

Justification, Imputation and Works

Paul's Use of Adamic and Abrahamic Tradition in Romans 4-5

by Wayne A. Brindle
Liberty University

INTRODUCTION

One renowned scholar has said that God declares believers to be righteous “in the *covenantal* sense that they are members of the single family God promised to Abraham, in the *forensic* sense that the divine law court has already announced its verdict in their case, and the *eschatological* sense that this verdict properly anticipates the one which will be issued in confirmation, on the last day.”¹ Believers then live out works that are produced out of the obedience of faith as they follow the Holy Spirit, and it is on the basis of this Spirit- and faith-produced obedience that believers will be justified at the final judgment. This obedience demonstrates that believers are indwelt by the Spirit, who guarantees that they will receive eschatological justification.

In this paper I will focus on how the Apostle Paul presented the doctrines of justification and imputation in Romans 4 and 5, and how some contemporary theologians mishandle these same doctrines. Part of my negative focus will land on N. T. Wright, who has reinterpreted imputation to remove the idea that God imputed to Abraham His own righteousness that Abraham did not deserve. Then in Romans 5 Wright sidesteps the essence of Paul's Adam/Christ parallel, which functions as a basis of believers' hope in Romans 5-8. By such mishandling of Christ's representative role in the passage, he fails to understand it as genuine substitution and imputation. He also neglects the fact that Romans 5-8 describes the confidence and status of believers who have already been justified (5:1) and thereby have peace with God, a standing in grace (5:2), and confident expectation for the future (hope, 5:3-11), and all this not by works or “Spirit-works” or “faith-works,” but purely by faith in Christ and the gospel.

Scholars influenced by Wright are increasingly asserting that most New Testament scholars have failed to understand that first century Jews (including Paul) saw salvation as rooted in covenant membership based in God's grace and defined by obedience to the Torah. And therefore Paul, in his newfound Gentile orientation, replaced the works of the Law with faith as the sign that one is part of God's covenant community. Paul's contention with Judaism thus centered in their determination to restrict covenant membership to their ethnic group as a status obtained by possessing and following the Mosaic Law. They further assert that since the grace of God was found in being part of His covenant, this insistence on an ethnically-defined righteousness, if allowed to triumph, would have killed Paul's Gentile mission in the bud. Paul therefore announced that justification was by faith, and that this faith was available to Gentiles by simply turning to Christ.

WRIGHT'S MISHANDLING OF ROMANS 4-5

What I would like to do in this paper is threefold: First, I will consider N. T. Wright's approach to some significant details in Romans 4 and 5 dealing with justification and imputation. Second, I will offer my opinions on his interpretations and arguments. And third, I want to offer my own exegesis of these details, with help from some others who have responded to these discussions.

ROMANS 4

¹ N.T. Wright, “Paul in Different Perspectives: Lecture 1: Starting Points and Opening Reflections” (lecture presented at the Pastors' Conference at Auburn Avenue Presbyterian Church, Monroe, La., 3 January 2005), 16.

Wright says the reason that Paul repeatedly quotes Genesis 15 in Romans 4 is because that is where God established His covenant with Abraham, and “Abraham’s righteousness is his right standing within that covenant.”² He then asserts that when Paul refers to God’s “righteousness” in Romans, he is referring to God’s commitment to be faithful to that covenant. Furthermore, the point of the covenant was always that “God would bless the whole world through Abraham’s family.”³ However, the covenant is not even mentioned until verse 13 (with the word “promise”) and throughout the rest of the chapter the focus of the promise references is still on Abraham’s faith and the significance of his righteousness-by-faith to believers today. Wright’s assumption that the chapter centers on the covenant and Abraham’s righteousness in the covenant seems to have little solid grounds.

Wright says that those who treat Romans 4 as presenting Abraham as an “example” or “illustration” of justification by faith completely miss the point of the chapter. Romans 4:16-17 (focusing on the covenant), he says, “are actually the main point of the whole discussion.”⁴ This is very doubtful, as I will attempt to show later.⁵

Wright says that the central meaning of “God’s righteousness” is His faithfulness to his promises to Abraham.⁶ He says this in all of his writings about justification, and never spends much effort attempting to prove it. As in much recent political campaigning, the act of repeating claims over and over appears to be presented as proof. Based on this assertion, Wright then laments the “tragedy” of Reformation theology that uses up “the language of ‘God’s righteousness’ on the unnecessary project of ‘finding someone’s righteousness to impute to the believer’ as though ‘righteousness’ was that sort of thing in the first place.”⁷ All this is due to Wright’s decision to redefine imputation as Paul applies it in Romans 4 based on Genesis 15:6. I will also deal with this in more detail later.

In Romans 4:11 Paul says that Abraham “received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised.” Wright says this statement expounds Genesis 17:11, where God tells Abraham that circumcision “shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you.” Wright infers that we are thus justified in reading Romans 4:11 as saying that Abraham received circumcision “as a sign and seal of the *covenant status* that he had by faith while still in uncircumcision.” He then uses this equivalence as proof that when Paul spoke of “righteousness by faith” he actually meant “covenant status” or membership in the covenant.⁸ Therefore justification by faith must have the same meaning. However, since Paul will not mention the covenant promises until

² Tom Wright, *Justification: God’s Plan and Paul’s Vision* (London: SPCK, 2009), 48.

³ *Ibid.*, 49. Wright says that God’s covenant with Abraham was from the beginning a “single-plan-through-Israel-for-the-world,” but Israel failed and let God down, not offering the obedience that would have enabled the “world-wide covenant plan” to succeed. That is, Israel was “faithless” in carrying out God’s commission. God solved this with a “faithful Israelite,” the Jewish Messiah, who carried out the plan through his obedience to the point of death (described by Paul in Rom. 3:21-26). In carrying out this “faithful obedience,” Jesus became the representative for his people and took on himself the death they deserved (Rom. 8:3; 2 Cor. 5:21). In my opinion, this is good biblical theology, but doesn’t take into account the teachings of Paul concerning the “mystery of the Church” in God’s unfolding plan of redemption (cf. Eph. 3:1-12).

⁴ *Ibid.*, 155.

⁵ Schreiner, for example, notes, “In Romans 4, Paul brings up Abraham, the progenitor of the Jewish people, to confirm his teaching on justification . . .” (Thomas R. Schreiner, “Justification apart from and by Works: At the Final Judgment Works Will Confirm Justification,” in *Four Views on the Role of Works at the Final Judgment*, ed. Alan P. Stanley [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013], 75).

⁶ *Ibid.*, 190.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 191.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 195.

verse 13, but has been talking about the imputation of righteousness by faith since verse three, this kind of reading and exchange of meaning seems arbitrary.

Wright maintains that Romans 4:16b—“so that the promise will be guaranteed to all the descendants, not only to those who are of the Law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all”—is the answer to Romans 4:1. That is, “Abraham is the father of us *all*, the law-people and the non-law people, Jews and Gentiles alike, the dead who need to be brought back to life and the non-existent who need to come to life for the first time (4:17).”⁹ Two things need to be said about this. First, verse 16 is so far removed from verse 1 that it can hardly be seen as an answer to a question asked in verse 1 (and apparently already answered in verses 3-5). I think this is wishful thinking and creative exegesis on Wright’s part. Second, I believe that in this citation, Wright completely misunderstands Paul’s meaning in 4:17. But more on that later.

Wright then makes an amazingly arbitrary leap when he says that the “ultimate answer to the question of 4:1” is in 4:23-25: “all those who believe in ‘the God who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead’ are part of Abraham’s single family, which means that they too, have their sins forgiven.” He freely inserts an extra element—“Abraham’s single family”—between faith and forgiveness. Believers have their sins forgiven, not directly by faith, but because they become part of Abraham’s family. This is an astonishing way to deal with scripture.

ROMANS 5

Wright correctly notes that the word “therefore” (ou[^]n) in Romans 5:1 signals that he believes that he has sufficiently expounded the topic of justification by faith that now “he can build something else upon it.”¹⁰ What he can build is an argument for assurance, which Wright relates to Romans 8:30 (“whom He justified, these He also glorified”) and summarizes as “that the verdict *already* announced is indeed a true anticipation of the verdict *yet to be* announced.”¹¹ Once again, however, Wright allows his preconceptions to blind him to the actual thrust of the biblical text. He reads 8:30 as though it said, “whom He justified, these He also really/finally justified.” Wright puts much weight on a future final verdict of justification. For him (and many Reformed exegetes), people who are already justified by faith are “those who will have the present verdict confirmed in the future.” Yet Romans 8:30 says that the justified are “glorified,” not again (finally) justified. Glorification is the eschatological transformation that will occur at the rapture (1 Cor. 15:43, 51-53; Phil. 3:20-21; 1 John 3:2). The judgment seat of Christ has to follow this. What possible relevance could a final verdict of justification have for those who are already glorified with Christ?¹²

Romans 5 introduces the topic of reconciliation (peace) between people and God. Paul shows that this is based on justification (5:1), and brings assurance of eternal salvation (5:10). Wright, however, sees another opportunity to introduce the covenant here, and says that reconciliation implies God’s love which is an integral component of God’s covenant, which instituted a “marriage bond” between God and His people: “The idea of God’s unbreakable bond with his people overarches the entire discussion.”¹³ Yet the topic of covenant is not found here. The passage is actually designed to promote the believer’s certainty that his justification will survive future trials, since it has produced peace and friendship with God. Further, since Christ died for us when we were rotten sinners and despicable enemies of God, *a fortiori* he will save us from all future wrath now that we’re his friends and righteous before him.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid., 197.

¹¹ Ibid. 198.

¹² Wright (and other Reformed exegetes) need to take the truths of John 3:18; 5:24 more seriously.

¹³ Ibid., 199.

When Wright summarizes the contrast between the disobedience of Adam and the obedience of Christ in Romans 5:15-19, he maintains that “the ‘obedience’ of Christ is not designed to amass a treasury of merit which can then be ‘reckoned’ to the believer.”¹⁴ It simply says that Christ was obedient all the way to death on a cross. There is no suggestion, says Wright, that the obedience of Christ refers to obeying the Law of Moses. In fact, the Law was not given as a way to earn redemption, salvation, or righteousness. “It is therefore a straightforward category mistake . . . to suppose that Jesus ‘obeyed the law’ and so obtained ‘righteousness’ which could be reckoned to those who believe in him.”¹⁵ The righteousness of Christ is not what is reckoned (imputed) to believers; it’s Christ’s death and resurrection. As will be shown later, this understanding of Romans 5:18-19 is probably correct.

AN EXEGESIS OF SOME DETAILS OF ROMANS 4-5

ROMANS 4

The first verse of this chapter is beset with several translational problems, the most significant of which is the formation of the question about Abraham. Is it (1) “What then shall we say that Abraham our forefather according to the flesh found?” (the traditional view); (2) “What then shall we say that Abraham our forefather found according to the flesh?” (supported by Robert Jewett and others)¹⁶; or (3) “What then shall we say? Have we found Abraham [to be] our forefather according to the flesh?” (suggested by Richard Hays¹⁷, N. T. Wright¹⁸, and others)? There are several reasons not to choose the third option: (1) The question “what then shall we say” (Tiv ou^ⁿ ejrou'men;) as a separate question appears five more times in Romans, and in four of these cases (as a separate question) it is answered with “certainly not” (mhV gevnoito). In the fifth occurrence (9:30) what follows is something Paul agrees with, and thus “certainly not” is not called for. Since Hays and Wright view what follows in 4:2 as contrary to Paul’s argument, “certainly not” should be expected. This indicates that Paul likely did not intend “what then shall we say” to stand alone, and thus option three is not preferable. (2) The question as translated by Hays and Wright does not appear to be answered in the following verses, and is therefore awkward in the context. (3) In addition, James Dunn says that the third option would produce a grammatical oddity.¹⁹ Options 1 and 2 are both acceptable, but option 1 appears to be the simplest statement that fits best with the following verses, and should be adopted.

Paul’s quotation of Genesis 15:6 in Romans 4:3 immediately focuses his argument on two significant words: “reckon” (credit, count) (logivzomai) and “believe” (faith) (pisteuvw, pivsti"). Both words occur throughout Romans 4 (logivzomai is used four times in the next five verses), and in fact the chapter could be considered an exposition of Genesis 15:6. Dunn suggests that Paul especially clarifies “reckon” in Romans 4:4-8 and “believe” in verses 9-21.²⁰ The gavr introducing the quotation indicates that the concept of imputation (reckoning) is being brought in to highlight the fact that Abraham was not justified by works (v. 2). That is, it’s clear that Abraham was not justified by works because Genesis 15:6

¹⁴ Ibid., 201.

¹⁵ Ibid., 205.

¹⁶ Robert Jewett, *Romans: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 307-08.

¹⁷ Richard B. Hays, “Abraham as Father of Jews and Gentiles,” *The Conversion of the Imagination: Paul as Interpreter of Israel’s Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 61-84.

¹⁸ N. T. Wright, *The Letter to the Romans*, New Interpreter’s Bible (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002), 489.

¹⁹ James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word Books, 1988), 199.

²⁰ Ibid., 228-30.

says that his faith was “credited” (imputed, reckoned) to him for righteousness.²¹ “When Paul thinks of the *justifying* work of God he thinks of the *imputing* or *crediting* work of God.”²²

Genesis 15:6 states that God counted/credited Abraham’s act of faith as though it were righteousness. In Romans 4:4-5 Paul tries to clarify the significance of this by contrasting two aspects of human reckoning in the area of work and wages. First, in the sphere of work, wages are reckoned as a debt (something owed to the worker), not as a gift (grace). Piper argues that the wages should be seen as an external reward being credited to the worker’s account, which is different from an internal faith being credited to a believer as righteousness (Wright’s interpretation of 4:3). Paul, he says, is contrasting two external imputations: (1) an external wage credited as something owed; (2) an external righteousness (Christ’s) credited as a grace gift to a believer—not our faith “as” righteousness but Christ’s righteousness for our lack of righteousness “by means of” our faith.²³ Second, in the sphere of grace, faith (believing in the justifier) is reckoned (credited/counted) as a gift, not as work (verse 5—the one “who does not work”). “The ‘one who works’ in verse 4 is contrasted with ‘the one who does not work’ in verse 5.”²⁴

Wright and others attempt to downplay the meaning of “reckon” (*logivzomai*) in these verses, but the term seems historically clear. The word was used regularly for business transactions in which something was reckoned or counted to someone’s credit.²⁵ According to Jewett, it was “a technical term for charging a bill, calculating a debt, or counting out wages earned for work performed.”²⁶

The Genesis 15:6 quotation is paraphrased in Romans 4:5. The Abraham who believed God in verse 3 is the one who does not work in verse 5 (how good Abraham may have been is irrelevant; he did nothing that could merit justification before God—compare verse 2). God did not credit him for his work, but in contrast declared an ungodly person (who was ungodly in reality—compare 3:10-20) righteous by his faith. Bock notes that “it truly is remarkable what God did in the life of Abraham before Abraham ever performed one act of obedience.”²⁷

Paul made the contrast between working and believing very clear. “It is not those who *work* for God who can claim righteousness from him but it is those who *believe* in this God.”²⁸ In 4:4 the word *logivzomai* refers to reckoning what someone deserves (wages for work), but in verse 5 what is reckoned is clearly not deserved (righteousness for faith [not working]). This is in keeping with the use of the term in the LXX, as seen in Genesis 31:15; Leviticus 7:18; and Numbers 18:27, 30.²⁹ Clearly Paul did not wish to present Abraham’s faith as deserving anything from God (least of all a declaration of righteousness), since in Romans 4:4 he indicates that if Abraham earned (deserved) anything it would be

²¹ John Piper emphasizes that the phrase *eij dikaiosuvnhn* should not be translated “as righteousness,” and points to parallels in Romans 10:10 as evidence (*Counted Righteous in Christ* [Wheaton: Crossway, 2002], 62 n. 7..

²² *Ibid.*, 54-55.

²³ *Ibid.*, 56-57.

²⁴ Gerhard H. Visscher, *Romans 4 and the New Perspective on Paul: Faith Embraces the Promise*, Studies in Biblical Literature 122 (New York: Peter Lang, 2009), 170.

²⁵ *Ibid.*; James H. Moulton and George Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament* (London, 1930; reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 377.

²⁶ Jewett, *Romans*, 313.

²⁷ Darrell L. Bock, *Recovering the Real Lost Gospel* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2010), 61.

²⁸ Visscher, *Romans 4*, 172.

²⁹ Gen. 31:15—“Are we not reckoned [regarded] by him [Laban] as foreigners?”; Lev. 7:18—“He who offers it [the sacrifice] will not be accepted; nor will it be credited [reckoned] to him”; Num. 18:27—“your offering will be credited [reckoned] to you as if it were the grain from the threshing floor”; 18:30—“the rest shall be credited [reckoned, counted] to the Levites as produce of the threshing floor.”

“reckoned as debt.” “Precisely because it is not earned, it is reckoned as a gift.”³⁰ Faith should not be described as the “basis” or “ground” of the righteousness a believer receives. The only way that faith can be the means for receiving righteousness from God is as a pure gift (apart from works—verse 5).

When we move on to Romans 4:6, we immediately discover parallels with verse 5, which were clearly intended by Paul (note *kaqavper*, “just as”). First, the “ungodly” in verse 5 are paralleled by “apart from works” in verse 6. The man in verse 6 is charged with “lawless deeds” and “sins” in verse 7. Therefore, notes Piper, “God’s crediting righteousness to a person ‘apart from works’ means that he credits righteousness to ‘the ungodly.’”³¹ Second, that God “justifies” in verse 5 is parallel to the fact that God “counts/credits righteousness” in verse 6. We must therefore conclude that for God to “justify the ungodly” in verse 5 is closely parallel to God “crediting (imputing) righteousness apart from works” in verse 6. It thus seems clear that Paul views justification by faith as equivalent to an “imputation of righteousness apart from works.”³² The grammar of verse 6 shows either that (1) Paul is using *logivzomai* loosely enough that he sees “credits faith to someone as righteousness” as equivalent to “credits righteousness to someone apart from works” or (2) Paul advances beyond his statement in verse 5 (and the quotation in verse 3) to say that God imputes/credits an objective (external) righteousness to believers. Either way, “Justification in Paul’s mind is God’s imputing righteousness to us ‘by faith’ rather than faith being treated as righteousness within us” (*a la* Wright).³³ This seems to be further illuminated in verse 11 by the statement that “the purpose [of circumcision] was to make [Abraham] the father of all who believe without being circumcised, so that righteousness would be counted/credited to them as well.”

Finally, I said earlier that Wright misunderstands the meaning of Romans 4:17, where Paul calls God the one “who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist.” Wright interprets this passage as describing “the law-people and the non-law people, Jews and Gentiles alike, the dead who need to be brought back to life and the non-existent who need to come to life for the first time.”³⁴ But he has very little support for this. Visscher notes that these two clauses were already being used in Jewish literature to describe God in his resurrecting power and his ability to create from non-existence.³⁵ In my opinion, the first of these statements must be understood in light of Paul’s references to Abraham and Sarah in verse 19: Abraham did not weaken in faith when he considered the deadness of his own body (for reproductive purposes) and the deadness of Sarah’s womb. God could make them alive again, and Abraham trusted in God’s ability to do so. The second statement probably refers to the full meaning and future application of Abraham’s new name: “father of many nations” (explicitly referred to in verse 17). God called Abraham by a name signifying he already had many descendants when he had none, and Abraham trusted him to call them into existence when as yet they did not.

ROMANS 5

Wright’s reading of Romans does not do justice to much of Romans 5:12-21. Without a clear concept of imputation, he fails to explain how the guilt of Adam’s sin was transmitted to all mankind, which leads to a failure to interpret the Adam-Christ typology.³⁶ Wright speaks of Christ as our

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 174.

³¹ Piper, *Counted Righteous*, 58.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.* Piper notes that “it is highly unlikely that Paul thinks in two different ways about how the ungodly are justified or how righteousness is imputed to the ungodly. Therefore, these two ways of speaking about imputing righteousness are probably saying the same things in two different ways or from two different angles” (p. 60).

³⁴ Wright, *Justification*, 195.

³⁵ Visscher, *Romans 4*, 206-7.

³⁶ See Cornelis P. Venema, “N. T. Wright on Romans 5:12-21 and Justification: A Case Study in Exegesis, Theological Method, and the ‘New Perspective on Paul,’” *Mid-America Journal of Theology* 16 (2005): 29-81; J. V. Fesko, “N. T. Wright on Imputation,” *Reformed Theological Review* 66:1 (April 2007): 19.

“representative” in his obedience and death, but neglects to press on toward a full application of the imputation of his work on the cross to believers.

As we trace the argument of this passage, we need to keep in mind that “there is an inescapable forensic context that builds up to a climax in verse 19.”³⁷ First, Paul shows that all sinned in Adam (v. 12), which led to universal death. The result was not simply physical death, but condemnation from God (v. 18). That all are condemned is demonstrated by the fact that all die. The main point of Paul’s Adam-Christ comparison/contrast appears to be that both are heads of a “race” of people, and all who are under those heads are affected by a specific action of the head. All who are in Adam (the entire human race) share the consequences of Adam’s sin—eternal death. But Jesus Christ, the second Adam, accomplished something greater than the effect of Adam. All who come to be in Christ by faith share in the free gift of God’s grace, resulting in justification (vv. 15-16). The result of receiving the “gift of righteousness” is (eternal) life. Believers in Christ can be certain that this life is eternal because the obedience of Christ in his death on the cross constituted them as “righteous,” just as the disobedient act of Adam (Gen. 3) constituted them as “sinners” (v. 19).

This righteousness that the believer possesses is a legal status accomplished by the death of Christ. First, the judgment that was brought by the sin of Adam was condemnation (*katavkrima*), which is contrasted with the justification (*dikaivwma*) brought by the obedient act of Christ. *katavkrima* refers not only to the pronouncement of judgment but also to its execution, resulting in major consequences.³⁸ Second, by contrast with *katavkrima*, *dikaivwma* (justification) must include the consequences of the justifying act as well, specifically “the righteous status that results from God’s justifying action.”³⁹

In addition, the word *kaqisthmi* (v. 19), usually translated “made” in this passage (“made sinners,” “made righteous”), often means “appoint” (see Matt. 24:45, 47; Luke 12:14; Acts 6:3; 7:10; Titus 1:5). This would mean that “through the obedience of Christ we are appointed or reckoned righteous,”⁴⁰ thereby supporting a meaning of the imputation of righteousness to believers. However, the word may also include the “bringing about a state of affairs,”⁴¹ so it may also carry the meaning of “made” here as well (see James 4:4; 2 Pet. 1:8). Piper argues strongly that the “whole context” calls for the meaning “appoint,” and he is probably correct: “Through the obedience of the One, many will be appointed or counted righteous.”⁴²

Mark Seifrid makes a valid point when he says that “the opposition between ‘justification’ and ‘condemnation’ in context indicates that the verb [*kaqisthmi*] bears a forensic significance (i.e., ‘instatement’).” He further notes that commentators often make the mistake of assuming that Paul refers to the obedience of believers in verse 19, that is, a present “righteousness of conduct.” He concludes correctly that this misses the point of the argument: “the obedience of the *one* has secured *life eternal* for the many (verse 21).”⁴³

³⁷ Brian Vickers, *Jesus’ Blood and Righteousness: Paul’s Theology of Imputation* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2006), 156.

³⁸ C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, Vol. 1 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1975), 287 n. 1.

³⁹ Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 338 n. 108.

⁴⁰ Piper, *Romans 4*, 108.

⁴¹ Moo, *Romans*, 345 n. 144.

⁴² Piper, *Romans 4*, 109.

⁴³ Mark A. Seifrid, *Christ, Our Righteousness: Paul’s Theology of Justification*, New Studies in Biblical Theology (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 71-72. He further notes that the contrast between condemnation and justification in Romans 5:16 shows that Paul regards Christ’s “deed of righteousness” not only as an “act of obedience” but also (and perhaps most forcefully) as “bearing” our condemnation (71 n. 94).

Piper, on the other hand, argues that the obedience to which Paul refers is Christ's lifetime of obedience to God as well as his obedience of death on the cross. I find this difficult to prove from the context, and remain unconvinced. I believe the context of the whole of Romans 5 points specifically toward Christ's death as the focus.

CONCLUSION

I conclude by reemphasizing three points:

- (1) In Romans 4 the Apostle Paul borrows from biblical Abrahamic tradition (principally Genesis 15) to confirm historically, logically, and theologically the truth of his teaching on justification by faith alone in Romans 3. In addition, Paul combines the Old Testament teaching on Abraham with statements by David to describe the act of "justification" as the "imputation" of righteousness to believers apart from any works on their part.
- (2) In Romans 5:1-11 Paul uses his earlier teaching on justification by faith to demonstrate that justification brings reconciliation (peace) with God, on which a solid assurance of eternal salvation can be based.
- (3) In Romans 5:12-19 Paul borrows from Adamic tradition (principally Genesis 3) and his own gospel preaching to demonstrate that Adam and Christ represent two headships, and that as the sin of Adam was imputed to all under his headship, the righteousness provided by Christ's sacrifice for all sin on the cross, is imputed to all who believe in Him, through the act of justification by faith alone.