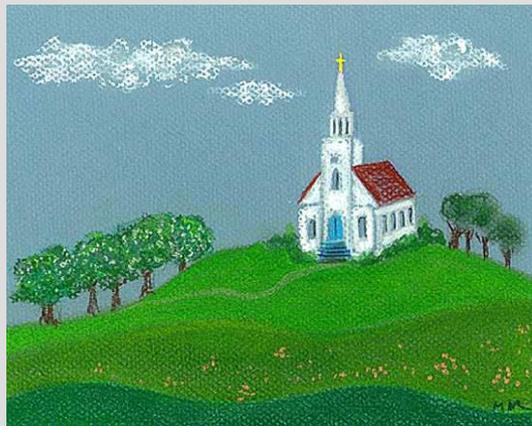


The Faithfulness of Christ – A Lost Doctrine?

Session 2

Mike Snider
2014



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)

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; ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵ 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, ²⁶ 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)

²¹But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets;
²²Even the righteousness of God *which is by faith of Jesus Christ* unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: ²³For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; ²⁴Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: ²⁵Whom 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; ²⁶To 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)

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; ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵ 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, ²⁶ to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of *the one out 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.

Highlights from Session 1

- The “object” of faith, its reliability, is the determining factor in a “trust” situation ... not the person's faith
- The Faithfulness of God and the Faithfulness of Christ are Biblical doctrines (see verses in Session 1...)
- As different translations have rendered the verses in question (e.g., Rom 3) in different ways, this is a valid issue for us to consider

Highlights from Session 1

- The greek noun *pistis* normally means “faithfulness” (or pledge), though in some religious literature it does occasionally mean “belief”
- The genitive case with *pistis* should always be translated “of”
- Colossians 2:5 seems to be a determinative case ...

Some NT Greek Background – A Determinative Verse?

Colossians 2:5b

⁵ 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

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)

Galatians 2:16 Discussion

NKJV

¹⁶ “knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by **faith in Jesus Christ**, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by **faith in Christ** and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified. ¹⁷ “But if, while we seek to be justified **by** Christ, ...

Proposed

¹⁶ “knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by **Jesus Christ's faithfulness**, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by **Christ's faithfulness** and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified. ¹⁷ “But if, while we seek to be justified **in the sphere** of Christ, ...

Galatians 2:16 Discussion

Support for Proposed Translation

1. Compare with Gal 2:17 and 2:20 (end of verse defines topic?)
3. Other translation makes two Greek constructions identical (?)
4. Other translation is redundant
5. Context is righteousness through Christ's work, not Law

Galatians 3:22 Discussion

¹⁹ What purpose then *does* the law *serve*? It was added because of transgressions, **till the Seed should come** to whom the promise was made; ... ²⁰ ... ²¹ *Is* the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not! For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law. ²² But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by **Jesus Christ's faithfulness** might be given to those who believe. ²³ But before **the faithfulness** came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for **the faithfulness** which would afterward be revealed. ²⁴ Therefore the law was our tutor *to bring us to Christ*, that we might be justified by **faithfulness**. ²⁵ But after **the faithfulness** has come, we are no longer under a tutor. ²⁶ For you are all sons of God through **the faithfulness in the sphere of Christ Jesus**.

Galatians 3:22 Discussion

1. Note that the law was “until the seed should come” (v. 19), “before the faithfulness came” (v.23), and “was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ” (v. 24). Obviously not related to personal faith as some teach ...
2. It seems that “the faithfulness” is clearly a reference to the Lord ... consistent with our premise and further emphasizing why Christ is called “Faithful and True” in Revelation.

Mark 11:22 Discussion

1. Context – Peter notes that the fig tree Christ cursed has withered away ...

“So Jesus answered and said to them 'Have faith in God.' ”

2. Is this “have faith in God” or “grab onto God's faithfulness”?

- AT Robertson notes that “the genitive does not mean 'in', but only the God kind of faith”.
- Art C. has suggested that concept of “grasping onto God's faithfulness”
- Consider the context ...

Hebrews 11 Discussion

Hebrews 10 ...

9 then He said, "Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God." He takes away the first that He may establish the second. 10 By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once *for all*. 11 And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. 12 But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, 13 from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool. 14 For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified. ...

19 Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, 20 by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, 21 and *having a* High Priest over the house of God, 22 let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of [faithfulness](#), having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. 23 Let us hold fast the confession of *our* hope without wavering, [for He who promised is faithful](#). ...

38 Now the just shall live by (out of or from) [faithfulness](#);
But if *anyone* draws back,
My soul has no pleasure in him."

39 But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those [of faithfulness](#) to the saving of the soul.

Hebrews 11 Discussion

¹ Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. ² For by it the elders obtained a *good* testimony. ³ By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God ...

Interlinear translates this literally as:

“Now faith is the reality of things hoped for, the proof of things not being seen”. For in this the elders obtained witness.”

1901 ASV has:

“Now faith is assurance of things hoped for, a conviction of things not seen. For therein the elders had witness born to them.”

Hebrews 11 Discussion

Points to consider

1. Verse 1 actually says “(Faithfulness or faith) is the reality (or foundation) of things hoped for, the proof of things not seen”. Does this sound more like a definition of personal faith or Christ's faithfulness and reliability?
2. Verse 2 actually says “for by means of it the elders had witness borne to them”.

Note: Don't be led down the trail that the elders, who are the “heros of the faith” in the following verses received praise ...

Hebrews 11 Discussion

Points to consider

3. And did all these folks evidence personal faith ... see verses 11, 20, and 23.
4. Isn't this all consistent with Heb 12:1-2 ... where we are surrounded by witnesses of Christ's faithfulness ... “looking unto the author and finisher of **the faithfulness** (actual translation)” ... who endured the cross ...

Some Study Concepts

1. Assume *pistis* means faithfulness/fidelity/trustworthiness of Christ
 - Common usage of word
 - Most likely meaning in doctrinal passages
2. Change your definition to faith/believe/trust if these are true:
 - *Pistis* is followed by *eis* – so we have a “believe in” situation
 - The context is clearly about a person's faith or belief
3. Always communicate clearly when discussing this issue

Some Study Concepts

1. Incorrect statement:

- “The word faith means the faithfulness of Christ in this verse”
- Why – In English, faith and faithfulness are different words with different meanings ... so this is not an accurate statement.

2. Correct statement

- “The greek word translated “faith” in this translation commonly means “faithfulness” (see Rom 3:3) and it should be translated that way here when you look at the context”

Other Verses to Consider

Acts 24:24

24 And after some days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was Jewish, he sent for Paul and heard him concerning the faith in Christ.

Correct translation – preposition eis.

Romans 4:14

14 For if those who are of the law *are* heirs, **the faithfulness** is made void and the promise made of no effect, 15 because the law brings about wrath; for where there is no law *there is* no transgression.

More likely speaking of Christ's faithfulness?

Romans 9:30

30 What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness of **the faithfulness**;

Better fit for this context – preposition is ek; see context in verses 31-33

Other Verses to Consider

I Cor 16:13

13 Watch, stand fast in [the faithfulness](#), be brave, be strong.

Good translation but should probably be faithfulness? ... uses preposition en.

Phil 3:9

9 and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which *is* from the law, but that which *is* through [Christ's faithfulness](#), the righteousness which is from God by [the faithfulness](#);

A Major Doctrine?

1. Mk 11:22 ... Grab hold of God's faithfulness
2. Rom 3:3 ... Will their unbelief make the faithfulness of the God without effect
3. Rom 3:22ff
22 even the righteousness of God, *which is by Jesus Christ's faithfulness*, to all and on all who believe... 24 being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,
4. Rom 5:1 ... Therefore, having been justified by faithfulness we have peace ...

A Major Doctrine?

5. Gal 2:16

¹⁶ “knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by **Jesus Christ's faithfulness**, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by **Christ's faithfulness** and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.

A Major Doctrine?

6. Gal 3:19ff

¹⁹ What purpose then *does* the law *serve*? It was added because of transgressions, **till the Seed should come** to whom the promise was made; ... ²⁰ ... ²¹ ... ²² But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by **Jesus Christ's faithfulness** might be given to those who believe. ²³ But before **the faithfulness** came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for **the faithfulness** which would afterward be revealed. ²⁴ Therefore the law was our tutor **to bring us to Christ**, that we might be justified by **faithfulness**. ²⁵ But after **the faithfulness** has come, we are no longer under a tutor. ²⁶ For you are all sons of God through **the faithfulness in the sphere of Christ Jesus**.

A Major Doctrine?

7. Phil 3:9

⁹ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which *is* from the law, but that which *is* through **Christ's faithfulness**, the righteousness which is from God by **the faithfulness**;

A Major Doctrine?

8. Hebrews 11

¹ Now faithfulness is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. ² For by it the elders had witness borne to them. ³ By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God ... *numerous verses demonstrating God/Christ's faithfulness ...*

9. Hebrews 12:1-2

¹ Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares *us*, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ² looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of **the faithfulness**, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

A Major Doctrine?

10. Revelations 19:11-16

¹¹ 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. ¹² 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. ¹³ He *was* clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. ¹⁴ And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. ¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ And He has on *His* robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

Conclusions

1. The “Faithfulness of Christ” is a major Biblical doctrine... or really part of an even larger doctrine - God executing his plan, fulfilling every promise ...
2. This doctrine is being hidden by poor translation, biased by Arminian presuppositions.

Conclusions

3. Clear translation of such verses is needed to see
 - how important is Christ's faithfulness in completing God's plan
 - how Christ's faithfulness relates to our personal faith
 - how inaccurate Arminian theology is
 - that perhaps the Reformers didn't go far enough when they broke from the Catholic church's teachings?

Conclusions

4. We should carefully look at all verses that have “faith” in them to see if they are really about our personal faith or Christ's faithfulness.

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 19th and 20th centuries.

A Major Doctrine?

10. Revelations 19:11-16

¹¹ 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. ¹² 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. ¹³ He *was* clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. ¹⁴ And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. ¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ And He has on *His* robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

One Pertinent Passage

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

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; ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵ 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, ²⁶ to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of *the one out of Jesus' faithfulness*.