

# The Faithfulness of Christ – A Lost Doctrine?

## Session 1

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# The Faithfulness of Christ – What Does God's Word Say?



# The Issue “in the Large”

- Reformed Theology (Calvinism) vs. Arminianism

Or

- Did Christ justify you as part of God's plan or does your personal faith in Christ justify you

# The Issue “in the Small”

- Are certain verses in Romans 3 and Galations 2 (deliberately or not) mistranslated to satisfy current Arminian leanings?
- And if so, what verses should be translated differently?

# One Pertinent Passage

## Romans 3:21-26 (NKJV)

<sup>21</sup> But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, <sup>22</sup> even the righteousness of God, **through faith in Jesus Christ**, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; <sup>23</sup> for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, <sup>24</sup> being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, <sup>25</sup> whom God set forth as a propitiation **by His blood, through faith**, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, <sup>26</sup> to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier **of the one who has faith in Jesus**.

# One Pertinent Passage

## Romans 3:21-26 (KJV)

<sup>21</sup> But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets;  
<sup>22</sup> Even the righteousness of God *which is by faith of Jesus Christ* unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: <sup>23</sup> For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; <sup>24</sup> Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: <sup>25</sup> Whom God hath set forth *to be a propitiation through faith in his blood*, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; <sup>26</sup> To declare, *I say*, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and *the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus*.

# One Pertinent Passage

Romans 3:21-26 (NKJV with proposed Greek  
“corrections” in blue)

<sup>21</sup> But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, <sup>22</sup> even the righteousness of God, *which is by Jesus Christ's faithfulness*, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; <sup>23</sup> for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, <sup>24</sup> being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, <sup>25</sup> whom God set forth as a propitiation *through faithfulness in the sphere of his blood*, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, <sup>26</sup> to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of *the one out of Jesus' faithfulness*.

# One Pertinent Passage – Some Comparison Translations

1901 ASV Romans 3:22

22 even the righteousness of God, **through faith in Jesus Christ** unto all them that believe; ...

Footnote that the “in” could be “of”

Net Bible (1996 - 2006)

3:22 namely, the righteousness of God **through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ** for all who believe. For there is no distinction, 3:23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. 3:24 But they are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. 3:25 God publicly displayed him at his death as the mercy seat accessible through faith. This was to demonstrate his righteousness, because God in his forbearance had passed over the sins previously committed. 3:26 This was also to demonstrate <sup>38</sup> his righteousness in the present time, so that he would be just and the **justifier of the one who lives because of Jesus' faithfulness.**

# Assumptions

1. The Bible is our basis for studying and reaching conclusions about this issue.
2. We are not talking about Christ's faith (what does that mean?), but Christ's faithfulness in fulfilling God's plan for the ages.
3. We are not saying that the Bible does not discuss a Christian's personal faith ... it certainly does.

# Basics on “Trusting”

- Consider “Romancing the Stone” and crossing the old hanging bridge to escape
- Do the Decision Table ...
- The “object” of faith, it's reliability, is the determining factor ... not the faith itself
- Consider the first born in Egypt ...

# Is Faithfulness a Biblical Topic?

## Psalms 36:5

5 Your mercy, O Lord, *is* in the heavens;  
Your **faithfulness** *reaches* to the clouds.

# Is Faithfulness a Biblical Topic?

## Psalms 89:1-

1 I will sing of the mercies of the Lord forever;  
With my mouth will I make known **Your faithfulness** to all  
generations.

2 For I have said, “Mercy shall be built up forever;  
**Your faithfulness** You shall establish in the very heavens.”

3 “I have made a covenant with My chosen,  
I have sworn to My servant David:

4 ‘Your seed I will establish forever,  
And build up your throne to all generations.’ ” Selah

5 And the heavens will praise Your wonders, O Lord;  
**Your faithfulness** also in the assembly of the saints.

# Is Faithfulness a Biblical Topic?

## Romans 3:3

<sup>3</sup> For what if some did not believe? Will their unbelief make the **faithfulness of God** without effect?

## I Thessalonians 5:23-24

<sup>23</sup> Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>24</sup> **He who calls you is faithful**, who also will do *it*.

# Is Faithfulness a Biblical Topic?

## Revelations 19:11-16

<sup>11</sup> Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him *was* called **Faithful and True**, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. <sup>12</sup> His eyes *were* like a flame of fire, and on His head *were* many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. <sup>13</sup> He *was* clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. <sup>14</sup> And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. <sup>15</sup> Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. <sup>16</sup> And He has on *His* robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

# Some NT Greek Background

1. The noun *pistis*
2. Genitive case with *pistis*
3. A determinative verse

# Some NT Greek Background

1. The adjective *pistos* means faithful
2. The verb *pisteuo* means to believe (seems to be used with *eis* when means to believe in

For examples see:

- John 1:12 “to those who believe in His name”
- John 2:11 “and His disciples believed in Him”
- John 2:23 “many believed in His name”
- John 3:18 “he who believes in Him is not condemned”
- Acts 10:43 “whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins”

# Some NT Greek Background

## 1. The noun *pistis*

- Per experts should normally mean faithfulness
- In Greek usually meant faithfulness or its extension – a pledge
- Predominant use in ordinary Greek and Septuagint is faithfulness (or pledge)
- Never meant faith except perhaps in some religious usage

# Some NT Greek Background

## Some references

1. Lidell and Scott – lists faith, faithfulness or trustworthiness, and credit (or pledge)
2. Arndt and Gingrich
  - First definition – faithfulness or reliability ... solemn promise ...proof or pledge
  - Second definition – trust or faith in
3. Kittel – list both faith and faithfulness (notes faith only in religious usage)

# Some NT Greek Background

1. Genitive case with *pistis* (subjective “of” or objective “in”)
2. Usage
  - Always “of” in general Greek examples \*
  - Always “of” in Septuagint
  - Always “of” in NT (51 times) except passages in question (Romans 3, Galations 2, and Mark 11:22)
    - For example – I Jn 5:4 ... “and this is the victory that overcometh the world, faith in us” **REALLY??**

\* See Lidell and Scott, Moulton and Milligan

# Some NT Greek Background – A Determinative Verse?

## Colossians 2:5b

<sup>5</sup> For though I am absent in the flesh, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your *good* order and the steadfastness of ***your faith in Christ.***

## Consider

1. “In Christ” is “*eis* Christ” (so *pistis* is probably faith here)
2. Genitive is “of” - “of you” or “your” in most translations

# One Pertinent Passage

Romans 3:21-26 (NKJV with proposed Greek  
“corrections” in blue)

<sup>21</sup> But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, <sup>22</sup> even the righteousness of God, *which is by Jesus Christ's faithfulness*, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; <sup>23</sup> for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, <sup>24</sup> being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, <sup>25</sup> whom God set forth as a propitiation *through faithfulness in the sphere of his blood*, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, <sup>26</sup> to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of *the one out of Jesus' faithfulness*.

# Conclusions from Session 1

1. Normal greek language usage indicates our proposed translation - “the faithfulness of Christ” - is very reasonable.
2. Normal concepts concerning “faith in an object” would seem to indicate the determining factor is the objects “faithfulness or reliability”.
3. The faithfulness of Christ (and God) is clearly a Biblical topic.

# Second Session Topics

1. Looking at Rom 3 and Gal 2 in context and comparing them with other scriptures on the same topic – does our proposed retranslation seem appropriate?
2. If so, what does our conclusion mean for other passages ... e.g., Galations 3 and Hebrews 11?
3. Is there a major doctrine here?

# References

1. D.W.B Robinson, “ 'Faith of Jesus Christ' – A New Testament Debate, “ The Reformed Theological Review 29, no.3 (Sept.-Dec. 1970, pp. 71-81.
2. Richard B. Hayes, “The Faith of Jesus Christ”, (Dissertation Series/Society of Biblical Literature; no. 56); Thesis (Ph.D.) Emory University, 1981.

Note: Most of the references in the above are from the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

# Looking at Scripture

1. Rom 3:22
2. Gal 2:16
3. Gal 3:22
4. Mark 11:22
5. Hebrews 11

# Romans 3:22 Discussion

## NKJV

21 But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, 22 even the righteousness of God, **through faith in Jesus Christ**, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference;

## Proposed Translation

21 But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, 22 even the righteousness of God, *which is* **by Jesus Christ's faithfulness**, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference;

# Romans 3:22 Discussion

## Support for Proposed Translation

1. Rom 3:3 ... “faithfulness of God”
2. Everyone agrees that Rom 3:3 and 4:16 are “of” genitives
3. Other translation makes two Greek constructions identical (?)
4. Other translation is redundant
5. Context is righteousness through Christ's work, not Law

# Romans 3:22 Discussion

Comparing scripture ...

**Rom 3:22**

through... faithfulness of Christ ... to all  
believing... righteousness of God

**Rom 5:19**

through ... the obedience of the one ... the  
many ... will be made righteous

**Rom 3:24** (compare with Eph 1:4-7)

through ... the redemption in Christ Jesus ...  
(group under discussion) ... justified freely by  
His Grace

# Supporting Arguments

In an RBC Bible Study, we looked at how we are justified in other verses and found:

- by God	8
- by Christ's death	5
- by Christ	4
- by Grace	3
- as a gift	3
- by Christ's obedience	1
- by personal belief	0

... and consider our example (I Tim 1:16)