**JEHOVAH TSIDKENU**
(The LORD Our Righteousness)
by Ron Crisp, 2010

*Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.*

Jeremiah 23:5-6

Indeed, this is one of the greatest mysteries in the world that a righteousness that resides with a person in heaven should justify me, a sinner on earth!

John Bunyan

**INTRODUCTION**

     Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being igno­rant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. (Romans 10:1-3)

     Only the LORD is holy. The gods men create they make after their own sinful image. An­cient Rome and Greece worshipped deities believed to be guilty of every crime and vice. Those who imagine and serve such gods are truly ignorant of God's moral perfections.

     Was this the ignorance Paul spoke of in Romans 10:3? There is no evidence to back this idea. The captivity in Babylon seemed to break Israel of their propensity toward pagan gods.

     Of what then was Israel ignorant? The answer becomes plain once we notice that Paul refers to God's method of justification as "God's righteousness" or as the "righteousness of God." Isra­el then was not ignorant of God's character but of his gospel. They knew to call him "righteous" but had not learned to call him "THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS." Even in "Christian" circles there are many who grasp the concept of righteousness as a divine attribute but have no knowledge of righteousness as a divine gift to believers.

*For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ*. (Romans 5:17)

     There are whole denominations that see justification as a result of infused righteousness. Like Israel they are ignorant of the imputation of Christ's righteousness.

**I. MAN'S NEED OF RIGHTEOUSNESS**

     Adam was created in God's image. He was holy in deed, word, and thought. The fall changed this, leaving both Adam and the human race which he represented in a state of guilt and depravi­ty.

*As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one*: (Romans 3:10) *They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one*. (Romans 3:12)

     Man's problem is only really understood when we realize that human depravity includes an inclination toward self-justification and self-righteousness. Men are depraved, condemned, and complacent. They are so blind as to feel pride in what most provokes the Lord. Religion itself is made to promote self-righteousness and self-satisfaction and thus becomes more dangerous to men's souls than even debauchery. This is because it blinds men to their need of mercy.

     Perhaps nothing our Lord taught was as shocking to men as this.

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*Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you*. (Matthew 21:31 b)

*And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that 1 possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merci­ful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be ex­alted*. (Luke 18:9-14)

     Sadly there remains a future shock for those who die trusting their own "dead works."

*Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: de­part from me, ye that work iniquity*. (Matthew 7:21-23)

**A. Our Righteousness Exposed.**

     How is it that God sees no good in those outside of Christ? Many of these seem like fine people in our eyes. Consider the following:

     1. God measures by a different standard than we do. God himself is the true standard. His law reflects his holiness.

*For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God*; (Romans 3:23)

     It is easy to feel content when we measure ourselves by someone to whom we feel superior. This however is a deception. A toad may feel equal in appearance to other toads but that does not make it beautiful. What value is there in feeling as good as others who are themselves under divine condemnation? This is like men who compete in attempting to leap across a high and wide chasm. If all come short and die, does it really matter who went the farthest?

     2. We look at the exterior while God looks at the heart. There he sees the root, the essence, the very matrix of evil. In the heart God finds what blights and corrupts every thought, motive, word, and act of fallen man. He sees that we no longer love him.

*Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be*. (Romans 8:7)

     Without love nothing we do pleases God.

**3**

*Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am be­come as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing*. (I Corinthians 13:1-3)

     Love is the focus of the law and the real heart of its demands.

*Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath ful­filled the law. For this, Thou shall not commit adultery, Thou shall not kill, Thou shall not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shall not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law*. (Romans 13:8-10)

 In speaking of the two great commandments, Jesus was actually summing up the Ten Commandments.

*Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and say­ing, Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets*. (Matthew 22:35-40)

  Sin comes in many forms, but all grow on the same root.

     This state of enmity toward God was first manifested in Adam after his fall. At his creation he had delighted in God's presence, rejoiced in his goodness and appreciated his gifts. Sin brought an immediate change. After his transgression, Adam dreaded God's presence, doubted his goodness and ultimately blamed God for his sin.

*And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat. And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons. And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid them­selves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden. And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou? And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid my­self. And he said, Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat? And the man said, The wom­an whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat. And the*

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*LORD God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat*. (Genesis 3:6-13)

     The change seen in Adam was soon reflected in the change that sin produced in the human race as a whole. The early chapters of Genesis tell the story. The first man born into this world murders his brother. Quickly the world becomes a cesspool ready for judgment.

*And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imag­ination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom 1 have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them*. (Genesis 6:5-7)

     3. Another problem with man's righteousness is that it is incomplete. We focus on the minor while neglecting the major.

*Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel*. (Matthew 23:23-24)

     We content ourselves with restraint from shocking behavior and forget the real extent of God's law.

*Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shall not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath commit­ted adultery with her already in his heart*. (Matthew 5:27-28)

     4. Finally, we note that man's righteousness often consists of the observance of human tradition. Men have great zeal for their own rules and ceremonies yet live in total neglect of God's revealed will.

**B. Our Righteousness Condemned.**

*But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away*. (Isaiah 64:6)

     Our best is "filthy rags" in God's sight. Note this well. The text is not speaking of Friday night indiscretions but of our Sunday morning devotions. That of which we boast often pro­vokes God more than that of which we are ashamed.

     Death is the penalty of sin and will soon sweep us all into God's presence. We are like a leaf, and death like an autumn breeze. It will be a sad day if we are forced into the judgment clothed in the rags of our own righteousness.

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**II. GOD'S PROVISION OF RIGHTEOUSNESS**

*For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God*. (Romans 10:3)

     Our sin problem is fully dealt with. Not only are our sins forgiven, but our need of righteous­ness is supplied. There is in salvation an actual imparted or infused righteousness. We are made new in regeneration and given new bodies in the resurrection. This righteousness fits us for Heaven and distinguishes God's children from others.

*In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother*. (I John 3:10)

But this imparted righteousness is not the ground of justification.

     There is also an imputed righteousness. This is what Paul refers to as the "righteousness of God." It alone is the basis of our acceptance with God. The Scripture has much to say about this concept.

**A. The Righteousness Of God Was Revealed in The Old Testament.**

     Paul did not invent this doctrine or the terminology used to explain it. He found it in the Old Testament.**1**

*But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets*; (Romans 3:21)

*What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, un­to whom God imputeth righteousness without works, Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin. Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? For we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. How was it then reckoned? When he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision. 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*: (Romans 4:1-11)

**B. The Righteousness Of God Is Received Apart From The Law.**
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**1** See Addendum.

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     We are not justified before God because we meet a standard. This truth is shocking to those not enlightened to understand the gospel. Would we give a student who fails every test an A+? Can a judge justify the guilty and be righteous himself? Can felons be forgiven and lodged in Paradise at the expense of the judge? These things would destroy our societies yet are analogous to what God does in salvation. He justifies lawbreakers at his own expense apart from any merit on their part.

*For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them. But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; That if thou shah confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall be­lieve in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation*. (Romans 10:3-10)

*What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith. But Israel, which fol­lowed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone; As it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stum-blingstone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed*. (Romans 9:30-33)

*Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith*: (Philippians 3:8-9)

     As shocking as the implications of salvation by grace are, there is no other hope for men. The law cannot justify, for none meet its standard. Its function is to reveal sin and to con­demn the sinner. Running to the law for justification is like going to a prosecutor for mercy, or like trying to wash one's face with a mirror.

*Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God without the law is mani­fested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets*; (Romans 3:19-21)

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The law reveals our need but does not meet it; the law exposes our sin but cannot cleanse it.

     Lest any should misunderstand, we are not denigrating the law, which is a reflection of God's nature and a revelation of his will. The gospel story is the record of God's law being honored in every way. Its demands were fully met but not by the sinner. Its penalty was inflicted but not on the elect. Hell is a tribute to the absolute jurisdiction of God's law, but Calvary is a greater tribute. Mercy never operated at the expense of the law but at the ex­pense of Christ Jesus. He submitted to its authority and honored it with perfect obedience. He bore the weight of its condemnation so that sinners could be saved yet the law's authority be upheld.

*Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: 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; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus*. (Romans 3:24-26)

     The salvation of sinners would remain a Gordian knot apart from our Savior. How can God be holy and just while showing mercy to the guilty? Christ solved the problem at Calva­ry.

*Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other*. (Psalm 85:10)

**C. The Righteousness Of God Is Not Received On The Basis Of Our Works.**

     We naturally think of acceptance before God as a reward for correct or even commenda­ble behavior. For fallen men to find hope in this is a delusion. Those outside of Christ have no works which God accepts. The very attempt at justification by works is not only futile but is a rejection of God's offer of mercy and an attempt to take the glory that belongs to Christ. In fact salvation only comes to those who cease any attempt to earn it and give Christ the credit for every aspect of salvation.

*Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are for­given, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin*. (Romans 4:4-8)

*But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteous­ness, and sanctification, and redemption: That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord*. (I Corinthians 1:30-31)

     Let no one imagine that this truth denies the importance of good works in the Christian life.

*Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven*. (Matthew 5:16)

 **8**      Rather it is the place of good works that we are discussing. They are the result not the basis of salvation. Note how Paul expresses this.

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

     Good works do not give life but they manifest it. This is certainly the message of James (James 2:14-20).

**D. The Righteousness Of God Justifies The Ungodly.**

*But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness*. (Romans 4:5)

     Justification is not a state we attain but a verdict of God concerning our legal status. Men are not justified as reformed sinners but as believing sinners.

*He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned al­ready, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God*. (John 3:18)

     Justification comes from the work of Christ for us not the work of the Spirit in us.

*Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. 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*. (Romans 8:33-34)

     The Holy Spirit gives us the peace of God, but Christ alone gives us peace with God.

*Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ*: (Romans 5:1)

     My desire to be understood makes me repetitious - please bear with me! Regeneration is the impartation of Christ's righteousness to the soul of the redeemed. Justification is the im­putation of Christ's righteousness to the sinner's account. One fits us for Heaven, the other gives us a certain acceptance before the Lord (...*accepted in the beloved*, Ephesians 1:6).

     Finally, let me point out that, because justification is forensic, it is instantaneous, com­plete and irrevocable.

*I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other*: (Luke 18:14a)

*And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justi­fied by the law of Moses*. (Acts 13:39)

*Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life*. (John 5:24)

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No wonder Paul spoke in rapture after mentioning the security of those justified (Romans 8:33-39)!

     Our exposition of justification is not a digression from our point that God's righteousness justifies the ungodly. Only those who hold to a forensic justification can truly believe this. On this matter the Roman Catholic Church provides an example. They deny a totally forensic justification, and they reject the idea of imputed righteousness. Justification in their system includes regeneration and sanctification. It is a state one attains most often after a period of purification in purgatory. Only those they call "saints" attain justification in this life. This is not a justification of the ungodly but a justification obtained only by those made worthy.

**E. The Righteousness Of God Is Provided For Us By A Divine Person.**

*Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS*. (Jeremiah 23:5-6)

     The "Jehovah titles" of the Old Testament reveal God as the one who meets every need of his people. "Jehovah Tsidkenu" or as it is translated "THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUS­NESS" is one of these titles. It clearly speaks of the Messiah and reveals him to be a divine Person. Messiah as God provides for his people the "righteousness of God" to justify them. This righteousness is his own.

**F. The Righteousness Of God Is Found In Christ Jesus Our Lord.**

     Christians believe that Jesus is the Messiah, and that the righteousness of God is found in Christ.

*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*. (II Corinthians 5:21)

*But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteous­ness, and sanctification, and redemption: That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord*. (I Corinthians 1:30-31)

*For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abun­dance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.) 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. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous*. (Romans 5:17-19)

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Let us expound this truth more extensively. In theology we speak of Christ's active and passive righteousness. His passive righteousness involved his suffering as our sin-bearer. He paid for our sins that we might have forgiveness.

     Remember, however, that we needed more than forgiveness, we needed righteousness. This is found in Christ's perfect life of obedience to the Father. This is Christ's active right­eousness. He is thus our sin-bearer and our righteousness. John Bunyan in his inimitable way explained this as follows:

Notice, the righteousness is still 'in him,' not 'in us.' Just as the wings and feath­ers still abide in the hen even when the chicks are covered, kept, and warmed thereby, so the righteousness abides in Christ even when we are made partakers of the benefits.

As my doings, though my children are fed and clothed thereby, are still my do­ings not theirs; so the righteousness wherewith we stand just before God from the curse still resides in Christ not in us. Our sins, when laid upon Christ, were yet per­sonally ours not his; so his righteousness, when put upon us, is yet personally his not ours. '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.' 2 Cor. 5:21.

The righteousness of Christ, therefore, is of justifying virtue only by imputation as God reckons it to us. In the same way our sins made the Lord Jesus "sin" only by God's reckoning them to him.

It is absolutely necessary that this be known by us. If the understanding is muddy on this point, it is impossible that we should be sound in the faith. When tempted, we will be at a loss if we look for a justifying righteousness in ourselves. It is to be found nowhere but in Jesus Christ. The apostle was always looking to Jesus, that he might "be found in him," knowing that nowhere else could peace or safety be had (Phil. 3:6-9). “Indeed, this is one of the greatest mysteries in the world that a righteousness that resides with a person in heaven should justify me, a sinner, on earth!”

From the main proposition I draw two positions. First, that men are justified from the curse of the law before God while sinners in themselves. Second, that this can be done by no other righteousness than that long ago performed by, and residing with, the person of Jesus Christ.**2**

**G. The Righteousness Of God That Justifies Is Made Ours By Imputation.**

There is no other way for sinners to be justified from the curse of the law in the sight of God, than by the imputation of that righteousness long ago performed by, and still residing with, the person of Jesus Christ.**3**

This doctrine taught by John Bunyan was first taught in Holy Scripture. Note an example of this: *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*. (II Corinthians 5:21)
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**2** *Gospel Seed*, April-June, 1986, Vol. 1, No. 2, pp. 3-4.
**3** *ibid*., p. 5. **11**

     What could be plainer! Christ had no sin yet suffered for ours. We have no righteousness yet are accepted through his. Is not this imputation?

     The truth of imputation is also taught in Romans 5:12-21. Paul's point there is that men are justified in Christ just as they were condemned in Adam. Just as Adam's sin was imputed to those under his headship, so Christ's righteousness is imputed to his people. In this matter of headship and imputation Christ was truly prefigured by Adam (Romans 5:14).

     Before we move on, we should note that this doctrine of imputation was plainly taught in the Old Testament. David spoke of it.

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

     Abraham was justified the same way.

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

**H. The Righteousness Of God Is Revealed In The Gospel.**

*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. For therein is the right­eousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith*. (Romans 1:16-17)

     The Gospel reveals the righteousness of God in two ways. First, it declares the truth con­cerning the subject. Second, it is the instrument through which the righteousness of God is brought to do its work in salvation. Where there is no gospel there is no faith.

*So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*. (Romans 1:17)

**III. Submitting To God's Righteousness**

*For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God*. (Romans 10:3)

     One submits to God's righteousness when he believes from the heart God's revelation of man's need and of God's provision. Paul tells us of his experience of conviction concerning his need of righteousness.

*For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me. Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good. Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful*. (Romans 7:9-13)

     This conviction ends our complacent trust in our own goodness. Not only in Paul's life but elsewhere Scripture illustrates this. Think of the thief at Calvary, the publican in Christ's parable, **12**

the Philippian jailer, and the woman who washed Christ's feet with her tears. All had ceased at­tempting to "establish their own righteousness."

  Finally, we submit to God's righteousness by faith in Jesus Christ. By faith we believe God's record in the gospel. In faith we look to Christ as our only hope.

*But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God*; (Romans 3:21-23)

*Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they be­ing ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them. But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; That if thou shall confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved*. (Romans 10:1-13)

*Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith*: (Philippians 3:8-9)

     God chose faith as the way we receive the gift of righteousness because "faith alone" is con­sistent with his plan that salvation be by "grace alone" through "Christ alone."

*Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abra­ham; who is the father of us all*, (Romans 4:16)

     Faith ascribes all the glory to its object. It looks away from self and leaves no room for boast­ing.

*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast*. (Ephesians 2:8-9)

**13**

     Abraham is the great prototype of those who receive the imputation of Christ's righteousness by faith. "Father" in Scripture can mean the first example of something (Genesis 4:19-21; John 8:44). Abraham is our "father" not because he was the first man ever saved but because he was the first man of whom we are told exactly how he was saved. Here is the record:

*And Abram said, Behold, to me thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir. And, behold, the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir. And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be. And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness*. (Genesis 15:3-6)

     Paul explains that the faith by which he received the imputation of Christ's righteousness was a faith in Christ.

*Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ*. (Galatians 3:16)

     Thus, before baptism was introduced, before the law was given, and before receiving circumci­sion, Abraham was justified by faith.

*What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness*. (Romans 4:1-5)

*Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abra­ham; who is the father of us all, (As it is written, 1 have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were. Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. And be­ing not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb: He staggered not at the prom­ise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. And therefore it was im­puted to him for righteousness. Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification*. (Romans 4:16-25)

**Conclusion**

     We must never leave theology in the realm of the merely theoretical. Are you, my dear read­er, a child of Abraham? Is Christ your sin-bearer and your righteousness? Have you renounced your own righteousness? Is your testimony like Paul's?

**14**

*Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith*: (Philippians 3:8-9)

     Has the prophecy of Jeremiah found fulfillment in your life?

*Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS*. (Jeremiah 23:5-6)

     Soon we will stand before God. May God help you who are not trusting in Christ to trust him now! To be without faith in him is to be without his righteousness being charged to your account.

*With the heart man believeth unto righteousness*. (Romans 10:10)

**ADDENDUM**
Professor John Murray on Romans 1:16-17

     In verse 17 we are given the reason why the gospel is the power of God unto salvation. And the reason is that in the gospel "is revealed a righteousness of God". It needs to be observed how the concepts with which the apostle here deals are analogous to and no doubt derived from the Old Testament. Four pivotal ideas are coordinated in these verses - the power of God, salvation, revelation, and the righteousness of God. In the Old Testament we find these same ideas brought together in a way of which verses 16, 17 are plainly reminiscent. "Oh sing unto the Lord a new song; for he hath done marvelous things: his right hand, and his holy arm, hath wrought salvation for him. The Lord hath made known his salvation: his righteousness hath he openly showed in the sight of the nations" (Ps. 98:1, 2). "I will bring near my righteousness; it shall not be far off, and my salvation shall not tarry: and I will place salvation in Zion for Israel my glory" (Isaiah 46:13). "My righteousness is near; my salvation is gone forth...my salvation shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished...my righteousness shall be for ever, and my salva­tion from generation to generation" (Isaiah 51:5-8). "My salvation is near to come, and my righteousness to be revealed" (Isaiah 56:1). "For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jeru­salem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth" (Isaiah 62:1). (Cf. also Isaiah 54:17; 61:10, 11). It is appar­ent that the making known of salvation and the showing forth or revelation of righteousness are parallel expressions and convey substantially the same thought. Hence in the language of the Old Testament the salvation of God and the righteousness of God in such contexts are virtually syn-onymous-the working of salvation and the revelation of righteousness are to the same effect. It is this same complementation that we find here. And this is why the apostle can say that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation: "for therein is revealed a righteousness of God".

(Extracted from *The Epistle to the Romans*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1987, pp. 28-29.)

**15**