

IMPUTATION IN PAULINE THEOLOGY

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The article examined the meaning of the imputation of Christ's Righteousness to believers (the moral righteousness) as a basis of salvation vs a Justified status or positional standing based on faith and belief in the Lord Jesus Christ (Soteriology). The author surveyed and analyzed various scriptures to understand the Greek usage of verb and nouns to distinguish when Paul was referring to moral righteousness or a justified status in Soteriology.

“This approach to conceptualizing the process of justification [where our sins are imputed to Christ and His righteousness is imputed to us] was first introduced by Martin Luther and then developed by Melancthon and John Calvin...”¹ The thought is that the one whose faith is in Christ excludes work as the basis for salvation. This individual appears before God not clothed in his own righteousness of the works of the law but clothed in the righteousness of Christ. Arminian and Wesleyan's traditions have generally accepted this ideology with some dissenters. John Wesley, however, “...was criticized for abandoning the concept of the imputation of Christ's righteousness...”² But “...John Wesley defend[ed] himself against this criticism...”³ Wesley, however, was “...concern that the idea that believers are clothed in Christ's righteousness was commonly used as a rationale for an antinomian ethical stance...”⁴ It seems the contemporary approach of Pauline scholars is to remain silent on the issue of the imputation

¹ Shellrude, Glen, *Imputation In Pauline Theology: Christ's Righteousness Or A Justified Status?*, pg. 18

² *ibid.*, pg. 19

³ *ibid.*, pg. 19

⁴ *ibid.*, pg. 19

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of Christ's righteousness as a means of justification. "...The imputation construct is neither discussed nor critiqued but simply ignored..."⁵

Among contemporary scholars the "consensus" is Paul's different usage of the term *dikaiosune*. Paul uses this term in at least two different ways where it could mean moral righteousness or a soteriological status. Depending on the contextual language this term could mean one having a right standing or one being justified or acquitted before God. "...[T]he contextual evidence strongly suggests that the following meaning of a justified or acquitted status is the primary meaning of the word *dikaiosune* when used in a soteriological sense..."⁶ Therefore, "...while there are differences of opinion as to how to define the status, the point remains that what is credited or given the believer is not 'moral righteousness' but a 'soteriological standing' before God. Once this is recognized...the imputation of Christ's righteousness as the basis for justification evaporates."⁷

In the various passages that the author cites to in Roman, Paul demonstrates the gift comes from God to the individual who believes. Even "...the Torah itself enshrines the principle of justification by faith...[This is demonstrated in the passages] of Abraham and David..."⁸ The passage in Roman 4:3 Where God credited or imputing righteousness to Abraham based on his response to God, this gift was justification or soteriological status of Abraham. "... The 'justification of the ungodly' and having '*dikaiosune* credited' are two ways of saying the same thing."⁹ Therefore, the author would agree that the gift of Christ's moral righteousness plays no role in justification.

⁵ *ibid.*, pg. 20

⁶ *ibid.*, pg. 21

⁷ *ibid.*, pg. 21

⁸ *ibid.*, pg. 24

⁹ *ibid.*, pg. 24

Bibliography

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