

AS LORD/ (“consubstantial with the Father” JHWE), Jesus is RIGHTEOUS (JUST/GOOD/HOLY)

“and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS” (Jer 23:6)

Ezra 9:15; Ps 7:9, 112:4, 119:137; Jer 12:1, 23:5-6;

Jn 5:22-30 Jn 17:25; Rom 1:17, 3:21-22;

- I. **DEFINING TERMS** (OT *tsedek* words & NT *dikaiois* words mean both righteousness & justice)
 - A. Righteousness: God, as Ultimate Goodness, Moral Character, does rightly
 - B. Justice: God, as Perfect Judge, renders to everything & every one what is right, due
- II. **AN ANCIENT/ENDURING QUESTION:** “Euthyphro Dilemma” (does God capriciously choose to make actions right, or does He choose the right because it is right, i.e. in accord with His Nature)
 - A. Nominalists insist He chooses (and thus anything—murder, lying, etc. could be right today, wrong tomorrow; so too nominalism undergirds pragmatists, cultural relativists, social determinists, et al.)
 - B. Realists insist He endorses/promulgates the Right because it is intrinsic to His Being
- III. **“DISTINGUISHABLE MODES”** (cf. Thomas Oden: *The Living God*)
 - A. **Essential/Intrinsic** to God’s Moral Nature (thus a “moral attribute”); “All his ways are just” (Dt 32:4); He “does no wrong, righteous and true is He!” (Dt 32:4).
 1. Dionysius the Areopagite: God “gives to all things what is right, defining proportion, beauty, order, arrangement, and all dispositions of place and rank for each, in accordance with that place which is most truly right” (*The Divine Names*)
 2. Theodicy (justifying ways of God) an ancient endeavor; He may allow but cannot do evil
 - B. **Legislative aspect:** prescribing Law—Ps 19:7-8
 - C. **Administrative aspect:** Providential (wise/prudential, non-fatalistic) workings in nature & history
 - D. **Judicial aspect:** divine justice both within & beyond history—Heb 12:18-24; Ro 2:6-8
- IV. **AS LORD, Jesus** (consubstantial with—via Hypostatic Union—and revealing the Father) **IS RIGHTEOUS**; NB: Jeremiah 23:5-6 prophecy & Christian understanding of its fulfillment
 - A. **Essential** to Jesus’ Nature—fully God Incarnate, He is:
 1. HOLY—angel to Mary: the Holy One who is to be born” (Lk 1:35)
 2. GOOD—rich young ruler said: “Good Teacher” (Mt 19:16) & Jesus relied “none good but God;” He also said “I am the good shepherd” (Jn 10:10), reminding us of Ps 23
 3. SINLESS (impeccable)—“Which of you shall convince me of sin?” (Jn 8:46); “And in Him there is no sin” (Jn 3:5); “Who did no sin” (1 Pet 2:22)
 - B. **Legislative aspect:** prescribing Law: “If you love Me, keep My commandments” (Jn 14:15).
 1. Shares with the Father authority: He “came not to abolish to fulfill” (Mt 5:17); He “taught them as one having authority” (Mk 1:22), thus authoring, not commenting on texts
 2. Set forth clarifications/amplifications of Law (re murder, adultery, oaths etc.) in Sermon on Mount; summed up: the “whole law and the prophets depend on these two commandments” (Mt 22:4); Golden Rule; “the perfect law of liberty” (Jas 1:25)
 - C. **Administrative aspect:** Providential His-Story preeminently revealed in the Incarnation/Death/Resurrection of Jesus
 1. Christ “figures” in OT—persons such as Adam, Melchizedek, Isaac, Joseph, Moses & David;
 2. Crucial events such as Passover & Exodus
 3. Augustine’s two cities & salvation history significance
 - D. **Judicial aspect:** “He shall come again to judge the living and the dead” (Nicene Creed)
 1. Assigned Role: inasmuch as the Father “has committed all judgment to the Son” (Jn 5:22), Jesus has “authority to execute judgment” (Jn 5:27), and His “judgment is just” (Jn 5:30)
 2. Prophesied Activity: St Paul declared: “God has appointed a day, in which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained” (Acts 17:31); “God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ” (Rom 2:16); He “will judge the quick and the dead”, (2 Ti 4:1).
 3. Presiding Position: “Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it” (Rev 20:11), “And I saw the dead . . . standing before God and books were opened.” (Rev 20:11); “And another Book was opened, which is the Book of Life; and the dead were judged out of the things written in the books according to their works” (Rev 20:12).
- V. **Soteriological Question:** the Righteousness of Christ **Imputed** or **Imparted** or **Both**?

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH ALONE?

R. C. Sproul shared Luther's conviction that justification by faith alone is "the article upon which the church stands or falls." Fearing Evangelicals have seriously compromised their heritage, Sproul set forth a classic Reformed position in *Faith Alone: The Evangelical Doctrine of Justification*. In his opinion, "no doctrinal dispute has ever been contested more fiercely or with such long-term consequences as the one over justification" (p. 18). After noting some contemporary views which concern him—i.e. John MacArthur's "Lordship salvation," Pentecostalism, and the especially the document entitled *Evangelicals and Catholics Together*—Sproul explains and defends the case for classic Calvinism, rejecting the *ECT* view "that we are justified by grace through faith because of Christ. Living faith is active in love that is nothing less than the love of Christ" because it indicates we are justified by *faith*, not *faith alone*, whereas it "was the *sola* of *sola fide* that was the central point of dispute" (p. 6).

This led Sproul to revisit Luther's break with Rome which hinged on his commitment to *sola fide*. Everything at stake in the Reformation, Sproul insisted, stands or falls with this doctrine. "The conflict over justification by faith alone boils down to this: Is the ground of our justification the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, or the righteousness of Christ working *within* us?" (p. 73). *Sola fide* insists that we are justified solely by Christ's righteousness, something *extra nos*, outside us, totally unrelated to our inner condition. Such justification includes: *notitia*, *assensus*, and *fiducia*—knowledge, assent, trust. We must first have knowledge (*notitia*)—cognitive propositional truth—as a basis for faith. Then we must give intellectual assent (*assensus*) to the truth. Added to these two items of the mind, the will must be engaged, trusting (*fiducia*) the truth revealed to us. Such justification is *forensic* in nature—we are declared righteous, not transformed into righteous persons, by God.

Roman Catholics, especially at the Council of Trent, affirmed that sinners are *made* righteous: "not only are we reputed but we are truly called and are just, receiving justice within us, each one according to his own measure" (p. 97). Both Catholics and Protestants agree that God's legal decree effects righteousness, but Catholics insist He declares "just" those who have been transformed by His grace whereas most Protestants maintain He declares sinners "just" before any regenerative change has transpired. Catholics hold that "we are therefore said to be justified by faith, because faith is the beginning of human salvation, the foundation and root of all justification, 'without which it is impossible to please God' (Heb. 11:6) and to come to the fellowship of His sons; and we are therefore said to be justified gratuitously, because none of those things that precede justification, whether faith or works, merit the grace of justification" (p. 121).

Catholics, Alister McGrath says, developed Augustine's understanding of *iustificare*: "Augustine understands the verb *iustificare* to mean 'to make righteous,' an understanding of the term which he appears to have held throughout his working life" (p. 99). Consequently, "Man's righteousness, effected in justification, is regarded by Augustine as *inherent* rather than *imputed*. . . . The righteousness which man thus receives, although originating from God, is nevertheless located within man, and can be said to be *his*, part of his being and intrinsic to his person" (*ibid*). Catholics hold, "as the new *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states it, 'God's free initiative demands *man's free response*, for God has created man in his image by conferring on him, along with freedom, the power to know him and love him'" (p. 141). God's grace comes to us as His unmerited favor. But for it to justify us—make us right with Him—we must freely accept it. Thus our "works," our cooperation with God, accompany our faith in a process which justifies. Justification, ultimately, results from and depends upon our sanctification.

So Sproul concludes: "The question of *inherent* versus *imputed* righteousness goes to the heart of the Reformation debate" (*ibid*). Here he sides with Calvin and Turretin, insisting that any compromise with *sola fide* negates the Reformed stance. While they allowed that grace may well be *infused* into the believer following his justification, they adamantly held that he is justified only because Christ's righteousness has been imputed to him. Consequently, Reformed theologians taught that *sola gratia* is "operative" rather than "cooperative," irresistible rather than resistible. At issue was the definition of "prevenient grace"—both sides emphasized its pre-justifying activity, but the Reformers declared it justifies sinners independently of human agency and there is no "free will" whereby man responds to God's grace. God extends His grace to us, unilaterally saving us simply because He decides to. Luther and Calvin, insisted that faith alone justifies, and that certain good "works" follow as a matter of course. Good works, righteous living, bear witness to God's justifying work, but all our efforts are flawed by sin and thus have no bearing on our justification. Sanctification results from justification and is expected but not really necessary for salvation. Siding with Luther and Calvin, Sproul insists that modern Evangelicals must reaffirm their *raison d'être* as Protestants: *sola fide*.