

Christ's Faith: The Pattern Jesus set for the World

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### Abstract

Over the past 50 years, there has been a ripple throughout the Christian community on how to interpret one of its most precious doctrines, the doctrine of justification by faith. Some may think that this issue was resolved during the Reformation or the Enlightenment, but thanks to the New Perspective on Paul movement, the controversy is once again as intensely passionate as ever. The questions range from the vicariousness of Christ's death, to Paul's view of the law, and the fundamental meaning of saving faith. This thesis is an attempt to carefully unite the old perspective with the new, to demonstrate that Christ is both the elect's substitute and example, and to explain how Christ's *pistis* correlates with His people's.

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## Introduction

To have faith in Christ is at the center of what it means to be Christian. Faith inaugurates the Christian life and brings the individual into union with Christ and His Church. That is not disputed. What is disputed is how Christ should be received. In Protestant theology, it is common to separate the old perspective and the new perspective on Paul by advocating that the former focuses on what Christ accomplished in our place, and the latter emphasizes the example that Christ set for us to follow. However, perhaps the biblical perspective is to carefully unite these two differing views around the foremost issue, the doctrine of justification by faith. The evangelical community is in need of a greater level of precision in discussing both the vicariousness of the atonement, and the cohesion between Christ's faith and the Christian's. Therefore, to determine theologically what saving faith is, Christ's "*pistis*" must be examined as the faithful manifestation of God's righteousness.

To provide a historical framework to this discussion, it is helpful to briefly remember the 19<sup>th</sup> century philosopher Søren Kierkegaard. Kierkegaard lived at a time in Denmark's history when almost 100 percent of the nation professed to be Christian. Most of Kierkegaard's writings therefore, attacked the notion of Christianity as a social entity that did not require unconditional religious commitment. As Norman Geisler explains, "Theologically Kierkegaard was orthodox. He wrote that he was not out to change the doctrines taught in the church but to insist that something be done with them."<sup>1</sup> Kierkegaard chastised Christendom in his day, writing, "We are what is called a 'Christian' nation—but in such a sense that not a single one of us is in the character of the Christianity of the New Testament."<sup>2</sup> Essentially, the burden of Søren

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<sup>1</sup> Norman L. Geisler, "Søren Kierkegaard," in *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1998), 406.

Kierkegaard was to (re-)introduce Christianity to Christendom, and he did so by describing faith as subjectively following Christ's example.

A century before Kierkegaard, there was an American theologian who saw faith vicariously: Jonathan Edwards. A verse that represents Edward's theology is Romans 4:5, "But to the one who does not work, but believes on Him who declares the ungodly to be righteous, his faith is credited for righteousness" (Holman Christian Standard Bible or HCSB). Edwards believed that "to suppose that we are justified by our sincere obedience, or anything of our own virtue or goodness, derogates from gospel grace."<sup>3</sup> Therefore, the challenge for Edward's theology was to reconcile Christ's commands for Christian obedience with his Calvinistic view of justification. The exact ways in which Edwards did this is not of concern here, because the goal is not to pit Edwards and Kierkegaard against one another but to demonstrate how their distinct emphases might actually work together.

### **Justification by Faith as Opposed to the Law**

Jonathan Edwards and Søren Kierkegaard serve as classic interpretations of what it means to have faith. Kierkegaard, as the "father of existentialism" understood the human experience as both the key to, and the yardstick for, genuine faith.<sup>4</sup> In fact, he went so far as to unite his soteriology (the doctrine of salvation) with his Christology (the doctrine of the person and work of Christ).<sup>5</sup> For Kierkegaard, there is no disconnect between the person of Christ and

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<sup>2</sup> Soren Kierkegaard, *Kierkegaard's Attack Upon "Christendom" 1854-1855*, trans. Walter Lowrie, Second Printing edition (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1968), 30.

<sup>3</sup> Jonathan Edwards, *Justification by Faith Alone* (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria Pubns, 2000), 58.

<sup>4</sup> N. T. Wright, *Justification: God's Plan & Paul's Vision* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 37.

<sup>5</sup> Paul Sponheim, *Kierkegaard on Christ and Christian Coherence*, Reprint edition (Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 1975), 188.

His saving work—both are manifestations of the righteousness of God. The Christian embraces Christ's faith by allowing Christ's righteous status to shape his existential righteous obedience. Edward's theology, on the other hand, was closer to the rational thought that characterized the Enlightenment and the Reformation. Therefore, it is not surprising that many of Edward's conclusions are centered on believing correctly in the finished work of Christ. Both views seem to be important, but how do they fit together?

In modern scholarship, much of the debate over the degree of vicariousness in the atonement comes down to how Paul's view of the law is interpreted. According to the traditional Reformed Protestant view, Paul opposed the law because He opposed any notion of works-based righteousness or self-sufficiency and was preaching a gospel that centered solely on the grace of God.<sup>6</sup> This is what Jonathan Edwards believed, and in large part, Protestant theology still holds this view to be correct. The current difficulty in interpreting Paul's understanding of the law and grace is that his preaching did not stay within the world of Judaism. Had only the Jews received Christ's salvation, then perhaps the whole issue of how to handle the law would evaporate, or at least significantly diminish. But Paul's ministry reached far beyond the world of Judaism, so much so that he identified himself as an apostle to the Gentiles (Rom. 11:13; Ga. 1:15-16; 2:7-8).

As many Gentiles, beginning in Paul's day and continuing to ours, place their faith in Christ, they will inevitably ask how Gentiles are to interpret the OT (and specifically the OT Law).<sup>7</sup> A sampling of their possible questions includes:

- Is Christ the end of the law or its goal, or both?
- Are Christians no longer under the law's jurisdiction or just its condemnation?
- Do believers fulfill the law or does Christ do it for us?

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<sup>6</sup> Francis Watson, *Paul, Judaism, and the Gentiles: Beyond the New Perspective*, 2 edition (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 2007), 27.

<sup>7</sup> For a few modern day examples of this controversy, see Appendix A.

- Is 'the law of Christ' the law reconfigured, or a new set of commandments, or something else?
- Are 'works of the law' identity markers separating Israel from the nations, or works demanded by the law?
- Is Paul's opposition to doing the law just his concern that it marks off Jews and Gentiles or is that only part of it?<sup>8</sup>

The answers to these questions have been broadly interpreted into three major categories: the Lutheran perspective, the Calvinist perspective, and the new perspective on Paul.

### Lutheran View of the Law

Martin Luther believed that there is both unity and diversity in the Bible: unity in God, but diversity in how God has chosen to reveal Himself (implying the contrast between law and gospel).<sup>9</sup> According to Brian Rosner, "Lutheranism holds that Paul believed that Christ abolished the law and that the law is the counterpoint to the gospel (Rom. 3:20; Gal. 2:16-21; 5:4)."<sup>10</sup>

Luther himself declared, "to want to be justified by works of the law is to deny the righteousness of faith... the righteousness of the law [that] they think they are producing is actually nothing but idolatry and blaspheming against God."<sup>11</sup> Luther's critique of the law is not restricted to the Jewish law, but to any moral attempt to make oneself appear to be righteous before God.

Therefore, the only appropriate use of the law is to reveal human sin and helplessness in hope that the righteous God will extend His grace.

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<sup>8</sup> These questions reflect a slightly edited list from Brian Rosner, whose work was incredibly helpful in understanding Paul's view of the Law. Brian S. Rosner, *Paul and the Law: Keeping the Commandments of God* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2013), 22.

<sup>9</sup> David L. Baker, *Two Testaments, One Bible: The Theological Relationship Between the Old and New Testaments*, 3rd edition (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2010), 39.

<sup>10</sup> Rosner, *Paul and the Law*, 21.

<sup>11</sup> Martin Luther, *Lectures on Galatians: Chapters 1-4*, ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Reprint edition, vol. LW 26 (Saint Louis, Mo: Concordia Publishing House, 1962), 253–54.

### Calvinist View of the Law

The Calvinist view agrees that “salvation is [solely] by grace and not by obeying the law, but once saved we are under the moral law and must obey it in order to please God (Mt. 5:17; Rom. 3:31).”<sup>12</sup> This view is best illustrated by John Calvin’s teaching on the three uses of the law. Calvin believed that the law first serves as a mirror for us, revealing the perfect character of God, and in so doing, exposing our sin. Secondly, the law has a civil use, restraining the wicked and distributing reward and punishment as appropriate. At both of these points, Luther would have agreed. The most controversial part of the Calvinist view of the law is its third function. Calvin argued that more than revealing or restraining sin, the law actually exposes what is pleasing to God. In this way, keeping the law is actually an act of worship and obedience.<sup>13</sup>

### New Perspective on Paul View of the Law

The New Perspective on Paul (NPP) addresses Paul’s problem with the law in terms of his problem with Jewish ethnocentrism. Therefore, it was “not that salvation is by grace and not by works, but that...the law was...[being] used by Jews to exclude Gentiles from the people of God (Acts 15:5; 21:28; Rom. 4:16).”<sup>14</sup> Therefore, as Ferdinand Christian Baur contends, “the purpose of Romans is to do away with the last remaining portions of Jewish exclusivism, by taking up and representing it as the mere introduction to the Christian universalism which extended to all nations.”<sup>15</sup> If Baur’s insights are correct, then Paul’s statements that seem anti-

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<sup>12</sup> Rosner, *Paul and the Law*, 21.

<sup>13</sup> John Calvin, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion: The law Given, Not to Retain a People for Itself, but to Keep Alive the Hope of Salvation in Christ until His Advent*, trans. Henry Beveridge, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 1845), 285–99.

<sup>14</sup> Rosner, *Paul and the Law*, 21.

<sup>15</sup> Ferdinand Christian Baur, *Paul the Apostle of Jesus Christ: His Life and Works, His Epistles and Teachings*, vol. 1 (Peabody, Ma: Hendrickson Pub, 2003), 322.

law may represent Paul's attempt to bring unity between Jews and Gentiles through Christ.<sup>16</sup> In the exegesis of Romans 3:21-22, there will be more room for discussion on what it means that the righteousness of God was revealed "apart from the law" by "*pistis Christou*" which could be translated as "faith in Christ" or the "faithfulness of Christ."

### ***Pistis Christou* in Romans 3:21-22**

#### Textual Analysis

There are two possible ways of translating the Greek phrase "*pistis Christou*." The traditional translation reads "faith in [Jesus] Christ," but it could also be translated as "the faith of [Jesus] Christ" or "the faithfulness of [Jesus] Christ" to reflect Christ's faithfulness to the Father.<sup>17</sup> Several translations now include in their margin a footnote that mentions this possibility. Below is an example of how the HCSB translation reads currently and how it would read if substituted with the "faithfulness of Christ."

#### **Romans 3:21–22 (HCSB)**

But now, apart from the law, God's righteousness has been revealed—attested by the law and the Prophets—that is, God's righteousness through faith in Jesus Christ, to all who believe, since there is no distinction.

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<sup>16</sup> Brian S. Rosner, *Paul and the law: Keeping the Commandments of God* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2013), 21.

<sup>17</sup> Fuller discussion on translation and the theological difference between faith and faithfulness will be the subject of the section "Faith or Faithfulness" (pg. 26). Also reference E. Elizabeth Johnson and David M. Hay, eds., *Pauline Theology, Volume IV: Looking Back, Pressing On*, First Edition, vol. 4 (Atlanta, Ga: Society of Biblical Literature, 1997), 35–60.

**Romans 3:21–22 (HCSB – margin note included)**

But now, apart from the law, God's righteousness has been revealed—attested by the law and the Prophets—that is, God's righteousness through [the faithfulness of Jesus Christ], to all who believe, since there is no distinction.

**Summary**

Since grammatically the phrase "*pistis Christou*" could be translated as either "faith in," "the faith of," or "the faithfulness of" Christ, the real question is how the theological emphases of faith change depending on the translation. Michael Gorman summarized the five most essential arguments for translating the phrase "*pistis Christou*" as the "faith of Christ:"

1. It expresses the most natural translation of the Greek phrase;
2. It makes God (rather than God and Christ) the consistent object of faith for Paul;
3. It is parallel in form and content to "the faith of Abraham" in Romans 4:12, 16;
4. It can be given coherent sense, as a reference to Christ's faith or faithfulness (the Greek word *pistis* can mean either) expressed in death, in the overall structure of Paul's experience and theology, making the most fundamental basis of salvation not anthropocentric (our faith) but theo- and Christocentric (Christ's faith);
5. It grounds Paul's emphasis on the inseparability of faith and love in one faithful and loving act of Christ on the cross.<sup>18</sup>

With these observations in mind, it makes sense that many translators are finding the "faithfulness of Christ" translation both interesting and compelling. At a grammatical level, the "*pistis Christou*" debate has much in common with the controversy over verses that have been omitted from some translations of the New Testament. For example, in Acts 8:36, the Ethiopian eunuch asked Philip what was keeping him from being baptized. In Acts 8:37, Philip responded, "If you believe with all your heart you may." And the eunuch replied, "I believe that Jesus Christ

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<sup>18</sup> Michael J. Gorman, *Cruciformity: Paul's Narrative Spirituality of the Cross* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), 110.

is the Son of God.” This verse seems incredibly significant to the passage, but it is actually missing in some translations (such as the NIV) because it does not appear in the earliest manuscripts and may have been added later to get across a theological point.

In the example of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch, verse 37 appears to have been added so that it would be clear to future readers that the Ethiopian man could be saved, but only by believing in Jesus. In a similar way, the argument that “*pistis Christou*” must be translated as “faith in Christ” in the context of Romans 3:21-22, seems to be an attempt to preserve the precious doctrine of justification by faith alone. In the context of the passage however, it almost breaks the flow of thought to claim that “God’s righteousness is revealed through [believing] in Jesus Christ, to all who believe [in Jesus Christ]” (translation mine). A more defensible reading of the text would be, “God’s righteousness has been revealed through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ, to all who believe in Him” (translation mine).

The laborious work of lexical criticism is better left with the experts, but if they decide that the “faithfulness of Christ” is a better translation than “faith in Christ,” it does not seem that the gospel will be lost. As every “*pistis Christou*” passage demonstrates, the faith of Christ is never a substitute for the human response of faith in Christ.<sup>19</sup> After all, the interest of this study is to show how the faithfulness of Christ actually enables and sets the pattern for a person’s faith in Christ. This revised translation may allow scholars to describe that correlation more precisely.

#### Exegetical Commentary on Romans 3:21-22

Romans 3:21-22 states, “But now, apart from the law, God’s righteousness has been revealed—attested by the law and the Prophets—that is, God’s righteousness through [the faithfulness of Jesus Christ,] to all who believe, since there is no distinction.”

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<sup>19</sup> Robert Tannehill, *Dying and Rising with Christ: A Study in Pauline Theology* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2006), 232–33.

The theological complexity of this one sentence is astounding. To fully understand what Paul is expounding here requires a proper perspective of Paul's view of the law, how God's righteousness was revealed in Christ, and Paul's view of justification by faith. On the first point, Robert Tannehill stresses that "the reason understanding Paul and the law is so critical to the study of the New Testament is that it touches on the perennial question of the relationship between the grace of God in the gift of salvation and the demand of God in the call of holy living. Misunderstanding Paul and the law leads to distortions of one or both."<sup>20</sup> Although the overall focus here is not Paul's view of the law, the exact dilemma between grace and obedience is what is being explored within the question: what is faith?

In this particular passage (Rom. 3:21-22), Paul presents the universal need for salvation that has somehow been supplied by the righteousness of God being made public through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ.<sup>21</sup> The goal of this section is to demonstrate exactly how and why that righteousness was revealed as well as how it may be received. The HCSB translation of Romans 3:21-22 is in bold for clarity.

**But now,**

This opening phrase represents a significant transition between what was said before and what is being said currently, particularly, that since the law was incapable of making a person righteous in God's sight (Rom. 3:20) that God is now revealing His righteousness outside of the law. This is not so much a change in time, as in seconds and minutes, but a change in how God has chosen to interact with His world through His Son. David Baker summarizes this phenomenon well when he remarks, "the New Testament proclaims that a new and

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<sup>20</sup> Rosner, *Paul and the Law*, 20–21.

<sup>21</sup> Mark A. Seifrid, *Justification by Faith: The Origin and Development of a Central Pauline Theme*, vol. LXVIII (New York, NY: E.J. Brill, 1992), 219.

unprecedented act of God has taken place in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, yet a central aspect of this proclamation is that Jesus is the fulfillment of Old Testament hopes and expectations (Rom. 1:1-4).”<sup>22</sup> Paul’s use of “but now” in Romans 3:21 represents his theology of Christ as the present fulfillment of an age-old promise.

**apart from the law,**

Paul firmly believed that God’s righteousness was revealed apart from the law, but what exactly does that mean? Is it that God’s righteousness is contrary to the law, that both Jews and Gentiles alike can be recipients of God’s righteousness, or could it mean that Jesus had a body and that the law was written on stone? Perhaps this divine revelation could even mean that “justification is on the basis of divine initiative followed by human response rather than human initiative followed by divine response.”<sup>23</sup> Each of these perspectives has a degree of Scriptural validity that must fit into the larger context of the book of Romans. In doing this, N.T. Wright and the New Perspective on Paul are very helpful.

Wright reports that the whole concept of the New Perspective on Paul originated in 1976 when he stumbled upon Romans 10:3.<sup>24</sup> The verse discloses, “[the Jews] disregarded the righteousness from God and attempted to establish their own righteousness, they have not submitted themselves to God’s righteousness.” Through the New Perspective on Paul, Wright tries to demonstrate that Judaism was never meant to be a religion of moralistic legalism but always a covenant of grace. The trouble with the law arose when unbelieving Jewish people

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<sup>22</sup> Baker, *Two Testaments, One Bible*, 34.

<sup>23</sup> Michael J. Gorman, *Inhabiting the Cruciform God: Kenosis, Justification, and Theosis in Paul’s Narrative Soteriology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 81.

<sup>24</sup> N. T. Wright, *Between Gospel and Election: Explorations in the Interpretation of Romans 9-11*, ed. Florian Wilk and Frank Schleritt (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 40.

insisted on keeping God's covenant blessings to themselves, rather than seeing themselves as a conduit for God's righteousness to flow through as it spread to the rest of the world.<sup>25</sup> This is a much more comprehensive view of Israel's failure than suggesting that they failed to keep a moralistic law or were attempting works-based righteousness.

It seems that the implication of the gospel being revealed "apart from the law" is that the Jews (who did not keep the law—Rom. 3:17-24) and Gentiles (who do not possess the law—Rom. 2:12-16) could now both receive God's righteousness through faith.<sup>26</sup> After all, the essential problem with the Law was not that it could not be kept (Dt. 30:11-14), but that it could be kept without actually loving God or having faith. This was true in the story of the rich young ruler. He was able to keep all the commandments, but he refused to sell everything he had and give it to the poor (Mt. 19:21-22). His greed was the opposite of Christ's cruciform faith and love (Phil. 2).

By the Pharisee's standards, Jesus was a Law-breaker (Mt. 12:2). Nevertheless, Jesus claimed that "unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven" (Mt. 5:20). The best way to summarize Jesus' relationship with the Law is to say that He was consistent with the Spirit of the Law. To Jesus, murder was not just killing someone, but anger towards a brother (Mt. 5:21-22). Likewise, righteousness was not just keeping the commandments, but embodying the Spirit of the Law which Jesus Himself unveiled. Therefore, for Christ to come "apart from the law" does not mean that He came in

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<sup>25</sup> Wright, 42.

<sup>26</sup> The statement that Gentiles do not possess the law is simply a reference to the Jewish Law and not the "law of [human] nature" (i.e. the moral law) which all human beings have. Clive S. Lewis proposed that "human beings, all over the earth, have this curious idea that they ought to behave in a certain way (due to the moral law) ... [but] they do not in fact behave in that way." More on this later. C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, Revised & Amplified edition (San Francisco, CA: HarperCollins, 2009), 8.

contrast to it. Rather, it means that He came in harmony with the Spirit of the Law in a way that made faith—as opposed to commandment keeping—the universal basis for relationship with God.

### **God's righteousness has been revealed**

In the book of Romans, Paul stresses that God has revealed His righteousness through creation (Rom. 1:19-20) and through His gospel (Rom. 1:16-17), but His revelation came most clearly and most powerfully through the incarnation of His Son Jesus. John 1:14 describes the incarnation most clearly as the moment “the Word became flesh and took up residence among us. We observed His glory, the glory as the One and Only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.”<sup>27</sup> The word “revealed,” or in some translations, “manifested” (NASB) means to bring something hidden and to lay it out in plain sight.<sup>28</sup> That is exactly what Christ did with God's righteousness. Notice the parallels between 2 Corinthians 4:4 and 4:6.

2 Cor. 4:4	2 Cor. 4:6
Satan blinds to the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ	God creates the light of the knowledge of the glory of God
who is the image of God	in the face of Christ <sup>29</sup>

These verses are the essence of the good news that Jesus brought to the world. Just as God had once called light to shine out of darkness in creation (Gn. 1:3), He now causes light to shine in the

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<sup>27</sup> Like Kierkegaard, Saint Cyril of Alexandria saw an intimate connection between Christology and soteriology. He even said that the reason for the incarnation was so that Christ could “reconstitute [humanity’s] condition within Himself.” In other words, He shared in our condition so that we might share in His. Cyril, *On the Unity of Christ*, ed. John A. McGuckin (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimirs Seminary, 2015), 62.

<sup>28</sup> Marvin R. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*, Reprint, vol. 3 (New York, NY: Nabu Press, 2010), 41.

<sup>29</sup> According to these verses, the gospel is not the price Jesus paid for the gift, or any freedom that the gift may bring, the gospel is “Christ Himself as the glorious image of God.” In other words, “God is the Gospel.” John Piper, *God Is the Gospel: Meditations on God’s Love as the Gift of Himself* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2005), 14, 61.

human heart of unbelief. Christ reveals the righteousness of God, and the Spirit of God turns that revelation into faith (Jn. 6:63; Rom. 4:17).

For Paul to specifically describe God's righteousness as being revealed through Jesus, implies not that Jesus possessed only that one quality, but that the specific quality of righteousness was pertinent to Paul's current discussion on faith. In his book on justification, Colin G. Kruse summarized a few biblical expressions of God's righteousness:

1. God's distributive justice – where God renders appropriately to all people based on their response to His divine revelation (Rom. 1:18-32).
2. God's covenant faithfulness – which is God's unflinching loyalty to His people, to His plan, and to His promises (Rom. 3:3-9; 9:1-29; 11:1-10)
3. God's saving action – the possibility for humankind to receive God's righteousness, or right standing before God, by faith (Rom. 3:21-26).
4. God's gift of justification – the free gift of God that is credited to all who believe (Rom. 4:1-25; 9:30-10:4).
5. God's righteousness which leads to righteousness of life in believers – the aspect of God's righteousness that liberates the Christian from the bondage of sin and inaugurates their enslavement to righteousness (Rom. 6:1-23).<sup>30</sup>

To concur with Paul that Christ put God's righteousness on display is to simultaneously agree that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself (2 Cor. 5:19). In other words, the narrative story of Christ's life is a public manifestation of the Spirit of God, active in Christ the Son, making known the righteousness of the Father.

In an incredibly self-revealing passage (Col. 1:24-28), Paul indicates a divine purpose for the pain that has been an inseparable aspect of his ministry:

Now I rejoice in my sufferings for you, and I am completing in my flesh what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for His body, that is, the church. I have become its servant, according to God's administration that was given to me for you, to make God's message fully known, the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to His saints. God wanted to make known among the Gentiles the glorious wealth of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. We proclaim Him, warning and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone mature in Christ. (Col. 1:24-28).

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<sup>30</sup> Colin G. Kruse, *Paul, the law, and Justification* (Eugene, Or: Wipf & Stock Pub, 2008), 169–70.

These verses indicate that the purpose of God, which was hidden as a mystery in time past but is now being revealed, is this: “Christ in you, the hope of glory.” The reason that Paul was willing to suffer as he did, is so that he might make known this mystery and call people into participation with Christ. As John Piper reasons in his book, *Filling up the Afflictions of Christ*,

[Christ's] voluntary suffering and death to save others is not only the *content* but it is also the *method* of our mission. We proclaim the Good News of what he accomplished, and we join him in the Calvary method. We embrace his sufferings *for* us, and we spread the gospel by our suffering *with* him. As Joseph Tson puts it in his own case: ‘I am an extension of Jesus Christ. When I was beaten in Romania, He suffered in my body. It is not my suffering: I only had the honor to share His sufferings.’<sup>31</sup> Pastor Tson goes on to say that Christ's suffering is for *propitiation*; our suffering is for *propagation*. In other words, when we suffer with him in the cause of missions, we display the way Christ loved the world and in our own sufferings extend His to the world. This is what it means to fill up the afflictions of Christ (Colossians 1:24).<sup>32</sup>

These verses, as well as Piper's comments on these verses, reveal that the revelation of the righteousness of God is both the gift of the gospel as well as the goal of it. This concept of the “revelation of righteousness,” or the public manifestation of any one of God's intrinsic qualities, is what the Old Testament refers to as glory (Is. 6:3). Therefore, the glory of God is first “God [revealed] in Christ” (Col. 2.2), and second “Christ [revealed] in you” (Col. 1:27).

### **attested by the law and the Prophets**

The fact that God's revelation of Himself in the person of Jesus is affirmed by the Old Testament Scriptures is not surprising. Jesus did not come “apart from the law” as in “apart from the prophecies and promises of the Old Testament;” in fact He came in fulfillment of those

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<sup>31</sup> Joseph Tson, *A Theology of Martyrdom* (Wheaton, IL, an undated booklet of the Romanian Missionary Society), 4.

<sup>32</sup> John Piper, *Filling up the Afflictions of Christ: The Cost of Bringing the Gospel to the Nations in the Lives of William Tyndale, Adoniram Judson, and John Paton*, Reprint edition, The Swans Are Not Silent, Book 5 (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 15.

promises (Acts 10:43; Rom. 1:2).<sup>33</sup> The authors of the Synoptic Gospels in particular, each demonstrate that Jesus was the Jewish Messiah and the one they had been waiting for. On the road to Emmaus, Jesus himself agreed with this truth (Lk. 24:25-27; 44). What the Jews already knew about the Messiah from their weekly reading of Scripture (Acts 13:15) was fulfilled by Jesus so that the Jews would place their faith in Him (Lk. 24:44; Jn. 1:45; Acts 28:23).

Christianity, therefore, was never meant to be anti-Semitic, or a sect of Judaism as some accused (Acts 24:14). Christianity is the belief that everything that was written about the Messiah has been miraculously fulfilled in Christ (Mt. 5:17; 22:40; Lk. 16:16).

**that is, God's righteousness through [the faithfulness of Jesus Christ,]**

The bracketed text indicates a possible revised translation of what Paul was intending to say with the phrase "*pistis Iēsous Christos*." Although it is possible that Paul could be using a play on words to indicate in one phrase that God's righteousness was manifested by "the faithfulness of Jesus Christ" and is received by "faith in Jesus Christ" it seems more likely that in this situation he was primarily explaining the way in which God's righteousness was personified. This revised translation is significant because it clarifies what saving faith is in terms of Christ's *pistis*.

Beginning with God's righteousness, in Romans 1:16-17, Paul labels the righteousness of God as the essential basis for the good news that he was proclaiming.<sup>34</sup> The fact that God is

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<sup>33</sup> The word "fulfillment" used here is not meant to indicate a conclusion to the plan of God, but the initiation of part one in the two-stage plan of God in bringing the kingdom of God to earth. In stage one, the Messiah comes to suffer and die as a fulfillment of what was written; in stage two, the crucified and resurrected Messiah comes in glory to rule and to reign as Lord. See Philippians 2 and John Piper, *What Jesus Demands from the World* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 21.

<sup>34</sup> Douglas Campbell interprets Rom. 1:16-17 to state that "the gospel, when preached, makes God saving act in Christ known [a second time] ... the faithfulness of Christ – in the broader sense of His obedience, death, and resurrection – revealed the saving righteousness of God [first]." Douglas A. Campbell, "The Faithfulness of Jesus Christ in Romans 3:22," in *The Faith of Jesus Christ: Exegetical, Biblical, and Theological Studies*, ed. Michael F. Bird and Preston M. Sprinkle (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2009), 65-70.

righteous is not new information. God's righteousness was expressed frequently throughout the Old Testament and as Paul contends in Romans 1:17, this new revelation of God's righteousness is harmonious with what was written in the past.<sup>35</sup> However, through the faithfulness of Christ, the righteousness of God is now being made known in a way that was unprecedented in time past. The faithfulness of Christ now personifies the righteousness of God. Likewise, sharing in the faith of Christ is how a person receives that righteousness. In a statement about the great commission, John Piper made a similar comment about the nature of faith:

[Jesus] did not say, "teach them all my commandments." He said, "teach them to *observe* all my commandments." You can teach a parrot all of Jesus' commandments. But you cannot teach a parrot to observe them. Parrots will not repent, and worship Jesus, and lay up treasures in heaven, and love their enemies, and go out like sheep in the midst of wolves to herald the kingdom of God. Teaching people to parrot all that Jesus commanded is easy. Teaching them to *observe* all that Jesus commanded is *impossible* (Mk. 10:25-27).<sup>36</sup>

Piper's contrast between the faith of a parrot as opposed to the faith of a Christian who shares the faith of Christ is helpful because it explains why it is faith that Jesus demands from the world. As opposed to rational assertion, commandment keeping, or a blind step in the dark, Christian faith is an embodiment of Christ's faith, and therefore, an embodiment of Christ.

In Romans 3, Paul is obviously talking about how Christ faithfully demonstrated God's righteousness through His atoning death, but it is important to remember that Christ's faithfulness to the Father's will was a theme of Jesus' life and not merely an isolated event. For example, immediately following Christ's baptism, the same Spirit that had powerfully descended on Him and anointed His public ministry, now led Him into the wilderness to be tempted by the

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<sup>35</sup> For example, both Abraham and David demonstrate aspects of justification by faith but they do not exhaust it. Why? Simply because they are properly Theocentric but are not, and cannot be, Christocentric. As soon as Christ appears, is crucified, and is raised, justification and faith are irreversibly Christocentric even as they remain Theocentric. God has now been revealed in Christ. (Gorman, *Inhabiting the Cruciform God*, pg. 85).

<sup>36</sup> Piper, *What Jesus Demands from the World*, 17.

Devil for 40 days (Mt. 4:1-2). While Jesus was there, it is common knowledge that He was tempted by the Devil three times. Each time that Jesus resisted these temptations, He provided a slightly fuller display of His faithfulness. to the Father.<sup>37</sup>

Through these examples, we see that Paul's statement about God's righteousness being revealed through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ (Rom. 3:22) is not unfounded. Paul was not making universal theological claims: his theology was consistent with the narrative of Christ's life. The beauty of Romans 3 is that the righteousness of God was personified by Christ, the only faithful one, so that unfaithful people could behold His righteousness and be transformed through participation in His faith.

**to all who believe,**

Since it is clear that all of humanity has fallen far short of the glory and righteousness of God (Rom. 3:23), the question becomes, is there any way for God and man to be reconciled to one another? The biblical answer to that question is a resounding yes. Multiple verses even seem to make this process very simple. Romans 10:9 states, "If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved." The sentiment that belief leads to salvation is very common in the book of John, but it appears in the other gospels and in Paul's letters as well.

In Romans 4:3, Paul reminds the reader that "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him for righteousness." The word "credited" that appears in verse 3 is the Greek word "*logizomai*" which can also be translated to "count," to "reckon," to "credit," to "charge," or to "impute."<sup>38</sup> In the HCSB English translation of Romans 4:3-8, twice Paul correlates believing in

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<sup>37</sup> Perhaps it is for this reason that Kierkegaard refused to limit the faithfulness of Christ to His sacrificial death. He said, "[Christ's faithfulness] was equally present at every moment, not greater when He breathed His last on the cross than when He let Himself be born." Sponheim, *Kierkegaard on Christ and Christian Coherence*, 183.

God and that belief being “*logizomai*” as righteousness. Five times total, the word “*logizomai*” appears in the passage. The emphasis that Paul is making here is that faith is credited to a person as righteousness forensically at the moment of belief, and not something that he or she grows into over time.<sup>39</sup>

It is because the righteousness of God is revealed through the faithfulness of Christ to all who believe, that the concept of justification by faith alone is not lost with this revised translation. As Romans 3:26 concurs, “God presented [Jesus] to demonstrate [God’s] (or God in Christ’s) righteousness at the present time, so that [God] would be righteous (just) and declare righteous (justify or *righteousify*) the one who has [the faith of] Jesus.” Another verse that demonstrates the role of human faith in salvation is Acts 16:14-15, where Luke records the story of Lydia’s salvation as follows:

A woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira, who worshiped God, was listening. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was spoken by Paul. After she and her household were baptized, she urged us, “If you consider me a *believer* in the Lord, come and stay at my house.” And she persuaded us. (emphasis mine)

These verses are just some of many that describe how God opens people’s hearts to believe, or to place their faith, in Him. Examples from Scripture demonstrate that this initial belief does not require a full understanding of the content of faith, but it does require faith in harmony with

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<sup>38</sup> *The Lexham Analytical Lexicon to the Greek New Testament* (Logos Bible Software, 2011).

<sup>39</sup> The word “forensic” was chosen because some may argue that the phrase “imputed righteousness” is unclear or insufficient in relating man’s justification with the Christocentric nature of the rest of Paul’s work. Imputation implies that God’s righteousness is transferred onto the believer, either through a legal declaration or through a literal dispensation. This implies that justification is made possible by Christ, but that it takes place in man. However, Seifrid states, “It is better to say with Paul that our righteousness is found, not in us, but in Christ crucified and risen.” Without picking hairs where Paul does not, Romans 4:25 states that “He . . . was delivered over because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification.” After Jesus’ resurrection, Paul does not state that Christ then goes about imputing His righteousness on believers, but rather that He credits His righteousness to believers based on their faith in Him. Therefore, it may be more precise to describe the transfer of righteousness as “incorporated righteousness” rather than “imputed righteousness.” See Michael Bird, *The Saving Righteousness of God: Studies on Paul, Justification and the New Perspective* (Waynesboro, Ga: Paternoster, 2007), 60–87.

Christ's faith. The type of faith that the Spirit of God has to stir up in a person. Therefore, justification is on the basis of Christ's faithfulness, it is appropriated by faith – both Christ's faith and the believer's – and it gives rise to an analogous life of faithfulness that is enabled and empowered by incorporation with Christ's life.<sup>40</sup>

One final comment on the role of belief in the transferal of Christ's righteousness, is that to Paul, justification is not "legal-fiction"<sup>41</sup> as some have critiqued, but an actual present vindication of a person before God. This is one place where John Piper seems to demonstrate that N.T. Wright's view of God's righteousness is too narrow. As Piper describes, "[Wright] defines God's righteousness by saying that it keeps covenant, judges impartially, deals properly with sin, and advocates for the helpless."<sup>42</sup> Each of these are examples of what God's righteousness prompts Him to do but not exactly what His righteousness is. Similarly, through participation in Christ's faith, believers will be transformed in such a way that they begin to act righteously (2 Cor. 5:21). This transformation is powerful, but it is rooted in the fact that the person has already been changed by Christ's righteousness and has become a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17).

**since there is no distinction.**

The inclusiveness of the gospel in Romans 3 is also consistent with what Paul writes about Abraham's faith in Romans 4:23-24, "now 'it was credited to him' was not written for Abraham alone, but also for us. It will be credited to us who believe in Him who raised Jesus our

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<sup>40</sup> Michael Bird, "What Is There between Minneapolis and St. Andrews? A Third Way in the Piper-Wright Debate," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 2011, 308, [http://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/54/54-2/JETS\\_54-2\\_299-309\\_Bird.pdf](http://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/54/54-2/JETS_54-2_299-309_Bird.pdf).

<sup>41</sup> N. T. Wright, *The Great Acquittal: Justification by Faith and Current Christian Thought* (London: Fount Paperbacks, 1980), 31. "Legal fiction" – God declaring a person to be something they are not.

<sup>42</sup> Piper, *The Future of Justification*, 62.

Lord from the dead.” The “us” that Paul uses in these verses seems to imply that God is not concerned with whether a person is a Jew or Gentile, for just as all have sinned, all may be justified freely by His grace displayed in Christ Jesus (Rom. 3:23-24).<sup>43</sup> God’s provision of grace is not contingent on merit or ethnicity but solely contingent on faith.

#### Summary of Exegesis: Romans 3:21-22

In light of Romans 3:21-22, justification by faith may be described as a forensic experience that occurs as a result of God revealing His righteousness in the person of Christ. When God “reveals His righteousness” (or any intrinsic quality of His Divine nature), humans call that revelation “glory.” The glory now being revealed is two-fold: it is first God in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself; it is second Christ in you, spreading God’s glory to the rest of creation. Since God is righteous and humanity is not, the only way for mankind to receive God’s righteousness is by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8). The grace of God was extended to humanity through Christ’s *pistis*—which includes both His faith and His faithfulness. Christian faith is a response in kind to Christ’s faith that is brought about through forensic union with Christ.

#### **The Implications of Christ’s Faith in the Atonement**

With the bulk of exegesis complete, it has become clear that Christ’s faithfulness formed the foundation for humanity’s redemption (through the atonement).<sup>44</sup> What is not yet clear is how Christ’s faithfulness was informed by His faith. The assumption is that Christ was not only faithful to the Father in His actions and obedience, but also in His will and emotions. Had Christ

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<sup>43</sup> Gentiles would of course not need to die to the Jewish law, but they must die to themselves and their own desires for this world (Gal. 5:24; 6:14). The point is, for both Jews and Gentiles, faith includes both death and resurrection, or better yet, resurrection through death. (Gorman, *Inhabiting the Cruciform God*, 67.)

<sup>44</sup> This connection is seen in Romans 3:25, “God presented [Jesus] as a propitiation (atoning sacrifice) through [the faithfulness of] His (God or God in Christ’s) blood, to demonstrate [God’s] righteousness...”

died unwillingly, His innocent blood may have still been sufficient for mankind's justification, but His faith would most certainly not represent the devotion to the Father that the early Christians saw as paradigmatic for all Christians.

#### Faith or Faithfulness?

Each of the "*pistis Christou*" texts are currently translated to read "faith in Christ" (in all major English translations including: HCSB, NASB95, NKJV, ESV, NIV, NLT), but as previously mentioned, there is some compelling evidence that indicates that a better translation might actually be the "faith of Christ" or the "faithfulness of Christ."<sup>45</sup> If this translation is going to be accepted, there needs to be an understanding that the faith of Christ does not negate the need for Christians to place their faith in Christ, rather, it is descriptive of the type of faith the Christian has.

Since both faith and faithfulness were on display during Christ's life, some scholars argue that *pistis* must have both meanings whenever it appears.<sup>46</sup> However, Moisés Silva is one of many other scholars who believe that while not every text is theologically precise, intentional ambiguity is rare among the biblical writers and that context will almost always eliminate multiple meanings.<sup>47</sup> Below are the six key texts of the *pistis Christou* debate that display alternate translations of Christ's *pistis* depending on their logical context.

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<sup>45</sup> Many translations currently include a margin note that indicates this possibility. This revised translation is especially appealing to those who would like to emphasize salvation as participation in Christ. James D.G. Dunn, *The Faith of Jesus Christ: Exegetical, Biblical, and Theological Studies*, ed. Michael F. Bird and Preston M. Sprinkle (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2009), xvii.

<sup>46</sup> Richard Hays goes so far as to say that it is a "semantic fallacy" to distinguish between Christ's faith and His faithfulness. Debbie Hunn, "Debating the Faithfulness of Jesus Christ in Twentieth-Century Scholarship," in *The Faith of Jesus Christ: Exegetical, Biblical, and Theological Studies*, ed. Michael F. Bird and Preston M. Sprinkle (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2009), 19.

<sup>47</sup> Moisés Silva, *Biblical Words and Their Meaning: An Introduction to Lexical Semantics*, Revised, Expanded edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), 149–56.

- Romans 3:21–22      <sup>21</sup> But now, apart from the law, God's righteousness has been revealed—attested by the law and the Prophets <sup>22</sup>—that is, God's righteousness through [the faithfulness of Jesus Christ], to all who believe, since there is no distinction.
- Romans 3:26      <sup>26</sup> God presented Him to demonstrate His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be righteous and declare righteous the one who has [the faith of Jesus].
- Galatians 2:16      <sup>16</sup> know that no one is justified by the works of the law but by [the faithfulness of Jesus Christ]. And we have believed in Christ Jesus so that we might be justified by [the faith of Christ] and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no human being will be justified.
- Galatians 2:19–20      <sup>19</sup> For through the law I have died to the law, so that I might live for God. I have been crucified with Christ <sup>20</sup> and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by [the faith of the Son of God], who loved me and gave Himself for me.
- Galatians 3:22      <sup>22</sup> But the Scripture has imprisoned everything under sin's power, so that the promise by [the faith of Jesus Christ] might be given to those who believe.
- Philippians 3:8–9      <sup>8</sup> More than that, I also consider everything to be a loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. Because of Him I have suffered the loss of all things and consider them filth, so that I may gain Christ <sup>9</sup> and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own from the law, but one that is through [the faithfulness of Christ]—the righteousness from God based on faith.

As these verses illustrate, Christ's faithfulness is typically thought of in terms of His vicarious death on behalf of human kind, while His faith is thought of as His righteous spirituality and allegiance to His Father during the days of His flesh (Rom. 3:26).<sup>48</sup> Since these terms are still so close to being synonymous they need to be discussed and defined separately. Before jumping to

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<sup>48</sup> Hunn, "Debating the Faithfulness of Jesus Christ in Twentieth-Century Scholarship," 20.

a preconceived conclusion of what faith is, it is helpful to take a moment to discuss what Paul calls “the law of sin” in Romans 7, in contrast with “the law of faith” in Romans 3.

### The Law of Sin and the Law of Faith

In Romans 7, Paul articulates the very scary reality of indwelling sin in the life of believers. He insists in Romans 7:20-21, “Now if I do what I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but it is the sin that lives in me. So I discover this principle: When I want to do what is good, evil is with me.” What the HCSB version translates as a “principle,” other translations also call a “law” (ESV). As Paul discovered in these verses, his desire was to do what is good, but the “law of sin” was the inward disposition of his heart and mind that habitually postured his life towards evil. Like any law, the law of sin insists on obedience and is capable of rewarding those who keep it and punishing those who break it. In the story of Moses for example, the law of sin presented Moses with the choice to either enjoy the temporary treasures of Egypt or to suffer with the people of God (Heb. 11:24-26).

The reason the “law of sin” is so dangerous and so persuasive is because it is inherent in every person’s sin nature. As John Owen articulated, “[the law of sin] is not an outward, written, commanding, directing law, but an inbred, working, impelling, urging law. A law proposed to us from outside is much weaker than a law bred into us.”<sup>49</sup> This is not to assume that the law of sin forces people to violate God’s commands, but it certainly predisposes them towards “voluntary slavery” (Jn. 8:34).<sup>50</sup> Due to man’s sin nature and depraved state, the natural man does not desire God and has no internal ability to change his present condition (Ecc. 7:20).<sup>51</sup> He rejects the

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<sup>49</sup> John Owen, *Indwelling Sin In Believers*, Reprint edition (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2010), 9.

<sup>50</sup> The term “voluntary slavery” is borrowed from Edward T. Welch to describe the phenomena that “all sin is simultaneously pitiable slavery and overt rebelliousness or selfishness.” Edward T. Welch, *Addictions: A Banquet in the Grave: Finding Hope in the Power of the Gospel*, 1st edition (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2001), 34.

Lord's commandments even though they were given for his own good (Dt. 10:13). As Martin Luther laments,

Man... does not do evil against his will, under pressure, as though he were taken by the scuff of the neck and dragged into it, like a thief... being dragged off against his will to punishment; but he does it spontaneously and voluntarily. And this willingness or volition is something which he cannot in his own strength eliminate, restrain, or alter...<sup>52</sup>

What Luther is highlighting is that every human heart has chosen sin, and in doing so, has chosen voluntary slavery that is inescapable through human power.<sup>53</sup> In light of this truth, it is understandable why Israel so helplessly failed at keeping the law that God gave to them outwardly at Mount Sinai. Like the rest of humanity, the Israelites found idols to be irresistible (Ezk. 14:3), and in their lust to benefit from them,<sup>54</sup> they committed adultery against God (Ezk. 16:32). The Law was able to point out their sinfulness, but it was not able to break their affinity for sin. For that they would need a new law, a law not written on tablets of stone, but written by the Spirit on the hearts of men (Ezk. 36:26-28; Jer. 31:31-33; Rom. 8:2).

This new law is described in Romans 3:27 as “the law of faith.” As an internal law, the law of faith also creates an inward disposition within a person's heart, but unlike the law of sin,

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<sup>51</sup> C. S. Lewis very wisely describes this human disability to keep the moral law. He perceives, “the law of gravity tells you what stones do if you drop them; but the Law of Human Nature tells you what human beings ought to do and do not. In other words, when you are dealing with humans, something else comes in above and beyond the actual facts. You have the facts (how men do behave) and you also have some-thing else (how they ought to behave). In the rest of the universe there need not be anything but the facts.” Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 17.

<sup>52</sup> Martin Luther, *The Bondage of the Will*, trans. J. I. Packer and O. R. Johnston (Westwood, NJ: Revell, 1957), 102.

<sup>53</sup> Very similar to steps one and two in the 12 steps program for fighting addiction. Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation, “*Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous*,” What are the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous? July 24, 2016, accessed March 06, 2018, <http://www.hazeldenbettyford.org/articles/twelve-steps-of-alcoholics-anonymous>.

<sup>54</sup> Welch writes, “The purpose of idolatry is to manipulate the idol for our own benefit. This means that we don't want to be ruled by idols. Instead we want to use them (1 Kings 18) ... Idolaters want nothing above themselves, including their idols ... So it is with modern idolatry as well ... Idols, however, do not cooperate. Rather than mastering our idols, we become deaf, dumb, blind, utterly senseless, and irrational.” In other words, the idolater becomes like the idols in which he worships (Ps. 115:8). Welch, *Addictions*, 50.

the law of faith is habitually postured towards God's will and His righteousness. There is an interesting comparison between how John Owen described the law of sin and how Søren Kierkegaard described the law of faith. Owen wrote, "[the law of sin causes a man to] tragically despise all their eternal interests,"<sup>55</sup> but Kierkegaard writes, "[the law of faith] is a passion for, and response to, the eternal."<sup>56</sup> Although these statements are descriptions of faith more than definitions of it, they demonstrate why faith is so powerful and transforming within a person—it reorients their focus on the eternal.

Hebrews chapter eleven is full of people who experienced and endured arduous trials and trusted God to come through on His promise in even the most uncertain situations. Along with the typical heroes of the faith, the end of the book is summarized this way:

Some men were tortured, not accepting release, so that they might gain a better resurrection, and others experienced mockings and scourgings, as well as bonds and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawed in two, they died by the sword, they wandered about in sheepskins, in goatskins, destitute, afflicted, and mistreated. The world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and on mountains, hiding in caves and holes in the ground. All these were approved through their faith, but they did not receive what was promised, since God had provided something better for us, so that they would not be made perfect without us. (Heb. 11:35b-40)

These people were able to endure so much because of their faith and their confidence in God to keep His eternal promises. In other words, the law of faith was at work in them reorienting their spiritual posture towards trust in God and His eternal righteousness.<sup>57</sup> This same law of faith is what stands out as a consistent theme in Christ's life as a motivation for His faithfulness.

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<sup>55</sup> Owen, *Indwelling Sin In Believers*, 12.

<sup>56</sup> Norman L. Geisler, "Kierkegaard, Søren," *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*, Baker Reference Library (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999), 407.

<sup>57</sup> For a more graphic explanation of this spiritual re-wiring, see Appendix B.

### The Law of Faith in Christ's Life

Almost everyone who has heard the story of Jesus has heard the story of His faithfulness. They have heard that He suffered, that He was beaten, and ultimately that He was crucified. Each of these examples are part of what makes up the objective realities that formed the basis for mankind's release from the power of sin and imputation of righteousness, also known as justification. As Paul contends in Romans 8:3-4, "[God] condemned sin in the flesh by sending His own Son in flesh like ours under sin's domain, and as a sin offering, in order that the law's requirement would be accomplished in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit." At the climactic moment of crucifixion, Christ was actually being faithful to the Father's will and allowing His body to be broken in order to fulfill God's eternal purposes.

Not many people would say that they believe that Jesus descended from heaven to earth on a cross, but it is easy to approach the gospel as if the end of the story were the only really important part. The profoundness of Christ's faithfulness is certainly present in the final hours of His life, but the Passion experience is not the sum total of Christ's suffering or His faith.<sup>58</sup> Jesus' story includes the fact that He spent nine months in the embryonic fluid of His mother's womb. His story includes the fact that as the Son of God, He went through puberty and developed physically as humans do. He had bowel movements and he most likely got the first century version of the flu. To many people, thinking of Jesus this way feels like we are making a

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<sup>58</sup> As a point of illustration, Douglas Campbell remarks, "No one seriously suggests that when Paul refers to the blood of Christ (such as in Rom. 3:25) he is referring *only* to the important oxygen-carrying liquid that ran in [Christ's] veins and then spilled out to a degree during His suffering and execution, thereby ignoring the rest of Christ Himself. . . . Similarly, any reference to Christ's death by Paul involves far more than a reference to the actual moment at which Christ expired." Therefore, to denote Christ's faithfulness as His life and not just His death seems to be perfectly consistent with Paul's usual practice. Campbell, "The Faithfulness of Jesus Christ in Romans 3:22," 63.

mockery of His deity, but that is just the point. Jesus shared in our humiliation and indignity. In this, Jesus was not ashamed to call us His brothers (Heb. 2:11)<sup>59</sup>

Since Jesus experienced human life in the same manner as the rest of the world does, yet without sin, He takes away the excuse that our lies, our anger, or our lust, are an un-avoidable part of being human. To be fully human is not to sin, it is to be like Christ, for He is the perfect picture of what humanity was created to be like.<sup>60</sup> Although Jesus was not made as Adam was, He was the ultimate picture of what it means to bear the image of God. The author Kelly Kopic writes, “Jesus’ life in human flesh was an integral part of his atoning work, culminating in His sacrificial death” (Heb. 2:17-18).<sup>61</sup> All of this is to say that Jesus’ faithfulness is more than the fact that He died in our place. His faithfulness is contingent on the fact that He lived as one of us and therefore was able to offer Himself to God on our behalf.

There is a danger in drawing a hard line between Christ’s faith and His faithfulness because it can lead to an unfortunate separation between the body and the spirit. History is full of examples of people who have discredited the worth of the body to elevate the significance of the spirit, or denied the existence of the spiritual in order to only discuss the material. Christianity however, seeks to find intrinsic value and God-ordained beauty in both. With that said, Christ never commanded His followers to be crucified on a tree as He was, but He did command them

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<sup>59</sup> Patrick Henry Reardon, *The Jesus We Missed: The Surprising Truth About the Humanity of Christ* (Nashville, Tn: Thomas Nelson, 2012), x.

<sup>60</sup> It is because Christ embodied what it means to be human that the traditional understanding of deification (as partaking in the divine nature, i.e. becoming like God) seems to have some serious issues. It seems better to conclude, as Cynthia Anderson does, that if deification is to be considered a Christian concept “it [must] not mean that humanity becomes divine. It rather [implies that through participation with Christ, man] becomes more fully and truly human.” Cynthia Peters Anderson, *Reclaiming Participation: Christ as God’s Life for All* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2014), 73.

<sup>61</sup> Kelly M. Kopic, *Embodied Hope: A Theological Meditation on Pain and Suffering* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2017), 90.

to have the same kind of faith that He possessed. Therefore, the work of the scholar is to use the objective aspects of Christ's faithfulness to extract more discreet elements of Christ's faith.

To avoid allegorizing Christ's acts of faithfulness into a spiritualized reading of His life, scholars can employ the study of Christological typology. Typology is one of the four systems (the other three being 'promise and fulfillment', 'continuity and discontinuity', and covenant) that Christian scholars use as a framework for interpreting how the Old Testament relates to the New Testament.<sup>62</sup> Typology is an actual systematic method – based on historical scholarship – of integrating the two testaments. Christological typology is one aspect of typology that involves integrating the testaments in a way that demonstrates how Jesus embodied the Messianic types that are present in the Old Testament. Below are a few examples:

- Israel was exiled into Egypt, Jesus spent the first part of His life as a refugee in Egypt
- Israel crossed the red sea in the Exodus, Jesus was baptized in the Jordan river
- Israel spent 40 years in the wilderness, Jesus spent 40 days in the wilderness
- Israel received their law from God on Mt. Sinai, Jesus went up a mountain to give His law
- Israel was fed by manna from heaven, Jesus described Himself as the bread of life

Typology is a useful way of thinking about Christ's faithfulness because it expounds on hundreds of documented occasions where Israel's story was typologically embodied by Christ for the stated purpose of Christ being the Savior for Israel (Mt. 15:24; Rom. 15:8).

It is interesting to think that as Jesus was studying the Hebrew Scripture and increasing in wisdom and stature (Lk. 2:52), He was actually taking possession of His own identity. In the wilderness, in the garden, and ultimately on the cross, Jesus fulfilled the very words that had He had read about Himself as a child. Knowing all along what His destiny would be, Jesus not only

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<sup>62</sup> Baker, *Two Testaments, One Bible*, 14.

taught openly that “the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, be killed, and rise after three days” (Mk. 8:31) but He was faithful to that end. The events of Christ’s life, such as his crucifixion, are historical examples of Christ vicariously taking Israel’s place, and in doing so, forming the foundation for the atonement. In light of this, the revised translations of “*pistis Christou*” as “the faithfulness of Christ” begins to make much more sense. God’s righteousness was revealed to the world through Christ’s faithfulness.

This becomes applicable in the first part of Galatians 2:16 when Paul exclaims that “no one is justified by the works of the law but by [the faithfulness of Jesus Christ].” Christ’s faithfulness is the only reason that justification is made available to the rest of the world. However, the second half of that verse is also important. Paul concludes by saying, “And we have believed in Christ Jesus so that we might be justified by [the faith of Christ] and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no human being will be justified.” This verse is significant because it proposes that justification was made available solely by Christ’s faithfulness, but it also states that mankind receives that justification by opening their hearts to receive the faith of Christ. To establish this connection, we turn to the impact of Christ’s crucifixion experience on Paul’s faith and spirituality.

### **Christ’s Faith and the Christian’s**

Ask a few typical Western Christians why they are saved and often their response will be “because I believe that Jesus is the Son of God and that He died on the cross for my sins.” The problem with this answer is not necessarily that it is wrong, but that it is a partial truth. This answer properly relishes the vicarious work of Christ, but it dismisses the necessity of sharing in His faith. With such a disproportionate emphasis, the Christian Church begins to embrace “cheap

grace:" a form of belief that does not require or result in any moral transformation. This should not be so. The Western Church would do well to remember that Jesus equated belief with becoming a disciple. In other words, He demanded followers and not admirers (Jn. 6).

Interestingly enough, when Paul described His spiritual experience, He used the verbs "crucify" or "co-crucified" of himself almost as often as he used it of Christ.<sup>63</sup> Michael Gorman calls this experience "cruciformity," or conformity to the crucified Christ. He argues that cruciformity should be the essential narrative spirituality of every Christian, because it was Paul's way of identifying with and participating in the fundamental experience of Christ.<sup>64</sup> Since Christ is one with God the Father and the Holy Spirit, Gorman also proposes that to be "in Christ" means that a person is simultaneously "in God/in Christ/in the Spirit."<sup>65</sup> In this way, cruciformity obviously differs from physical crucifixion, but it seems that it is no less a reality of Paul's spirituality or of the Christian life (see Gorman's explanation of justification as co-crucifixion below).

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|---------------------|--|
| Galatians 2:19a     | (a) For through the law I have died to the law [my previous source of justification],  |
|                     | (b) so that I might live for God.  |
| Galatians 2:19b-20a | (a) I have been crucified with Christ [my new source of justification]   |
|                     | (a") and I no longer live,   |
|                     | (b) but Christ lives in me.  |
|                     | (b") The life I now live in the body, I live by [the faith of the Son of God], who loved me and gave Himself for me. <sup>66</sup> |

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<sup>63</sup> Gorman, *Cruciformity*, 76. Key texts of Christ's crucifixion include: 1 Cor. 1:13, 23; 2:2, 8; Gal. 3:1. Key texts of Christian's being co-crucified with Christ: Rom. 6:6; 7:4; 2 Cor. 13:4; Gal. 2:19-20; 5:24; 6:14.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>65</sup> Gorman, *Inhabiting the Cruciform God*, 4.

The danger in thinking that believing the gospel is as simple as believing that “Jesus died in my place,” is that Christ’s atonement is an objective reality that does not necessarily require faith. For years, Christians have been toying with the treacherous idea that Jesus can be a person’s savior without also being their Lord. In other words, they can believe that Christ was faithful but they do not need to share the faith of Christ. This idea is seriously flawed and needs to be corrected by a thorough presentation of the faith of Christ. As Peter indicates in 1 Peter 2:24, “He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, *so that*, having died to sins, *we* might live for righteousness” (emphasis mine). The early followers of Jesus understood that Christ left them with a massive “so that,” implying that His atonement and justification, while being vicarious, are received by faith of the same nature.

In his book, “*Salvation by Allegiance Alone*,” Matthew Bates claims that “the gospel climaxes with the enthronement of Jesus as the cosmic king, the Lord of heaven and earth... as such, faith in Jesus is best described as allegiance to Him as king.”<sup>67</sup> Bates recognizes that “faith” is a broader term than “allegiance,” but he believes that in the context of following Jesus as Lord, “allegiance” makes the most logical sense. Although the actual translation change from “faith” to “allegiance” in the New Testament seems highly unlikely and possibly even flawed, the concept of Christ’s allegiance to the Father is an accurate description of Christ’s faith and should subsequently be paradigmatic of the Christian’s.

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 66.

<sup>67</sup> Matthew W. Bates, *Salvation by Allegiance Alone: Rethinking Faith, Works, and the Gospel of Jesus the King* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017), 77.

Both the garden and Golgotha give vivid portrayals of Christ's faith as allegiance to His Father's will. In the garden, Jesus prayed, "Father, if You are willing, take this cup away from Me—nevertheless, not My will, but Yours, be done" (Lk. 22:42). One commentator describes this moment very well when he writes, "in His prayer in the garden, Jesus handed over not only His will but also His flesh."<sup>68</sup> As the story unfolds, it becomes clear that God chose not to intervene on His Son's suffering, but He gave Him the strength to endure it (Lk. 22:43). In this way, Jesus was delivered from death, but not by avoiding it, instead He experienced death fully and came out victorious over it.

Had Jesus been obedient to the Father in His will but not in His body, his story in the garden would have been no different from Peter's. Jesus told Peter that his spirit was willing, but his flesh was weak (Mt. 26:41). Both Peter's flesh and His faith failed him on that night: he fell asleep on His Lord, he denied Him three times, and at the end of Jesus' life Peter's heart broke to even look at Him. However, Jesus' flesh did not fail, He was faithful to the end. In the final seconds of Jesus' pre-resurrection life, Jesus once more re-affirmed his allegiance to the Father. As Luke 23:36 recounts, "Jesus called out with a loud voice, 'Father, into Your hands I entrust My spirit.' Saying this, He breathed His last."<sup>69</sup> From the beginning of Jesus' life to the end, He never wavered in either His faith in the Father or His faithfulness to the Father. Jesus was the perfect example of consistency because His faith kept Him focused on the eternal.

Theologians may debate over why Christ was able to be faithful to God's will without failure, but the answer that Jesus gives is that He knew Himself to be His Father's Son. His assurance of His Sonship is why Jesus did not give in to the Devil's temptations in the

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<sup>68</sup> Reardon, *The Jesus We Missed*, 157.

<sup>69</sup> Interestingly, it was at this moment that the Roman centurion verbalized his belief that "this man really is righteous" (Lk. 23:47).

wilderness (Mt. 4), it is why He so boldly and so powerfully preached the upside down message of the Kingdom of God (Jn. 8:28), and it is ultimately why the Jews wanted to crucify Him (Jn. 19:7). Jesus had a unique relationship with the Father as His Son that no other human has ever experienced. However, the remarkable gift that Christ made available to His followers is to share in His faith, and therefore, to share in His intimacy with the Father. In Matthew 11:27, Jesus testifies that “All things have been entrusted to Me by My Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son.” The verse could have ended there, but Jesus adds, “and anyone to whom the Son desires to reveal Him.” The ability to address God the Father like Jesus would, as His child, is part of what it means to partake in Christ’s faith.

In the gospel narratives as well as in Paul’s epistles there are many more examples of what it means to embrace Christ’s faith. In the gospels, there are several occasions where someone is sick or dead and Jesus heals them and in one way or another expresses to them “your faith has made you well” (Mk. 5:34). In one particular encounter, Jesus was passing by Jericho when a blind man called out to Him for mercy (Lk. 18:35-43). Jesus could obviously tell that the man was blind and that He was asking for money, but rather than instantly meeting his needs, Jesus asked him what he wanted. By engaging this man with a question, Jesus invited him to express his needs and to take ownership of his faith.<sup>70</sup> In other circumstances the events transpire differently, but the common thread is that a person comes to God in need of mercy and their faith that God can do what they cannot makes them well.

The same theme of mercy and faith continues in Paul’s epistles and even in Paul’s own life. For example, when Paul shares his testimony in 1 Timothy, he shares this eternal truth: “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—and I am the worst of them. But I received

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<sup>70</sup> Reardon, *The Jesus We Missed*, 92.

mercy for this reason, so that in me, the worst of them, Christ Jesus might demonstrate His extraordinary patience as an example to those who would believe in Him for eternal life” (1 Tm. 1:15-16). When Paul later exhorts Christians in Philippians 2 to have the mind of Christ, he is affirming that the attitude and allegiance of the Christian should reflect Christ’s humility and faith.

The conclusion is that Christians are saved solely by grace through faith, but that faith needs to be defined in Christ’s terms. True faith is more than intellectual agreement with the fact that Christ suffered, it is participation in His kenotic self-emptying and self-offering to God as a beloved son or daughter.<sup>71</sup> This kenotic (or cruciform) participation is the opposite of merit theology. To be saved by merit, a person would have to perform some good work that would reward him with the grace of God. Cruciform faith on the other hand is a complete renouncement of self-righteousness and a Spirit driven embracement of Christ’s righteousness.

Paul understood what it means to share Christ’s faith perhaps better than anyone. He wrote to the Church at Philippi:

But everything that was a gain to me, I have considered to be a loss because of Christ. More than that, I also consider everything to be a loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. Because of Him I have suffered the loss of all things and consider them filth, so that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own from the law, but one that is through faith in Christ—the righteousness from God based on faith. My goal is to know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, assuming that I will somehow reach the resurrection from among the dead. (Phil. 3:7-11)

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<sup>71</sup> By labeling Christ’s actions in Philippians 2 as “kenotic,” I certainly do not mean to say that Christ emptied Himself of His divine attributes while He was here on earth. Rather, I believe that Christ’s submission to the Father’s will, even to the point of death, is the very embodiment of His divinity. In other words, the Christian God is intrinsically cruciform. He does not operate through a top-down system of totalitarianism, but through kenotic, self-emptying, love (see footnote 82 on page 47).

There are many more passages like this one, but in these few verses Paul strikes at the heart of crucifixion and resurrection. This spiritual pattern of life through death is the essence of what it means to share in the faith of Christ. Additionally, since Christ's faith was an everyday reality and not just a momentary occurrence, Christian faith does not end at justification. As Paul pointed out in 1 Corinthians 15:31 "I die daily" (NASB). It is through this daily, Spirit produced, death to self that the Christian begins to understand life in Christ as he also puts Him on display through love.

### **Justification and Social Justice**

Having examined the vicarious work of Christ's faithfulness in the atonement and then correlating Christ's faith and the Christian's, a third (and final) connection must be made between justification and social justice. It is at this point that some who have agreed with what has been written thus far may begin to disagree. This will be especially true for those who see justification solely as a forensic declaration of vindication and not as a transformative act of becoming the righteousness of God in Christ (2 Cor. 5:21). However, before concluding that justification and social justice are totally separate, it might be fruitful to know that John Calvin himself believed that "good works do not serve as the meritorious grounds of justification, but they belong so necessarily to salvation that there is no justification without them."<sup>72</sup> This final section is necessary because of the biblical inseparability between faith and love (demonstrating

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<sup>72</sup> Calvin grounded good works in his theology of union with Christ. He believed that justifying faith should be defined "not only passively, as a resting on Christ alone, but actively, as an obedient faith that, resting on Christ alone, perseveres in the pursuit of holiness." This notion is derived from verses such as 1 Peter 1:16, "for it is written, be holy, because I am holy." Garcia, *Life in Christ*, 260-262.

itself in good works).<sup>73</sup> Jesus commands that all those who share in His “*pistis*” will also share in His “*agapē*” as they embody their role as a “living exegesis.”<sup>74</sup>

The connection between justification and social justice begins by understanding what the word justification actually means. It is well known in biblical scholarship that there is a close connection between the English words “justification” and “righteousness.” The Greek origin for both of these words come from the “*dikē*” word family and can be translated a variety of ways depending on context. It is easy to define justice and righteousness as conformity to God’s perfect standards, but the terms carry different connotations in people’s minds. For example, justice is usually thought of in judicial terms and is a measurement of fairness and equal standards. Righteousness, on the other hand, is typically used to describe a person of virtue and upright moral conduct.

In the conversation on justification, the judicial view has already been well established, but the idea that God also “*righteousifies*” a person must not be lost. To “*righteousify*” a person means that God not only declares that person righteous legally, but He also makes that person a partaker in His righteous love for others. Justification changes a person both vertically (as they are reconciled with God) and horizontally (as they are reconciled with people). The latter of these transformations is what we will call social justification (i.e. *righteousification*), or as Paul might say, love.

When the teachers of the law asked Jesus what was the greatest commandment, it is no surprise that he took them back to Scripture by reciting, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and most important

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<sup>73</sup> When YAHWEH described His nature to Moses in Exodus 34:6 one descriptor that He used was “*hē-sēd*,” which the HCSB translates “faithful love.” This word is used nearly 250 times in the OT.

<sup>74</sup> Gorman, *Inhabiting the Cruciform God*, 104.

command. The second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. All the law and the Prophets depend on these two commands” (Mt. 22:37-40). This message was deeply personal for Jesus, as He explains in another passage, anyone that loves God will also love God’s Son, and anyone that rejects God’s Son is also rejecting His Father (Jn. 8:42; 14:21). What is interesting about the greatest commandment is that it is not new, in fact, it dates back all the way to Moses who made the very same statement in Deuteronomy 6:5. Moses gave the commandment to “Love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength” one chapter after he received the ten commandments from mount Sinai in Deuteronomy 5.

The ten commandments are commonly referred to as the Decalogue, and many people (including Philo, Josephus, and perhaps Paul) have divided it into two parts: one part involving man’s (vertical) relationship with God, and the other part involving man’s (horizontal) relationship with others.<sup>75</sup> As John Piper appropriately writes,

Loving God cannot be defined as loving our neighbor. They (the two commandments) are different. Loving God is first. Loving neighbor is second... They are not separated, for true love for God will always bring about love for people. But they are different. This means that the behaviors of love toward others are not the essential meaning of loving God. They are the fruit of loving God.<sup>76</sup>

It would seem that while love for God (faith) and love for others are distinct, they are still intrinsically connected in justification. It is these two basic sins, ungodliness (lack of love for God) and unrighteousness (lack of love for others, see Rom. 1:18), that form the backdrop of the human condition and necessitate the need for a Savior.<sup>77</sup> For this reason, Michael Gorman argues

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<sup>75</sup> Francis Watson, *Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith*, 1 edition (New York, NY: T&T Clark, 2004), 305–14.

<sup>76</sup> Piper, *What Jesus Demands from the World*, 78.

<sup>77</sup> Piper maintains, “God is righteous. The opposite of righteousness is to value and enjoy what is not truly valuable or rewarding. This is why people are called unrighteous in Romans 1:18. They suppress the truth of God’s value and exchange God for created things... Righteousness is the opposite... Righteousness is recognizing and welcoming and loving what is truly valuable.” John Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad: The Supremacy of God in Missions*, 2nd edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003), 21–22.

persuasively that “the justified are those who have begun the process of replacing *asebeia* (ungodliness) and *adikia* (unrighteousness) with *pistis* (faith) and *agapē* (love) by the power of the Spirit, thus fulfilling the two tables of the law.”<sup>78</sup> This faith and love of course is rooted and embodied in the faith and love of Christ. Just as there is a “law of sin” (Rom. 7), and a “law of faith” (Rom. 3), so too is there a “law of Christ” (Gal. 6:2; 1 Cor. 9:21) which could be summarized as a winsome, self-giving, love for others, a love that Christ Himself embodied.

Although John Piper is a strong advocate for the vicarious “finished” work of Jesus, he understands himself that “there is no doubt that Jesus saw some measure of real, lived-out obedience to the will of God as necessary for final salvation.”<sup>79</sup> Piper’s strong conclusion is drawn from passages such as these:

Mt. 7:21-23      “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord!’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of My Father in heaven. On that day many will say to Me, ‘Lord, Lord, didn’t we prophesy in Your name, drive out demons in Your name, and do many miracles in Your name?’ Then I will announce to them, ‘I never knew you! Depart from Me, you lawbreakers!’

Mt. 25:44-46      “Then they too will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or without clothes, or sick, or in prison, and not help You?’ “Then He will answer them, ‘I assure you: Whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for Me either.’ “And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

Mk. 3:34-35      And looking about at those who were sitting in a circle around Him, He said, “Here are My mother and My brothers! Whoever does the will of God is My brother and sister and mother.”

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<sup>78</sup> Gorman, *Inhabiting the Cruciform God*, 51.

<sup>79</sup> Piper, *What Jesus Demands from the World*, 160.

The collective insinuation of these passages is that there is a social dimension to justification that the Christian need not miss. This does not mean that justification is by works (as indicated by the passive past tense verbs in Rom. 5:9-10), but it does mean that justification is not merely a private conversion, but the beginnings of a transformed life that will most certainly cause a person to become an agent of reconciliation within his or her community (2 Cor. 5:17-21).<sup>80</sup>

A final text that needs to be considered in the conversation on faith and love (as the foundation for justification and justice) is Philippians 2:1-11. This Scripture can be split into three sections: Philippians 2:1-5; 2:6-8; 2:9-11. Philippians 2:1-5 begins as a fuller interpretation of the law of Christ in community:

If then there is any encouragement in Christ, if any consolation of love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfill my joy by thinking the same way, having the same love, sharing the same feelings, focusing on one goal. Do nothing out of rivalry or conceit, but in humility consider others as more important than yourselves. Everyone should look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. Make your own attitude that of Christ Jesus, (Phil. 2:1-5)

Interestingly, although neither justification nor the law of Christ are mentioned in this section, the term “love” is used twice. Love seems to take on two forms in this passage, one of affection and mercy (2:1) and the other of the same self-effacing humility that was characteristic of Christ’s attitude (2:4-5). Once again, there is the inseparability of Christ’s faith and love, and therefore, the inseparability of faith and love for the believer. After describing what the community of God is supposed to be like, Paul now demonstrates how Christ’s own love initiated that community,

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<sup>80</sup> On the subject of faith and works, Augustine reminds us of the relationship between the vine and the branches. He warns, “only those corrupted in mind, reprobates concerning the faith, [can fail to attribute faith and every good work to the Vine. Indeed,] he who supposes that he has any fruit of himself is not in the vine. He who is not in the vine is not in Christ. He who is not in Christ is not a Christian.” And yet, Jesus makes it clear that he who is in the vine will bear much fruit (Jn. 15:5). Aurelius Augustinus, *Sancti Aurelii Augustini In Iohannis Evangelium tractatus CXXIV*, ed. Radbodus Willems, tract. 81, sect. 2 (Turnholti: Typographi Brepols editores pontificii, 1954), 530.

[Christ] who, existing in the form of God, did not consider equality with God as something to be used for His own advantage. Instead He emptied Himself by assuming the form of a slave, taking on the likeness of men. And when He had come as a man in His external form, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death—even to death on a cross. (Phil. 2:6-8)

In his book, *Reconstructing Honor in Roman Philippi*, Joseph Hellerman makes note of the sharp contrast between Rome's "*cursus honorum*" (the elites upward-bound race for honor), and Jesus' "*cursus pudorum*" (His humble downward-bound acts of self-emptying).<sup>81</sup> Not only did the pre-existent Christ humble himself by becoming a man, but the human Jesus also humbled himself by being obedient to the point of death on a cross (actions that represent both His faith and love). The HCSB translation of verse six helpfully omits the word "although" and chooses to begin with "Christ who..." and not "Although Christ..." While this "although" rightly represents the kenotic nature of Christ's actions, it could mislead one to believe that Christ was acting out of character. As Michael Gorman so helpfully puts it,

The evidence of truly possessing such a status [X] (which in Phil. 2 is Christ's equality with God) is in the refusal to exploit it selfishly and thus to use it in such a selfless way that its use seems to be a renunciation of the status but is in fact a different-from-normal manner of incarnating that status... [Therefore,] it is not just although Christ, Paul, and all believers possess a certain identity [X] (which in justification is the righteousness of God) that their story has a certain shape (not [Y] but [Z]); it is also because they possess that identity [X].<sup>82</sup>

What is so helpful about this explanation of Christ's faith and love is that it is entirely personified as a social experience, implying that Christ's example was not only paradoxical, but also paradigmatic for all who find themselves in Christ. It is Christ's human experience that now sets the stage for the final consummation of this poem, the worship of Christ as Lord:

For this reason God highly exalted Him and gave Him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow — of those who are

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<sup>81</sup> Joseph Hellerman, *Reconstructing Honor in Roman Philippi: Carmen Christi as Cursus Pudorum* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 130.

<sup>82</sup> Gorman, *Inhabiting the Cruciform God*, 24–25.

in heaven and on earth and under the earth — and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Phil. 2:9-11)

Of these verses, Gorman perceives that “[the ‘for this reason’ in verse 9] does not signal that God has promoted Jesus to a new status, as if divinity could be manufactured or gained by some act, however noble. Rather, it indicates that God has publicly vindicated and recognized Jesus’ self-emptying and self-humbling as the display of true divinity that He already had, and that makes the worship of Jesus as Lord perfectly appropriate.”<sup>83</sup> Because of Christ’s faith and love, the whole world will proclaim with one voice that Jesus is Lord.

It would take another whole body of work to construe the faith and love of Christ into a Christian politic. Some attempts have been made to do just that, but there is no agreement on one uniform Christian agenda.<sup>84</sup> What is more obvious is that Jesus never disconnected His character from His ethic, and neither should His followers. The Christian life is unapologetically a life of both faith and love.

### Conclusion

Returning to the original text of Romans 3:21-22, Paul announced that “now, apart from the law, God’s righteousness has been revealed—attested by the law and the Prophets—that is, God’s righteousness through [the faithfulness of Jesus Christ], to all who believe, since there is no distinction.” For Paul to describe Christ as the manifestation of God’s righteousness implied that in some way, the transferal of this righteousness was of central importance. Further investigation revealed that the glory of God (the result of God’s righteousness being made

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<sup>83</sup> Gorman, *Inhabiting the Cruciform God*, 30.

<sup>84</sup> Popular examples of Christian social politics include: enemy love, righteous zeal, Benedictine community, and moral majority.

public) involves a two phase process. First, “God [is personified] in Christ” (Col. 2:2) and second, “Christ [is revealed] in you” (Col. 1:27). This is the beauty of the gospel and the reason why Christ took on flesh and blood and faithfully suffered the way He did. Christ did not only live to die and vicariously provide atonement for mankind, He lived a life of faithful allegiance to the Father so that humanity would paradigmatically share in His faith and love.

The same “*pistis*” that was characteristic of Christ’s life, forms the means, method, and model for the Christian life. The means of a Christian’s justification is the vicarious faithfulness of Christ throughout His life, culminating in His crucifixion. The method for how Christ is received is through “co-crucifixion” or sharing the faith of Christ. Christians are obviously not expected to be physically crucified in order to be saved, but they must embrace the fact that just as Christ died, their salvation is contingent on whether or not they spiritually died with Him (Rom. 6:8). The gospel is not the story of a crucified criminal, but rather the story of a crucified and resurrected Lord. This causes Paul to imply that spiritual life comes through the Christian’s paradoxical death to sin and self, followed by spiritual resurrection with Christ (Rom. 6:11).

Finally, Christ is the model for the Christian life because He desires to use His Church to continue revealing His righteousness to the world (Mt. 16:18). Salvation is initiated when Christians share in Christ’s faith, and therefore in His righteousness. It is for this reason that Paul urged the Christians in Rome to present their bodies as living sacrifices (Rom. 12:1)—the only appropriate response towards Christ’s faith. Sharing in Christ’s faith, opens the door for the Christian to share in every other part of who Christ is, including His love, His joy, His peace, His power, His mercy, and His mission. The fruits of the Spirit are not faith, but they are the byproducts of participating in Christ. They demonstrate that no part of life is left untouched.

As Christians embody Christ's life, including His suffering, they bring Him glory and spread His offer of salvation to the world. They also find that Christ is worth every sacrifice. (Mk. 10:28-30).<sup>85</sup> Even when a Christian dies, other Christians are able to proclaim their hope to the world that physical death is the pathway leading up to bodily resurrection and an eternity with Jesus (1 Cor. 15:16-18). The ministry of Christ makes it clear that He is calling followers and not believers or admirers. Therefore, following Christ is about trusting His faithfulness, sharing His faith, and being transformed by His love.

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<sup>85</sup> On these particular verses, John Piper comments, "surely what Christ means is that He Himself makes up for every sacrifice." Jesus's promise to prospective missionaries is "I promise to work and be for you so much that you will not be able to speak of having sacrificed anything... In other words, Jesus wants us to think about sacrifice in a way that rules out self-pity." John Piper, *Desiring God: Meditations of a Christian Hedonist*, Revised, Expanded edition (Colorado Springs, CO: Multnomah Books, 2016), 239-241.

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### Appendix A: Contemporary Controversy over the Law

During Jesus' earthly ministry, there were several occasions in which He challenged the Pharisees (the teachers of the Law, Acts 5:34) on their understanding of the Law, particularly regarding appropriate behavior on the Sabbath (Mt. 12). After Jesus' ascension, the gospel began spreading to the Gentiles and the early Church had to decide whether the Gentiles were required to keep the Law (including circumcision) in order to be saved (Acts 15). In the book of Romans, there is debate between the Law and faith. In Galatians, the debate is between the Law and grace. And even today, some 2000 years later, understanding the Law properly is still of central importance if Christians want their values heard in secular culture.

The following example, from NBC's television show *The West Wing* (season two, episode three), was used by James M. Todd III to illustrate this point. Todd describes the situation like this:

President Bartlet enters the room of a talk-radio reception during the final hour of midterm election day. As he begins to address the radio hosts, he notices a woman sitting in the midst of his audience. President Bartlet pauses for a second and then continues his speech. However, it becomes apparent that he cannot ignore the woman's presence without comment, so he stops, points to her, and asks, "I'm sorry, you are Dr. Jacobs, right?" After receiving an affirmative answer, he begins to push her regarding her conservative radio show, eventually getting to his major point. He has a problem with her calling homosexuality an abomination. Facetiously, he tells her, "I like your show. I like how you call homosexuality an abomination."

Confidently, she replies, "I don't say homosexuality is an abomination, Mr. President. The Bible does."

He responds, "Yes it does. Leviticus—"

She retorts, "18:22"

He says, "Chapter and verse," pauses, and then begins to attack her views.

His diatribe is as follows.<sup>86</sup>

'I wanted to ask you a couple of questions while I had you here. I'm interested in selling my youngest daughter into slavery as sanctioned in Exodus 21:7. She's a

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<sup>86</sup> James M. Todd III, *Sinai and the Saints: Reading Old Covenant Laws for the New Covenant Community* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2017), 4–5.

Georgetown sophomore, speaks fluent Italian, always cleared the table when it was her turn. What would a good price for her be? While thinking about that, can I ask another? My chief of staff, Leo McGarry, insists on working on the Sabbath. Exodus 35:2 clearly says he should be put to death. Am I morally obligated to kill him myself, or is it okay to call the police? Here's one that's really important because we've got a lot of sports fans in this town. Touching the skin of a dead pig makes one unclean (Leviticus 11:7). If they promise to wear gloves, can the Washington Redskins still play football? Can Notre Dame? Can West Point? Does the whole town really have to be together to stone my brother John for planting different crops side-by-side? Can I burn my mother in a small family gathering for wearing garments made from two different threads? Think about those questions, would you?<sup>87</sup>

Although both President Bartlet and Dr. Jacobs are fictional characters, his comments towards her represent a public sentiment (especially on the issue of homosexuality) that has surfaced in reality many times since the year 2000. In 2013, Chris Broussard (an outspoken Christian and ESPN analyst) received national criticism when he was asked to share his thoughts on Jason Collins becoming the first athlete in a major American sport (the NBA) to announce publicly that he was gay.<sup>88</sup> More recently, the refusal of a Christian baker to bake a cake for a gay wedding went all the way to the Supreme Court as a landmark case between religious freedom and illegal discrimination.<sup>89</sup> In each of these cases, the OT Law is brought into question, and Christian's are tasked with the responsibility to understand it and apply it appropriately.

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<sup>87</sup> Aaron Sorkin, "The Midterms," *The West Wing Quotes*, aired October 18, 2000, accessed March 11, 2018, [https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0745700/quotes/?tab=qt&ref\\_=tt\\_trv\\_qu](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0745700/quotes/?tab=qt&ref_=tt_trv_qu).

<sup>88</sup> Kelly Dwyer, "ESPN's Chris Broussard clarifies his views on Jason Collins: 'I don't agree with homosexuality. I think it's a sin'," *Yahoo Sports*, April 29, 2013, accessed March 11, 2018, <https://sports.yahoo.com/espn-chris-broussard-clarifies-views-jason-collins-don-221941033.html?y20=1>.

<sup>89</sup> Pete Williams, "Supreme Court hears why baker refused to make a wedding cake for gay couple," *NBC News*, December 05, 2017, accessed March 11, 2018, <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/supreme-court/supreme-court-hears-why-baker-refused-make-wedding-cake-gay-n826706>.

### Appendix B: Kierkegaard and the Law of Faith

The following chart is a summary of Søren Kierkegaard's existential beliefs about life categorized in three stages of life that all Christians must pass through:<sup>90</sup>

<b>The Aesthetic Stage</b>	<b>The Ethical Stage</b>	<b>The Religious Stage</b>
Feeling	Deciding	Existing
Self-centered	Law-centered	God-centered
Routines of life	Rules for life	Revelation to life
Centered in present	Centered in life/time	Centered in eternity
Individual is spectator	Individual is participant	
Live by personal whims	Live by universal norms	
Life of deliberation	Life of decision	[Life of faith]
Life of immediate interests	Life of ultimate concerns	[Life of God's concerns]
	Respect of moral law	Response to moral law giver
	The universal	The individual
	Propositions about God	Person of God
	Objective truth	Subjective Truth
	Essential Realm	Existential realm

Kierkegaard believed that if someone wants to move from the ethical stage of living to the religious stage, the only way to make that leap is by faith. However, as Kierkegaard so often points out, faith is paradoxical and is therefore unattainable by human effort ("God is folly to our mind and an offense to our heart").<sup>91</sup>

In the context of the law, the law of sin predisposes every person to remain in the aesthetic stage, living for themselves and their temporary pleasure. In stage two, the law (whether that be the Jewish Law or the universal moral law) brings about responsibility and sorrow when the law is not kept, but it cannot in itself lead to redemption or regeneration. As

<sup>90</sup> Geisler, "Søren Kierkegaard," 406.

<sup>91</sup> Geisler, 408.

Kierkegaard knew, “the law ends self-reliance, but it does not itself bring God-reliance.”<sup>92</sup> God-reliance requires the law of faith.

Faith is what moves a person from merely believing correctly about God, to existentially and paradigmatically following Him. Faith re-orientates a person's hope from the temporal to the eternal, and in so doing, provides the rational basis for them to paradoxically embrace the power of God by following Christ in life through death (1 Cor. 1:18). This type of faith was characteristic of Christ's kenosis, both in His pre-incarnate life and in His faithful obedience to the point of death (Phil. 2:6-11), but it was present before Christ as well.

For example, when the author of Hebrews was recounting heroes of faith from the OT, one story he shared was when “by faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac” (Heb. 11:17). Interestingly, the Greek word “*prosenēnochen*,” which is translated “offered up” in English, is actually in the perfect tense—as if Abraham actually sacrificed Isaac. Some might see no issue here and be satisfied accepting that “God blessed Abraham because he was willing to sacrifice Isaac.”<sup>93</sup> While that may be true practically, it seems that the author of Hebrews is trying to communicate something more about Abraham's faith. By offering Isaac to God in the perfect tense, as a completed verbal action, Abraham demonstrated that His allegiance to God (i.e. his faith) surpassed his moral ethics. He was willing to experience the unimaginable and illogical loss of his son because of His faith that God would raise Him from the dead (Heb. 11:19).

The allure of Satan's first lies to Adam and Eve in the garden was that if they ate of the forbidden fruit, they would experience life like they had never imagined before. That is what the

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<sup>92</sup> Geisler, 406.

<sup>93</sup> John D. Barry, *Faithlife Study Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016), Heb. 11:17.

law of sin does, it entices with the offer of life but it ends up destroying through death and separation from God (Prov. 7). The law of faith, which is at the core of Christianity, is exactly the opposite. The law of faith is wrapped up in the reality of death that leads to life, or crucifixion that leads to resurrection. To share in Christ's faith is to embody this paradoxical experience.