

The Trust of Abraham and the Trust of Jesus Christ

Romans 1:17

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This article was first published in *Currents in Theology and Mission*, Volume 30/6.

At the beginning of his letter to the Romans the Apostle Paul declares that he is not ashamed of the Gospel—for two reasons. On the one hand, it is "the power of God" that is directed towards salvation, and, on the other hand, it discloses the reality of God's justice.

Paul continues to be identified with "justification by faith," but in actuality "justification by faith" as Romans 4 indicates, is a relationship with God that goes all the way back to Abraham and Sarah and simply serves as the point of departure for Paul's presentation of the Gospel in Romans 5. Far more significant is his interpretation of Jesus' death and resurrection which discloses a new road into the fulfillment of the justice that God wills for humankind. The movement from Abraham's faith into the salvation of Jesus Christ that generates justice is expressed in the double prepositional phrase of Romans 1:17, "Out of the trust [of Abraham] into the trust [of Jesus Christ]."

Both the end of the Preamble of Paul's Letter to the Romans (1:16) and the following transition (1:17) into his analysis of the human condition are introduced by the adverbial conjunction "for" (γάρ). Paul wants to explain why he is apostolically under obligation to "Greeks and barbarians, to wise and foolish". As an apostle he is free, as he had claimed in 1 Cor. 9:1; and yet necessity is laid upon him not only to evangelize without charge (1 Cor. 9:16-18) but also to fulfill his apostolic commitment to the Gentiles. On the one hand, he is not ashamed of the gospel because it is the power of God that is teleologically oriented "unto" or "towards salvation" (εἰς σωτηρίαν). On the other hand, he is not ashamed of the gospel because it discloses the reality of "the justice of God". As a Jew and as a former "Pharisee of the Pharisees," he has been engaged in pursuing God's righteousness. That pursuit has finally been fulfilled in his submission to the gospel of Jesus Christ, for, as he acknowledges, "in it the justice of God is revealed." Even as the gospel is God's power "to everyone who believes," the gospel is also the disclosure of God's justice ἐκ πίστεως εἰς πίστιν.¹

¹ For the recent debate on Rom. 1:17, see Douglas A. Campbell, "Romans 1:17 – A *Crux Interpretum* for the Πίστις Χριστοῦ Debate," *JBL* 113/2 (1994) 265-285; Brian Dodd, "Romans 1:17 – A *Crux Interpretum* for the Πίστις Χριστοῦ Debate?" *JBL* 114/3 (1995) 470-473. Many of the following works are focused on the problem of πίστις Χριστοῦ, primarily in Galatians, but in one way or another they relate to or have a bearing on Rom. 1:17: A. J. Hultgren, "The *Pistis Christou* Formulation in Paul," *NT* 22 (1980) 248-263; L. T. Johnson, "Rom 3:21-26 and the Faith of Jesus," *CBQ* 44 (1982) 77-90; Richard B. Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ: The Narrative Substructure of Galatians 3:1-4:11* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), originally published in 1983 by The Society of Biblical Literature; S. K. Williams, "Again, *Pistis Christou*," *CBQ* 49 (1987) 431-437; Morna D. Hooker, "ΠΙΣΤΙΣ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ," *NTS* 35/3 (1989) 321-342; James D. G. Dunn, "Once More, ΠΙΣΤΙΣ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ," *SBL 1991 Seminar Papers*, ed. by Eugene H. Lovering, Jr. (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991) 730-744.

How is this double prepositional phrase to be translated? A literal rendition, “out of faith into faith” is no more intelligible than the translations that are offered by the versions that are in print today.

- King James:* “For therein is the righteousness of God revealed *from faith to faith*; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith.’”
- RSV:* “For in it the righteousness of God is revealed *through faith for faith*; as it is written, ‘He who through faith is righteous shall live.’”²
- NRSV:* “For in it the righteousness of God is revealed *through faith for faith*; as it is written, ‘The one who is righteous will live by faith.’”
- NIV:* “For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is *by faith from first to last*, just as it is written, ‘The righteous will live by faith.’”
- NEB:* “Because here is revealed God’s way of righting wrong, a way that starts *from faith and ends in faith*, as Scripture says, ‘he shall gain life who is justified through faith.’”
- Good News:* “For the gospel reveals how God puts people right with himself: it is *through faith from beginning to end*. As the Scripture says, ‘The person who is put right with God through faith shall live.’”
- Goodspeed:* “In it God’s way of uprightness is disclosed *through faith for faith*, just as Scripture says, ‘The upright will have life because of his faith.’”
- Luther:* “Denn Gottes Gerechtigkeit wird darin offenhart *aus Glauben zu Glauben*, wie denn geschrieben steht, ‘Der Gerechte wird aus Glauben leben.’”
- Protestant, and Catholic Union Translation* “Denn in Evangelium wird die Gesechligkeit Gottes offenhart *aus Glauben zum Glauben*, wie es in der Schrift heisst, ‘Der aus Glauben Gerechte wird leben.’”

Why does the Apostle employ a double prepositional phrase, when the first of the two, ἐκ πίστεως, corresponds to the prepositional phrase of the quotation of Hab. 2:4, ἐκ πίστεως, from which it may have been derived? It would seem that that congruity would be adequate. Indeed, Paul employs the phrase at least eight times in Romans and six times in Galatians, but the second prepositional phrase, εἰς πίστιν, occurs nowhere else in his writings.³

² “*Through faith for faith*” is the translation that Anders Nygren, *Commentary on Romans*, trans. by Carl C. Rasmussen (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1949) 78, offers, and it is interpreted as: “Faith is both the beginning and the culmination.”

³ After examining various interpretations of these phrases, D. A. Campbell, “Romans 1:17,” renders ἐκ πίστεως as “the faithfulness of Christ” and as an interpretation of εἰς πίστιν proposes, “with the goal of faith/fullness (in the Christian)”. But by focusing his investigation on πιστις Χριστοῦ he is misled into a set of christological interpretations. Brian Dodd, “Romans 1:17,” in his critique of Campbell makes the same mistake. Luke Timothy Johnson, *Reading Romans: A Literary and*

A few of these instances of ἐκ πίστεως suffice to disclose something of the sense and significance they have for the apostle. According to Rom. 3:30, it is “*out of faith* (ἐκ πίστεως) that circumcision will be justified.” The promise to Abraham and his seed was made on the basis of ἐκ πίστεως (4:16) so that [the promise might be] according to grace not only to those descendants to whom the law was given but also to those who, like Abraham, live *out of faith* (ἐκ πίστεως). Indeed, Abraham, empowered by faith believed (ἐπίστευσεν) in hope against hope (παρ’ ἐλπίδα ἐπ’ ἐλπίδι) and “it was reckoned to him unto justice” (εἰς δικαιοσύνην). “Now this was written not only on account of him, that is, ‘it was reckoned to him,’ but also on account of us to whom it is going to be reckoned, to those who believe on the one who resurrected Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered up because of our offenses and was resurrected because of our acquittal.”⁴ In the very next verse (5:1) Paul proceeds to draw the consequences, “Therefore, being justified ἐκ πίστεως, we have peace towards God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”⁵ Accordingly, the phrase, ἐκ πίστεως, is especially linked to Abraham, the grand patriarch of Israel, and it indicates the basis of his relationship to God and attendant his justification by God.

Paul employs the same phrase, ἐκ πίστεως, in his Letter to the Galatians in order to establish the priority of faith over the giving of the Law: “Even as Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him unto justice. Consequently you know that the offspring of Abraham are those [who live] *out of faith* (ἐκ πίστεως). As in Romans 4, Paul proceeds to draw the Gentiles into this heritage of faith: “Now the Scriptures foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles *out of faith* (ἐκ πίστεως) proclaimed good news to Abraham in advance that ‘all the nations will be blessed in you; so that those ἐκ πίστεως are blessed with the faith of Abraham.” A few verses later, in 3:11, he declares “that it is clear that in or by the Law no one is justified before God, because the righteous one will live ἐκ πίστεως.” Hab. 2:4 is quoted here as also in Rom. 1:17.⁶

Why then is it necessary in Rom. 1:17 to attach the prepositional phrase εἰς πίστιν to ἐκ πίστεως, the phrase that may have been drawn out of Hab. 2:4? What is its rationale?⁷ Earlier scholarly efforts to resolve the problems of Rom. 1:17 ignored the purpose and significance of εἰς πίστιν. To determine the relationship between the two prepositional phrases it is necessary to examine Paul’s complex discussion of πίστις Χριστοῦ in Gal. 2:15-3:29 and particularly his attendant application of an analogy that he appears to have drawn out of Roman jurisprudence.⁸

Theological Commentary (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2001) 29, is attracted to Campbell’s interpretation, but he prefers the possibility of the dynamic of gift and response. “God’s faithfulness to humans” and “their obedient acceptance of that gift.”

⁴ These are paraphrases of Romans 4:18-25.

⁵ See below, for the grammatical elucidation of this text.

⁶ Contrary to D. A. Campbell, “Romans 1:17,” there is not the slightest implication here that ἐκ πίστεως in Hab. 2:4 or Rom. 1:17 has a christological significance.

⁷ For C. H. Dodd, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans* (New York: Harper, 1932) 13-14, the meaning of the double prepositional phrase “is not very clear. The probability is that we have no more than a rhetorical device to give emphasis to the idea of faith.” Otto Michel, *Der Brief an die Römer* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1955) identifies the phrase as a “Kampfprud,” a battle cry that emphasizes the concept of faith, but moves on quickly to the quotation of Hab. 2:4. Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, trans. and ed. by G. W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980) 31, tends to dismiss its importance, claiming simply that the clause “is related only loosely to the preceding statement”. Its purpose is to indicate that the revelation of God’s righteousness “takes place always only in the sphere of faith.” James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1-8. Word Biblical Commentary* vol. 38 (Dallas: Word Books, 1988) 44, seems to conclude that ἐκ πίστεως refers to God’s faithfulness and εἰς πίστιν to “man’s faith”. Peter Stuhlmacher, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans: A Commentary*, trans. by Scott J. Hafemann, (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1994) 29, concentrates on “God’s righteousness” and, without commenting specifically on this clause, states, “God’s righteousness is experienced as salvation simply and solely by faith.”

⁸ Πίστις Χριστοῦ is the focus of M. D. Hooker’s essay, “ΠΙΣΤΙΣ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ,” and, after examining many of the occurrences of this phrase in Paul’s writings, but without including an analysis of Paul’s use of *fidei commissum* in Gal. 3:15, she concludes on

It is the juridical principle of *fidei commissum*, an undertaking by trust adopted from ancient Greek law; and, because of its pervasive appropriation throughout the Mediterranean world, it would be intelligible not only to the Christians at Rome but also to Christians in the Roman province of Galatia.⁹

Paul introduces this analogy in Gal. 3:15 by informing his addressees that he is going to speak *κατὰ ἄνθρωπον*; he is going to give an example from everyday life: “No one annuls or adds a codicil to a testament (*διαθήκη*) ratified by a human being.”¹⁰ This is not the testament (*διαθήκη*) of the old covenant that was “chiseled in letters on stone tablets” nor is it to be identified with the new covenant “of greater glory” (2 Cor. 3:7-11). This is the *διαθήκη* that is “430 years older than the Mosaic law.”¹¹ It is the testament that was drawn up between God and Abraham, and as Gal. 3:18 indicates, it has to do with “inheritance”. *Διαθήκη*, as Raphael Taubenschlag states in his analysis of the Roman law of inheritance, is “the most frequently used technical term to designate the last will and testament.”¹²

It was Greer M. Taylor who recognized the juridical determination of *διαθήκη* in Gal. 3:15 and related it to the distinctive function of *πίστις* (faith) in both Galatians and Romans on the basis of the Roman legal institution of *fidei commissum*.¹³ The *fidei commissum* is a body of law that establishes the provisions for the disposition of inheritance. “It is a device for the distribution of benefits – which include *δικαιοσύνη* but, also, other benefits which the law does not even claim to offer.”¹⁴ Abraham and Christ are the successive testamentary heirs who receive the inheritance in *πίστις*. As Paul says in Gal. 3:16, “The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed, who is Christ.” By drawing upon a close reading of the Septuagint text of Gen. 12:2, “*τῷ σπέρματί σου*, he is able to apply the *fidei commissum* to Abraham and a single lineal descendant, Jesus Christ. For, as he continues, “It does not say, ‘and to seeds,’ as of many, but as of one;” and, after repeating the text of Gen. 12:2, he identifies that one seed as the “Christ”.¹⁵ “These two persons,” as Taylor asserts, “have exclusive legal title to, and exclusive power to transmit the benefits [of the testament]. And the benefits come as a free gift – without

pp. 336-337 that the genitive construction of *πίστις Χριστου* should be identified as a subjective genitive and therefore interpreted as “the faith of Christ” with the implication that it also refers “to the faith of the believer”.

⁹ On the basis of Taylor’s example of the will of C. Longinus Castor, which is limited to Rome, R. B. Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ*, pp. 188-189, denies its institutionalization beyond Rome. But this does not appear to be true. On pp. 70 and 73 Taylor refers to the use of *fidei commissum* in Egypt. He includes the *Institutes* of Gaius, the tenure of property in a fiduciary capacity in the Septuagint, and *Der Gnomon des Idios Logos*, the papyrus collection of imperial enactments. See Raphael Taubenschlag, *The Law of Greco-Roman Egypt in the Light of the Papyri 332 B.C. – 640 A.D.* (Warsaw: Panstwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1955) 190ff., and especially p. 203, n. 10. Also J. H. Moulton and G. Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament* (London: Hodder & Hodder, 1957); *πίστις* is also used in the papyri in the juridical sense of “guarantee, pledge, bond”.

¹⁰ Somehow R. B. Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ*, ignores the example from real life that Paul introduces in Gal. 3:15. On p. 187 he acknowledges that the first reference of *διαθήκη* occurs in Gal. 3:15, but he makes no effort to link it to Paul’s introduction of the *διαθήκη* analogy. What is that illustration from every day life? The analogy of *fidei commissum* not only determines the development of Paul’s thought in Gal. 3:16-29 but throughout the entire section, 2:15 – 4:31, that is, from the beginning of the “Proposition” of 2:15-21 through his development of the four arguments that follow in 3:1 to 4:31.

¹¹ G. M. Taylor, “The Function of ΠΙΣΤΙΣ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ,” p. 63, n. 8.

¹² Taubenschlag, *The Law of Greco-Roman Egypt in the Light of the Papyri 332 B.C. – 640 A.D.*, 190.

¹³ As Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ*, p. 185, acknowledges, Taylor’s hypothesis has been greeted among Pauline scholars with benign neglect... In his critique of Taylor’s work, pp. 185-189, Hays dismisses Taylor’s interpretation for various reasons, but perhaps mostly because, as he claims on p. 187, “... precisely at the point where Paul develops the analogy of the *διαθήκη* [3:15–18] *πίστις* drops out of the discussion.” (The emphasis is his.) But there is no need to include *πίστις* until 3:22ff. because the matter of adding a codicil to the inviolable testament must first be resolved.

¹⁴ G. M. Taylor, p. 63.

¹⁵ Hays, *The Faith of Christ*, p. 183, claims that “Gal. 3:16 and 3:19 show that Paul understood certain promises to the seed of Abraham as messianic prophecies.” Perhaps! But it is also possible that Paul’s analogy of *fidei commissum* has determined his interpretation of Gen. 12:2.

being earned – to beneficiaries of all nations, Jew and Gentile alike, all on the same terms.”¹⁶ Although Abraham is the original testamentary heir, Christ as the single descendant is the sole agent of the distribution of its benefits.

God is the maker of this διαθήκη, and, it was made and received in πίστις; that is, it was made and received in “faith”. Here, however, as already implied, the word “faith” is an inappropriate translation. For πίστις, in this context of Gal. 2:15-3:29 and Paul’s employment of *fidei commissum*, belongs to the language of jurisprudence and therefore is more aptly rendered into English as “trust”.¹⁷ Indeed throughout its use in Gal. 2:15-3:29, πίστις belongs to the διαθήκη, the testament that God established with Abraham and his descendent Christ. Πίστις, however, is the trust that was given and received under the testament; it is that trust or trust fund that would confer the promised inheritance when its beneficiaries would come of age, as Gal. 3:25 and 4:1-6 indicate.¹⁸

The juridical principle of the *fidei commissum* that Paul has enunciated in Gal. 3:15 makes the testament inviolable: “No one annuls or adds a codicil to a testament (διαθήκη) ratified by a human being.” The precedence of that testament, however, is challenged by the Sinai covenant and its attendant giving of the Law. “For if the inheritance is “out of law” (ἐκ νόμου), it is no longer “out of promise” (ἐξ ἀγγελίας). Consequently it is necessary for Paul to return to the inviolability of that διαθήκη that was given and received in “trust”, and he adds in v. 17, “The law having happened after 430 years does not make void the διαθήκη previously ratified by God so that the promise is abolished.”

That, then, brings the teleology of the Law into sharper focus! “Why then the Law?” In spite of its originally intended purpose to serve Israel as social legislation, Paul attributes to it the function that he might have derived from the entire Old Testament account of Israel’s history, the function of the Law as a mirror. “It was added on for the sake of transgression.” He expresses the same perspective at the conclusion of his analysis of the human condition in Rom. 3:20, “By the Law is the recognition of sin.” Before Abraham’s seed should come, it was necessary to expose the human condition of sin (ἁμαρτία) and the acts of transgressions and offenses that it engenders. Only after that disclosure could Abraham’s seed fulfill the terms and conditions of that original testament (διαθήκη).¹⁹

If that original διαθήκη was inviolable so that it could neither be annulled nor a codicil added to it, how, then, could the Law have been joined to it? Paul offers a stunning reply to this critical question: “[It was] ordered through angels by the hand of a mediator.” Ignoring the biblical witness to the divine origin of the Law, he claims that the Law was ordained by angels, through the mediation of a negotiator.²⁰ But as he is quick to acknowledge in v. 20, “A negotiator is not of one, but God is one.”²¹ By these rather enigmatic words, Paul infers that

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ “Trust,” is the appropriate translation of πίστις, as Taylor, “The Function of ΠΙΣΤΙΣ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ,” 68, rightly contends.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 64.

¹⁹ Taubenschlag, “The Law of Greco-Roman Egypt,” 218.

²⁰ Ben Witherington III, *Grace in Galatia: A Commentary on Paul’s Letter to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998) 257, maintains that, because the preposition διὰ (through) in 3:19 expresses “intermediate agency,” the Law was ordained by God but came to Moses through angels. That may be correct. But Witherington, therefore, is unable to identify God as one of the two parties negotiating with Israel, with Moses serving as arbitrator, to determine whether the codicil of the Law should be added to the διαθήκη. In his judgment, Paul is stressing the oneness of God in 3:20. Charles B. Cousar, *Galatians. Interpretation* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982) 77-83, ignores vs. 19-20.

²¹ Unfortunately G. M. Taylor does not draw upon Gal. 3:19b-20; it would strengthen the case he is attempting to establish. Curiously R. B. Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ*, also makes no reference to either vs. 19b or 20, yet they are crucial for the development of Paul’s analogy.

arbitration always involves two parties. God was one of them! The other party is not named, but undoubtedly it must be Israel. The mediator also remains unidentified, but it could only be Moses. Through the arbitration of Moses, God and Israel reached an agreement to add a codicil to the testament that God established in trust with Abraham and his single lineal descendant, the Christ. As a codicil it does not annul the testament or cancel the promises. Indeed it could not, because as Paul maintains, “If the Law [that] was given was able to make alive, in truth justice would come “out of the Law” (ἐκ νόμου),”

The Scriptures make it very clear, however, that “all things were confined together under sin (ἁμαρτία).” The teleological objective of the διαθήκη, therefore, was the arrival of the second testamentary heir, Jesus Christ. He, then, would serve as the divinely appointed agent to distribute the benefits of this trust, “so that the promise out of the trust of Jesus Christ (ἐκ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ) be given to those who believe.” The διαθήκη was based on πίστις, the trust fund that God established with Abraham. But because its benefits were made available after second testamentary heir, Jesus Christ, had fulfilled the conditions of the διαθήκη, Paul can designate this trust fund “the trust of Jesus Christ,” as he does in Gal. 2:16; 3:22, 26 (and also in Rom. 3:22).²² In Gal. 3:23, 25, he also refers to it simply as “the trust”.²³ “When the trust came, we are no longer under a παιδαγωγόν,” (very likely the slave who made certain that the child got to school, but whose duty was completed when he turned the child over to the teacher). Consequently, if the Law as a παιδαγωγός has fulfilled its function by making human beings conscious of sin, it prepared them for the “trust of Jesus Christ”. “Christ,” therefore, as Paul declares in Rom. 10:4, “is the termination and goal of the Law unto justice (δικαιοσύνην) to everyone who believes.”

If the Law accomplishes its objective as a truant officer, how has Jesus Christ fulfilled the obligations of the διαθήκη? There are only hints in this section of Gal. 2:15-3:29. In 2:20 Paul, speaking in the first person singular, acknowledges “[The life] that I now live in the flesh, I live in the trust of the Son of God who loved me and handed himself over on my behalf.” Through his death by crucifixion Jesus terminated the old moral order for all of humanity. The same eschatological perspective is expressed in 2 Cor. 5:14, “... one died on behalf of all, consequently all died.” More, however, is expressed in Rom. 5:1-11, a passage that concentrates on the reality of Good Friday.

God confirmed his love unto us, for while we were still sinners Christ died on our behalf.

Being justified now by his blood, how much more shall we be saved through him from the wrath. If being enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his son,

how much more, being reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. (5:8-10)

Reconciliation or “peace with God” is the first of many benefits that are dispensed through the death of Jesus Christ. But there are also benefits that are transmitted through his resurrection from the dead, according to 5:12-21.

²² The Greek text of Gal. 3:26 is problematic because of a manuscript variant that places the preposition ἐν (in) before “Christ Jesus” and therefore requires the use of the dative case, Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ. Although it may possibly be regarded as the more difficult reading, it does not correspond to the Pauline use of the genitive construction of πίστις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ that dominates Gal. 2:15–3:29. The preposition ἐν must be deleted and the dative Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ replaced by the genitive Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ.

²³ George Howard, *Paul: Crisis in Galatia. A Study in Early Christian Theology* (Cambridge: at the University Press, 1979) 65, translates πίστις as “faith,” without considering the analogy of jurisprudence that Paul introduces in 3:15, and contends that: “This ‘faith’ is the faith of Christ, who, by keeping the promise given to Abraham, brought salvation to non-law-abiding Gentiles and unity to mankind.” . Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 267-268, acknowledges that the use of ἡ πίστις in v. 23 is “an odd way to speak” and concludes that the phrase means “the coming of faith to be revealed.” Subsequently, in his interpretation of v. 25, he identifies πίστις with Christ.

For if by the offense of one death ruled through the one, how much more those receiving the abundance of grace and the legacy of justice (δικαιοσύνη) will rule in life through the one Jesus Christ.” (5:17)

Grace, justice, ruling in life, and therefore recovering the glory, honor, and sovereignty that the Creator willed for all human beings, according to Gen. 1:26-30 and Ps. 8:5-6, are among the benefits that are conveyed through the trust of Jesus Christ.²⁴

The precondition of being a beneficiary of that trust requires participation in the family of God that Jesus has constituted by his death and resurrection. According to Gal. 3:26, “For you all are daughters and sons of God through the trust of Christ Jesus, for as many of you as were baptized into Christ, you have put on Christ [as a robe or garment that bears witness to the coming of age].” The eschatological death experience of baptism terminates participation in the old moral order and its dominant reality of the human infection of sin and incorporates men and women into a New Humanity in which “there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, neither male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are of Christ, consequently you are Abraham [and Sarah’s] seed, heirs according to the promise.”²⁵

Those who are “of Christ” are separated from Abraham and Sarah by the great divide or chasm of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The latter belong to the old moral order that is dominated by the power of sin, but they were justified because they lived “out of faith” (ἐκ πίστεως). Justification by faith, as the Reformation doctrine is usually called, is a reality of the Old Testament and has no immediate connection to the trust of Jesus Christ. All who trust God, as Abraham and Sarah did, are justified by faith. But because Abraham and Sarah lived before the giving of the Law, and because “By the Law is the recognition of sin!” they had no consciousness of their infection. In the face of the stark realities of the old moral order, they lived “out of faith” and God reckoned to them righteousness (δικαιοσύνη), as Paul states in Rom. 4:22 and Gal. 3:6. According to Gal. 3:7, therefore, “those ἐκ πίστεως are the daughters and sons of Abraham.” The codicil of the Law was added to the testament that God established with Abraham and his lineal descendant in order to awaken human consciousness to the reality of sin. All those who live on this side of Sinai and the giving of the Law, therefore, are confronted with the mirror of the Law and all that it reveals. Although they, like Abraham and Sarah, can be justified by faith, they must live with the realities that are generated by their awareness of sin and the alienation, guilt, and death that result from it. They can live by faith, be declared righteous by God, and live with the courage to be. But they have not crossed the great divide into the trust of Jesus Christ.

That is the significance of ἐκ πίστεως in Rom. 1:17. No more, no less! It is living out of the trust of Abraham without its completion by his descendent, the Christ.²⁶ The good news of Jesus Christ is what Paul implies in and by the second prepositional phrase of 1:17, εἰς πίστιν (into trust), that is, the trust of Jesus Christ. The good news is about the fulfillment of the terms and conditions of the testament that God established with Abraham and the benefits that

²⁴ See G. M. Taylor, “The Function of ΠΙΣΤΙΣ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ,” 64, for the benefits that he lists when the terms and conditions of the trust have been fulfilled.

²⁵ According to Gal. 4:5-6, adoption is the means by which human beings are incorporated into God’s family of daughters and sons. Francis Lyall, “Roman Law in the Writings of Paul – Adoption,” *JBL* 88/4 (1969) 466, concludes, “... the believer is taken out of his former state, and is placed in a new relationship with God. He is made part of God’s family forever, with reciprocal duties and rights.”

²⁶ According to Karl Paul Donfried, “Justification and Last Judgment in Paul,” *ZNW* 67/1/2 (1976) 99, “... justification is the beginning of the Christian life.” But only in as far as a Christian, trusting with the faith of Abraham, believes “on the one who resurrected Jesus our Lord from the dead...”

are universally conferred on all who participate in it. The movement of 1:17, therefore, is ἐκ πίστεως, out of the trust of Abraham, εἰς πίστιν, into the trust of Jesus Christ.²⁷

The grammatical principle that is operating in Rom. 5:1 accentuates this critical differentiation: Δικαιωθέντες οὖν ἐκ πίστεως εἰρήνην ἔχομεν πρὸς τὸν θεὸν διὰ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. The aorist participle, δικαιωθέντες (being justified), is relative to the main verb, ἔχομεν (we have), and expresses an action that is antecedent to that of the main verb.²⁸ Therefore, the act of “being justified out of faith” is prior to the reality of “having peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Reconciliation does not originate from being justified “out of faith,” but as Paul subsequently states in 5: 9, “Being justified now by his blood”. Trusting God and living ἐκ πίστεως, like Abraham and Sarah, may result in “justification by faith”. But being justified does not eliminate the alienation that arises when the mirror of the Law discloses the reality of sin and with it the resulting, growing sense of exile and estrangement. If there is anything Christian about being justified by faith, it is, as Paul asserts in Rom. 4:24, “believing on the one who raised Jesus from the dead.” Abraham and Sarah trusted the same God, and they were declared righteous. However, beyond living ἐκ πίστεως, is a life that is committed to living εἰς πίστιν, a life therefore that is dedicated to actualizing the justice of God (δικαιοσύνη τοῦ θεοῦ) in and by the trust of Jesus Christ.

²⁷ Adolf Schlatter, *Romans: The Righteousness of God*, trans. by Siegfried S. Schatzmann with a foreword by Peter Stuhlmacher (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995) 24, almost reaches the same conclusion: “God’s righteousness is not only revealed on the basis of faith (ek pisteōs), but also for the purpose of faith (eis pistin).”

²⁸ See F. Blass and A. Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, translated, revised and edited by Robert W. Funk (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961) 174-175. Also C. F. D. Moule, *An Idiom-Book of New Testament Greek* (Cambridge: at the University Press, 1968) 99.