.sbts.edu/docs/tschreiner/Romans4_1-8.pdf>, 8).

⁴⁵ See Moo, *Romans*, 262; cf. Schreiner, *Romans*, 215. He continues, "God's righteousness is not native to human beings; it is an alien righteousness granted to us by God's grace" (ibid.).

⁴⁶ Phillips, "Justification of Imputed Righteousness," 83.

⁴⁷ For an excellent and thorough treatment of this verse, see Vickers, *Jesus' Blood and Righteousness*, 113-57.

⁴⁸ Cf. 1 Cor 15:21-22.

κατεστάθησαν οἱ πολλοί. The verb κατεστάθησαν is from καθιστημι and is used 21x in the NT.⁴⁹

καθιστημι has undergone significant discussion as to its meaning.⁵⁰ Suffice it to say, BDAG

defines καθιστημι as “causing someone to experience something,” “to make,” “to cause.”⁵¹

Consider the parallel thought in Paul’s argument here:

Strophe 1: διὰ τῆς παρακοῆς τοῦ ἐνὸς ἀνθρώπου ἀμαρτωλοὶ κατεστάθησαν οἱ πολλοί

Strophe 2: διὰ τῆς ὑπακοῆς τοῦ ἐνὸς δίκαιοι κατασταθήσονται οἱ πολλοί

These are exact parallel phrases.⁵² The first simply states that through the disobedience of Adam (cf. Gen 3), the many⁵³ were appointed⁵⁴ sinners. On the other hand, through the obedience⁵⁵ of

⁴⁹ Matt 24:45, 47; 25:21, 23; Luke 12:14, 42, 44; Acts 6:3; 7:10, 27, 35; 17:15; Rom 5:19; Titus 1:5; Heb 5:1; 7:28; 8:3; Jas 3:6; 4:4; and 2 Pet 1:8. Notice the only two occurrences of this term that occur in Romans both occur in 5:19.

⁵⁰ And it is not the purpose of this paper to give a detailed explanation and proof of the meaning of καθιστημι but for a good summary of the domains of meaning, see Vickers, *Jesus’ Blood and Righteousness*, 116-22.

⁵¹ Walter Bauer, W. F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich, and F. W. Danker. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*. 3rd edition. ed. Frederick William Danker (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 492. Also see the helpful discussion by Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. ed. Moisés Silva (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2006), 287-88; Piper, *The Future of Justification*, 170.

⁵² Therefore the basic idea is thus in 5:19 (See Vickers, *Jesus’ Blood and Righteousness*, 155):

<u>Actor</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Result</u>
Christ	Obedience	Righteousness (status)

⁵³ “Many” here being used signifying the whole of humanity. See Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*. The New International Commentary on the New Testament. Ned. B. Stonehouse, F. F. Bruce, and Gordon D. Fee, eds. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996), 343-44. The point is this: Just as sin is charged to all in Adam (all mankind), righteousness is credited to many (those in Christ). Just as the judicial consequences of Adam’s sin apply to all in Adam, the judicial consequences of Christ’s righteousness apply to the many who are in Christ” (Bridges and Bevington, *The Great Exchange*, 109).

⁵⁴ Note the aorist passive κατεστάθησαν; the many were appointed as sinners. Adam’s sin affected all his posterity so that no one is born righteous (Psa 51:5).

one man, the many are appointed (or made) righteous. Obviously this cannot mean that people are made righteous because *they* are righteous for Psalm 143:2 says: “For in Your sight no man living is righteous.”⁵⁶ Because of this truth, the obvious interpretation of Rom 5:19 is that people are “made righteous only by the righteousness of Christ and their faith in Christ, not by *being* righteous.”⁵⁷

Speaking of this verse and its relation to imputation, John Piper says:

Paul’s point is that our righteousness before God, our justification, is not based on what we have done, but on what Christ did. His righteous act, his obedience, is counted as ours. We are counted, or appointed, righteous in him. It is a real righteousness, and it is ours, but it is ours only by imputation – or to use Paul’s language from earlier in the letter, God “imputes righteousness” to us apart from works (4:6); or “righteousness is imputed” to those who believe (4:9).⁵⁸

Philippians 3:9

Greek: καὶ εὑρεθῶ ἐν αὐτῷ, μὴ ἔχων ἐμὴν δικαιοσύνην τὴν ἐκ νόμου ἀλλὰ τὴν διὰ πίστεως Χριστοῦ, τὴν ἐκ θεοῦ δικαιοσύνην ἐπὶ τῇ πίστει,

Author’s Translation: *And I might be found in Him, not having my own righteousness which is from the Law, but on the other hand, that which is through faith in Christ, a righteousness from God on the basis of faith.*

⁵⁵ There is discussion as to what this obedience refers to. There are two views purported: 1) It refers to the whole life of Jesus Christ and his constant, continual obedience to the Father; or 2) It refers to the sacrificial and substitutionary death of Jesus Christ for sinners.

⁵⁶ Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references will be from the New American Standard Bible, 1995 edition.

⁵⁷ Moo, *Romans*, 345, n.145.

⁵⁸ Piper, *Counted Righteous in Christ*, 110. Regarding this verse, Vickers also concludes: “If Christ’s obedience has the result that ‘many will be made righteous,’ then that necessarily means that there must be a way in which God considers Christ’s obedience as the ground upon which he will view ‘sinners’ as ‘righteous.’ Theologically we may well describe this by saying that God indeed ‘counts’ Christ’s obedience as the ground of the believer’s righteousness” (*Jesus’ Blood and Righteousness*, 157).

In Philippians chapter three, Paul has endeavored to prove to the church in Philippi just how zealous he was for the things of God according to the Jewish faith (3:1-6), but yet he notes that all this is rubbish because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus as Lord (3:8). Then in verse nine, Paul's hope is simple. He no longer relies on his own abilities and righteousness, but rather he trusts that he be found ἐν αὐτῷ. To be in Christ means to be unified to Him so that all the person's sins were credited to Him on the cross and all the perfect righteousness of Christ was credited to the sinner. Thus this phrase signifies a believer's position in Christ.⁵⁹

From this verse is found the truth that external righteousness is given to a believing sinner, τὴν ἐκ θεοῦ δικαιοσύνην.⁶⁰ Here δικαιοσύνην is used (as often the case in the NT) referring to the court of law where the judge had to decide between two parties to justify the one and condemn the other. In other words, he had to decide in favor of the one and against the other. "Thus, 'to justify' often meant 'to give a person his rights.'"⁶¹ Specifically, the phrase ἐκ θεοῦ is significant because it shows that the righteousness is not only *from* God, but it is contrasted with the righteousness which can be derived from the law on the basis of good deeds.⁶² And as Vickers concludes, "the righteousness that Paul wants can only be Christ's righteousness – the

⁵⁹ See Piper, *Future of Justification*, 171. He says, "True, this does not say explicitly that *Christ's righteousness* is *imputed* to us it is a natural implication of this verse" (171-72).

⁶⁰ See Vickers, *Jesus' Blood and Righteousness*, 209.

⁶¹ Hawthorne, Gerald F. *Philippians*, Word Biblical Commentary. David A. Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker, eds (Waco, Tex.: Word Books, 1983), 140.

⁶² *Ibid.*

righteousness that is not Paul's own."⁶³ In other words, "what is reckoned here is not faith but righteousness on the basis of faith ... It is clear that what is reckoned (imputed) is righteousness entirely *apart* from human merit."⁶⁴

Paul sought the alien righteousness that comes only from God, only by faith, and only *from* Christ.⁶⁵ Therefore it must have come from Christ, since He is the only absolutely perfect One. So when Gundry notes "[The] righteousness is not described as Christ's; and Paul goes on to say that it comes 'from God on the basis of faith,' so that yet again we are dealing with God's righteousness"⁶⁶ it is understood that his position in seeing this crucial text being irrelevant to the doctrine of imputation needs to be corrected.

1 Corinthians 1:30

Greek: ἐξ αὐτοῦ δὲ ὑμεῖς ἐστε ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ ὃς ἐγενήθη σοφία ἡμῖν ἀπὸ θεοῦ δικαιοσύνη τε καὶ ἁγιασμὸς καὶ ἀπολύτρωσις

Author's Translation: *But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus who became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption.*

Paul is concluding an extraordinary argument proving that the word of the cross is foolishness to both Jews and Greeks (1:18-25). It is for this reason that God has chosen the

⁶³ Ibid, 210. The point is that there is nothing earned, but rather only righteousness received. And that is received externally from another source. This is Paul's point in Philippians 3:9 (ibid., 211).

⁶⁴ Ladd, *Theology of the New Testament*, 491. See also Hawthorne who says, "faith in Christ, then, is another way of stating what it means to be found in Christ (ἐνθεῶ ἐν αὐτῷ), incorporated in him, and united with him to such a degree that *all that Christ is and has done is received by the person who trusts in Christ*" (emphasis added) (*Philippians*, WBC, 142).

⁶⁵ See White, *The God Who Justifies*, 117.

⁶⁶ Robert Gundry, "Why I Didn't Endorse 'The Gospel of Jesus Christ: An Evangelical Celebration.'" *Books & Culture* 7, no. 1 (Jan/Feb 2001): 7.

foolish things of the world (1:26-28) so as to magnify His own glory (1:29-31). It is right in the middle of these few verses where Paul specifically states that God has chosen the worthless things of the world so that “no flesh may boast before God” (v.29). Verse 30 begins with the celebratory phrase ἐξ αὐτοῦ δὲ ὑμεῖς ἐστε ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ. Indeed, it is only by His doing (ἐξ αὐτοῦ)⁶⁷ that any Christian has union with Christ (ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ).

The next phrase is in need of close examination for here the concept of imputation is found in the glorious truths contained in verse 30.⁶⁸ It is not insignificant that N. T. Wright acknowledges that 1 Cor 1:30 “is the only passage I know where something called ‘the imputed righteousness of Christ,’ a phrase more often found in post-Reformation theology and piety than in the New Testament, finds any basis in the text.”⁶⁹ However, Gundry sees this verse as having no relevance to the doctrine at hand,

That the wisdom comes from God favors that righteousness, sanctification, and redemption – which make up or parallel wisdom – likewise come from God. Thus, the righteousness that Christ becomes for us who are in him is not his own righteousness, but God’s. Nor does Paul use the language of imputation.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Note the emphasis here on the divine action and the theological amplification of this phrase in Eph 2:8-9 (See Mark A. Garcia, “Imputation and the Christology of Union with Christ: Calvin, Osiander, and the Contemporary Quest for a Reformed Model,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 68, no. 2 [Fall 2006]: 227).

⁶⁸ Calvin often spoke of the truth “Christ is our righteousness,” and, in addition to Jer 33:16, oftentimes he was alluding to this verse in 1 Cor 1:30 in so doing (Garcia, “Imputation and the Christology of Union with Christ,” 233).

⁶⁹ N. T. Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997), 123. On a milder note, regarding this verse, Garlington says that it has not been established that *imputation* is the means by which Christ’s righteousness becomes ours. [His idea is rather] that Christ has become our righteousness by virtue of union with himself, plain and simple (*In Defense of the New Perspective*, 137).

⁷⁰ Gundry, “Why I Didn’t Endorse ‘The Gospel of Jesus Christ,’” 7.

For this reason, it is all the more necessary to look closely at verse 30. Paul continues his thought in the paragraph by noting ὃς ἐγενήθη σοφία ἡμῖν. The idea is that He⁷¹ became⁷² wisdom for us. The personal pronoun ἡμῖν is a dative of advantage giving it the proper force of “He became wisdom *for our advantage*.”⁷³ Not only this, but Paul qualified this phrase with the prepositional phrase ἀπὸ θεοῦ. In other words, Jesus Christ became the wisdom *from God* for our advantage. Not only did Jesus Christ become wisdom but Paul inserts three other nouns for emphasis and encouragement; δικαιοσύνη, ἁγιασμός, and ἀπολύτρωσις. It is the author’s persuasion that these three nouns are modifying the phrase ἐγενήθη while still receiving the dative of advantage force of the pronoun ἡμῖν. Diagrammed, 1 Cor 1:30 may look like this:

ὃς ἐγενήθη ἡμῖν ἀπὸ θεοῦ

σοφία
δικαιοσύνη
ἁγιασμός
ἀπολύτρωσις

Therefore it is seen that Jesus Christ became for the believer wisdom from God and righteousness from God, sanctification, and redemption.⁷⁴ The divine activity of Christ becoming

⁷¹ ὃς refers back to Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ in the previous phrase.

⁷² John Piper wisely notes that ἐγενήθη strongly suggests that “Christ’s ‘becoming’ or ‘being’ righteousness for us is related to justification – our being declared righteous” (*Counted Righteous In Christ*, 85).

⁷³ See David E. Garland who agrees with this usage of the dative (*1 Corinthians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Robert W. Yarbrough and Robert H. Stein, eds (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2003), 79).

⁷⁴ Furthermore, it is not pressing the issue to see the natural progression in the four realities that Christ is for us. In our union with Christ he becomes ‘wisdom’ for us in overcoming the blinding and deadening *ignorance* that keeps us from seeing the glory of the cross (1 Corinthians 1:24). Then he becomes righteousness for us in overcoming our *guilt and condemnation* (Romans 8:1). Then he becomes sanctification for us in overcoming our *corruption and pollution* (1 Corinthians 1:2; Ephesians 2:10). Finally, he becomes redemption for us in overcoming,

δικαιοσύνη for believers is forensic in nature. It “highlights the believer’s undeserved stance of right standing before God, despite his/her guilt from having broken the law.”⁷⁵

2 Corinthians 5:21

Greek: τὸν μὴ γνόντα ἁμαρτίαν ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν ἁμαρτίαν ἐποίησεν, ἵνα ἡμεῖς γενώμεθα δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ.

Author’s Translation: *He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*

Without a doubt to many, this is the quintessential text in the New Testament in proving dual imputation. It is abundantly clear – to most, at least. Though this verse has, for centuries, been believed to have taught dual imputation, Wright takes great umbrage with this traditional understanding. He argues that this verse simply teaches that the apostles are the “living embodiment of the message they proclaim.”⁷⁶ They are an “incarnation of the covenant faithfulness of God.”⁷⁷ Therefore, it has absolutely nothing to do with the forensic act of justification.⁷⁸ The New Perspective advocates deny that this verse has anything to do with

in the resurrection, all *the miseries, pain, futility, and death* of this age (Romans 8:23). There is no reason to force this text to mean that Christ became these things for us in exactly the same way, namely, by imputation” but the idea of imputation is certainly in this verse (see Piper, *Counted Righteous in Christ*, 86-87).

⁷⁵ Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*. The New International Commentary on the New Testament. ed, F. F. Bruce (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987), 86. Garland hints at this conclusion when he says, “‘Righteousness’ refers to the state of having been acquitted and sharing Christ’s righteous character. When they are arraigned in God’s court, God will not judge them on the basis of what they are but as those who are guiltless in Christ Jesus” (*1 Corinthians*, BECNT, 80).

⁷⁶ Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said*, 104.

⁷⁷ Ibid. Cf. Wright, “On Becoming the Righteousness of God: 2 Corinthians 5:21,” 200-8; Also, for a helpful critique of this, see Waters, *Justification and the New Perspectives on Paul*, 140, 172, 177-79.

⁷⁸ N.T. Wright dismisses this verse as proving dual imputation. He notes that this is not a “that [God] gives, reckons, imparts, or imputes to human beings” (“On Becoming the Righteousness of God”).

imputation. Rather, as Garlington notes, “what is at stake is not imputation, but ‘interchange in Christ.’ That is to say, an exchange has taken place on the cross: Christ and we have switched places. He became what we are – sin – and we have become what he is – the very embodiment of God’s righteousness.”⁷⁹ Additionally, Gundry argues that this verse proves that God counts as righteous the faith that united us to the Christ who died for believers.⁸⁰

In 2 Corinthians Paul is defending his apostleship against those who are seeking to undermine his authority. In chapter five, Paul makes it evident that he endeavors to be pleasing to God (v.9) because all will one day stand before the judgment seat of God (v.10) and, as a result, he endeavors to persuade men to come to salvation (v.11). Why? Because he knows that “one died for all, therefore all died” (v.14). This ought to change the way that believers live so they no longer live for themselves but for God and His glory (v.15). This life transformation is evident because if anyone is in Christ, “he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come” (v.17). The point of Paul’s ministry then is to declare the glorious truth of reconciliation with God (v.18-20). Paul notes that God reconciled the world to Himself through Christ and His finished work on the cross (v.19).

⁷⁹ See Don Garlington, *In Defense of the New Perspective on Paul: Essays and Reviews* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2005), 118-19. The issue is centered on the genitive phrase δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ as to whether it is a subjective genitive or an objective genitive. As John Piper notes, “God’s righteousness, is his commitment to do what is right. Or, pressing beneath the surface to discern the standard by which God defines what is ‘right,’ righteousness consists most deeply in God’s unwavering allegiance to himself ... His righteousness is his unswerving commitment to uphold the worth of his glory. That is the essence of his righteousness” (Piper, *The Future of Justification*, 164).

⁸⁰ Gundry, “The Nonimputation of Christ’s Righteousness,” 41. In the footnote on this phrase he says, “Since elsewhere Paul uses the phrase ‘in Christ’ predominantly for the location of believers, 2 Corinthians 5:21 is best taken as indicating the location of believers where they become God’s righteousness, not the location of that righteousness” (ibid, n.48).

Then, Paul, with the thought of God reconciling the world to Himself, declares the climactic statement and the means as to *how* he effects this reconciliation - God made Christ who knew no sin to be sin so that believers may become the righteousness of God in Him.

The first phrase in v.21 is emphatic, τὸν μὴ γινόντα ἁμαρτίαν. Jesus Christ was the Lamb of God who *knew no sin* (Heb 4:15; 9:28). Then Paul gives the treasured phrase of substitutionary atonement, ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν; it was Christ who did this *for us*; on behalf of us.⁸¹

Paul wrote this verse with a parallel structure.⁸² God made Jesus Christ, the sinless man, to be sin in the place of sinful humans. Obviously this does not allow one to infer that Jesus Christ became a sinner as a *person*.⁸³ Instead, “Jesus received our sins by *imputation*.”⁸⁴ It is a logical parallel that Paul draws, that “Christ was ‘made sin’; we in the same manner ‘might become the righteousness of God’ – namely, by imputation.”⁸⁵ The Greek phrase ἵνα ἡμεῖς γινώμεθα δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ signifies the reality that the believer is “appointed righteous” or

⁸¹ See Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, 383-89 for an excellent discussion of ὑπὲρ and its relation to substitutionary atonement.

⁸² And this is precisely why N.T. Wright’s view on this verse has no weight. As already mentioned, Wright sees this referring to God’s covenant faithfulness that was evident through Paul’s own ministry, but such a view destroys the parallelism between ἁμαρτία and δικαιοσύνη (would then become “covenant disloyalty”), restricts the ἡμεῖς arbitrarily to Paul and his ministry, and robs the characteristically Pauline phrase ἐν Χριστῷ of its potency (See Murray J. Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*. New International Greek Testament Commentary. I. Howard Marshall and Donald A. Hagner, eds (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005), 256.

⁸³ The various views of Jesus Christ being the sinner, sin-offering, sin bearer or sin will not be explicated in this paper for this has no direct bearing to the argument of the latter phrase in the verse. For a good treatment, see Harris, *Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, NIGTC, 252-54.

⁸⁴ Phillips, “Justification of Imputed Righteousness,” 93.

⁸⁵ This phrase δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ does not refer to “God’s attribute of righteousness, for our faith has nothing to do with that, but with the righteousness which God has provided for the one who believes in Christ. Thus, God restores us to favor by imputing to us Christ’s righteousness” (See Henry Clarence Theissen, *Lectures in Systematic Theology*, Rev. Vernon D. Doerksen [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006], 276).

“constituted righteous” in the divine court.⁸⁶ Even Isaiah the prophet recognized this many centuries before the Messiah came in saying, “The righteous one, my servant, shall make many righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities” (Isa 53:11, NRSV).

Even though the often-occurring imputation verb λογίζομαι is absent from this verse it is “not inappropriate to perceive in this verse a double imputation: sin was reckoned to Christ’s account (v.21a), so that righteousness is reckoned to our account (v.21b).⁸⁷ The sin of the justified one was imputed to Christ so that he could bear it on the cross. Likewise, his righteousness was imputed, or credited, to us, so that we might enter into the blessing of eternal life.”⁸⁸ John Calvin said along the same lines,

This is the wonderful exchange which, out of his measureless benevolence, he has made with us; that, becoming Son of man with us, he has made us sons of God with him; that, by his descent to earth, he has prepared an ascent to heaven for us; that, by taking on our mortality, he has conferred his immortality upon us; that, accepting our weakness, he has strengthened us by his power; that, receiving our poverty unto himself, he has transferred his wealth to us; that, taking the weight of our iniquity upon himself (which oppressed us), he has *clothed us with his righteousness*.⁸⁹

Perhaps no one has said it better than Charles Hodge,

There is probably no passage in the Scriptures in which the doctrine of justification is

⁸⁶ See Harris, *Second Epistle of Corinthians*, NIGTC, 455.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Phillips, “Justification of Imputed Righteousness,” 93-94. Hodge similarly notes “We are righteous with the righteousness of God, not with our own which is but a filthy rag, but with that which he has provided and which consists in the infinitely meritorious righteousness of his own dear Son” (Charles Hodge, *An Exposition of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (New York: Robert Charter and Brothers, 1881), 150; cf. Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle of St Paul to the Corinthians*, The International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh, U. K.: T & T Clark, 1960), 188.

⁸⁹ Calvin, *Institutes*, 2:1362. Similarly he notes, “To wipe out the guilt of the disobedience which had been committed in our flesh, he took that very flesh that in it, for our sake, and in our stead, he might achieve perfect obedience. Thus, he was conceived of the Holy Spirit in order that, in the flesh taken, fully imbued with the holiness of the Spirit, he might impart that holiness to us” (ibid., 2:1341).

more concisely or clearly stated than in [2 Cor 5:21]. Our sins were imputed to Christ, and his righteousness is imputed to us. He bore our sins; we are clothed in his righteousness ... Christ bearing our sins did not make him morally a sinner ... nor does Christ's righteousness become subjectively ours, it is not the moral quality of our souls ... Our sins were the judicial ground of the sufferings of Christ, so that they were a satisfaction of justice; and his righteousness is the judicial ground of our acceptance with God, so that our pardon is an act of justice ... it is not mere pardon, but justification alone, that gives us peace with God.⁹⁰

Hebrews 10:1, 14

Greek: Σκιάν γὰρ ἔχων ὁ νόμος τῶν μελλόντων ἀγαθῶν, οὐκ αὐτὴν τὴν εἰκόνα τῶν πραγμάτων, κατ' ἐνιαυτὸν ταῖς αὐταῖς θυσίαις ἅς προσφέρουσιν εἰς τὸ διηκεῖς οὐδέποτε δύναται τοὺς προσερχομένους τελειῶσαι ... μιᾷ γὰρ προσφορᾷ τετελείωκεν εἰς τὸ διηκεῖς τοὺς ἁγιαζομένους.

Author's Translation: *For the Law, having only a shadow of the good things to come, was not itself the form of the things, is never able, by the same sacrifices which are constantly offered year by year, to perfect those who come near ... for by one offering He has perfected forever those who are sanctified.*

The book of Hebrews centers on the superiority of the Lord Jesus Christ. After giving proof after proof that Jesus is better than anything and everything that the Jewish people could want or do, the author is showing the inadequacy of the animal sacrifices of the Old Covenant which were offered so often in years past and yet comparing that with the marvelous, sufficient and perfecting sacrifice of Jesus Christ on Calvary's cross.

Chapter 10 begins where 9 left off speaking of Christ ὁ Χριστὸς ἅπαξ προσενηχθεὶς εἰς τὸ πολλῶν ἀνενεγκεῖν ἁμαρτίας. In verse one of chapter 10, the author notes that the Law has a shadow of the good things which are to come (namely, a final sacrifice for sins), but yet it was

⁹⁰ Hodge, *Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 150-51.

not the sacrifice par excellence (οὐκ αὐτὴν τὴν εἰκόνα τῶν πραγμάτων). It is these sacrifices that were continually offered in the Old Covenant that could never sufficiently atone for sin once and for all.⁹¹ The author makes certain the readers know that the sacrifices which were offered could never make perfect those who draw near.⁹² One of the emphases in this verse is the last word of the verse, τελειῶσαι.⁹³

Then in verse 14, summarizing a similar point, the author says that those who are being sanctified (τοὺς ἁγιαζομένους) have been perfected forever by one offering (μιᾷ γὰρ προσφορᾷ). It is clear from the context and from the usage of that the adjectival participle τοὺς ἁγιαζομένους is referring to true believers in Christ. Therefore, verse 14 notes that through the one offering of the Lord Jesus Christ, the perfect Lamb who died once and for all (Heb 9:12, 28). The noun προσφορᾷ is a dative of means. Through the *means of* this one sacrifice, the intended result was accomplished. But what was that accomplished result?

The accomplished result was that Jesus Christ τετελείωκεν εἰς τὸ διηκεῖς those who are believers (τοὺς ἁγιαζομένους). The perfect active verb τετελείωκεν is significant in this context.

⁹¹ Note the emphatic phrases in the Greek, κατ' ἐνιαυτὸν and εἰς τὸ διηκεῖς.

⁹² τοὺς προσερχομένους **τελειῶσαι**. τελειῶ used here means to perfect or to cause something to be perfect. Bridges and Bevington note so appropriately, “Can animal sacrifices ‘make perfect those who draw near’? The answer is a resounding, ‘Never!’ For animals do not have a moral righteousness of their own to transfer to us sinners, and thus they cannot cleanse our guilty consciences. But they provide a shadow that serves a divine purpose, leading us to the sinless sin bearer. Only the perfect life and death of Christ provide us with justification, forgiveness, and the resulting permanent position of favor with the holy God. Christ’s finished work of atonement provides us with something animal blood never could – God” (*The Great Exchange*, 240).

⁹³ Oftentimes when the author wanted to draw attention to something, he would move the emphatic word (or phrase) forward to begin the sentence. Yet there are times when an author would save the most important word for the very end of the verse thus leaving the reader (or hearer) with much anticipation (See Gk. Σκιάν γὰρ ἔχων ὁ νόμος τῶν μελλόντων ἀγαθῶν, οὐκ αὐτὴν τὴν εἰκόνα τῶν πραγμάτων, κατ' ἐνιαυτὸν ταῖς αὐταῖς θυσίαις ἅς προσφέρουσιν εἰς τὸ διηκεῖς οὐδέποτε δύναται τοὺς προσερχομένους **τελειῶσαι**). See Heb 2:9 and 6:20 for this kind of emphatic expression used for saving important words until the end of the phrase or the verse (2:9 - τὸν δὲ βραχὺ τι παρ' ἀγγέλους ἠλαττωμένον βλέπομεν **Ἰησοῦν**; and 6:20 - ὅπου πρόδρομος ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν εἰσηλθεν **Ἰησοῦς**).

The same verb was used in 10:1 to emphasize that the same sacrifices which were brought year after year and sacrificed under the Old Covenant could never *perfect* (τελειῶσαι) those who came near. Contrast 10:1 with 10:14 where the author unmistakably states that through this one sacrifice of Christ, he has perfected forever those who are saved. But how are believers *perfected*? The author would argue that believers are only *perfected* through the shed blood of Jesus Christ on Calvary's cross in bearing the sin of those who believe and, consequently, crediting to them His righteousness so that they would be perfected (cf. 2 Cor 5:21).

Conclusion

After observing these crucial texts in support of imputation one can hardly but agree with the Reformed theologians of history in saying that the act of justification *requires* imputation, namely, a positive imputation of Christ's obedience must be imputed to the believer beyond the forgiveness of sins in order for him to be justified.⁹⁴ It is not *only* the forgiveness of sin which allows God to pardon the sinner but it is the perfect and undefiled righteousness of Christ, which is imputed to a believer at the moment of regeneration, which becomes the basis upon which God can and does treat the believer as just.⁹⁵ The result of being justified is the believer's most supreme desire to live a life worthy of his or her calling (Eph 4:1) and to be conformed to the image of Christ (Rom 8:29). Gundry is wrong in implying that the doctrine of imputation allows room for believers to live disobedient lives simply because they are already *declared righteous because of Christ's obedience*.⁹⁶

⁹⁴ Vickers, *Jesus' Blood and Righteousness*, 41.

⁹⁵ See White, *The God Who Justifies*, 111.

⁹⁶ See Gundry, "The Nonimputation of Christ's Righteousness," 44.

Some well known lyrics from the past describe the glorious truth that believers in Jesus Christ are clothed in the perfect righteousness of Christ. Edward Mote in the 19th century wrote these familiar words,

*My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness ...
Dressed In His righteousness alone
Faultless to stand before the throne.*⁹⁷

Charles Wesley in 1738 penned,

*No condemnation now I dread; Jesus, and all in Him, is mine!
Alive in Him my living Head and clothed in righteousness divine.*⁹⁸

Just one year later, in 1739, Nikolaus L. von Zinzendorf authored these wonderful lines,

*Jesus thy blood and righteousness
My beauty are, my glorious dress.*⁹⁹

Perhaps no one has concluded better than John Piper in saying,

Alongside the pastoral preciousness of the doctrine of the imputed righteousness of Christ is the great truth that this doctrine bestows on Jesus Christ the fullest honor that he deserves. Not only should he be honored as the one who died to pardon us, and not only should he be honored as the one who sovereignly works faith and obedience in us, but he should also be honored as the one who provided a perfect righteousness for us as the ground of our full acceptance and endorsement by God. I pray that the “newer” ways of understanding justification, which deny the reality of the imputation of divine righteousness to sinners by faith alone, will not flourish, and that the fullest glory of Christ and the fullest pastoral help for souls will not be diminished.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ *The Hymnal for Worship and Celebration* (Waco, Tex.: Word Music, 1986), 402.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 203.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 193.

¹⁰⁰ Piper, *Counted Righteous in Christ*, 125.

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