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Section: Doctrine of Christ (Christology)

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**HANDOUT NOTES**

**Q70.** **How is Jesus our righteousness?**

His perfect life of obedience is credited to us. God sees Christ’s righteousness when He looks on those who are saved.

* **Introduction**

**Martin Luther**: “Justification is that article upon which the church stands or falls.”

**John Calvin:** [Justification is] “The main hinge on which religion turns.”

If we distort justification, we preach an alternate gospel.

* **What Is Justification? Why Must We Be justified?**

**Justification**: God declares a believer not guilty based on the believer being credited Jesus Christ’s perfect righteousness.

**Romans 1:16-17** For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.”

**Righteousness**: is nearly equivalent to holiness, comprehending holy principles and affections of heart, and conformity of life to the divine law. It includes all we call justice, honesty and virtue, with holy affections; in short, it is true religion.

**Daniel 9:7a** “To you, O Lord, belongs righteousness.”

**Romans 3:23**: all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God

**Romans 6:23a** … the wages of sin is death

**1 Corinthians 15:22** … in Adam [we] all die ...

We have a fundamental problem.

**Isaiah 53:6** All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

We are dead. We are without fellowship with our Creator.

God, in His gracious mercy, extends the protoevangelium, the proclamation of the gospel, to Adam and Eve.

**Romans 3:23-26** for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

How God could effectively “pass over” sin and remain righteous?

If God does not demand payment for sin, how then can He be God? God would cease to be God if He was not just and righteous. And so that’s the dilemma Paul is resolving: How can God be holy and just if He pardons sinners without just payment?

Jesus, who perfectly submitted to the demands of the applicable positive law and the whole moral law, and who took on flesh to become a sacrifice for sin that mere animal sacrifices could not satisfy.

He satisfied the wrath of God in His death and was triumphant in victory over death by His resurrection. He purchased the elect’s salvation as planned in the Covenant of Redemption. He allows for God to remain righteous in His condemnation of sinners and in His mercy and salvation for the elect. God IS “just and the justifier” (Romans 3:26) *because of* the victory of Jesus and the salvation plan of justification by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.

**Romans 1:16-17** For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.”

“For in (the gospel) the righteousness of God is revealed from FAITH for FAITH.”

**Habakkuk 2:4** “… the righteous shall live by his faith.”

Paul is speaking of the righteousness of God, the gospel, and how it’s revealed *from* God’s faithfulness (through Christ) for our faith/belief.

God gives us righteousness through Christ. Upon His sovereign work of salvation, God credits the elect righteousness that He demands from all people everywhere.

The only way to receive this righteousness is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.

* **What Is Imputation?**

**Imputation**: When something not of your own is credited (accounted) to you. Adam’s guilt was imputed to all persons. The sin of the elect was imputed to Jesus at the cross, and Jesus’ perfect righteousness is imputed to the elect at conversion.

Adam was our first “federal head.”

**Romans 5:12** … sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned.

We are declared guilty because of Adam, and we add to this by our own subsequent sin.

**Romans 4:3-5** For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness.” Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness.

Only Christ can credit it to us through the gospel, and so we obtain Christ’s righteousness in a moment–-at salvation-–by grace through faith. And thusly, because of this faith, we are counted as righteous. Christ’s righteousness is counted to us (each of God’s elect). God credits us what He demands of us.

We obtain our justification by grace alone through faith—faith alone. It is important to note that justification is not based on or maintained by a mixture of our works and faith.

**Ephesians 2:8-9** For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Faith is worked in us by God, based on His work of grace in our hearts.

**Romans 5:18-19** Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.

The correct understanding of this verse reads this way: “One trespass led to condemnation for every person who was represented by Adam, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for every person who is subsequently represented by and united to Christ.”

We are declared (or counted as) righteous at conversion. God looks upon the lowly sinner and sees the righteousness of Christ.

* **Why Is Justification So Important?**

If we approach God with our own work, then we fundamentally misunderstand that Christ paid for our sin and has credit us the righteousness we need.

Why can’t we be justified by something that we have done?

**Isaiah 64:6** ​We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.

**Matthew 5:48** “You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

**Romans 14:23** ... whatever does not proceed from faith is sin.

* **Closing**