

# The Brown Street Beacon

*"...Shine out among them like beacon lights,  
holding out to them the Word of Life" (Phil 2:15-16)*



Volume 2

June 22, 2014

Number. 20

## Imputed Righteousness

**T**he imputation of righteousness is one of the most glorious teachings of the Word of God, and it is a doctrine made possible by the inimitable love of God and the riches of His grace. As a result of God's willingness to impute righteousness to us, we can stand before Him in all holiness and without blame (Ephesians 1:4). This is great news because Isaiah once said that all our righteous deeds are as polluted garments (Isaiah 64:6), and Paul reminds us that no one is righteous, no not one (Romans 3:10). God's willingness to put righteousness down on our account is critical to our salvation.

Sadly, though, even this glorious doctrine is not immune to perversion, especially by those who espouse the reformed doctrine produced by the sixteenth century reformation movement. Listen to some who are of that persuasion.

*"By having the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, we can be seen as sinless, as Jesus is sinless. It is not, therefore, our perfection, but His. When God looks at the Christian, He sees the holiness, perfection, and righteousness of Christ. Therefore, we can say with confidence, 'I am sinless, as Jesus is sinless'" (www.gotquestions.org/imputed-righteousness).*

*"Justification is that step in salvation in which God declares the believer righteous. Protestant theology has emphasized that this includes the imputation of Christ's righteousness (crediting it to the believer's "account")...Imputed righteousness therefore means that upon repentance and belief in Christ, individuals are forensically declared righteous. This righteousness is not the believer's own, rather it is Christ's own righteousness 'imputed' to the believer" (Theopedia)*

*"Note this point. Not only were our sins taken away from us and the punishment for those sins endured by Christ, but the important third aspect of Imputation involved the placement of Christ's perfect righteousness on the head of every Christian" (Associates for Scriptural Knowledge).*

These quotes actually teach two false doctrines concerning imputation. One is that our sins were literally transferred to Christ, making Him the greatest sinner this world has ever seen. Here is what Martin Luther writes about Jesus in his commentary on Galatians.

*“All the prophets of old said that Christ should be the greatest transgressor, murderer, adulterer, thief, blasphemer that ever was or ever could be on earth. When He took the sins of the whole world upon Himself, Christ was no longer an innocent person. He was a sinner burdened with the sins of a Paul who was a blasphemer; burdened with the sins of a Peter who denied Christ; burdened with the sins of a David who committed adultery and murder, and gave the heathen occasion to laugh at the Lord. In short, Christ was charged with the sins of all men...”*

Is that really how you want to view Christ, that is, as the greatest transgressor, murderer, adulterer, thief, and blasphemer that ever was or could be on earth? Perhaps I will expose that error in another article, but what about the imputation of Christ's righteousness? Does Paul not clearly teach such in the book of Romans? No he doesn't. He does teach the imputation of righteousness, but the righteousness under consideration is not the personal righteousness of Christ. Here is some of the typical teachings of Paul on the imputation of righteousness.

*Rom 4:3*

*3 For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness."*

*Rom 4:5*

*5 And to the one who does not work but trusts him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness,*

*Rom 4:6*

*6 Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works,*

*Gal 3:6*

*Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.*

Does Paul even mention the personal righteousness of Christ in any of these passages? Again the answer is no. There are two important words in this discussion.

*Righteousness.* The Greek word is a forensic term meaning “to be declared not guilty” or “to be acquitted.” Paul clearly teaches that this righteousness is imputed by faith; however, he never teaches that it is imputed by faith alone. In fact, James tells us that one is justified by works, and not by faith only (James 2:24).

*Impute.* The Greek word means, “to charge to the account of, or to credit” (Complete Bible Library, Greek-English Dictionary). Now, Calvinism teaches that the thing that is accredited to our account is the personal righteousness of Christ. Listen to a Baptist preacher explain this word.

*“The word counted in Romans 4:3 is Logizomai means to take something that belongs to someone else and credit it to another’s account” (Billy Jenkins).*

Do you see how Mr. Jenkins added his own belief or opinion to the definition of this term in order to promote his Calvinistic view. The Greek word doesn’t demand that the thing charge to one’s account *belongs to someone else*. He added that so that he can teach that it is the righteousness of Christ that is imputed. The truth is, the righteousness imputed is NOT the righteousness of Christ, it is a state of righteousness, that is, an acquittal of one’s sins, based, not on the fact that our sins are literally transferred to Christ, but on the fact that they are forgiven because Jesus was willing to become our sin offering on the cross.

Imputed righteousness is a beautiful doctrine. Our salvation rests upon it, and our relationship with God would not be possible without it. We are, as David said, truly blessed because our iniquities are forgiven and our sins are covered. We are saved, not because we have never sinned, but because, by the grace of God, our sins have been forgiven. There is no need to add a Calvinistic twist to this glorious doctrine. Its greatness stands on its own. We have the hope of heaven because God, as a matter of grace and mercy, declared us “not guilty” in heaven’s court. To Him we should be eternally grateful.

*Don*