**Lecture 3: Faith in the Gospel of Jesus Christ (Paul’s Letters)**

“Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ” (Romans 10:17)

**Introduction: Paul or the Gospels?**

**An Entry Point: Romans 1:16–17, 3:21–22**

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith [*ek pisteōs eis pistin*], as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith [*ek pisteōs*]” (1:16–17)

*ek pisteōs eis pistin*

1.Rhetorical: Faith and Nothing but Faith

2. Psychological: From Initial Faith to Mature Faith

3. Theological: From God’s Faithfulness to Human Faith(fulness)

4. Christological: From Christ’s Faithfulness to Human Faith

5. Apocalyptic: From the Event of Faith to Individual Faith

6. Salvation-Historical: Progression from One Faith to Another Faith

7. Hermeneutical: Habakkuk 2:4 Read in the Light of Genesis 15:6

“God is one—who will justify the circumcised by faith (*ek pisteōs*) and the uncircumcised through (*dia tēs pisteōs*) the same faith” (3:30)

Here, “by faith” [*ek pisteōs*] is scriptural [that is, it corresponds to the Habakkuk quote], whereas “for faith” [*eis pistin*] must be a gloss intended to draw out a further implication of the scriptural language. If the prophetic “by faith” implies an instrumental relationship between faith and righteousness, the Pauline “for faith” hints at an intentional divine action – the acknowledgment of the one who has faith as righteous. In that sense, the righteousness of God is *for* all who believe.[[1]](#footnote-1)

“But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ (*dia pisteōs Iēsou Christou*) for all who believe (*eis pantas tous pisteuontas* )” (3:21–22).

As in the case of Abraham, there is a human individual who believes, and there is a divine reaction to that fact which takes the form of a “reckoning” as righteous (cf.. Rom. 4.3, citing Gen. 15.6). “By faith for faith” indicates that the instrumental relationship between faith and righteousness entails a free and intentional divine responsive action. The gloss, “for faith” rules out any suggestion that righteousness is somehow inherent to faith, without reference to the free divine decision.[[2]](#footnote-2)

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**Biblical Theological Continuity: Faith Alone According to Grace (Romans 4)**

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| *4:1–8: Abraham the model believer* | *4:9–25: Abraham and Salvation History* |
| A. as “the one who does not work but believes” (4:5)  Genesis 15:6 cited at verse 3 | A. as “heir of the world”(4:13) and “the father of us all” (4:16)  Genesis 15:6 cited at verse 22 |
|  |  |
| God “who justifies the ungodly” (4:5) | God “who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist” (4:17) |
| “according to grace” (4:4) | “according to grace” (4:17) |
|  |  |

“According to grace”: “describes a pattern that holds together the origin and horizon of Abrahamic history: Abraham is righteous ‘according to grace’; Abraham is a father ‘according to grace’…[It] is the grammar according to which Paul reads Genesis”.[[3]](#footnote-3)

4:1–8

4:9–25

Faith as Allegiance (Matthew Bates)?

For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed [*pisteuō*] God, and it was counted to him as righteousness.” (4:3)

His faith [*pistis*] was “counted to him as righteousness” (4:22)

**Biblical Theological Newness: Righteous By Faith Because of Christ (Galatians 3:15–25; Romans 3:21–26)**

Now that faith has come (Gal 3:22–25)

22 But the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ [*ek* *pisteōs Iēsou Christou*] might be given to those who believe. 23 Now before faith [***tēn*** *pistin*] came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith [***tēn*** *mellousan* *pistin*] would be revealed. 24 So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith [*ek pisteōs*]. 25 But now that faith [***tēs*** *pisteōs*] has come, we are no longer under a guardian,

*Pistis Christou*[[4]](#footnote-4)

Objective: Our faith in Christ [he is the *object* of our faith]

“verges on blasphemous absorption in our own religious subjectivity” (Hays)

Subjective: Christ’s own faithfulness (or faith) [he is the one who exercises faith/is faithful]

Third View(s): “The system of Christ-faith” (Kevin Grasso)

Ephesians 3:11–12 This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him [*dia* *tēs**pisteōs* *autou*].

Mark 11:22 Jesus answered them, “Have faith in God [*pistis theou*]”.

“But now” (*nuni de*) (Romans 3:21–26)

“For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it” (3:20–21)

The “righteousness of God through faith,” because it is defined in the absence of law, is first an anthropological negation. With Romans 3:20, it says “no” to the possibility of righteousness before God by works of law. [But] if “apart from law” identifies faith’s “no,” it is the name “Jesus Christ” that defines faith’s “yes”. In Romans 3:21–22, the contrast between law and faith is asymmetrical. Where “law” is joined to a preposition (*chōris* [apart from]), “faith” gets both a preposition (*dia* [through]) and a name, Jesus Christ. The effect of this imbalance is to “christologize” faith. It is not faith in abstract antithesis to law that defines “the righteousness of God”. Rather, “the righteousness of God” is “the righteousness of God through faith in Christ.” Hence Barth’s question: ‘what is *sola fide* but a faint yet necessary echo of the *solus Christus*?”[[5]](#footnote-5) “Through faith in Christ” is the Pauline way of saying “Christ alone.” Defined in antithesis to “works of the law,” it excludes law-defined worth as the grounds of justification. Defined by the name Jesus Christ, it confesses Christ as the *one* by, in, and on the basis of whom God justifies the ungodly.[[6]](#footnote-6)

**Faith in Paul: Work, Activity, Obedience?**

“For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake” (Phil. 1:29)

“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this [*touto*] is not your own doing; it is the gift of God” (Ephesians 2:8–9)

“The grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.” (1 Tim. 1:14)

1 Corinthians

The “natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned” (2:14).

“What do you have that you did not receive]? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?” (4:7)

“The gospel I preached to you, which you received , in which you stand and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you-- unless you believed in vain” (15:1–2)

“stand firm in the faith” (16:13).

“But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me” (15:10).

“The more the human agent is operative, the more (not the less) may be attributed to God”.[[7]](#footnote-7)

[Sanctification] follows justification and is begun here in this life by regeneration and promoted by the exercise of holiness and of good works, until it shall be consummated in the other by glory. In this sense, it is now taken passively, inasmuch as it is wrought by God in us; then actively, inasmuch as it ought to be done by us, God performing this work in us and by us.[[8]](#footnote-8)

2 Corinthians

“Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead” (1:9)

Boasting in weakness (11:30; 12:5;12:9)

Faith and Obedience (Rom 1:5; Rom 16:26)

*eis hypakoēn pisteōs*

1:8 your *faith* is proclaimed in all the world

16:19 your *obedience* is known to all

10:16a But they have not all *obeyed* the gospel

10:16b For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has *believed* what he has heard from us?”

11:23 if they do not continue in their *unbelief*

11:31 so they too have now been *disobedient*

1:5 to bring about the *obedience of faith* for the sake of his name among all the nations

15:18 Christ has accomplished through me to bring the [nations] to *obedience*

“Whoever *believes* in the Son has eternal life; whoever *does not obey* the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him” (John 3:36)

Paul “defines faith as that obedience which is given to the gospel” (Calvin)[[9]](#footnote-9)

Hear (*akouō*) / Obey (*hypakouō*)

Faith and Hearing (Romans 9:30–10:17)

**Conclusion**

1. Francis Watson, *Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith* (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 51. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Watson, *Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith*, 51. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Jonathan Linebaugh, *The Word of the Cross: Reading Paul* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2022), 24–25 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. διὰ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (Rom. 3:22); ἐκ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ (Rom. 3:26); διὰ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (Gal. 2:16a); ἐκ πίστεως Χριστοῦ (Gal. 2:16c); ἐν πίστει … τῇ τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ (Gal. 2:20); ἐκ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (Gal. 3:22); διὰ τῆς πίστεως αὐτοῦ (Eph. 3:12); διὰ πίστεως Χριστοῦ (Phil. 3:9). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Barth, *CD* IV/1, 632. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Linebaugh, *The Word of the Cross,* 18. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. J. M. G. Barclay, introduction to *Divine and Human Agency in Paul and His Cultural Environment* (ECC/LNTS 335; ed. J. M. G. Barclay and S. J. Gathercole; London: Continuum, 2006), 6–7. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, 2.17.1. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Unde et fidem definit Paulus obedientiam quae praestatur Evangelio [↑](#footnote-ref-9)