

The Righteousness of God in the Pauline Corpus

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CHAPTER ONE

PAULINE TERMS FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS AND USAGES

Definition of Terms

The term δικαιοσύνη is usually translated from the Hebrew term רָצוֹן .¹ In the LXX, It is used 81 times for ‘δικαιοσύνη’ and six times it is translated “just,” or “righteous.” In eight instances the term is used for חַסְדִּים , meaning “loving-kindness,” or “mercy.”²

In Hebrew usage, the term indicates more than a Western idea of appropriate justice to each person. “Usually the word suggests Yahweh’s saving acts as evidence of God’s faithfulness to his covenant.”³ Thus, the term, while it may indicate the idea of equality and justice, announces a commitment to the people as well as the covenant God both initiated and maintained. The emphasis, in the Hebrew concept, is on the faithfulness to the law and Covenant and thereby God himself.⁴

The Hebrew word is most often used as a “term rooted in a legal forensic terminology”⁵ rarely implying an ethical quality. Usually, it is rooted in relationship terms depicting a kinship between two parties.⁶ In the relationship between Saul and David in 1 Sam 24:17, David is reckoned to be more righteous than Saul since he maintains his role as a subject of Saul’s rage without retaliating.⁷ Thus, righteousness is established on sealing a covenant and maintaining it.

¹ G. Schrenk, “δικαιοσύνη κτλ”, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vol II, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 195.

² K.L. Onesti and M.T. Brauch, “Righteousness, Righteousness of God,” *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, ed. G. Hawthorne and R. Martin (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 829.

³ Ibid..

⁴ Ibid..

⁵ Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. trans. W. Arndt, (Chicago: University Press, 1979), 196. Cf. Morris, 101, Dunn, 164.

⁶ Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, Vol I.(New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1954), 271.

⁷ James D.G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 342.

In Greek terminology, the word implies a similar covenantal flavor, retaining much of the meaning from the Hebrew. The idea of proper behavior or right standing in relationship to others is seen often in the early meaning of δικαιοσύνη. This characteristic was considered a virtue to the Greek citizenry.⁸ “In Roman Civil Law, justice was done when one acted toward another in accordance with one’s respective status established by tradition and the Roman legal corpus.”⁹

However, on occasion, the Greeks used the term in an ethical sense,¹⁰ implying a rightness or correctness of behavior. One was righteous when one acted in accordance with the laws and statues of the land. Therefore, while different, the concept of covenant is still in view.

Synonyms and Antonyms in Contrast to Δικαιοσύνη

In contemplating the term δικαιοσύνη, it may be of benefit to examine the logical opposite of the term in order to grasp the breadth of its meaning. Antonyms include αδικία (Rom 1.17, 3.5.; 4.5; 5.6.; Rev. 22.11) and αμαρτία, (Rom 6.19; 2 Cor 6.14). These terms, each denoting a state of unfaithfulness or wrong-ness, imply such in ethical terms as well as in theological terms.

In parallel nomenclature, the δικαιοσύνη is the Βασιλεία (Matt 6.33), οσιότης (Eph 4.24), εγκρατεία (Acts 24:25), ειρηνή και χαρά (Rom 14:17), σοφία and αγιασμός (1 Cor 1.30), αγαθωσύνη και αληθεία (Eph 5.9), and ευσεβεία, πιστις, αγάπη, υπομονή, πραυταθεία (1 Tim 6:11 cf. 2 Tim 2:22). “A survey of the usage confirms the assumption of a twofold dimension in the New Testament usage of dikaiosunh: as a major theological-soteriological concept and as an expression of ethically correct human conduct.”¹¹

Pauline Usage of Δικ- Words

Of the 302 times a δικ- word is used, 138 of those are found in the Pauline writings.¹² Paul thus establishes the meaning of the concept of the δικαιοσύνη and gives it its widest variance of meaning.¹³ He affirms the close connection of the concept with the Old Testament, and thus with the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, demonstrating the

⁸ Bultmann, 1:271.

⁹ Ibid.,

¹⁰ Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 101.

¹¹ Kertelge, 326.

¹² John Reumann, “Righteousness in the New Testament,” *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. D.N. Freedman, (New York: Doubleday Press, 1992), 747.

¹³ H. Seebass, “Righteousness,” *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, Vol. III, ed. Colin Brown, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Press, 1978), 363.

idea of a relational connection in righteousness.¹⁴ This concept of righteousness is tied closely to the Old Testament understanding of righteousness between two parties based upon an obligation to maintain their roles.¹⁵ Paul assumes the covenantal faithfulness of God as he asserts the δικαιοσύνη Θεοῦ, equating it with the power of God to save.¹⁶

Δικαιοσύνη Θεοῦ

This genitival term lies at the very heart of the Pauline concept of justification and the sinner. Two possibilities arise as to how this phrase is to be understood. First, one may understand this as an objective genitive, that is the righteousness from God. This option implies “righteousness from God” with God as the object of the faith.¹⁷ This explanation has at its root the justification of man through the redemptive work of Christ. Therefore, the righteousness of God appropriates itself into lives through faith in Christ and in God. Righteousness stands as the covenantal renewal with God as both keeper and founder of the covenant.

Second, one may understand this as a subjective genitive, meaning righteousness that is a gift from God as a result of his character.¹⁸ Thus, faith is based on a “God gift of his character”¹⁹ never to be separated from the Giver. “The righteousness of God is God’s power in Christ reaching out into the world” experienced in the sphere of Christ’s lordship (Rom 10:4).²⁰

While strong possibilities exist for both interpretations, the best solution may be a “both and”. Grammatically, either alternative is possible and thus, it is possible that Paul

¹⁴ Joseph Fitzmyer, *Anchor Bible Commentary – Romans*, ed. W.F. Albright and D.N. Freedman, (New York: Doubleday Press, 1992), 350.

¹⁵ Dunn, 342.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 343.

¹⁷ So A.T. Robertson, *A Greek Grammar In Light of Historical Research*, (New York: Hodder and Stoughton, 1914. cf. Dunn and Morris.

¹⁸ Cf. Käsemann, P. Stuhlmacher.

¹⁹ Alistar McGrath, *Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification*, (Cambridge: University Press, 1986), 52. In history, a subjective understanding as well as an objective interpretation of the construction *iustitia Dei* implies “a gracious act of justification rather than to a divine property which stands over and against man. . . In a soteriological setting, it refers to “the salvation of mankind, whether as a consequence of God’s faithfulness to his promises of mercy or of the bestowal of the divine righteousness upon the sinner.

²⁰ Onesti, *DPL*, 835

intended both objective and subjective to be understood.²¹ However, this phrase seems to lean more toward the possibility of an objective genitive, placing God in the position of being faithful to his covenant as well as the object of faith. Such an understanding seems to be in keeping with much of Paul's writings.

Romans provides the point of understanding of this term since the majority of the Δικαιοσύνη Θεοῦ passages are found there. In Rom 1:16-17, the phrase is introduced and given what may be its most full explanation. Through the gospel, the δικαιοσύνη Θεοῦ is revealed through faith, confirming the prophecy regarding those who live by faith. "For Paul, the historical gospel – the life, death, and resurrection of Christ – is the historical manifestation of divine power."²² In this passage, the concepts of righteousness and gospel meet. The only viable response to such an encounter is faith.²³ Thus, faith in Christ is the means of appropriating this righteousness (Rom 1; 3; 10).

Despite human frailty and wickedness (Rom 3:3-5), God remains faithful to his covenant. This underlying principle is the basis upon which Paul builds the balance of his argument. God is true to his covenantal promises. Therefore, man can take confidence in the reliability of the δικαιοσύνη Θεοῦ and in it, they find justification and right standing before God.

The sacrificial nature of Christ's death is an essential component in appropriating the righteousness of God (Rom 3:24-25). Christ is the manifestation of the righteousness of God and the covenant renewal. Once that has been established, believers are challenged to reconcile their lives to God in order to be "instruments of righteousness" (Rom 6:13). Believers are said to be "slaves to righteousness" (Rom 6:18). Righteousness, then, is the foundation for God's relationship to man (Rom 10:10).

Δικαιοσύνη Θεοῦ as Kerygmatic Formula

Some have taken the concept of the δικαιοσύνη Θεοῦ as a starting point for understanding Paul's theology. They assert that Paul adopted the term and embodied it with a more complete meaning,²⁴ contrasting the δικαιοσύνη Θεοῦ with the righteousness of man. His use of this term, especially in Romans, is recognized as one of the keys to apprehending his salvific concept.

In examining the history of δικαιοσύνη Θεοῦ as a kerygmatic formula in pre-Pauline tradition, it is possible that Paul assumed the phrase from other places since usage of it in other writings was prevalent.²⁵ This formulaic idea, filled with connotations

²¹ Walter Schmithals, *The Theology of the First Christians*, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 95-96. Likewise, Bultmann, *Theology*, 1: 271

²² Dunn, 342.

²³ Ibid..

²⁴ James Moffatt, "Righteousness," *Dictionary of the Apostolic Church*, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1918), 382.

²⁵ Kertelge, 327.

of Old Testament covenant renewal and rightness of relationship between man and God, would have made the term a favorite with Jewish Christians.²⁶ It implied the idea of justification of each person and thus the re-establishment of the covenant promised. The possibility of Paul's adoption of this term is further substantiated by the use of δικαιοσύνη Θεοῦ in 1 Cor 5:21 and Rom 3:25ff²⁷ as a means (or a marker) of entering into the new life of this covenant (cf. Rom 1:3-4; 4:25; 10:9; 14: 9; 1 Thes 1:9-10, 4:14-16; 1 Cor 15:3-5).

Therefore, the proclamation of covenantal establishment manifests itself by God's announcement of a permanent solution to the enigma of sin. While correcting the broken relationship between man and God is impossible from a strictly human standpoint, the δικαιοσύνη Θεοῦ is offered based on God's abilities to both offer it and maintain it.

Δικαιοσύνη Θεοῦ as Justification

Directly connected to the concept of the δικαιοσύνη Θεοῦ is the Pauline thought of justification.²⁸ Man is treated "(a) as if he had never sinned and (b) as if he always accomplished all the good God could expect from him."²⁹ This righteousness is the great and comprehensive idea which embraces in its width both God and man.³⁰

This idea of justification is exemplified in passages such as 2 Cor 5:21, when Paul makes it clear that this justification was done on the part of God for the benefit of mankind. First Corinthians 1:30 asserts that Christ himself is redemption, righteousness and holiness, thus appropriated through faith in him.

Δικ- as an adjective

The a δικ- used adjectivally in the Pauline corpus is rare. In Rom 3:10, Paul declares the complete fallibility of man as he declares that there are none who are inherently righteous. At times, God is characterized as righteous in nature (Rom 3:26).

²⁶ Fitzmyer, 342, notes that the pre-Pauline form of this saying may have appeared as: "being justified freely through redemption (which comes) in Christ Jesus, whom God presented as a means of expiating sin through his blood, as a manifestation of his uprightness for the pardon of past sins committed in the time of forbearance."

²⁷ Ibid.. Cf. J. Reumann, "Righteousness in the New Testament," *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Vol V, (New York: Doubleday Press, 1992), 758. "The phrase δικαιοσύνη Θεοῦ, which occurs in some of the pre-Pauline formulas, has a supposedly technical term in the OT and Jewish Apocalyptic lit, and has been taken as the starting point for Pauline development."

²⁸ Schmithals, 96.

²⁹ F. Godet, *Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans*, trans A. Cusin, (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1982), 159.

³⁰ W. Sanday and A.C. Headlam, *The Epistle to the Romans: An Exegetical Commentary*, International Critical Commentary, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1920), 24.

Additionally, Paul uses δικαιοσύνη to describe a righteousness emanating *from* God (Rom 3:22).

When a δικ- term used in reference to humans, it designates him as one having the characteristics of righteousness. In Rom 5:7, Paul describes in adjectival tone the man who is regarded as righteous. Paul describes the ones called righteous as those who live according to the principles of God's law and thus have their lives shaped as a result (cf. Eph 6:1; Phil 4:8; Col 4:1; Titus 1:8; Gal 3:11).

Δικαιῶ

This verbal form is used to “describe that divine action which affects the sinner in such a way that the relationship to God is altered or transformed (either ontologically. . . or positionally).”³¹ This term is usually seen as a action of God, changing and reshaping the person or groups, back toward the covenant relationship with Him (Rom 3:21-31; 5:1-9; Gal 2:17).

Conclusion

The righteousness of God, therefore, is neither a new doctrine nor a new idea, but “the appearing of that which had been determined in the council of God with respect in the fullness of time.”³² Using the established definition of δικαιοσύνη, Paul addressed the issue of covenantal righteousness through a multitude of usage.

This δικαιοσύνη Θεοῦ is the primary phrase chosen by Paul to communicate both the foundation of the covenant and the continuance of it. Both are to be found in the δικαιοσύνη Θεοῦ. It is the means of justification (bringing believers into the rightness of relationship) and sanctification (the continuing results of this new covenant). The means for appropriating this into one's life is through faith in the work of Christ.

This δικαιοσύνη comes from God himself and nowhere else. He alone is the source for true δικαιοσύνη. Therefore, out of his own good pleasure and desire to re-establish a right relationship with man, God himself had to initiate the process.

³¹ Onesti, *DPL*, 835.

³² Herman N. Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology*, trans H.R. DeWitt (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 162.

CHAPTER TWO

EXEGESIS OF ROMANS 3:21-26

This passage represents the first time in Romans Paul approaches the issue of Christology in detailed fashion.³³ This passage, a classic in the arena of study, demonstrates the initiative of God in restoring humanity to a right relationship to himself.³⁴ These verses provide the sum and substance of the gospel of the Apostle, not just for the Jew who stands under the old covenant, but also for the Gentile who has been welcomed into this new covenant. From this passage, one cannot help but ascertain one thing for sure: God has sat in judgment, judged sin, and punished such through the act of Christ on the cross. Through such a graphic and definitive act, God established his δικαιοσύνη in His people and thus through his people.³⁵

Rom. 3:21 - But now righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify.

From the outset of this passage, Paul fully intends to employ a contrast between the “righteousness” of the old covenant (under Moses, the Law and the Prophets) and the new covenant established under Christ. The adverbial phrase νῦν δέ, which opens this pericope, emphasizes the shift in thought as Paul moves from his discussion in 3:1-20 of the righteousness established through the acts of the man. Morris notes that the “but now” phrase implies the intervening hand of God himself.³⁶ Fitzmyer refers to this as the “eschatological” adverb, which marks a new day in salvation history.³⁷ Dunn notes this phrase as characteristically Pauline in transitioning from one point to another.³⁸

³³ Fitzmyer, 343.

³⁴ Ibid., 341.

³⁵ Fitzmyer, 341. “God himself has taken the initiative and has restored for humanity the right relationship of it to himself. The gospel proclaiming Christ’s passion, death and resurrection and the effects of those events are thus manifestations of “God’s power (unleashed) for the salvation of everyone who believes” (1:16).

³⁶ Morris, 173.

³⁷ Ibid., 343.

³⁸ James D.G. Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, Word Biblical Commentary, ed. G. Barker and D. Hubbard, (Dallas: Word Books, 1988), 164. He further notes its use as a transition from “one epoch to another where a decisive new element has transformed the circumstances which previously pertained.” Cf. Fitzmyer, 343.

This new day is underscored as one being *χωρὶς νόμου*.³⁹ This marks a dramatic shift for not only the Gentiles but for the Jews as well.⁴⁰ The traditional and accepted method of obtaining righteousness is no longer viable. The new righteousness, which is now interposed, is disconnected from any effort at rule maintenance. It is completely *χωρὶς νόμου*.

This νομος is further defined as that which is μαρτυρουμένη ὑπὸ τοῦ νόμου καὶ τῶν προφητῶν. Thus, Paul defines the Law as encompassing the Decalogue, the Levitical Laws, as well as the words of Prophets. All of these μαρτυρουμένη to the righteousness which is now revealed. Thus, while Paul does not cast off the Law and the Prophets, they are to be viewed as an insufficient method for meeting the demands of God. Righteousness, and thus justification, must be found somewhere else.

If justification is to be found apart from the law, from whence does it come? Through the δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ. As has been already demonstrated, this righteousness of God is both descriptive of his character, which is normative for Paul, and prescriptive for a covenantal relationship with God. Schrenk rightly notes that this is not the same type of righteousness as found in the synagogue.⁴¹ Rather this distinctive type of righteousness is πεφανέρωται - being made known. The tense of the verb suggests a complete yet continuing action.⁴² Thus, while this manifestation of the righteousness of God took place at a specific point in time, its impact continues with a durative concept. The implication is that this righteousness, heretofore unknown, has come (and remains) in full view.

Rom. 3:22a - This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.

Paul now begins to describe this righteousness and the means of appropriation of such. Interestingly, Paul inserts the adversative δε, further distinguishing this new righteousness with the old methods of justification.⁴³ He first notes that this δικαιοσύνη is found in the person of God himself. The absence of the verb in this verse implies the

³⁹ νόμου is the typically Pauline word when dealing with the Torah. He wants to be certain that his readers understand that this new righteousness has nothing to do with ritual purity or covenant maintenance. Also, given the context of the rest of Rom 3, equating this νόμου with the Torah is almost inescapable.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 165.

⁴¹ G. Schrenk, “δικαιοσυνη κτλ.”, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vol II., ed. G. Kittel (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 196.

⁴² Robertson, 893.

⁴³ Ibid., 1184.

action is initiated and carried out through the work of God himself, not through normal means of mediation.⁴⁴

The nature of διὰ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ deserves no small attention. The appropriation of this new found righteousness is through διὰ πίστεως. This genitival phrase has plagued many a New Testament commentator. Is this a subjective genitive, meaning the faith of Jesus Christ brings about this righteousness or an objective genitive meaning faith in Jesus Christ. Many, such as Kittel and Williams,⁴⁵ read this as a subjective genitive. However, many others, such as Dunn, Robertson and Morris,^x read this as an objective genitive, thus Jesus is the object of faith.⁴⁶ That is, God's righteousness comes into full expression through faith in Christ. Faith in Christ is the only path available to true δικαιοσύνη.⁴⁷ The central issue then is on the operation of God's righteousness and the salvific effect of faith in Christ. This is the first time Paul links the idea of righteousness with faith in Christ.⁴⁸

This faith is unto εἰς πάντα τοὺς πιστεύοντας. Paul here restates his emphasis on the underlying broadness of these words. This faith in Christ is for no single ethnic or socio-political group, it is for all who believe. This faith is the designating mark for all who believe.

Rom 3:22b-26: There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished — he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.⁴⁹

Paul addresses the issue of the universality of frailty and the sinful condition. Despite the geographic, ethnic, political or social conditions of the readers of Romans, Paul sweeps them all together as he makes clear - οὐ γὰρ ἐστὶν διαστολή, πάντες γὰρ ἡμαρτον

⁴⁴ Dunn, 165.

⁴⁵ Taken from Fitzmyer, 345

⁴⁶ So Dunn, 165. Morris, 176.

⁴⁷ E.H. Gifford, *The Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans*, (London: John Murray, 1886), 89, says "Faith therefore, is not an arbitrary condition imposed upon us from without, but a law of our true nature. It exalts man to his rightful dignity by allowing the free consent of his will, and the active exercise of his faculties, and yet humbles him before God in acknowledgment of mercy undeserved. Thus, faith is at once the soul's highest exercise of freedom, its lowliest confession of sin and the only homage it can render to God.

⁴⁸ Morris, 176.

⁴⁹ Despite the fact of NIV translation of these as a number of sentences, the Greek text is one sentence. Therefore, they will be addressed and treated as such.

καὶ ὑστεροῦνται τῆς δόξης τοῦ θεοῦ. The multitude of distinctions – διαστολή⁵⁰ - are bound up and cast aside as the mutually destitute plight of all is brought into view by the Apostle.

Paul continues his emphasis on the broad nature of his language as he leaves no room for questions as he uses the plural πάντες to describe those whom are included in this group. While many have sought to appease or please God through covenant maintenance, *all* have ἥμαρτον καὶ ὑστεροῦνται τῆς δόξης τοῦ θεοῦ, regardless of their efforts. The compound verbal phrase ἥμαρτον καὶ ὑστεροῦνται emphasize both the plight and the failure of humanity to reach the plateau sought in seeking reconciliation with God. The tense of ἥμαρτον, an aorist, may indicate a continual state of sinning, as well as sinning at a punctiliar point in time. Furthermore, those who ὑστεροῦνται are included. Not only is there a punctiliar and repeated failure on the part of παντες; there is also a ὑστεροῦνται (lacking; falling short), which results in missing the δόξης τοῦ θεοῦ.

The glory of God is often referred to in the future tense in Paul (Rom 2:7, 10; 5:2; 8:18, 21), but with a present element as well.⁵¹ Is it possible that by linking the concept of man's sin with the loss of the glory of God that Paul intends to speak of God's original creative purpose?⁵² It is plausible, but equally likely that Paul is emphasizing that in order to enter a right relationship with God, sin and failure are insufficient to receive the δόξης τοῦ θεοῦ.⁵³ The works of the law are not adequate to accomplish this weighty task. Only a dramatic intervention of God is sufficient to remedy this problem. Therefore, the sin of mankind results in the necessity of the redemptive work of Christ on the cross creating a pathway to this δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ.

From the ashes of defeat comes the promise of deliverance. Those who are helpless to remedy their own situation are δικαιούμενοι, - justified - by the work of Christ. This indicative participial phrase of δικαίω is without parallel in Paul, though he does speak of God as “the justifier.”⁵⁴ This justification is brought about, not through the merits of the recipients since Paul has already made clear that they have no merit on their own, but rather as a free gift, a δωρεάν⁵⁵ given through his χάριτι . Thus, no man has the right or

⁵⁰ BAGD, 188.

⁵¹ Morris, 177.

⁵² Ibid. He notes that God's original purpose was for man to share in his δόξης. However, because of man's sin, another plan for man to share in that glory had to be invented thus the whole redemptive work of Christ.

⁵³ Fitzmyer, 347, Dunn, 168. Dunn states Paul's overall emphasis in v.22 and 23 is to reduce all mankind to their “common creature-liness.”

⁵⁴ Dunn, 168.

⁵⁵ BAGD, 210.

privilege of proclaim his worthiness to receive such a gift, since all who receive it do so freely, in spite of the sinful condition marking their lives. Furthermore, perhaps Paul is setting the freely given grace in antithesis with the works of the law and the earned righteousness.⁵⁶

This justification by grace is actualized διὰ τῆς ἀπολυτρόσεως τῆς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ - through the redemptive act of Jesus Christ. The essential term ἀπολυτρόσεως⁵⁷ is a slavery term, used in terms of purchasing ownership of a slave.⁵⁸ Perhaps Paul intends to draw on the analogy of a change of ownership. This may be the best option in light of the Old Testament emphasis on bondage and freedom (Deut 7.8; 9:26; 13.5; 15:15; Psm 25.22, 26:11; 31:5; Isa.51:11, 52:3; 62:12; 63:9). Thus, while at one time, those who are justified were in bondage to sin, through the Christ event; they have been ἀπολυτρώσις-ied into his kingdom.

This redemption is brought through the work of Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ whom God presented as a sacrifice of atonement. This work of atonement is done out of the purposes of God himself. Christ is προέθετο by God in order to be the ἰλαστήριον. The issue of setting forth is a thorny one. Before whom did God set forth Christ? Before himself as a measure of his punitive judgment and righteousness or before man as a marker of the price of propitiation? While it is plausible to read this passage as a punitive requirement of the righteous law of God and thus punishment had to be served, it seems more likely to read this with regards to the public nature of Christ's death. This was not a secretly initiated offer, but instead an offer made publicly to all who would receive it.

Furthermore, this is to have parallels to the Suffering Servant passage in Isaiah 53. The implication is clear and Paul had this in mind as he spoke about the public nature of the death of Christ.⁵⁹

The term ἰλαστήριον has gained much attention in scholarship.⁶⁰ There are two readings that are most plausible. First, some have understood it to mean the place of atonement or the mercy seat of the Ark of the Covenant. In the LXX, the ἰλαστήριον is designated as the mercy seat, which on the Day of Atonement is sprinkled with blood by

⁵⁶ Dunn, 168.

⁵⁷ BAGD, 96.

⁵⁸ Dunn, 169, notes this as a familiar term to Jewish writers. He also notes the strong possibility that many of those listening were either slaves or ex-slaves, speaking more directly to the desire for freedom.

⁵⁹ Chris Vogel, *The Exegetical Substructure of Romans 3:10-18 and its Relationship to its Context*, (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1989), 25.

⁶⁰ James Moffatt, *Dictionary of The Apostolic Church*, "Righteousness", ed. J. Hastings (Charles Scribner's Sons, 1918), 389 states that it is here that Paul's concept of righteousness crosses with his concept of atonement.

the High Priest.⁶¹ This seems to be an open understanding in light of the similar terminology and style.⁶² However, Christ's death was not done privately, as the sacrificial animal on Yom Kippur, but openly for all to see. Furthermore, would the Gentile readers of Rome have understood it that way?

These concerns led F. Godet to suggest a second possibility: a public display of that atonement without the heavy emphasis on the Old Testament concept of sacrifice. While Godet concedes that the Old Testament influence may be present, he resists the temptation to make this a type/anti-type scenario on three grounds. First, the book of Romans is not a Levitical book, such as Hebrews.⁶³ Second, the clear absence of the definite article with ἱλαστήριον. If Paul had in mind a specific, well-known place, would he not have used it? Third, if the term is to be used in such a heavily theological place, why does Paul only use it here?

While Godet may be right to not place all of Paul's emphasis on the ἱλαστήριον as the mercy seat, the references to blood and the seemingly similar circumstances surrounding the death of Christ and the term ἱλαστήριον make it difficult to dismiss the concept completely.⁶⁴ Therefore, while not assigning an overwhelming amount of influence to ἱλαστήριον as mercy seat, it will be recognized as a strongly likely possibility.⁶⁵ Thus, the interpretation perhaps best suited here is to read this term as "sacrifice, (NIV), "propitiation" or "expiation", all of which emphasize the sacrificial nature of Christ's death without emphasizing other specific details. In other words, through the sacrificial work of Christ, somehow, the wrath of God is averted by Jesus death.⁶⁶

⁶¹ Dunn, 170, underscores the LXX nature of this term. Used 21 times in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers for the lid of the Ark.

⁶² Walter Schmithals, *The Theology of the First Christians*, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 95-6.

⁶³ F. Godet, *Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Roman*: Clark's Foreign Theological Series, trans A. Cusin, (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1982), 255.

⁶⁴ James Moffatt, "Righteousness", *Dictionary of the Apostolic Church*, Vol II., (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1918), 388. Moffatt notes "Whether ἱλαστήριον means propitiatory gift or sacrifice, it is offered by God himself, not by men and this sacrifice of Christ was necessary for the realization of God's righteousness or redeeming purposes. . . . What enables God to justify sinners, what justifies justifying them, is the ἱλαστήριον of Christ. It is through this sacrificial death that God's moral character as δίκαιος becomes in relation to human sin, the attitude and action of δικαίων. Till Christ and outside of Christ there is no righteousness for men."

⁶⁵ C.E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, Vol. I, (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1975), 210. So Dunn, Morris. Cranfield further notes a connection between the deaths of martyrs and the view of such as part of the ἱλαστήριον of Israel- 217.

This act is accomplished διὰ [τῆς] πίστεως, returning to Paul's emphasis on the aspect of faith, whether the emphasis be the faith of God or faith in God, in the saving efficacy of the Christ event. Again, Paul seems to place πιστις in contrast to the works off the law. The work of Christ is to be responded to simply through faith.

This sacrifice was made ἐν τῷ αὐτοῦ αἵματι (in his blood), symbolic of the events of Yom Kippur and the annual sacrifice needed for remission of the sins of the Hebrews. The effectiveness of the blood of Christ is in the same line of thought as that of the Old Testament sacrificial system. Such a sacrifice of blood was in accordance with Old Testament law (Ex 29:21; Lev 8:15; cf. Heb 9:22). Paul's use of type and anti-type is evident here as he sets up Christ as the penultimate sacrifice, thus abolishing the sacrificial system permanently.

The purpose of the sacrifice of Christ was εἰς ἔνδειξιν τῆς δικαιοσύνης αὐτοῦ –lit. “in order to demonstrate his righteousness.”⁶⁷ The use of the term ἔνδειξιν implies a righteousness demonstrated by God's willingness/ability to lay down a sacrifice for those to whom he has pledged himself.⁶⁸

For an undetermined period, God passed over the sins of mankind, διὰ τὴν πάρεσιν τῶν προγεγονότων ἁμαρτημάτων (through the passing over of sins committed beforehand). This does not mean to imply God “overlooked” the sins of man, but rather delayed the proper time. To overlook the sins of man is wholly incompatible with the nature and character of God.⁶⁹ To bypass sin forever would be in complete contradiction with his holy nature as well as a “cruel betrayal of sinners”⁷⁰ Instead, the day of decisive judgement stands in the heart of God from the beginning. Thus, the outpouring of judgement and wrath will be held back until that day.

In patience, God held back his wrath - ἐν τῇ ἀνοχῇ τοῦ θεοῦ (in the forbearance of God). This theme is common in the Jewish cosmology (Ex. 34:6; Num. 14:8; Psm 86:15; Jer. 15:15). The sacrificial system had stood for so long that the forbearance of God was simply a given equation. However, as will be soon demonstrated, this patience would not last for eternity. Thus, the understanding that God's timetable is radically different than those understood by men.

This forbearance would not last forever. There would be a day when punitive righteousness would be restrained no longer. Thus, πρὸς τὴν ἔνδειξιν τῆς δικαιοσύνης αὐτοῦ ἐν τῷ νῦν καιρῷ, - to the demonstration of his righteousness in the present time. That time had come. The νῦν καιρῷ indicated a time frame of recent,

⁶⁶ Dunn, 171.

⁶⁷ This reading gives credence to the possibility that God set Christ before himself, but still seems best read as a public announcement.

⁶⁸ Dunn, 173. Contra Cranfield, 211, who takes this as “offering” or “making available.”

⁶⁹ Cranfield, 212.

⁷⁰ Ibid..

if not immediate, history. This pivotal point in history stands as the turning point and hinge pin on which the rest of history will rest. Thus, this recent demonstration of righteousness is the prophetic and apocalyptic act, looking both back toward the history of the promises of God as well as forward to this new δικαιοσύνης appropriated through faith in Christ.

But how can a holy God be both just and the justifier? Through the propitiatory act of Christ. εἰς τὸ εἶναι αὐτὸν δίκαιον καὶ δικαιοῦντα τὸν ἐκ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ. – (toward him being just and justifier to those who have faith in Jesus. First, God is Just simply because he is so by nature (1 Thess 1:5-6; Rom 3:4).⁷¹ He is not simply Just because he acts in accordance with an abstract sense of justice, but rather because, in keeping with the term δικαιοσύνη, he is righteous by keeping his word of covenant with his people. The unrighteousness of the people had to be dealt with in a permanent way – thus was the purpose of Jesus' death as the ἰλαστέριον.

Moreover, the Christ event sets God apart as not only Just, but in justifying those who name the name of Christ. Once again, in keeping with his covenantal word, God establishes his object as bringing man into a right relationship with himself. Moreover, the emphasis is clearly on faith, not law. Paul has no patience for those who desire to mix the two.⁷² Therefore, as the covenant keeper and as characteristically holy and just, God establishes a new covenant in a new era for all, regardless of ethnicity, to enter into with him.

Conclusion

In this passage, Paul addresses some of the most significant and conclusive verses in his corpus. Herein, he formulates a basis for justification, redemption, expiation and possibly pardon.⁷³ These great concepts, as distant and as thorny as they appear, are accessible to the least of God's children through faith. Moreover, even the most learned and scholarly are still bound to come to Christ through the same pathway – faith in the Christ event. Such a paradox is the foundation for the balance of Paul's thought.

The concepts presented in this passage are each firmly rooted in the person of God and the fact that through him and in him is the δικαιοσύνη Θεοῦ.

⁷¹ Dunn, 175.

⁷² Morris, 184.

⁷³ Fitzmyer, 342.

CHAPTER THREE

RESULTANT INTERPRETATIONS OF Δικαιοσύνη Θεοῦ

Distinction between the δικαιοσύνη Θεοῦ and Jewish Piety

An indispensable component in the concept of righteousness is Paul's contrast between the δικαιοσύνη Θεοῦ and the righteousness of the Jewish state. Five distinctions are apparent.

First, the δικαιοσύνη Θεοῦ is righteousness already imputed to man, not strictly an eschatological blessing as the Jews proposed.⁷⁴ This was a present reality.

Second, righteousness is a present reality as well as an eschatological promise.⁷⁵ The righteousness offered through Christ's propitiatory act is active in the lives of those who are called by his name today. The activity of this righteousness will continue into the new age.⁷⁶

Third, the present reality of the δικαιοσύνη Θεοῦ rests upon the occurrence of salvation through the atoning work of Christ.⁷⁷ This salvation is both present in tense as well as future in orientation. It is a present reality resulting in an entrance into the aeon of new covenant.⁷⁸

Fourth, while the Jew takes for granted that covenant continuance can be maintained by keeping the Law, Paul asserts clearly that such a proposition is no longer tenable. The "works of the law" are no longer sufficient for acceptance into the covenantal fellowship of God. Rather, this new δικαιοσύνη Θεοῦ, received through the act of Christ on the cross, stands as the only entry point in to this new covenant.

Fifth, Paul depicts a contrast between the boasting of rule keeping and the simple faith necessary for salvation.⁷⁹ The selection of Israel as God's covenant people was based on God's divine grace, not on their ability to earn a high position. Such is the case as well for believers in Christ. Righteousness has its origins in the grace of God.

⁷⁴ Bultmann, 274.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 275.

⁷⁶ Herman Ridderbos, *When the Time had Fully Come*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957), 50.

⁷⁷ Bultmann, 276

⁷⁸ Ridderbos, 50.

⁷⁹ Bultmann, 281.

The righteousness of God becomes the δικαιοσύνη Θεοῦ when recognized as the foundation for the justification of believers. It is “God-given, God-adjudicated righteousness”⁸⁰ and founded only on the divine grace of God.

Types of Righteousness

As a result of the above distinctions and the exegetical examination of Rom 3:21-26, several elements of δικαιοσύνη Θεοῦ become evident. While some are interpretations based on what is omitted, the absence creates the possibility that such a meaning was understood by the first century Christians.⁸¹

Righteousness as Imputed

Δικαιοσύνη cannot be earned or merited. The Law represented man’s efforts at earning such a covenantal rightness and yet, continually demonstrated the failure of man to meet the qualifications for such. Therefore, since man cannot earn δικαιοσύνη, it must be bestowed, imparted on the person / people God chooses. This impartation recognizes the destitute condition of man, as well as his thorough inability to live up to the high standards for this δικαιοσύνη. Yet the love of God is such that it “counts as righteous” those who come to faith in Christ. This righteousness is revealed and placed in the lives of believers (Rom 1:17; 3:20, 22; 4:3, 5, 13; 5:1, 17; 6:20; 10:4; 1 Cor 6:11; 2 Cor 3:9; Gal 2:16; 3:6; 21 Tim 3:16; Titus 3:7)

Righteousness as Declared

Since this δικαιοσύνη is imparted, it also must be declared. This declaration perceives one as righteous, regardless of appearance or worthiness to receive it. It is righteousness based on the character of God, not on the character of man. The covenant renewal is announced and acted upon as if it were a settled and proven fact, thus counted to him as “if it were righteousness” (Rom 2:13; 3:26, 28; 4:2-9; 6:18, 20; 8:30; Gal 2:16; 3:24; 5:4; 2 Th 1:5; 1 Tim 3:16; Titus 3:7). The declaration is based on the δικαιοσύνη of God and nothing else. Without this δικαιοσύνη, a declaration of this type would require God to simply override his own Law which would violate his holiness. However, because of the Christ event and the δικαιοσύνη that it brings, man can be declared righteous and thereby in right standing with God.

Righteousness as Dynamic

This δικαιοσύνη is as alive as the Giver of the δικαιοσύνη. Far from a static concept of lifeless laws, the righteousness imparted and declared is dynamic. The Law was never intended to be dynamic, but always static. Therefore, to speak of the δικαιοσύνη Θεοῦ as a dynamic, life-giving source was a radical notion. Yet throughout the writings of Paul, such a concept is seen repeatedly. In Rom 3:21,

⁸⁰ Ibid., 285.

⁸¹ Note that these terms are not necessarily mutually exclusive. In charting, there was a great deal of overlap, but not enough to warrant the elimination of a category.

δικαιοσύνη is seen as the means to life itself. In Rom 4:13, δικαιοσύνη is presented as the seminal force resulting in continuing life. Such an impression results in the reflection that through the creative God comes the dynamic δικαιοσύνη which results in a life flow into those who are declared righteous (cf. Rom 5:1; 6:16; Gal 3:8, 11, 21)

Righteousness as Forensic Justification

“The heart of Paul’s theology of justification was the dynamic interaction between the ‘righteousness of God’ as God’s saving action for all who believe and the δικαιοσύνη as God’s faithfulness to Israel, his chosen people.”⁸²

By far the majority of the uses of δικαιοσύνη have a forensic element inherent. The principle of justification for sin is the chief use. It is possible that Paul intended to show through this usage the costly nature of sin and reconciliation. Perhaps Paul intended to imply a participatory act in this justification. In other words, each man is called to die to sin on an individual basis. Only as one has died to sin and the efforts to establish the δικαιοσύνη apart from one’s own merits may one become justified and thus able to do the will of God.⁸³

The propitiatory death of Christ made clear that righteousness does not come without a price.⁸⁴ This high price was paid for the rectification of the relationship between man and God, paid through the person and work of Christ himself. Apart from this work of Christ, Paul asserts, δικαιοσύνη is not available. It can only be through this process of justification that this righteousness comes into being experientially.

How then does the Christ event demonstrate the δικαιοσύνη as justification? “It does so by a great, and we may say cosmical, act, the nature of which we are not able wholly to understand; but which at least present analogies to the rite of sacrifice and to that particular form of the rite which had for its object propitiation.” In other words, δικαιοσύνη is demonstrated by Christ’s sacrifice as the final payment of the sacrificial system, but also the renewal of the covenant in each believer’s life. (Rom 3:4, 5, 10, 24, 25, 28; 4:2-11; 5:1, 9, 19; 6:18-20; 8:33; 10:4, 10; 1 Cor 4:11; 6:11; 2 Cor 3:9; Gal 2:16-17, 21; Gal 3:6, 8, 11, 21, 24; 5:4; Eph 4:24; Phil 3:9; 2 Th. 1:5; 1 Tim 3:16; Titus 3:7).

Righteousness as Eschatological Hope

The future tense of righteousness is founded on the basis of the covenant philosophy. Such a future idea is seen clearly in the Jewish concept of justice, that is future acquittal in the judgement of God.⁸⁵ “To Paul, the eschatological reality of the divine judgement

⁸² Dunn, *Theology*, 344.

⁸³ Seebass, 363.

⁸⁴ Sanday and Headlam, 89.

⁸⁵ Herman Ridderbos, *When The Time Had Fully Come* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957), 50.

and the divine acquittal are revealed in the Cross and in the resurrection of Christ.”⁸⁶ The δικαιοσύνη is not simply for the life of this physical body that is redeemed, but is for the time to come as well. Thus, while δικαιοσύνη looks back toward the cross, it also looks forward to the day of ultimate deliverance and covenantal fulfillment. (Rom 2:5; 5:17, 19, 21; 6:18-20; 10:10; 14:7; Gal 3:8; Eph 5:5).

In the Pauline corpus, the Apostle takes special consideration to distinguish the δικαιοσύνη of which he spoke from Jewish covenantal thought. He makes clear that simple rule maintenance will no longer suffice.

In examining the various ways in which δικαιοσύνη is used, several elements become clear. Righteousness is depicted as impute by the hand of God. Righteousness is seen as declared by God in spite of appearances. Righteousness is seen as dynamic in nature. Righteousness regularly has a forensic nature to it and often has an element of eschatological hope found with it. These combine to present the complete image of Pauline δικαιοσύνη Θεοῦ as a right relationship restoring love for humanity that reached beyond human efforts at covenant to the very heart of man. This δικαιοσύνη Θεοῦ is forged through the costly work of Christ and is actualized in man through faith.

CONCLUSION

The concept of the Δικαιοσυνη Θεοῦ plays a crucial role in grasping the Pauline ideas of justification, propitiation, expiation and covenant. The thoroughly Jewish nature of Paul’s background is evident as he emphasized the covenantal aspects of the δικαιοσυνη in his writings.

By taking on the commonly used covenant terminology of the day, Paul adopted and transformed the idea of the δικαιοσυνη into δικαιοσυνη Θεοῦ which may have been an early Christian kerygma. The phrase implied a right standing with God. This right standing is founded in the action and heart of God, manifested by the Christ event. This took place in the fullness of God’s time and according to his good pleasure. Man responds by faith, and only by faith, in Christ Jesus to the offer of righteousness. This righteousness comes only as a free gift.

Paul substantiates these views throughout his writings, but specifically in Romans 3:21-26. Here, Paul states that this righteousness is based on the act of God and not the ability of man to maintain laws. For all men are equally destitute and thus equally worthy of condemnation since each has failed to measure up to the glory of God. Therefore, each man is required to find another means to this glory. This means is found in the person and work of Christ. He is both the propitiation for sin as well as the mediator for the covenant. The deeds of Christ introduced the covenant to man and thus brought the δικαιοσυνη Θεοῦ into reach for man. Only through his work can mankind be made “righteous.”

Paul intended his readers not to confuse the new righteousness with the old system of sacrifice, therefore, he set out to distinguish the two, delineating the new covenant throughout his writings. Thus, the δικαιοσυνη Θεοῦ is righteousness imputed since it cannot be earned. It is a righteousness declared since only God can grant it. It is a dynamic, life-giving source which comes through connection and covenant with the Life-

⁸⁶ Ibid..

giver. It is also forensic justification, recognizing that apart from the propitiatory act of Christ, such righteousness cannot be attained.

The δικαιοσύνη Θεοῦ is the relationship restoring love of God that poured itself out through the person of Christ. The passion of Christ demonstrates the intensity of God in restoring man to this right relationship with Him. Therefore, the δικαιοσύνη Θεοῦ is rooted in the love of God for man and His creative desire to fellowship with man. Such a desire brought about the propitiatory work of Christ and his ἀπολυτρόσεως of those whom he created. This covenant renewal in rescuing those he loves continues.

