

The Role of the Holy Spirit in Justification

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The doctrine of justification is at the heart of great debates in Christian theology, and the Letter to the Romans is at the heart of the discussion of justification. The classic confrontation between Protestants and Roman Catholics centers to a great extent on justification, with Protestants affirming justification by faith alone and Catholics affirming justification by faith and works. Yet both sides have seemingly given inadequate attention to the role of the Holy Spirit in justification. An examination of this topic, particularly from the standpoint of Romans, could bring a greater understanding and consensus.

More than anything else, the Letter to the Romans is known for its teaching of justification by faith, and from a Protestant perspective it is particularly known for the proposition that justification is by faith rather than works. For many conservative Protestants, this doctrine means that salvation comes by accepting certain beliefs rather than by acts of obedience such as water baptism. Yet there is much more to the discussion of justification than the contrast between faith and works, and the letter to the Romans presents a much richer understanding of faith than mental assent to doctrine.

The contrast in Romans is not between mental acceptance of teaching and faithful obedience to teaching. Rather, it is between the works of sinful humans to earn salvation and the work of God's Spirit in human hearts, in response to their faith, to effect their salvation. Only the latter is sufficient to bring salvation. From this perspective, justification is not primarily a legal transaction based on acceptance of propositional truth, but it is a work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of those who yield to God's grace. Justification by faith thus means receiving and relying upon the saving work of the Holy Spirit rather than relying upon one's own merits, abilities, and efforts.

To understand the role of the Holy Spirit in justification according to Romans, we will first define terms that are key to our study. Next, we will survey the entire letter and exegete relevant passages on justification and the Holy Spirit. Third, we will place our findings within the historical and theological context of the letter. Fourth, we will

examine these ideas in light of Paul's theology as expressed in other writings. Finally, we will attempt to integrate our understanding with historic and contemporary Christian theology and offer conclusions.

Key Terms

Justification. In Romans, the words “justify,” “justification,” “righteous,” and “righteousness” all come from the same Greek root. Respectively, the Greek words are *dikaioō*, *dikaiōsis*, *dikaios*, and *dikaiosunē*. According to Bauer's lexicon, to be “justified” (*dikaioūsthai*) means to “*be acquitted, be pronounced and treated as righteous and thereby become dikaios, receive the divine gift of dikaiosunē, as a theological t.t. [technical term] be justified.*”

Douglas Moo defined justification as “the act by which God brings people into right relationship with himself.” He further explained with regard to the verb form of the word:

It is now generally agreed, then, that *dikaioō* in Paul means not “make righteous” but “declare righteous,” or “acquit,” on the analogy of the verdict pronounced by a judge. To justify signifies, according to forensic usage, to acquit a guilty one and declare him or her righteous.

But James Dunn has argued that that we should not totally exclude the idea of transformation. Thus he commented on the verb “justify”:

Does it mean “to *make* righteous” or “to *count* righteous?” This is the classic dispute between Catholic and Protestant exegesis.... Since the basic idea is of a *relationship* in which God acts even for the defective partner, an action by which God sustains the weaker partner of his covenant relationship within the relationship, the answer again is really *both*.

Righteousness. In Romans, “righteousness” *dikaiosunē* is “*the righteousness bestowed by God; ... in this area it closely approximates salvation.*” It can also refer to the righteousness that God possesses, that is part of God's character. Moo provided three options for the meaning of “the righteousness of God” in Romans 1:17: (1) “an attribute of God”; (2) “status given by God”; and (3) “an activity of God,” specifically, “the saving action of God.” He concluded, “There is no doubt that the third-God's saving activity-

receives the strongest support.”

Dunn’s view of “the righteousness of God” is similar: “Is it an attitude of God or something he does? Seen as God’s meeting of the claims of his covenant relationship, the answer is not a strict either-or, but both-and, with the emphasis on the latter.”

Faith. “Faith” in the Greek text is *pistis*, which Bauer et al. have defined as “*faith, trust*. 1. that which causes trust and faith-a. *faithfulness, reliability*.... 2. *trust, confidence, faith* in the active sense=‘believing’, in relig. usage.” Dunn explained that faith “is clearly intended to denote *the basis of a relationship which is not dependent on specific ritual acts, but is direct and immediate, a relying on the risen Christ rather than a resting on the law.*”

There is a consensus among scholars that in Romans *pistis* does not mean mere assent or mental belief but trust and reliance upon God that motivates one’s actions. Thus Stanley Stowers has explained:

I have chosen “faithfulness” as the most satisfactory translation for many texts, although I am often not entirely happy with any English word. Paul associates *pistis* with obedience to God, and “trusting obedience” is sometimes a possible translation. At other times, the emphasis lies on confidence in God’s promises, and “trust” makes a good translation.

Luke Timothy Johnson made a similar comment regarding the related verb *pisteuō*:

For Paul, “faithing” (*pisteuein*) certainly includes what we think of as belief, that is, a confession that something is so. Thus, in Romans 10:9, Paul speaks of “believing in the heart that God raised Jesus from the dead.” But “faithing”, in Paul’s usage includes a much broader range of response than simple cognitive assent. It points above all to the innermost response of the “heart” in a fully personal engagement with another, and in this case, *the Other*. Paul therefore will touch on the nuance of faith/faithing as “hearing and responding” (Romans 10:14), as “trust” (Romans 4:3), and as “hope” (Romans 4:18). The special connotation that Paul seeks to develop in this letter however, is that of “obedience” (see 1:5; 16:26); that is, a deeply responsive hearing in which the claim of God is acknowledged by human freedom. When Paul then speaks in 3:22 of “all those who are faithing,” he means those who respond to God’s gift with hearing, belief, trust, hope, and obedience.”

According to Rudolph Bultmann, for Paul, faith is, a form of obedience. Even conservative Protestant interpreters such as Moo have acknowledged that obedience

should be included in the full definition of faith:

We understand the words “obedience” and “faith” to be mutually interpreting: obedience always involves faith, and faith always involves obedience. . . . Paul called men and women to a faith that was always inseparable from obedience-for the Savior in whom we believe is nothing less than our Lord-and to an obedience that could never be divorced from faith-for we can obey Jesus as Lord only when we have given ourselves to him in faith.

Works. “Work” or “deed” is from the Greek *ergon*, meaning “*deed, action.*” Bauer et al. have further explained that *erganomou* -translated in the NRSV as “deeds prescribed by the law” or “works prescribed by the law”-means “*deeds that the law commands you to do.*” In our discussion of the historical and theological context of Romans, we will examine whether “works” refers to all human actions or specifically to works under the Jewish law that were signs of the covenant. In any case, however, the contrast between works and faith is not between action versus inaction but between deeds performed to earn or retain salvation versus trust in and obedience to the word of God.

John Moores explained how most scholars today look at the contrast between faith and works in Romans:

Paul sees [faith] as thoroughly active, once one has ceased to define it by a misinterpretation of the term “works.” The Jews were wrong in relying on works in a narrow sense as a demonstration of their membership of the people to whom God has promised salvation; the Christian must, by his works, demonstrate in a comprehensive sense that he is a member of the community which has been saved by trust in Christ. There is now a fair consensus of opinion that something like this best approximates to Paul’s attitude.

Holy Spirit. The “Holy Spirit” is *pneuma hagion*. Romans typically uses the word *pneuma* (“Spirit”) by itself to refer to the Holy Spirit, or Spirit of God. Since *pneuma* can also refer to the human spirit, one must examine the context to determine which is meant, but the contextual meaning is usually clear.

Literary Context and Exegesis

The fullest discussion of justification occurs in Romans 3-5, but to gain the best

possible understanding of the subject we must look at the entire letter. Moreover, instead of looking at the subject through the lens of historical debates, we must attempt to examine the text afresh.

The Letter to the Romans begins with a prologue (1:1-17), which consists of a greeting, an expression of Paul's personal interest, and a statement of the theme. We find the theological theme of the letter in Romans 1:16-17: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel; it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, 'The one who is righteous will live by faith.'" At its most basic, we may identify the theme of the letter as "the gospel" rather than justification, for "it is only in 1:18-4:25 that justification is highlighted in Romans."

To demonstrate the universal need of God's righteousness, Paul first discussed the universal guilt of the human race, Jew and Gentile, and the corresponding universal need for righteousness (1:18-3:20). In the second major theological segment of the letter, he presented the solution, or the means of receiving righteousness from God, namely, justification by faith (3:21-5:21). Third, Paul described the believer's life—the life of holiness that results from receiving God's righteousness (6:1-8:39). In the process he elaborated on the work of the Holy Spirit in the believer's life. The fourth theological topic is the condition of Israel (9:1-11:36)—specifically, Israel's rejection of God's righteousness in relation to past, present, and future. The didactic portion of the letter concludes with practical exhortations for Christian living (12:1-15:13). The letter ends with a discussion of Paul's reason for writing and his personal plans, greetings from Paul and his companions, admonitions, and praise to God (15:14-16:27).

As we have just noted, the main discussion of justification is in Romans 3:21-5:21. Chapter 3 states and explains the doctrine, chapter 4 provides proof from the Old Testament, and chapter 5 describes the permanent blessings and universal application of justification.

Chapter 3 teaches that the source of justification is the grace of God; the basis of justification is the redemptive, atoning work of Jesus Christ; and the means of justification is faith in Jesus Christ. "They are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement

by his blood, effective through faith” (vs. 24-25). The chapter emphasizes that justification does not come by the works of the Law of Moses: “For we hold that a person is justified by faith apart from works prescribed by the law” (v. 28).

Chapter 4 introduces Abraham and David as examples of justification. Paul sought to prove that justification by faith was not his invention but was supported by examples from the Hebrew Scriptures. He gave particular attention to Abraham as the father of the Hebrews and established that he is also the father of all who live by faith. Verses 17-21 describe Abraham’s kind of faith, and verse 22 states, quoting Gen 15:6, “Therefore, his faith was ‘reckoned to him as righteousness.’” In short, Abraham was justified by his faith in God.

Verses 23-25 identify Abraham’s faith and relationship with God as an example for Christian believers: “Now the words, ‘it was reckoned to him,’ were written not for his sake alone, but for ours also. It will be reckoned to us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was handed over to death for our trespasses and was raised for our justification.

In other words, Christians will be justified as Abraham was if they have the same kind of faith that Abraham had. The object of their faith is the one God of Abraham, but here God is specifically identified as the God who raised Jesus from the dead. Moreover, it is significant that Jesus “was handed over to death for our trespasses and was raised for our justification.”

Typically, in Christian theology, justification is associated with the death of Christ, but here we find it equally associated with the resurrection of Christ. This statement advances the discussion beyond that of the chapter. In chapter 3, justification is grounded on the death of Jesus: “whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement by his blood” (v. 25). Romans 4:25 is thus a strong indication that Paul considered the work of justification to be more than a forensic transaction involving the death of Christ, but it specifically involves the resurrection of Christ also.

By introducing the resurrection of Christ to the discussion of justification, Paul prepared the way for a discussion of the life of Christ in believers. As we will see, for Paul, the resurrection life of Christ is equated with the Holy Spirit. Thus Romans 4:25 indicates that the work of the Holy Spirit is an integral part of justification.

Luke Timothy Johnson noted the connection in Romans between the resurrection of Jesus and the Holy Spirit:

To a remarkable extent, . . . statements about power are correlated to statements about the resurrection of Jesus and the Holy Spirit. . . . Throughout the New Testament, the term “Holy Spirit” functions more or less equivalently to “the presence and power of Jesus” in the community of his followers. . . . The Holy Spirit is therefore not an impersonal force, but the life-giving presence and power of the risen Lord among his followers.

Several passages in Romans connect the resurrection of Christ with the Holy Spirit, particularly in chapter 8. In chapter 7 we see the inability of either the law or the flesh to impart spiritual life to Christians and give them power over sin. In chapter 8 we see the answer to this dilemma: the Spirit of the risen Lord imparts new spiritual life to believers so that they can live victoriously in the present age and have assurance of resurrection in the age to come.

The chapter begins with a sharp contrast between the old way of the flesh and the law versus the new way of the Spirit. “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and to deal with sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, so that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit” (Romans 8:2-4).

What the law could not do and what sinful human flesh could not do, God has done through the death of his Son. The first part of this statement-“the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus”-indicates that this victory comes not merely by the historic death of Christ, nor merely by a belief in the reality and efficacy of that death, but somehow the believer must participate in the life of the risen Christ.

A few verses later, this implication becomes explicit. “But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to

your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you” (Romans 8:9-11).

Gordon Fee paraphrased v. 10 as follows:

If Christ by his Spirit is dwelling in you, even though your bodies are destined for death because of sin, the presence of the Spirit (because he is the “Spirit of life”) means that you also have life both now and forever, because of the righteousness that Christ has effected for you.

Believers are to overcome the old life, which is characterized by the dominion of sinful desires and attitudes—that is, “the flesh.” To do so, they must begin to live in “the Spirit.” This occurs by their receiving the Spirit of God to dwell in them. The passage identifies “the Spirit of God” with “the Spirit of Christ” and with “Christ,” and it asserts that his indwelling presence is essential. The focus is not on belief in the death of Christ, although that is necessary and is the basis of what follows. But to enjoy new life, the believer must have a present relationship with the resurrected Christ by being filled with his Spirit.

Indeed, “the Spirit is life because of righteousness.” If we understand “righteousness” in terms of Romans 1:17, then it refers to God’s saving action in human lives, or God’s fulfillment of a covenant relationship with humans. Receiving the Spirit of life “because of righteousness” means that God, as part of God’s saving action, bestows the Spirit of Christ so that believers might have life. Even though they still live in mortal bodies that are in the process of dying, and even though they still face the sentence of physical death, they have present spiritual life by the indwelling presence of Christ. They enjoy this presence “because of” the righteousness of God, which as Romans 1:17 states, they receive through faith. In other words, Christ comes to dwell in believers by his Spirit as an integral part of justification by faith.

Moreover, by the same indwelling Spirit, believers have the promise of resurrection in the life to come. Here v. 11 explicitly links the resurrection of Christ with the Spirit in believers. Because they have the same Spirit in them that raised Christ from the dead, they also have the promise of bodily resurrection. There is a close parallel between the past, present, and future works of the Spirit. In the past, the Spirit gave life to the dead body of Christ. In the present the Spirit gives spiritual life—victory over “the

flesh” (vs. 4-9), victory over “the deeds of the body” (v. 13)-to believers. In the future the Spirit will give life to the “mortal bodies” of believers (v. 11). Robert Morgan commented on the work of the Spirit in Romans 8:10-11:

The Spirit is life (cf. v. 2) on account of (God’s?) righteousness, probably God’s saving action, or a right relationship with God, rather than the human moral virtue which ensues. The close connection between God’s Spirit and the resurrection of Jesus (cf. 1.4) means that God will by his indwelling Spirit give life to the mortal bodies that the Spirit indwells.

A few verses later, the letter further explains the role of the Spirit in the life of believers: “For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, ‘Abba! Father!’ it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God” (Romans 8:14-16). Here, the Spirit is not merely a gift that accompanies the experience of becoming a child of God, but the Spirit is the very actor that makes the believer a child of God. The Spirit of God-or the Spirit of Christ (v. 9)-is the agent of adoption and the first witness of the believer’s new spiritual status. Morgan has again pointed out that the resurrected Christ comes to believers and acts in their lives as the Spirit:

The God who creates and saves is known in his saving righteousness in the death and resurrection of Jesus who is present to believers as Spirit. The Lord who is Spirit and creates freedom (cf. 2 Corinthians 3.14-18) works on earth through believers who are empowered by this Spirit.

To summarize, Romans 4:25 links justification by faith with participation in the resurrection of Christ. Then, Romans 8 explains that the way believers identify with and participate in the resurrection of Christ is by receiving his Spirit to dwell in their lives. The Spirit is essential to their change of status. Without the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ (v. 9). Moreover, the Spirit causes their adoption as God’s children (v. 15). If we think of justification as describing the believer’s change of status from being counted as sinful to being counted as righteous, then the work of the Spirit is essential to justification.

The Spirit not only effects a change of status, however, but also a change of identity, by actually beginning to transform the believer into a person who has power over sin. By the Spirit, believers are delivered from walking “according to the flesh” (v. 4) and are able to “put to death the deeds of the body” (v. 13). If we recognize the active, transformative connotations of justification, as exemplified by Dunn’s discussion of the word, then again we see that the work of the Spirit is essential to justification.

The Spirit bears witness to our spirit of this transformation (v. 16). Here is an indication that the role of the Spirit in justification and adoption is not invisible or silent, but it includes a tangible experience and is accompanied by miraculous power. Later in Romans, Paul described the action of the Spirit in the conversion process by using just such terms: “For I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me to win obedience from the Gentiles, by word and deed, by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God, so that from Jerusalem and as far around as Illyricum I have fully proclaimed the good news of Christ” (Rom 15:18-19).

In this regard we might well think of the powerful involvement of the Holy Spirit in Christian initiation as described in the Book of Acts. According to its accounts, believers were “baptized [immersed, overwhelmed] with the Holy Spirit” and “filled with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 1:5; 2:4). The Spirit “fell on” them, was “poured out” on them, and “came upon them” (Acts 10:44-45; 19:6). Immediately accompanying this work of the Spirit, the believers miraculously “began to speak in other languages” (Acts 2:4). In addition to “speaking in tongues” they also began “extolling God” (Acts 10:46), and they “prophesied” (Acts 19:6). Thus, Luke’s record of initiation experiences confirms the theological discussion of Paul, which is what we would expect if Luke was indeed a coworker and traveling companion of the apostle.

Historical and Theological Context

The latter part of the twentieth century brought a scholarly reappraisal of the historical and theological context of the Letter to the Romans. Beginning with Martin Luther, Protestants had generally viewed Romans as simply a reaction to Jewish legalism. In other words, Paul wrote Romans to refute the first-century belief of the Jews that they

could earn salvation by doing good deeds in conformity to the law of Moses. Instead, Paul taught that salvation comes through faith in Jesus Christ without the requirement of good works.

E. P. Sanders made a strong case, however, that this interpretation was based on a misunderstanding of first-century Judaism. He maintained that the Jews of the time did not typically base their salvation on meritorious good works but acknowledged the necessity of God's saving grace. However, they viewed obedience to the law as the means of maintaining their status in their covenant with God. Therefore, in writing to the Romans, Paul was not denying the importance of good works, but he specifically opposed "covenantal monism"-the Jewish idea that only those who kept the Mosaic law could be in covenant with God.

To a great extent, James Dunn has accepted this concept and built upon it. In his understanding, "works of the law" refers specifically to obeying the law as a means of establishing a boundary around the Jews to mark them off from the Gentiles, thereby maintaining their "national righteousness" as God's unique covenant people. Consequently, Dunn has critiqued the traditional Protestant understanding of justification by faith:

Protestant exegesis has for too long allowed a typically Lutheran emphasis on justification by faith to impose a hermeneutical grid on the text of Romans.... The antithesis to "justification by faith"-what Paul speaks of as "justification by works"-was understood in terms of a system whereby salvation is *earned* through the *merit* of *good works*.

Instead, Dunn has argued for a more nuanced explanation of Paul's polemics on justification that takes into account the stance of first-century Jews as described by Sanders. In essence, they observed the law in order to maintain their unique identity and status before God in contrast to the Gentiles:

The law thus became a basic expression of Israel's distinctiveness as the people specially chosen by (the one) God to be his people. In sociological terms the law functioned as an "identity marker" and "boundary," reinforcing Israel's sense of distinctiveness and distinguishing Israel from the surrounding nations.... [In particular,] circumcision, food laws, and [the] sabbath ... [were] test cases of

covenant loyalty.

Consequently, Paul did not oppose the need for an active response of obedience to God's commands, but he opposed the insistence upon certain Jewish legal practices as the exclusive means of a covenant relationship with God. Thus, Dunn concluded that "works of the law" has a specific historical connotation in Romans:

The first Roman listeners would most probably and rightly understand "works of the law" as referring to those actions which were performed at the behest of the law, in service of the Torah; that is, those actions which marked out those involved as the people of the law, those acts prescribed by the law by which a member of the covenant people identified himself as a Jew and maintained his status within the covenant.

Against Dunn, Douglas Moo has argued for a more traditional Protestant interpretation of justification in the Letter to the Romans:

The teaching of Paul-and of Jesus and Matthew and Luke and Mark and Peter-cannot satisfactorily be explained without the assumption that some Jews, at least, had drifted from a biblical conception of the primacy and sufficiency of God's grace into a belief that accorded their own works done in obedience to the law as basic to their justification/salvation.

We conclude, then, that Paul criticizes Jews for thinking that the Mosaic covenant is adequate without that perfection in "works" without which any system of law must fail to bring one into relationship with God. . . . If the Jews, with the best law that one could have, could not find salvation through it, then *any* system of works is revealed as unable to conquer the power of sin. . . . No person can gain a standing with God through works because no one is able to perform works to the degree needed to secure such a standing.

This entire discussion helps us to view Romans with a fresh paradigm, so that our interpretation of the letter is not circumscribed by the historical controversy between Protestantism and Catholicism. The views of Sanders and Dunn are certainly helpful in this regard, although we can still agree with Moo that Paul's argument in Romans serves to invalidate any system of legalism or works-righteousness. Based on our analysis of Romans to this point, perhaps we can advance the argument of Sanders and Dunn in a

somewhat different direction, as follows:

The Jews who rejected the Christian message were intent on maintaining their identity and their status by keeping the law. Their error was not merely covenantal monism or legal exclusivism, but it was supremely their rejection of the saving work of Christ—specifically, his death, burial, and resurrection. Their error was not in acting as opposed to believing; rather, it was in acting by the power of the flesh rather than by the power of the Spirit. They sought to obey God by the law, which was outmoded because it relied on the ability of the flesh. Instead, they needed to realize that the law was a temporary tutor to lead them to Christ so that in Christ they could be transformed and live a new life by his indwelling Spirit. Instead of the old way of the letter, they needed to follow the new way of the Spirit.

Thus Paul wrote to the Galatians: “The law was our disciplinarian until Christ came, so that we might be justified by faith” (Galatians 3:24). “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us ... in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith” (Galatians 3:13-14). Similarly, to the Romans Paul contrasted the old way with the new way: “But now we are discharged from the law, dead to that which held us captive, so that we are slaves not under the old written code but in the new life of the Spirit” (Romans 7:6). In both letters the new way is not merely justification as a doctrine, but it is an experience in the Holy Spirit and a relationship with the living Lord through his Spirit.

In this regard, James Hollingshead has explained that the death and resurrection of Jesus created a new world order based on outpouring of the Holy Spirit:

For Paul the chief effect of the crucifixion and resurrection is not that they *reveal* the underlying structure of the universe, but that they *change* that structure. Paul thinks that the one unavoidable, observable fact that proves this change has occurred is presence of the spirit (recall Romans 5:5). This observable presence of the spirit has significance for Paul that goes far beyond mere instruction....

The reason Paul can argue against the works of the law is that they have been replaced-by the spirit....

But in Paul's understanding, the spirit has now entered into the world. It is not "represented," but manifested. This is not so much allegory as the collapse of allegory. The signified ideal has literally entered into the realm of the signifier.... Paul can dismiss circumcision precisely because the signified has descended into the human realm, and no longer requires representation.

Other Letters of Paul

In several other undisputed letters of Paul, we find a connection between justification, the resurrection of Christ, and the work of the Holy Spirit. The strongest statement linking justification with the Holy Spirit is in 1 Corinthians 6:11: "And this is what some of you used to be. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God."

In the context, Paul described the former sinful life of the Corinthian believers by listing various habitual sins, and he contrasted it with their new life in Christ. In their conversion from the old to the new, they were washed, sanctified, and justified, and Paul linked these works to the name of Jesus and the Spirit of God. Elsewhere in the New Testament, washing is associated with baptism in the name of Jesus Christ, while sanctification is associated with the Holy Spirit. In traditional Protestant theology, justification is typically identified with faith, but here we see that in Paul's theology it is important also to identify justification with both the name of Jesus and the Holy Spirit. In other words, justification rests upon the saving action of the man Jesus Christ, in his historical death, burial, and resurrection, but it also rests upon the present work of the Spirit of Christ in the believer's heart.

It appears that 1 Corinthians 6:11 describes Christian initiation, which involves repentance, water baptism in the name of Jesus Christ, and the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). According to Acts 19:1-6, Paul found some disciples of John the Baptist at Ephesus, and he acknowledged that they were believers in some sense. Yet he insisted upon rebaptizing them in the name of the Lord Jesus, and he prayed for them to receive the Holy Spirit. He regarded both water baptism and Spirit baptism as part of Christian initiation, and in 1 Corinthians 6:11 we find a theological expression that corresponds to his action.

Commenting on 1 Corinthians 6:11, Gordon Fee noted how important the work of the Spirit is to salvation, in the thinking of Paul:

Christ's death was the place in history where such saving activity took place; they were saved in these various aspects "by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." But because they were all experientially appropriated at conversion, which is essentially the work of the Spirit, they were also saved in these various aspects "by the Spirit of our God."... It needs only be noted once more how crucial the role of the Spirit is to Paul's view of salvation in Christ.... The Spirit appropriates God's salvation in the life of the believer in such a way that new life and behavior are the expected result; and without the latter, the effective work of the Spirit in the believer's life, there has been no true salvation-in any meaningful sense for Paul.

In language reminiscent of Romans 15:18-19, Paul also wrote to the Corinthians, "My speech and my proclamation were not with plausible words of wisdom, but with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith might rest not on human wisdom but on the power of God" (1 Corinthians 2:4-5). This statement describes the role of the Spirit in the proclamation of the gospel. Moreover, it identifies the basis of faith as the power of God, specifically, the Spirit. Thus, Paul tied justifying faith to the Spirit.

In 2 Corinthians 3:8-9, Paul equated "the ministry of the Spirit" with "the ministry of justification." The contrast in this passage is between the old covenant ("the ministry of death") and the new covenant ("the ministry of the Spirit"). The new covenant is also called "the ministry of justification." Presumably, Paul did not deny the existence of either the work of the Spirit or justification under the old covenant, but in the first-century context he saw the Jewish tendency to trust in law observance as antithetical to the new way of the Spirit. Significantly, the work of the Spirit was so intimately involved with justification by faith under the new covenant that he could actually equate the two.

A few verses later in the same chapter, Paul wrote, "Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit" (2 Corinthians 3:17-18). We should probably regard this passage as dealing primarily with the ongoing work of sanctification in the life of the believer. Nevertheless, it is significant that verse 18 equates the Lord with the Spirit. Not only could Paul equate justification in the believer's life with the work of the Spirit, but he could equate the

presence of the Lord in the believer's life with the Spirit. In the words of evangelical author Lewis Smedes:

In the new age, the Lord is the Spirit.... The Spirit is the ascended Jesus in His earthly action.... This suggests that we do not serve a biblical purpose by insisting on the Spirit as a person who is separate from the person whose name is Jesus.

In the Letter to the Galatians, Paul dealt with justification much as he later did in the Letter to the Romans. He rebuked the Galatians for falling away from the doctrine of justification by faith and going back to dependence on the law. "We know that a person is justified not by the works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ. And we have come to believe in Christ Jesus, so that we might be justified by faith in Christ, and not by doing the works of the law, because no one will be justified by the works of the law" (Galatians 3:16).

In the course of his rebuke, Paul equated the old way of reliance upon the law with walking in "the flesh," and he equated the new way of justification by faith with walking in "the Spirit." "Are you so foolish? Having started with the Spirit, are you now ending with the flesh?" Fee pointed out the significance of this dichotomy: "The ultimate contrast with which Paul deals in this letter is not between 'faith' and 'works of Law,' but between life in the Spirit-lived out always by faith-and Torah observance."

A couple of verses later, Paul asked, "Well then, does God supply you with the Spirit and work miracles among you by your doing the works of the law, or by your believing what you heard?" (Galatians 3:5). The assumption here is that justifying faith involves the work of the Spirit, while the deeds of the law do not involve the Spirit. The problem with trusting in "the works of the law," then, is that this is equivalent to trusting in the ability of the flesh. By contrast, when people have faith in God, the Spirit is activated in their lives.

Fee noted that this verse deals with "the hope that our justification by faith in Christ and the Spirit has secured." He again pointed out that for Paul justification involves the historical work of Christ but also the present work of the Spirit: "Our present justification/righteousness based on the work of Christ and the Spirit is what will be realized-provided we continue in faith and the Spirit and do not return to slavery."

Integration and Conclusion

Traditional Protestant theology emphasizes the forensic model of justification. Under this view, justification is essentially something that takes place outside of humans. Jesus Christ paid the penalty for human sins on the cross, and God accepts this atoning act as the necessary and sufficient satisfaction for those sins. This remedy is applied to an individual's heart by grace through faith, which enables the person to be justified, or counted as righteous. In the theologies of both Martin Luther and John Calvin, even this faith is extrinsic to humans, for prior to their birth God has predestined those who will be saved, and based on this election he grants justifying faith to the chosen.

Traditional Catholic theology emphasizes that justification involves the active cooperation of humans. While justification begins with faith, it is maintained and increased by works, which are motivated by grace through faith. Justification involves both being counted as righteous and actually being made righteous by the work of the Holy Spirit.

A study of the Letter to the Romans indicates that neither position fully articulates the Pauline concept of justification. The forensic model accurately describes Christ's death as the necessary and sufficient atonement for all human sins, and Protestantism is correct to insist that no human works can earn salvation. Nevertheless, the traditional Protestant interpretation of justification does not give sufficient attention to the resurrection of Christ and to the corresponding role of the Holy Spirit. Here the Catholic explanation gives a useful hint by pointing to the work of the Spirit in the believer's life.

What is needed for a full theology of justification is something more than either of these two approaches. We find a fresh way to move forward by a careful examination of Paul's theology in Romans-supported by other Pauline writings as well as other books of the New Testament (although we have excluded them from the present study). In Romans we see an emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit for justification as well as for all aspects of salvation.

Romans teaches that justification rests upon both the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Christ's death provides the way of atonement and reconciliation, but by

itself his death would have been a defeat instead of a victory. Christ's resurrection won actual victory over death, sin, and the devil, and to receive justification we must somehow participate in his resurrection as well as his death.

The way we apply the resurrection of Christ to our lives is by receiving his Spirit to dwell in us. The Spirit is the agent of justification-not only transferring us from the category of unrighteous to righteous based on Christ's atoning death, but also transferring us from a dead spiritual state to a living relationship with the risen Lord. At justification, the Spirit of Christ gives us power to overcome sin, death, and the devil just as Christ did in his earthly life. The work of transformation begins, as the Spirit progressively molds us into the image of Christ. This is the process of sanctification, but it begins with justification by the Spirit.

Sinful humans can receive the divine work of justification in their lives by grace through faith. Justifying faith is not merely acceptance of Christ's atonement, but it consists of trust, reliance, and obedience. By obedient faith, the sinner turns to God in repentance and receives the gift of the Holy Spirit, "which is Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27). The Spirit comes with vibrant witness and transforming power. While justification is by grace through faith and not of works, it is not merely an extrinsic, forensic transaction. Rather, it is a dynamic event in the human heart that enables believers to enter the new covenant life of the Spirit.

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