

According To Paul In Roman's Sanctification Includes The Imputation Of God's Righteousness By Means Of

According To Paul In Roman's Sanctification Includes The Imputation Of God's Righteousness By Means Of the transformative work of divine grace through faith, a foundational doctrine in Christian theology. The Apostle Paul, particularly in the Epistle to the Romans, articulates a profound understanding of how believers are sanctified—made holy—by the divine act of righteousness being imputed to them. This concept underscores the pivotal role of God's righteousness as the basis of salvation and ongoing sanctification, emphasizing that it is not achieved through human effort but through divine grace received by faith. In this article, we will explore the biblical basis of Paul's teaching on sanctification, the meaning of imputed righteousness, and the means through which believers are sanctified according to Scripture.

Understanding Sanctification in the Context of Romans

What is Sanctification?

Sanctification is the process by which believers are made increasingly holy, conforming more to the image of Christ. It involves both a positional aspect—being set apart as God's own—and a progressive aspect—growing in holiness throughout one's life. Paul's writings highlight that sanctification is a work of divine grace that begins at conversion and continues throughout a believer's life.

The Biblical Foundation in Romans

The Epistle to the Romans offers a comprehensive explanation of salvation and sanctification. Central to Paul's argument is the idea that righteousness is a gift from God, imputed to believers through faith, not earned by human effort. Romans chapters 3 and 4 are particularly significant in understanding this doctrine.

- Romans 3:21-22 — "But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God which is through faith in Jesus Christ to all and on all who believe."

- Romans 4 — Paul illustrates that Abraham's faith was credited to him as righteousness, emphasizing that righteousness comes through faith, not works.

Through these passages, Paul emphasizes that sanctification involves a divine transfer of righteousness—an imputation—that transforms the believer's standing before God.

The Doctrine of Imputed Righteousness

Meaning of Imputation

Imputation refers to the legal act of reckoning or crediting righteousness to the believer's account. It is akin to a financial transaction where a debt is paid or a credit is added. In spiritual terms, God's righteousness is credited to the believer through faith in Christ, making them acceptable before God.

Imputed Righteousness vs. Actual Righteousness

It is important to distinguish between imputed righteousness and actual righteousness:

- Imputed Righteousness — God's righteousness credited to the believer's account at the moment of salvation. It is an unearned, gracious gift that justifies the believer before God.
- Actual Righteousness — The moral conformity to God's standards that believers grow in through sanctification. It is the practical holiness developed over time.

While imputed righteousness is a legal declaration, actual righteousness is the ongoing process of becoming more like Christ.

Scriptural Evidence for Imputation

Several key passages support the doctrine of imputed righteousness:

- 2 Corinthians 5:21 — "For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." This indicates that Christ's righteousness is credited to believers.
- Romans 4:3-5 — "For what does the Scripture say? 'Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.'"
- Philippians 3:9 — Paul speaks of being found in Christ, "not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ."

Through these texts, Paul underscores that righteousness is imputed through faith, not through human works.

The Means of Sanctification According to Paul

Faith as the Primary Means

Faith is the conduit through which God's righteousness is imputed. Believers are justified by faith alone, and this faith is the means by which they receive the righteousness of God. Paul emphasizes that:

- Romans 5:1 — "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

- Galatians 2:20 — "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me."

Faith not only initiates the process of salvation but sustains the ongoing sanctification process.

Grace as the Enabling Power

Sanctification is a work of God's grace that empowers believers to live righteously. Paul teaches that:

- Ephesians 2:8-9 — "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God."

Grace provides the motivation and strength necessary for believers to grow in holiness.

Role of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is instrumental in sanctification, convicting of sin, guiding into truth, and enabling righteous living.

- Romans 8:13-14 — "For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live."

- Galatians 5:16 — "Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh."

The Spirit's indwelling transforms the believer from within, aligning their life more closely with God's righteousness.

The Practical Implications of Imputed Righteousness in

Sanctification

Assurance of Salvation

Understanding that righteousness is imputed by faith provides believers with confidence in their salvation. They are justified not by their works but by God's grace through faith, which secures their position before God.

Motivation for Holy Living

Knowing that sanctification is rooted in God's imputed righteousness encourages believers to pursue holiness out of gratitude, not obligation. It affirms that growth in righteousness is a response to God's grace, not a means to earn favor.

Progressive Sanctification

While imputed righteousness is immediate at salvation, sanctification is a lifelong process. Believers are called to cooperate with God's Spirit to manifest the righteousness already credited to them.

Conclusion

According to Paul in Romans, sanctification fundamentally includes the imputation of God's righteousness by means of faith in Jesus Christ. This divine act of crediting righteousness to believers' accounts bridges the gap between sinful humanity and a holy God. It is the foundation of salvation, assurance, and ongoing spiritual growth. Through faith, grace, and the work of the Holy Spirit, believers are continually being sanctified—becoming more like Christ—grounded in the righteousness that has been imputed to them. This doctrine not only underscores the gracious nature of God's salvation plan but also invites believers to rest confidently in God's unmerited favor as they pursue holiness throughout their lives.

Frequently Asked Questions

What does Paul mean by the imputation of God's righteousness in Romans' sanctification?

Paul refers to the divine act of attributing Christ's righteousness to believers through faith, making them morally and spiritually righteous before God as part of their sanctification process.

How is the imputation of God's righteousness related to justification in Romans?

In Romans, imputation of God's righteousness is central to justification, where God declares believers righteous based on Christ's righteousness credited to them, which then influences their ongoing sanctification.

What role does faith play in the imputation of God's righteousness according to Paul?

Faith is the means by which believers accept and receive God's righteousness, allowing it to be imputed to them, thus initiating and sustaining their sanctification.

How does Paul's teaching on imputed righteousness differ from other views of sanctification?

Paul emphasizes that sanctification includes the imputation of God's righteousness through faith, contrasting with views that see sanctification solely as human effort or moral improvement without divine imputation.

Why is the concept of God's righteousness important for understanding sanctification in Romans?

Because it underscores that sanctification is rooted in God's gracious act of imputation, transforming believers from within and aligning their lives with God's holiness through divine righteousness credited to them.

How does the imputation of God's righteousness influence a believer's moral and spiritual growth?

It provides the spiritual foundation and assurance that believers are accepted by God, motivating them to pursue moral integrity and spiritual growth as a response to their justified state.

In what ways does Paul connect the imputation of righteousness to the life of a believer in Romans?

Paul links imputation to the believer's new identity in Christ, emphasizing that this divine righteousness empowers believers to live holy lives and participate in ongoing sanctification.

Can the imputation of God's righteousness be separated from sanctification according to Paul?

No, according to Paul, the imputation of God's righteousness is closely linked to sanctification, as it initiates and sustains the believer's process of becoming more Christ-like through divine grace.

Additional Resources

Sanctification: According To Paul In Romans' Righteousness Imputation

Introduction

In the vast landscape of Christian theology, few themes are as foundational and yet as nuanced as the doctrine of sanctification. Central to understanding this process is the Apostle Paul's presentation in the Book of Romans, where he intricately discusses the imputation of God's righteousness as the means by which believers are sanctified. This article aims to explore, in depth, how Paul articulates this vital aspect of salvation, emphasizing the role of God's righteousness imputed through divine means. We will dissect Paul's arguments, examine relevant biblical passages, and analyze the theological implications of this doctrine, providing a comprehensive guide for students, scholars, and believers alike.

The Concept of Sanctification in Pauline Theology

Defining Sanctification

Sanctification, derived from the Latin *sanctus* (holy), refers to the process by which believers are made holy or set apart for God's purposes. In Pauline theology, sanctification is both a positional and a progressive reality:

- Positional Sanctification: At the moment of salvation, believers are declared holy because of their union with Christ.
- Progressive Sanctification: Over time, believers grow in holiness through the work of the Holy Spirit, acquiring Christlike character.

Paul consistently emphasizes that sanctification is rooted in God's transformative work, not merely human

effort, highlighting its divine origin and empowerment.

Paul's Emphasis on Righteousness

For Paul, righteousness is the core attribute that underpins salvation and sanctification. It is not merely moral virtue but a divine attribute that signifies being in right standing with God. In Romans, Paul contrasts two kinds of righteousness:

- Righteousness of the Law: Achieved through human compliance with God's commandments.
- Righteousness of Faith: A gift from God, imputed through faith in Jesus Christ.

Paul underscores that the righteousness which sanctifies is the righteousness of God, imparted through divine means rather than human effort.

The Imputation of God's Righteousness: The Central Mechanism

What Is Imputation?

Imputation is a forensic or legal act whereby God credits righteousness to the believer's account. It does not imply that believers become inherently righteous on their own but that God reckons or credits Christ's righteousness to them. This legal declaration is foundational for understanding Pauline sanctification.

Key aspects of imputation include:

- Legal Declaration: God declares believers righteous based on Christ's righteousness.
- Christ's Substitute Role: Jesus' atoning work is the basis for the imputation.
- Unmerited Grace: Imputation is a gift, not earned by human merit.

Paul's Explanation in Romans

Romans 3:21-26 is the pivotal passage where Paul expounds on the righteousness of God being manifested apart from the Law and accessible through faith in Jesus Christ. Verses such as Romans 4 and 5 further illustrate this doctrine.

Romans 4:3-8 exemplifies the imputation principle through Abraham:

> “For what does the Scripture say? ‘Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness...’”

This demonstrates that righteousness is credited through faith, not works.

Similarly, Romans 5:17-19 draws a direct comparison:

> “For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man... much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.”

This passage underscores that righteousness is a free gift, imputed through Christ's work.

Adoption of Divine Means in Imputation

The Role of Faith

Faith is the instrument through which believers receive God's righteousness. It is not a work that earns righteousness but a trust that receives God's gift.

Key points:

- Faith is the means by which righteousness is imputed.
- It is trust in Christ's atoning work, not merely intellectual assent.
- Faith itself is a response enabled by God's grace.

Romans 3:28 emphasizes that a person is justified by faith apart from works of the law.

Christ's Atoning Sacrifice

The core divine means for the imputation of righteousness is the sacrificial death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Christ's obedience and sacrifice serve as the basis for believers' righteousness.

Implications:

- Christ's righteousness is transferred to believers upon faith.
- His death removes guilt and imputes righteousness.
- Resurrection confirms the efficacy of His atonement.

Romans 4:25 states:

> “He was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.”

This links Christ's resurrection with the believer's justification through imputation.

The Holy Spirit's Role

While imputation is a legal act, the Holy Spirit actively works in believers to apply and confirm the righteousness credited to them. The Spirit:

- Assures believers of their justified status.
- Enables sanctification as a response to imputed righteousness.
- Empowers ongoing growth in holiness.

Romans 8:16 affirms:

> “The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.”

This indicates that the Spirit's work is integral to the sanctification process rooted in imputed righteousness.

Implications for Sanctification and Christian Life

Sanctification as a Result of Imputation

The imputation of divine righteousness is not only a momentary act but also the foundation for ongoing sanctification. It:

- Positions believers as righteous before God.
- Enables a life of holiness, as believers are now free from guilt and empowered by grace.
- Transforms behavior as believers respond to their new standing.

Key implications:

- Sanctification is not based on human effort alone but rooted in God's act of imputation.
- The believer's growth in holiness is a response to and reflection of the righteousness credited to them.
- The process involves cooperation with the Holy Spirit, who enables righteous living.

The Practical Outworking

The doctrine encourages believers to:

- Rest in God's grace, not in self-effort.
- Pursue holiness out of gratitude and love.
- Remain confident in their justified status, despite ongoing struggles.

Romans 6:1-14 emphasizes that believers, knowing they are righteous in Christ, should live accordingly, considering themselves dead to sin and alive to God.

Theological Significance and Contemporary Relevance

Reformed Perspective

The Reformed tradition emphasizes that the imputation of righteousness is solely a divine act through faith, emphasizing God's sovereignty in salvation. It underscores that sanctification flows from this initial act of imputation, making it the ground of Christian living.

Challenges and Clarifications

Some theological debates focus on:

- The relationship between imputed righteousness and imparted righteousness (the actual holiness believers grow into).
- Whether sanctification is caused by or enabled by imputed righteousness.

Most scholars agree that imputation provides the legal standing; sanctification involves the progressive

application of that righteousness in the believer's life.

Modern Applications

Understanding this doctrine helps believers:

- Guard against legalism by recognizing salvation as a gift.
- Encourage perseverance based on God's faithfulness.
- Strengthen assurance rooted in Christ's righteousness, not personal perfection.

Conclusion

The doctrine of the imputation of God's righteousness, as articulated by Paul in Romans, remains a cornerstone of Pauline theology and a vital truth for understanding sanctification. It reveals that believers are sanctified not through their own efforts but through a divine exchange—Christ's righteousness credited to them by means of faith, empowered by the Holy Spirit. This imputation transforms the believer's legal standing before God and fuels the ongoing process of holiness. Recognizing the divine means—faith, Christ's atoning sacrifice, and the Spirit's work—underscores the grace-centered nature of sanctification, offering believers assurance, motivation, and confidence in their spiritual journey.

References for Further Reading

- Romans 3:21-26; 4:1-25; 5:12-21; 8:16-17
- John Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*
- Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*
- R.C. Sproul, *Faith Alone: The Doctrine of Justification*
- Michael Horton, *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology*

Final Word

In sum, Paul's presentation in Romans underscores that sanctification is rooted in the divine act of imputing righteousness through faith, made possible by Christ's atoning work and applied by the Holy Spirit. This doctrine reassures believers of their secure standing before God and energizes their pursuit of holiness as a grateful response to God's grace.

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