

My Response to John Piper on Justification in CT Article

Written by Calvin Fox

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Christianity Today has run a chart comparing the views of John Piper with those of NT Wright on the subject of Justification. I have copied the words of Piper from the chart (below in italics) with my personal response in bold print.

God created a good world that was subjected to futility because of the sinful, treasonous choice of the first human beings. Because of this offense against the glory of God, humans are alienated from their Creator and deserve his just condemnation for their sins. YES and NO (for what it omits)

"A good world subjected to futility". The natural world is still good, but it has been cursed by its Creator. This means it will resist all efforts of Mankind to care for it and make it productive. Given the opportunity, it will seek to over run Mankind and "go wild" and be out of control. It is subject to decay and death. It is not acting as its Creator intended or bringing Him the Glory for which it exists. Redemption must include setting the Natural World free from this Curse and restoration to its original state and better.

"Treasonous choice", "Offense against the Glory of God" refers to the "Fall". Yes, but I would say simply human beings rebelled against their Creator and have sought to live autonomously on their own terms, not His and for their own Glory, not His. This is known in Reformed circles as the Antithesis and is concurrent with inherited Original Sin (Fallen Nature or Depravity) The consequence of Original Sin is better described as Death, which is "alienation" or separation on several levels.

God revealed himself through the Law, which pointed to Christ as its end and goal, commanded the obedience that comes from faith, increased transgressions, and shut the mouths of all humans because no one has performed the righteousness of the Law so as not to need a substitute. YES and NO (for what it omits)

God revealed more than Himself, i.e.- His moral character and will through the Law. The Mosaic Law did indeed point prophetically to Christ who did fulfill it with his life and death. The Mosaic Law (usually limited to the Decalogue) did indeed act as a school teacher, teaching Men about sins and leading them to conviction and repentance and on to Christ as the fulfiller of the Law before God on their behalf (their substitute).

But the Law is more than what is commonly meant by "Mosaic". The Law is the entire 5 Books of Moses, known as the Torah. And it contains God's Norms or Principles by which His People know what God expects of them in their daily living. The Torah reveals how to live righteously and is thus essential to Sanctification. It is the neglect of this function of the Law which has led to the moral and ethical failure of multitudes of Christians

The essence of God's righteousness is his unwavering faithfulness to uphold the glory of his name in all he does. No single action, like covenant keeping, is God's righteousness. For all his acts are done in righteousness. YES.

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*God's faithfulness to Himself (His Glory) in all He does is indeed righteousness. □
The essence of human righteousness is the unwavering faithfulness to uphold the glory of God in all we do. The problem is that we all fall short of this glory; that is, no one is righteous. NO*

The essence or heart or basis of our righteousness is utter commitment to seeking the Glory of God. □ What is omitted here is how this motive and desire plays out in practice. □ This is where the so-called Third Purpose of the Law, the instrument of our Sanctification, is essential. □ How do we glorify God "in all we do"? □ By living as He wants us to- by fulfilling the Norms and Principles of the Torah. □ That no one does this perfectly is true, but is no excuse for not trying.

Many Jews in Jesus' day (like the Pharisees described in the Gospels) did not see the need for a substitute in order to be right with God, but sought to establish their own righteousness through "works of the Law." Whether keeping Sabbath or not committing adultery, these works became the basis of one's right standing with God. The inclination to rely on one's own ceremonial and moral acts is universal, apart from divine grace. YES

The heart of the gospel is the good news that Christ died for our sins and was raised from the dead. What makes this good news is that Christ's death accomplished a perfect righteousness before God and suffered a perfect condemnation from God, both of which are counted as ours through faith alone, so that we have eternal life with God in the new heavens and the new earth. YES (as far as it goes) □

Note the Ascension, triumph over the Evil Powers and Christ's present reign is omitted, as is the Promise of full Redemption of all Creation. □ Dr Piper does include the Reformed Doctrine of Imputation ("reckoned") which is the point most disputed with advocates of the "New Perspective on Paul" of which Dr. Wright is major spokesperson.

By faith we are united with Christ Jesus so that in union with him, his perfect righteousness and punishment are counted as ours (imputed to us). In this way, perfection is provided, sin is forgiven, wrath is removed, and God is totally for us. Thus, Christ alone is the basis of our justification, and the faith that unites us to him is the means or instrument of our justification. Trusting in Christ as Savior, Lord, and Supreme Treasure of our lives produces the fruit of love, or it is dead. YES

Present justification is based on the substitutionary work of Christ alone, enjoyed in union with him through faith alone. Future justification is the open confirmation and declaration that in Christ Jesus we are perfectly blameless before God. This final judgment accords with our works. That is, the fruit of the Holy Spirit in our lives will be brought forward as the evidence and confirmation of true faith and union with Christ. Without that validating transformation, there will be no future salvation. YES When compared to Dr Wright's statements in the Chart, I find I am far more in agreement with Pastor Piper than the Bishop. T

he entire Article/Chart can be found

[HERE](#)