

ESSENTIALS OF JUSTIFICATION

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Few doctrines have come under fire from the enemies of truth as has the Gospel doctrine of justification by God's grace alone by and through the Lord Jesus Christ alone. The biblical doctrine of justification lies at the heart of the Gospel message of how a holy and just God can remain holy and just and still justify sinful people. Job considered this dilemma in asking the following question – ***“I know it is so of a truth: but how should man be just with God?” (Job 9:2).*** Job's friend Bildad posed the same question – ***“How then can man be justified with God? or how can he be clean that is born of a woman?” (Job 25:4).*** Biblical justification involves two miracles of God's grace:

(1) The complete forgiveness (pardon) of sins on a just ground, that ground being the blood of Jesus Christ as the Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer of God's chosen people.

(2) The reality of a righteous standing for sinners before God on a just ground, which is Christ's righteousness (the merits of His

obedience unto death for His people) imputed (charged) to them.

The Bible teaches that both miracles are totally and exclusively the work of God through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, with no contribution from or participation by those whom God has justified. The Bible states clearly that the only living and true God, the sovereign God of all grace, justifies ungodly people – ***“But to him that worketh not, but believeth on HIM THAT JUSTIFIETH THE UNGODLY, his faith is counted for righteousness” (Romans 4:5).*** This means that there is absolutely no condition placed upon sinners by which they are justified, and there is no qualification within sinners for which they are justified. It is all by grace based upon the qualifications found in and conditions fulfilled by the Lord Jesus Christ as the Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer of God’s chosen people. Consider –

(1) WHAT ARE CHRIST’S QUALIFICATIONS FOR THIS GREAT

WORK? He is God manifest in the flesh, God with us, both God and perfect Man in one Person –

*1 Timothy 3 – (16) And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: **GOD WAS MANIFEST IN THE FLESH, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.***

*Matthew 1 – (23) Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call His name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, **GOD WITH US.***

(2) WHAT CONDITIONS DID CHRIST FULFILL? He became incarnate and, as Godman, by His obedience unto death for the sins of a people that God the Father chose and gave to Him before the foundation of the world and whose sins the Father imputed (charged) to Him, He obeyed the law unto death and paid their sin-debt in full.

Having been raised from the dead, He fulfilled all righteousness whereupon God's people are justified and from which they receive the gift of spiritual and eternal life –

Romans 3 – (24) Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: (25) Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; (26) To declare, I say, at this time His righteousness: that He might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.

Romans 8 – (10) And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.

Hebrews 2 – (17) Wherefore in all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining

to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.

This is the righteousness of God revealed in the Gospel –

Romans 1 – (16) For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. (17) For therein is THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

The most common controversy that has been debated over the years has to do with HOW GOD JUSTIFIES SINNERS. This debate can be framed in different ways and by different terms, but they all come down to the same question – Does God justify His people based on Christ’s righteousness imputed or by Christ’s righteousness imparted? Is the justification of sinners before God accomplished by a work of Christ totally

outside of those for whom He died and arose again, or is it accomplished by a work of the Holy Spirit within those for whom Christ died and arose again, first making them inwardly righteous whereupon God then imputes it to them? As you can see, these are two opposing views of how God justifies His people.

The next controversy that has been debated over the years has to do with WHEN God justifies sinners. This debate is not as polarizing as the first because true believers can disagree over the timing of justification and still maintain the truth of God's grace and the fellowship of faith. The three positions taken by professing believers on this issue are:

(1) Justified from eternity in the eternal mind of God which never changes;

(2) Justified at the time of the cross-death of Christ when He redeemed His people from sin; and

(3) Justified at the time when God the Holy Spirit in the new birth gives God's people faith.

If we believe that our justification before God is based or grounded upon Christ's righteousness imputed which results in God-given faith in Christ, the issue of timing is not a Gospel issue over which professing believers should divide. However, and we need to be very clear on this matter, any notion that God justifies sinners based on or because of their believing rather than based on Christ's righteousness imputed is a denial of the grace of God in the Gospel of Christ. I have written a booklet entitled, WHEN ARE GOD'S PEOPLE JUSTIFIED IN HIS SIGHT? You can find this booklet on the following website – www.rofgrace.com. The subject of this current booklet is the essential truths on which all true believers must agree according to the teachings of God's Word on HOW GOD JUSTIFIES HIS CHOSEN PEOPLE. In God's Word (the Bible), we find five points of revealed truth that involve these essential elements showing the answer to Job's and Bildad's questions – How should man be justified with God? I will use many Scriptural references to show these five

essential points of truth, and I will endeavor to maintain the integrity of these references by not taking them out of their context. But I do urge you to take some time to read and study the whole of God's Word to see if these things are true. The passage upon which I will base most of my comments is the following –

Romans 8 – (32) He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? (33) Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. (34) Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, Who is even at the right hand of God, Who also maketh intercession for us.

ESSENTIAL TRUTH #1 – GOD IS THE ONLY SOURCE OF JUSTIFICATION

This is stated in *Romans 8:33* – “***IT IS GOD THAT JUSTIFIETH.***” The source of justification is the sovereign love, mercy, and grace of God in and by the Lord Jesus Christ. This shows that it does not matter so much what we ourselves or others say about being justified. The only real judgment that matters is God’s judgment. And the only way we can know God’s judgment for certain is to know His Word. The Lord rebuked the self-righteous Pharisees for justifying themselves without knowing God’s way of justification –

Luke 16 – (15) And He said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.

But any self-justification is futile –
Job 9 – (20) If I justify myself, mine own

mouth shall condemn me: if I say, I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse.

So, all true believers agree that God alone by His free and sovereign love, grace, and mercy in Christ Jesus is the only source of justification. Christ also acknowledged that even though the Pharisees appeared to be right with God in the eyes of men, because of their unbelief and self-righteous works, they gave no evidence of having been justified with God

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Matthew 23 – (28) Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.

Again, we must recognize that **“IT IS GOD THAT JUSTIFIETH.”** This shows us that true justification is totally and exclusively the work of God the Father acting as the sovereign and righteous Judge of all. Justification before God is totally and exclusively a LEGAL (forensic) matter having to do with how we stand before the

supreme Judge of all and how He views us in the light of His perfect law and inflexible justice. Many object to viewing justification as an exclusively legal matter because they believe this diminishes its reality and power. The suggestion is that holding such a view would be pretense on God's part. They claim that it would mean that God declares sinners to be righteous when they really are not righteous. They reason that if God declares us to be righteous, we must first be made righteous within ourselves, else God cannot declare us so legally and righteously. I will deal with this misconception in more detail later on in this booklet, but this denies the very nature of biblical justification. Biblical justification involves God's legal declaration and judicial pronouncement of the standing He gives His chosen people in and by the Lord Jesus Christ. If God, according to His law, pronounces a person forgiven and righteous IN HIS SIGHT, there is no greater reality than this – ***“Let God be true, but every man a liar” (Romans 3:4).*** Justification is not God making us righteous inwardly. It is God

declaring us legally (positionally) righteous without any change within us. As we shall see later, justification most certainly leads to a powerful and miraculous change within God's people, but justification itself is strictly legal (positional). It is true that, having fallen by Adam, we are born into this world in a state of spiritual death and depravity. This is why we deserve and can earn nothing but condemnation and eternal death. This is why we need salvation itself by God's grace and power in Christ. This is why we must be justified by God's grace through the Lord Jesus Christ –

Romans 3 – (23) For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; (24) Being JUSTIFIED FREELY BY HIS GRACE THROUGH THE REDEMPTION THAT IS IN CHRIST JESUS:

This is also why we, as spiritually dead and depraved people, must experience the powerful and miraculous change within ourselves. This change is also totally and

exclusively the work of God and the result of Christ's righteousness having been imputed to us. Because of our justification, we must be born again by the Holy Spirit and brought by God-given faith to believe in Christ and repent of dead works and idolatry. As stated, our justification before God, in and of itself, is not a change of our state in this world, but it leads to, even demands, a change of our state in this world –

Romans 8 – (10) And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.

It needs to be emphasized that justification before God is not an inward work of the Holy Spirit. It is totally a work of God the Father in His eternal and immutable mind, i.e. His court of justice, and it is based on the work of the Son on the cross. But we also need to see that our legal justification before God in Christ is the source and power of that change of state brought about by the Holy Spirit in imparting spiritual life and the graces

and gifts of the Spirit. This is the new birth (*John 3:3-7*). As we will see later in this booklet, the only matter of justification worked in us by the Spirit is when we are justified within our own consciences as the Spirit applies the blood of Christ to our hearts. This is what many people mean by the phrase “justified by faith.” Just as sin demands death, righteousness demands life –

Romans 5 – (21) That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

ESSENTIAL TRUTH #2 –

GOD’S ELECT ARE THE ONLY OBJECTS OF JUSTIFICATION

This is stated clearly in *Romans 8:33* – *“Who shall lay anything to the charge of GOD’S ELECT.”* It is clear from the Scriptures that the objects of God’s grace in receiving every blessing and benefit of salvation, including justification, are those whom God chose to save and gave to Christ

before the foundation of the world. They are identified in the Word of God by various terms. They are “*His people*” –

Matthew 1 – (21) And she shall bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call His name JESUS: for HE SHALL SAVE HIS PEOPLE from their sins.

They are called “*sinners*” –

1 Timothy 1 – (15) This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world TO SAVE SINNERS; of whom I am chief.

They are described as “*His church*” –

Acts 20 – (28) Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed THE CHURCH OF GOD, which He hath purchased with His own blood.

The word “**church**” means “those who are called out” of the world by the Gospel empowered by the Holy Spirit. They are also called His “**sheep**” –

John 10 – (11) I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth His life FOR THE SHEEP. (14) I am the good shepherd, and know MY SHEEP, and am known of mine.

They are identified as those who “**believeth**” and those who “**live by faith**” –

Romans 1 – (16) For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation TO EVERY ONE THAT BELIEVETH; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. (17) For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, THE JUST SHALL LIVE BY FAITH.

There are many other names that identify and distinguish the objects of God’s

justifying grace in Christ, and in **Romans 8:33**, as well as other Scriptures, they are identified as **“GOD’S ELECT.”** The elect are those individuals whom God chose to save in and by Christ. They were given to Him before the world began, and the whole responsibility of their salvation was upon Christ –

John 17 – (2) As thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal LIFE TO AS MANY AS THOU HAST GIVEN HIM.

Ephesians 1 – (3) Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: (4) According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love: (5) Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, (6) To the praise of the glory of His

grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved.

The elect are those for whom Christ died and arose again for their complete salvation. He called them His “*brethren*,” as they were all adopted into God’s family in the adoption of grace.

Hebrews 2 – (11) For both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause He is not ashamed to call them BRETHREN, (12) Saying, I will declare Thy name unto MY BRETHREN, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto Thee.

The popular heresy that claims that God loves every person without exception and that Christ died for every person without exception cannot be supported with Scripture. God saves those whom He has justified, and He has justified His elect whom He chose before the foundation of the world and whom

He gave to the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ is their Surety, Substitute, Redeemer, Life-Giver, and Preserver. They ALL shall be saved –

John 6 – (37) All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me; and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out. (38) For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me. (39) And this is the Father's will which hath sent Me, that of all which He hath given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. (40) And this is the will of Him that sent Me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.

**ESSENTIAL TRUTH #3 –
CHRIST’S RIGHTEOUSNESS IS THE
ONLY GROUND OF JUSTIFICATION**

This is stated in *Romans 8:34* – ***WHO IS HE THAT CONDEMNETH? IT IS CHRIST THAT DIED, YEA RATHER, THAT IS RISEN AGAIN, WHO IS EVEN AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD, WHO ALSO MAKETH INTERCESSION FOR US.*** The Bible teaches that God is holy, righteous, truthful, and just. He cannot be anything less than the perfection of these attributes. He cannot deny Himself. Whatever God purposes, plans, or does, HE must do so in harmony with His holiness, righteousness, truthfulness, and justice. When God elected His people unto salvation, He had to do this on a just and righteous ground. God’s love, grace, and mercy are miraculous and marvelous attributes to behold, but when we see His love, grace, and mercy acting and being applied in perfect harmony with His holiness and justice, it is the greatest miracle of His wisdom, power, and grace that any

sinner has been blessed to behold. To see and know God as both “*a just God AND a Savior*” (*Isaiah 45:21*), as both “*just AND the Justifier*” (*Romans 3:26*) of sinners, and to know Him as both a loving, merciful Father AND a righteous Judge is the greatest revelation of Himself that God can and does give to His people! And how does God accomplish this salvation of His people and still honor and magnify His justice? IT IS UPON THE GROUND OF THE MERITS OF THE OBEDIENCE UNTO DEATH OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST AS THE SURETY, SUBSTITUTE, AND REDEEMER OF HIS PEOPLE WHO WERE GIVEN TO HIM BY HIS FATHER BEFORE THE WORLD BEGAN –

2 Timothy 1 – (9) Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, WHICH WAS GIVEN US IN CHRIST JESUS BEFORE THE WORLD BEGAN,

This ground of justification before God is described in the Bible by the phrase, ***“the righteousness of God”*** (*Romans 1:17; 3:21,22; 2 Corinthians 5:21; James 1:20; 2 Peter 1:1*). This is the merit (value, worthiness, power) of Christ’s obedience unto death on the cross for the redemption of His people. By His one offering, He paid the sin-debt for His people and worked out and established a perfect righteousness by which God is just to justify those whom He had set apart for salvation. This is what is meant by sinners being justified by His blood and perfected by His one offering –

Romans 5 – (8) But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (9) Much more then, being now JUSTIFIED BY HIS BLOOD, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.

Hebrews 10 – (14) For by one offering HE hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

God is the God of all grace Who saves sinners by His grace through His justice satisfied in and by Christ. Everything in the complete salvation of sinners is by God's grace –

Ephesians 2 – (8) For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: (9) Not of works, lest any man should boast. (10) For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

No part of salvation, nor any blessing or benefit of eternal life, is conditioned on the works, obedience, or wills of sinners. IT IS ALL OF GRACE CONDITIONED ON THE WORK OF CHRIST! God's election of a people is all of grace. God's justifying His people is all of grace. God's adoption of His people is all of grace. God's redemption of all His people is all of grace. God's regenerating

and calling of His people is all of grace. God's preservation of His people is all of grace. God's glorifying His people is all of grace. And this whole salvation is all grounded upon the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

God is a loving, merciful, and gracious God towards His people, but His love, mercy, and grace cannot be given to sinners unless His holy law and justice is satisfied. This is where the truth of "**PROPITIATION**" comes into God's plan of salvation –

Romans 3 – (24) Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: (25) Whom God hath set forth to be a PROPITIATION through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; (26) To declare, I say, at this time His righteousness: that He might be just, and the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.

1 John 2 – (1) My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not.

And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: (2) And He is the PROPITIATION for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.

1 John 4 – (10) Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the PROPITIATION for our sins.

“Propitiation” is the justice of God completely satisfied by the Lord Jesus Christ for all the people the Father gave to Him and for whom He died on the cross. *“Propitiation”* means the certainty of their full salvation unto final glory. When John wrote that Christ is the *“propitiation ... for the sins of the whole world,”* he was not saying that Christ died for all people without exception over the whole world. He was speaking of God’s elect throughout the whole world, both Jew and Gentile. If Christ is truly the *“propitiation”* for MY sins, there is no

way that I can perish. I must be justified, I must be born again, I must be preserved and brought to glory, ALL by God's grace based on the merits of Christ's death, His righteousness imputed, as my Surety, Substitute, Redeemer, Life-Giver, and Preserver!

**ESSENTIAL TRUTH #4 –
IMPUTATION IS THE ONLY MEANS
AND INSTRUMENT OF
JUSTIFICATION**

This is stated in *Romans 8:33* – ***WHO SHALL LAY ANYTHING TO THE CHARGE OF GOD’S ELECT.*** Before the foundation of the world, God chose a people to be saved, gave them to His Son, making His Son to be their Surety. Christ has always been, and will always be, the Surety of the everlasting covenant of grace. The conditions and requirements necessary to ratify that covenant and ensure the salvation and eternal life of all whom God chose and gave to Him were always upon Him alone to fulfill on their behalf –

Isaiah 9 – (6) For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given: AND THE GOVERNMENT SHALL BE UPON HIS SHOULDER: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of

Peace. (7) Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon His kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.

The “*government*” of which the prophet spoke is the government of God’s covenant of grace, and the eternal kingdom of God, all conditioned on Christ. Having been made the Surety of His people, their sin-debt was charged to His account. He willingly took this debt upon Himself and agreed to come in time and pay this debt in full by the price of His own blood. This is the redemption of His people. Because of Christ’s suretyship, the sins of God’s elect were not charged to them but to Christ. This speaks of three things:

(1) The non-imputation of the sins of God’s elect to their accounts;

(2) The imputation of the sins of God's elect to Christ's account; and

(3) The imputation of the righteousness of Christ to the account of God's elect.

Consider the following verses that teach these blessed truths –

Romans 4 – (6) Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, (7) Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. (8) Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.

God the Holy Spirit inspired the Apostle Paul here to expound upon and quote from a psalm of David (*Psalm 32:1-2*). When it comes to God justifying the ungodly, the truth of imputation is clearly the issue both in the Old Testament and the New Testament. It answers the question of how God can be just and still justify sinners –

Isaiah 45 – (21) Tell ye, and bring them near; yea, let them take counsel together: who hath declared this from ancient time? who hath told it from that time? have not I the LORD? and there is no God else beside Me; A JUST GOD AND A SAVIOUR; there is none beside Me. (22) Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else. (23) I have sworn by Myself, the word is gone out of My mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto Me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear. (24) Surely, shall one say, IN THE LORD HAVE I RIGHTEOUSNESS AND STRENGTH: even to Him shall men come; and all that are incensed against Him shall be ashamed. (25) IN THE LORD SHALL ALL THE SEED OF ISRAEL BE JUSTIFIED, AND SHALL GLORY.

The truth of imputation for justification is pictured throughout the Old Testament beginning in *Genesis 3*, where

Adam and Eve, having sinned against God, ***“sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons to hide their nakedness”*** (*Genesis 3:7*). These fig-leaf aprons are symbolic of man’s works and futile attempts to cover his exposure to God’s wrath and to work his own righteousness before God. But God revealed early on that man’s works will not make him righteous in His sight, and God slew an animal and made them coats of skin –

Genesis 3 – (21) Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them.

This is a beautiful picture of the righteousness of God established by Christ, the Lamb of God, His righteousness imputed to His people for their justification before God. Christ’s righteousness imputed is often symbolized by wearing a garment or armor –

Job 29 – (14) I put on righteousness, and it clothed me: my judgment was as a robe and a diadem.

Psalm 132 – (9) Let Thy priests be clothed with righteousness; and let Thy saints shout for joy.

Isaiah 61 – (10) I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels.

The concept of imputation is pictured in *Leviticus 16:7-10, 20-22* where we read about God's commandment regarding the "scapegoat." Every year on the Day of Atonement, two goats were presented to the high priest. The high priest laid his hands on one of the goats and symbolically transferred or "imputed" to that goat the sins of the people. This "scapegoat" was then released into the wilderness to carry away that sin. The second goat was sacrificed on the altar in

order to atone for the sins of the people. One goat carried their sins away; the other paid for those sins. The concept portrayed by these two goats foreshadowed both aspects of what Christ would accomplish through His death on the cross based on the sins of God's elect imputed to Him and His righteousness imputed to them for their complete justification. This was all accomplished in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, and He Himself illustrated this in His own baptism

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Matthew 3 – (15) And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh Us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered Him. (16) And Jesus, when He was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him: (17) And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

Objections to this glorious truth usually fall within three categories:

(1) Some claim that faith is the means and instrument by which God justifies His people. This was popularized in the phrase, “*sola fide*,” which means “faith alone.” It comes from the phrase “*justified by faith*” found in Scripture verses such as the following –

Romans 3 – (28) Therefore we conclude that a man is JUSTIFIED BY FAITH without the deeds of the law.

Romans 5 – (1) Therefore being JUSTIFIED BY FAITH, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:

Galatians 3 – (24) Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be JUSTIFIED BY FAITH.

Some view this as meaning that sinners are justified by their believing in Christ when the Holy Spirit by the new birth imparts the gift of faith whereby we believe in, receive, and rest in Christ for all salvation. That would mean that God imputes the righteousness of Christ to us by means of our believing in Christ. This is contrary to the Scriptures which teach, as we will see in the next essential truth, that faith (believing in Christ) is not the means by which God imputes righteousness. Faith (believing in Christ) is the fruit of justification. Christ's righteousness imputed is the **GROUND** of justification; faith (believing in Christ) is the fruit of justification.

Others believe that it is simply a matter of timing in which God imputes Christ's righteousness either at the same time He gives us faith to believe or just prior to giving us faith to believe. But the word "***faith***" itself is not always in reference to the gift of faith by which God brings us to believe in Christ. It is often referring to the content of the Gospel revealed in God's promise of

salvation by His grace based on the merits of Christ's obedience unto death. To say that we are "***justified by faith,***" then, is the same as saying we are justified by Christ according to what God has promised in the Gospel of Christ, i.e. "***justified by His blood***" (***Romans 5:9***), according to God's promise. What we see then is that biblical "faith" can never be separated from its object which is the glorious Person and finished work of Christ as our Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer. Consider the following verse –

Romans 4 – (3) For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and IT was counted unto him for righteousness.

What is the "***IT***" that was imputed to Abraham "***for righteousness***"? Was it Abraham's believing that was imputed to him? If that were true, then we would have to say that either our believing is somehow equivalent to the perfection of righteousness, or that God accepts our believing in place of the perfection of righteousness. We know that

neither is true. God requires perfect righteousness, and this righteousness can be found only in the glorious Person and finished work of Christ –

Romans 10 – (4) For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.

We also know that God-given faith by which He brings us to believe in Christ is a spiritual quality of character that can only be imparted. Righteousness is the merit of a work that can only be imputed. So, how can we understand the phrase “***his faith is counted for righteousness***” in Abraham’s case? We must ask ourselves, “What was Abraham’s faith”? “***His faith***” was what God promised him concerning salvation by God’s grace through the merits of the promised Messiah. This is what Abraham believed, and this gave evidence that God had imputed righteousness unto him –

Romans 4 – (6) Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, (7) Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. (8) Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin. (9) Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness.

And this is the same promise that God has made to all of His chosen people in Christ and to which He brings us to believe by the power of the Holy Spirit under the preaching of the Gospel –

Romans 4 – (10) How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision. (11) And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the

father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; THAT RIGHTEOUSNESS MIGHT BE IMPUTED UNTO THEM ALSO:

(2) Another objection raised against imputation being the only means and instrument of justification is that some claim that if it were by imputation alone, then it is not real or substantial. They claim that it would be God pretending that “we are righteous when we really are not righteous.” They attack the biblical truth of imputation by disparaging it and calling it a “legal fiction,” “a pasted-on righteousness,” or “a pretended righteousness.” They also misrepresent God by claiming that “God can only justly impute righteousness to us after He has already made us righteous within.” All of this reflects a serious misunderstanding of God’s justice and mercy in the justification of His people, and an ignorance of true biblical imputation and the work of the Holy Spirit within God’s people.

We must remember that the imputation of our sins to Christ and the imputation of His righteousness to us is a LEGAL DECLARATION OF GOD concerning the forgiveness of our sins on a just ground and concerning a righteous standing before God on that same just ground. It is how God legally establishes our right standing with Him in Christ. Imputation itself is not a change of nature or character. It leads to, and always results in, a change of nature and character in the new birth. Where righteousness is imputed to a sinner, spiritual life will, at some point in time, be given to that sinner. He will be brought to faith in Christ, repentance of dead works, and perseverance in the faith – *“the just shall live by faith”* (**Rom. 1:17**). Christ’s righteousness imputed is the ground of our justification, and He as the Lord our righteousness is the source and power of our sanctification by the Spirit.

So, when Christ was *“made sin”* (**2 Corinthians 5:21a**), there was no inward change of His nature or His character. He was the perfect Godman who was never

contaminated or corrupted with our sins. Our sins were imputed to Him, and He was made responsible for our debt to God's justice. We can even say He was made guilty but only by imputation, not by infusion or impartation of our sins or sin-natures to Him. When we were ***“made the righteousness of God in Him”*** (2 ***Corinthians 5:21b***), there was no inward change in our nature. We remained sinners and were never made righteous within ourselves. We were (and are) like the Apostle Paul – ***“O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?”*** (***Romans 7:24***). Christ's righteousness was imputed to us for our justification. As we will see in the next essential truth, the inward change that comes within everyone of God's elect in time is the new birth (regeneration and conversion) which is the fruit and result of our justification based solely upon Christ's righteousness imputed.

So, whenever men say that “God can only impute righteousness where He finds it,” meaning that He must make us righteous within and find it within us before He can

justly impute it to us, remember, God is the God of all grace Who justifies THE UNGODLY (**Romans 4:1-8**). Remember also that God is not looking for righteousness in us. He has provided it for us in and by His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ (**Romans 1:16-17; 10:4; 2 Corinthians 5:21**). God knows exactly where righteousness is. It has always been in His Son as He made Him to be the Surety of the covenant of grace and appointed Him to come in time and work righteousness by redeeming His people on the cross (**Daniel 9:24**). God has always found righteousness in His Son, and this is the righteousness He has imputed to His people, sinners saved by grace. This is God ***“Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began”*** (**2 Timothy 1:9**). All this is revealed and made known to God’s people in time by the coming of Christ into the world to do His work of redemption for them and by the Holy Spirit Who works in them in the new birth – ***“But is now made manifest by***

the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, Who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel” (2 Timothy 1:10).

(3) Another objection is closely related to the second objection just mentioned. It is stated by some that “God would be unjust or unrighteous to impute righteousness to us before He actually made us righteous within.” Those who raise this objection abuse Scriptures such as *Proverbs 17:15* to try to prove their point –

Proverbs 17 – (15) He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are abomination to the LORD.

Those who twist this Scripture to deny that imputation is the one and only means and instrument of justification only expose their blindness to the reality of God’s wisdom and glory revealed in the Gospel of salvation by His grace in and by the Lord Jesus Christ.

Consider that all that this verse in *Proverbs* is saying is simply that in a human court of law, for a guilty man to be declared innocent or for a just man to be condemned, each would be a horrible miscarriage of justice. Sinful men cannot do either without breaking the law and perverting justice. However, that which men must not and cannot do is revealed as accomplished by God in the message, the miracle, and the glory of God set forth in the Gospel. The Lord God, Who is both a just God AND a Savior, can and does what sinful men cannot do, and He does it without any breach of His law and justice. He can and does this to the glory of His grace and the honor of His justice. It is written that God "*justifieth the ungodly*" (*Romans 4:5*), and the way He justified His elect, who are by nature wicked, was by charging the sins of His chosen people to His just and innocent Son. He made Christ the Surety of His people, and He condemned Him to die for crimes which were His only by imputation. Christ willingly accomplished this work for His people –

John 10 – (17) Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life, that I might take it again. (18) No man taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of My Father.

In the same way that our sins became Christ's sins (by imputation), His righteousness became ours (again, by imputation) –

2 Corinthians 5 – (19) God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation ... (21) For He hath made Him to be sin for us, Who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.

As stated before, the whole context of this passage that teaches how God is reconciled to sinners and how sinners are

reconciled to God shows that it is by the means and instrument of imputation –

2 Corinthians 5 – (19) To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, NOT IMPUTING THEIR TRESPASSES UNTO THEM; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

Consider again what was stated before about how the non-imputation of sins to God's elect speaks of three truths taught in the Bible as proven in *Psalms 32:1-2* and *Romans 4:6-8* quoted above:

- (1) The non-imputation of the sins of God's elect to their accounts;
- (2) The imputation of the sins of God's elect to Christ's account; and
- (3) The imputation of the righteousness of Christ to the account of God's elect.

**ESSENTIAL TRUTH #5 –
GOD-GIVEN SPIRITUAL LIFE,
KNOWLEDGE, FAITH, REPENTANCE,
PERSEVERANCE, AND
GLORIFICATION ARE THE FRUITS
OF JUSTIFICATION**

This is stated in *Romans 8 – (32)* *He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also FREELY GIVE US ALL THINGS?* “*ALL things*” includes the gifts of spiritual life, all graces of the Spirit, and the eternal blessedness of final glory –

Romans 5 – (21) *That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.*

The Lord Jesus Christ defined eternal life in *John 17 – (3)* *And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, Whom Thou hast sent.*

All whom God has justified by His grace in Christ Jesus will be brought to know the only true and living God. They will be brought to know Him through Jesus Christ as He was sent of the Father to establish righteousness by His redeeming blood and to bring forth spiritual and eternal life evidenced by His resurrection from the dead. The work of the Holy Spirit is to impart spiritual life, knowledge, and faith by the new birth from above. This is when He gives us spiritual eyes to see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ and spiritual ears to hear the beautiful sound of His grace by the Word of faith. This is where He gives us a new heart (mind, affections, and wills) to know, rest in, desire, love, believe, and follow Christ, the Word of God, as fulfilled and revealed in the glory of His Person and the power of His finished work.

God-given faith, by which the Holy Spirit brings God's elect to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, is neither the means nor the instrument by which God justifies His people. It is the means by which God makes us aware

and assures us of our justification by His grace in Christ. It is the means by which the Holy Spirit cleanses our hearts wherein we are justified in the court of our own consciences –

Hebrews 9 – (14) How much more shall the blood of Christ, Who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, PURGE YOUR CONSCIENCE FROM DEAD WORKS to serve the living God?

Hebrews 10 – (19) Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, (20) By a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh; (21) And having an high priest over the house of God; (22) Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, HAVING OUR HEARTS SPRINKLED FROM AN EVIL CONSCIENCE, and our bodies washed with pure water.

The “*conscience*” is our own mental courtroom, or the courtroom of our own

hearts. It is the seat of all judgment within our own minds by which we pronounce the verdict of “guilty” or “not guilty” upon ourselves according to our own mental compass –

Romans 2 – (14) For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: (15) Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, THEIR CONSCIENCE ALSO BEARING WITNESS, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;)

Our natural “*conscience*” is defiled by sin and self-righteousness. This is the “*evil conscience,*” and nowhere does the defilement and evil of our natural consciences show forth more than in our efforts to cleanse our consciences and clear ourselves by our works, our decisions, our reformations, our prayers, our confessions, along with any and

all religious exercises. An ***“evil conscience”*** is a condemned conscience because of sin which, in our natural state of spiritual death and depravity, stirs us up to seek to establish a righteousness of our own which we think will cleanse us from sin and make us accepted with God. It is the deceitful and evil heart of which Jeremiah spoke – ***“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” (Jeremiah 17:9).*** This is why that in our salvation from sin, we must be given new hearts, new life, and new spirits. The Lord says to His people –

Ezekiel 36 – (26) A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. (27) And I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes, and ye shall keep My judgments, and do them.

Christ sends the Holy Spirit to convict His people of sin, righteousness, and

judgment. The Holy Spirit comes forth as the Spirit of life, knowledge, and conviction –

John 16 – (7) Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you. (8) And when He is come, He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: (9) Of sin, because they believe not on Me; (10) Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see Me no more; (11) Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.

The Holy Spirit shows us, God's elect, that the only thing that will cleanse us from our sins and make us righteous is the blood of Christ which is His righteousness imputed. It is by the application of this knowledge by God-given faith that our hearts are "*sprinkled from an evil conscience*" and brought to see how we are justified by the blood of Christ. This is how the Holy Spirit purifies our hearts by faith in Christ. In speaking of the Gentiles

whom God brought to faith in Christ, the Apostle Peter said,

Act 15 – (8) And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as He did unto us; (9) And put no difference between us and them, PURIFYING THEIR HEARTS BY FAITH.

This is how the Spirit in the new birth under the Gospel of God's grace in Christ cleanses the consciences of God's elect –

Hebrews 9 – (13) For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: (14) How much more shall the blood of Christ, Who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, PURGE YOUR CONSCIENCE FROM DEAD WORKS TO SERVE THE LIVING GOD?

In closing, there is one thing that must be made perfectly clear – Nothing that has been written here denies or even diminishes that absolute necessity of faith, repentance, and perseverance in the salvation of God’s elect. It simply states that faith, repentance, and perseverance are not the grounds of salvation or of justification but rather the fruits of justification based on the one ground of Christ’s righteousness imputed. Consider the following two truths:

(1) NO SINNER WILL BE SAVED WITHOUT BEING BROUGHT BY GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT IN NEW BIRTH TO FAITH, REPENTANCE, AND PERSEVERENCE! Where Christ’s righteousness is imputed to a person, in God’s appointed time, that person will be brought under the preaching of the Gospel, given spiritual life, and brought to God-given faith to believe in Christ, to repent of dead works and idolatry, and to persevere in the faith by the preserving power and grace of God in Christ.

Romans 6 – (17) But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. (18) Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.

(2) NO SINNER HAS ANY BIBLICAL, GOD-APPROVED RIGHT TO CLAIM SALVATION BY GOD'S GRACE IN CHRIST UNTIL HE HAS BEEN BROUGHT BY GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT TO BELIEVE IN CHRIST FOR ALL SALVATION, TO REPENT OF HIS DEAD WORKS AND IDOLATRY, AND TO PERSEVERE IN THE FAITH BY GOD'S POWER AND GRACE IN CHRIST. This holds true for every aspect of the salvation that God freely and fully provides for His elect in and by the Lord Jesus Christ –

1 Thessalonians 1 – (4) Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. (5) For our Gospel came not unto you in

word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake.

The first evidences of God's election of grace, predestination unto life, justification based on Christ's righteousness imputed, the adoption of grace, redemption by the blood of Christ, and even regeneration by the Spirit are faith in Christ, repentance of dead works, and perseverance in the faith. The evidence of being reprobate, unjustified, not predestinated unto life, not justified, not adopted, not redeemed, and not regenerated by the Spirit is a sinner who goes throughout his life and dies without believing and resting in the Lord Jesus Christ, as He is presented, identified, and distinguished in the true Gospel, for all salvation –

John 3 – (36) He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.

The Bible tells us that justification is UNTO life –

Romans 5 – (18) Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto JUSTIFICATION OF LIFE.

Romans 5 – (21) That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness UNTO ETERNAL LIFE BY JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD.

May the Lord give all who read these words eyes to see and ears to hear the things that God has prepared and freely given to His people in and by the Lord Jesus Christ!