

What did St Paul really say? NT “Tom” Wright and James R White

[A discussion on the *Unbelievable?* show on Premiere Christian Radio. Transcribed by Roy Soliman]

JB - Justin Brierley (host of *Unbelievable?*)

NTW - Nicholas Thomas Wright, goes by “Tom”

JRW - James R White

[00:02:32 JB] Well I've really been looking forward to having NT Wright “Tom” as he's often known, Tom Wright, NT Wright joining me on the program today, research professor of New Testament and early Christianity at St. Andrews University.

And we're here to talk about: 'What did St Paul really say about justification?'

That's the question that we're looking at on today's edition of *Unbelievable?*. Tom has, in many ways, been at the forefront of looking into the historical Jesus, the Resurrection - he's well known for some of those books he's written in those parts. Also the nature of Paul and Paul's writing has been a major focus in the last few years. He's got a new book coming out later in the year, Paul and the Faithfulness of God.

A lot of the arguments though that have been raging in the academic world and the theological world have been to do with what he wrote about the nature of justification, what's sometimes called the new perspective. So we're going to get to all that.

Also on the program, joining me today, a show regular, he's been on a number of times before. James White joins me, director of Alpha and Omega Ministries - out in Arizona in the States. He's himself is a Bible scholar and he's part of what you would call, generally, the Reformed tradition - he's a Calvinist.

What does that mean though when it comes to this debate? Why particularly have some of the more influential voices in that world - John Piper is a specific example.

Today we're talking about justification. Welcome along Tom to the program.

[00:04:09 NTW] Thank you. Thank you very much, good to be with you.

[00:04:12 JB] As I say, I've long wanted to have you on the program so when I saw there was a possibility of you coming in I thought let's nab him; let's collar him - at last. We're going to go with “Tom” but “NT Wright” is how many people would know you as an author.

[00:04:23 NTW] Yes

[00:04:25 JB] You seem to be able to produce more books than I've had hot dinners, what is the secret to your prolific output, Tom?

[00:04:33 NTW] There's no secret. It's simply I spent the first twenty years of my adult life doing a lot of reading, studying, praying, thinking, discussing and sometime around just when I turned 40 I thought, 'You know, I've been doing this a long time, it's time I started writing some of it down'.

And happily, the whole word-processing thing had taken off and I find I can use computers - I can write very fast. And so, in a sense I was planting a lot of seeds for twenty years which have then, in the last twenty years been bearing fruit.

[00:05:03 JB] They certainly have and many people would see you as at the forefront of modern scholarship, especially around the person of Paul. But at the same time, doing anything new often means that people will disagree with your thesis.

[00:05:17 NTW] Sure; sure.

[00:05:19 JB] Not least as I mentioned, out in the States: John Piper. What is it exactly that you've said, if you can condense it into a nutshell that has got people both very interested but also some people rather skeptical?

[00:05:32 NTW] It's hard to say one thing because there's three or four different things which kind of rush together at a certain point. For instance, one of the things that I and many others have become convinced is that many first century Jews really were living out of a long story which goes back to Daniel 9, which says that there is a sense in which the exile hasn't finished yet; and that God needs to do something new which will finish it. This is, as I say, it's based in Daniel 9 and for many people that's very scary - the idea of a continuous story which is now reaching fulfilment - that's not how they've seen Paul at all.

But then at a quite different level, it's to do with what did first Century Jews really believe that they were doing when they were keeping the law. Were they earning favour with God or something like that. And in a sense, yes they were; in a sense no they weren't.

My real problem is that I think I have glimpsed in the first Century a sense that they are much more concerned as Jesus himself was with God's kingdom come on earth as in heaven and Western Christianity has been concerned with how to leave earth and go to heaven and the justification debates have often been framed in that latter context.

And so when I've said that 'No actually, this is about new creation, it's about resurrection, it's about God's new world and how you tell in the present who is going to be part of the God's new world'. People get very scared.

So it's a combination of several different things, as well as particular texts which have been favourites for exegetes and preachers and which when I've looked at them - some of them - I've said 'hmmm looks to me really as though that doesn't mean what we all thought it meant' and then that is, that is very upsetting for people - naturally, you know. I understand that.

[00:07:11 JB] Well, this is what drives you isn't it going back to the text ...

[00:07:15 NTW] Absolutely ...

[00:07:18 JB] ... going back to the background of the context of those texts and in this debate that we're having today about justification your feeling is that very often people are looking to the, sort of, debates in the medieval church more than the debates that were going on in Paul's day.

[00:07:30 NTW] Yes, without wishing to be picky - let me just pick you up. This isn't something I feel it's something I think. This is a major problem in contemporary discourse - that we say 'feel' when we mean 'think'; so sorry about that.

[00:07:38 JB] No it's fine!

[00:07:40 NTW] But, I think that the way the reformers were addressing the question came to them naturally from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries; from the theories of justification of the Latin *Justitia*, which was very powerful and prevalent in the medieval church.

And the way I say it as a sort of short hand, the reformers were doing their best to give biblical answers to the wrong question. Or at least not entirely the wrong questions, but at least questions that were significantly flawed and I'm really interested in getting back and saying what were the questions that were out there in the first century that Paul was giving his answers to.

And part of the trick here is to see how the whole of Paul's letters fit together. In other words, you can't stop Romans 3 at verse 26; you can't omit Romans 9-11; you can't pull apart bits of Galatians 3 and just concentrate on verses 10-14 and forget other bits. And so on, and so on. So I'm really concerned about the whole flow of each letter.

I have a sense that if Luther and Calvin were listening to that claim, they would say 'Yuh - that's the thing you have to do: Go for it'. They might disagree how I did it, but that's my agenda to go back to the text and get it right.

[00:08:47 JB] I know you've got another, well your opus magnum really - if that's the right word - is coming out later in the year; that's the big volume on Paul and so we look forward to that where you'll presumably give ... you'll be giving people even more cause to potentially find fault with the ...

[00:09:03 NTW] Oh, oh yes - millions of hostages to fortune there but hopefully also some ...

some evidences and answers as to what's going on.

[00:09:10 JB] So we'll lay out exactly what you say about the way Paul really means 'justification'; what he really meant when he used that word. Before we get to you laying that case out, let's introduce our other guest for today's program, that is of course James White. James no stranger to this program, last on I think James talking with a Muslim guest in the light of stuff going on around the film of the prophet Mohammed and so on. You're coming back to these shores soon, I think aren't you to do a few more discussions, debates and talks.

[00:09:40 JRW] Actually I'll be in Dublin at the end of this month, Trinity college and UCD I believe. Both two different nights, discussing the 'Quran as the Word of God' with some Muslim representatives there. Just a couple of weeks but I won't actually be getting to London at that point. I'll be teaching in Berlin in June so I may get through London at that point. We'll see it's still sort of up in the air.

[00:10:03 JB] Oh great stuff. Well, if you're in the Ireland area or you make it over there, do check out the details and of course details for both my guests and their websites with the podcast of today's program, now that's www.premier.org.uk/unbelievable

James, thank you so much for coming on today. We should say from the outset you haven't had much time to prepare for this. I asked you at very late notice once I'd found Tom was coming in and so on. And so, with that sort of addendum, tell us a little bit about what you've made of Tom's work as you've interacted with it over the years.

[00:10:38 JRW] Well yeah, I did want to contrast when I debated John Dominic Crossan, an incredibly intelligent man, I had six months to immerse myself in his lectures and books; his autobiography and everything else. Seventy hours not quite the same thing, but actually the new perspective was a focus of my studies back around 2003 to 2005 and I laid them aside primarily because that's when I really began my serious study of Islam and the Qur'an and the Hadith and picking up Arabic and all that wonderful fun stuff.

Not really a whole heap of overlap there though I think we will see there are some questions that arise that I want to raise at some other later point. But in this subject, I'll be honest with you - the past couple of days has been very interesting because I have a very well-worn copy of What St Paul Really Said, in my hands and very well marked and lots of comments and notes and things like that. But there have been developments since then, and so looking at the exchange between Dr Wright and Dr Piper, in their published works, was somewhat helpful, though not as helpful as I'd hoped it would be to be perfectly honest with you. And so, I'm going to ask ... and again I was just raised in such a way that you use honorific titles: the Right Reverend Dr Bishop - I don't know what terms we should use, but ...

[00:12:03 NTW] Just call me Tom.

[00:12:04 JRW] ... just grates against my upbringing, but anyways what I found, and I'd like to

ask if this would be really representational of where Tom feels himself to be today, is your [JETS article from March of 2011](#). And that's about as close as I can get ...

[00:12:21 NTW] Oh okay

[00:12:22 JRW] 'Justification, Yesterday, Today and Forever'. Would that ... see, I am an apologist and so when I, for example, deal with Islam ... I don't know who drummed this into my head years ago in; really, it was a conviction of mine before my education - you go to the original sources. And one of the things that has really concerned me just over the past couple of days is I hear a lot of talking past from both directions; there's a lot of language problems - we're using the same words, meaning different things by them.

This is nothing new, you go back to the early Trinitarian controversies, East and West were constantly talking past each other - partly because of Greek and Latin and so on and so forth, but I've just sensed a lot of miscommunication between both sides and especially listening to people attempting to summarise New Perspectivism - I just don't know think that's even a possible thing to do.

There's so many different new perspectives, I mean there's so many different nuances between yourself and James D. G. Dunn or Sanders or whoever else it might be, that I tried to find a way of really focusing upon you individually, because - for example, you have a much higher view of the consistency and inspiration of Scripture than many others who would call themselves New Perspectivists. And that has to be brought out, if it's not brought out there's going to be a flattening out, there's going to be a misrepresentation, and that's something I think you've complained many, many times in different contexts.

So, my background as an apologist primarily drove me to this article and that's really where I'm going to be focusing my comments, if that's useful to you.

[00:14:04 JB] That is certainly useful and in many ways, because of the constraints for a program like this, we won't be able to barely graze the surface of many of the issues here. But what we will hopefully do is lay out the perspective on justification, allow you some time to make some critiques ask some questions - yourself James and see what Tom has to say in response. And let people go away and look up more things if they want to.

[00:14:31 NTW] Perhaps I could just say that JETS article would be a good place to start. That was a recent, short statement in a conference where I was in debate with Frank Thielman from Beeson Divinity School and Tom Schreiner from Southern Seminary. And both are scholars that I've enjoyed engaging with; I've used their work on other occasions. We're not head to head on everything, there's a lot we agree on but let me just very firmly say, 'Yes' to what was just said about the New Perspective. There is no one thing called the 'New Perspective'. There are several different scholars with very, very different views and indeed, ever since the publication of Ed Sanders in 1977 which really got this thing going, I have spent as much time attacking or modifying or pulling away from Sanders as I have agreeing with him. He kind of alerted us all to

one particular phenomenon namely, a misrepresentation of first Century Judaism. I don't think he got it right either and the task is to go on beyond that and see now where can we all work on this?

[00:15:26 JB] Well, that's the topic of today in general terms: the New Perspective. Even though it's a hard thing to pin down, but particularly within that new perspective, we are asking today - What did St Paul really say about justification? We're going to get Tom to explain why he thinks the church has misunderstood what Paul meant by 'justification' for quite a long time.

If you want to get involved; if you want to respond to anything you hear on today's program, I would welcome your emails, that's unbelievable@premier.org.uk, you can equally find me at Twitter @UnbelievableJB if you want to tweet me and www.Facebook.com/unbelievable if you want to like the Facebook page. Don't forget all the links including to both my guests today, James White and Tom Wright ... I'm going to get confused, aren't I between those two ... they're all available from the show page: premier.org.uk/unbelievable. You're listening to the show that aims to get you thinking.

<Break>

[00:16:34 JB] So coming back to you then Tom, then we'll allow James to sort of start to question you on this ... in a nutshell ...

[00:16:44 NTW] ... I knew you were going to say that

[00:16:45 JB] ... You knew I was going to ... What did St Paul really say about justification? What we have often assumed he was saying and what do you think he actually said?

[00:16:56 NTW] Let me try to make this as brief as I can but it's not as straight-forward as it's often made - and indeed one of the main problems is over-simplification. I am committed to understanding each of the Biblical texts in their proper context and in trying to say, what do they specifically have to say.

Galatians is the first the major statement. And in Galatians, Paul is really concerned about the fact that you do not have to become physically Jewish, by males getting circumcised in order to belong to the covenant people of God.

However, ever since the medieval period - it didn't start with Martin Luther - people pulled away from the idea of the covenant people, the people of Abraham. It wasn't what the middle ages wanted to know about, they wanted to know about, 'How do I go to heaven?' and so they took Paul's arguments about belonging to the historic people of God, the children of Abraham and they translated that into language about going to heaven; which actually, Galatians doesn't have anything to say about. It doesn't say anything mention salvation; it certainly doesn't mention all that dimension that is now so familiar to us. And so there's been a major misunderstanding there.

It's about how we know that all those who believe in Jesus are, right now, members of the same family at the same table. This is not something other than forgiveness of sins etc because in order to create this family out of a sinful humanity, God has to deal with their sin, but the emphasis of Galatians and the language of justification is of people coming into that family.

Then in Philippians chapter 3, more briefly, chapter 3 verses 2 to 11, Paul sets out his stall - this is the kind of Jew I was, I was the real zealous type, the hardliner, but I have discovered that in the Messiah Jesus all that has been stood on its head and by dying and rising with the Messiah, I have a status of righteousness which is not my own based on the law, but is a status which is God's gift, it's a righteousness from God upon faith.

Here again, it's about covenant membership - there's nothing in Philippians 3:2-11 about sin and being forgiven. Now, that's really important - we have to do justice to that. When Paul expands that language in Romans, he expands it by using the law court language, which goes with justification as well, in a way which he doesn't in Galatians and Philippians.

And in the law court, there are two different things going on. I'll be as quick and brief as I can about this, but it really is quite tricky. In Romans 2, he talks about a future justification. That is the time when God will judge the whole world and declare that some people really are his people - and that's what's going to be.

[00:19:36] There's a line from that in the letter which goes all the way to chapter 8, when he says, "There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus", and at the end 'it is God who justifies who is to condemn?'

So the line from Romans 2 to Romans 8 is all about the ultimate future justification. Then in Romans 3 he describes how the verdict which will be announced on the future date is brought forward into the present when someone believes in Jesus. And that's quite a complicated scheme for us to grasp, but it was very easy for Paul, because that's how first Century Jews thought. There is that great coming day, how do we know in the present who is going to be among God's people on that day?

So Romans 3 is about the fact that on the basis of the death of Jesus and because of people coming to faith, God declares in the present that they are in the right; that their sins are forgiven; that they're part of Abraham's family.

There I think that's about two and a half minutes.

[00:20:35 JB] You did very well

[00:20:36 NTW] I'm not sure it can be done any quicker

[00:20:38 JB] You've condensed a lifetime's scholarship there into two ... If I can try and ... try

and spell this out, and you will have to correct me - but can we say that justification then, as far as Paul was concerned, is about membership more than personal salvation, if you like?

[00:20:53 NTW] This is precisely the either/or that we have to avoid ...

[00:20:56 JB] ... Okay ...

[00:20:57 NTW] because the membership question is the membership and the family of Abraham and the purpose of Abraham's family was to undo the sin of Adam. That is the huge thing which once you put that in the middle of the picture everything becomes clear. Why do you want to belong to the family of Abraham for goodness sake? Answer: Because they are the people in whom the Adamic entail of sin and death has been dealt with. So it's got to be both.

[00:21:22 JB] And did the reformers get it wrong then? I mean did they get the wrong end of the stick essentially about what justification is?

[00:21:28 NTW] They came with a meaning for the word *iustificātiō* in Latin, 'justification', which was about the medieval doctrine of *iustitio*, 'justice', and they screened out by and large, I think Luther more than Calvin all the Jewish emphasis, all the Abraham emphasis, all of that, because for Luther the Jews were teaching justification by works, therefore this couldn't be a Jewish idea - because that would slide you back. Many scholars make that same mistake today.

[00:21:56 JB] Now, we'll get James to respond to this, but again a lot of people seem worried that you're somehow undermining 'we're saved by grace', because many people have said when Paul talks about his past life as a Jew, a law keeping Jew, that says to us today that you're not going to heaven by your good works; it's all about what God has done for you in Jesus Christ and that you are somehow undermining that core doctrine, that core aspect of Protestant Christianity.

[00:22:35 NTW] Part of the difficulty is the New Testament is not terribly interested about going to heaven. It's interested in the new heavens and the new earth and in the kingdom of God on earth as in heaven. And as long as we persist in talking about how we get to heaven, we are reversing what the New Testament is really all about.

Now I've often said, 'Heaven is important, but it's not the end of the world'. Yes, when we die - if we're Christ's - we go to be with Christ which is far better, but actually this isn't a separate discussion; this affects how you talk about present justification in terms of how you see the future.

[00:23:07 JB] alright, well we've had it spelled out there. James, just some initial thoughts. What are your main concerns with the way Tom, the new perspective deal with this issue of justification?

[00:23:19 JRW] Well, what's fascinating to me is - as I approach this, just a word from my own

experience. When I was in seminary, again because I had this 'go to the original source's, I found the local Christian bookstore, I personally purchased the Mishnah and the Soncino Talmud - this was back before you could do that electronically anyways - and I have always recognised that there was a spectrum of Jewish belief.

I think one of the issues that has to be addressed; one of the reasons this is such a complex issue is because there's so many underlying issues in regards to Tannaitic Judaism and what did Second Temple Jews believe. And of course there are all sorts of different kinds of perspectives amongst them and all the rest of that stuff.

But I've just never been in a position where, like I guess, as Tom would put it certain - especially Lutherans - would view it, where I view the Jews in this monolithic, pull-yourself-up-by-your-bootstraps mode anyways. It was just never how I've understood it. And in the best of reformed theology, you have union with Christ, you have the covenant of grace, you have justification having its proper place in the midst of all of this. And it just seems to me that the things that I hear in, especially in Tom's presentation that resonate with me and that I see is as being biblical, I already had. I don't think that it's addressed to me because I didn't view it in that way and the questions that come up though that many people have repeated over and over again has to do with this: What is the grounds and the basis of my standing before God and does that change between now and the future?

In other words, when you say that justification is primarily an ecclesiology issue - 'Who's in?; How can we know now?' What is the grounds that I have as an individual in having peace with God?

However we understand Romans 4, and this will be one of the issues (I don't know if we'll be able to get to it), but Tom's understanding of Romans 4:1, he will have to admit, is outside the normal range of exegesis; there the same as 2 Corinthians 5:21, Romans 10 and how we understand some of the things there.

There are some issues we can get into there and that's where it becomes somewhat complicated. But, how do we know - not just from the external sense of how do we know who's in the covenant now, but the big issue that there's a lot of concern about is when we get to the end and Tom says that 'the final declaration of justification will be based upon the life lived'.

The issue of 'based upon', 'according to', these are all issues that people become very uncomfortable with. I understand; I think I understand, I'm trying to understand in distinction to other new perspectivists what Tom is saying at that point. But my concern is that when I think about the Jews, I don't see them as moralists trying to pull themselves up by their bootstraps. But I do see, and I can't see how Paul can be read in any other way, than speaking of a synergistic righteousness on their part that the new perspective, even as Tom enunciates it, I don't see how it closes the door on that synergism, and in fact, maybe one of the things we can bring up

[00:26:43 JB] Just explain what you mean by synergistic

[00:26:46 JRW] What I mean by that is, as I see, what the Jews were saying and as I see Paul's concern, it's not just - and the thing I appreciate about what Tom Wright is saying is, there is clearly a national and ethnic aspect to their concerns. But I don't think it's just that, because a person who would, for example, would limit God's blessings to just our ethnic group - that doesn't speak well of their entire moral character. And clearly, when we read Matthew when we read all that Paul says, there was an ethical and moral aspect to what the Jews were saying as well, and so, the kind of law keeping that they were doing, partook of both of these aspects and hence, their meritorious standing before God, comes from their fulfillment of these things - it's both ethical and moral. And I don't know how, the new perspective, or at least let's leave that terminology aside: In Tom's position, in light of his statement - that the final verdict of justification will be based upon the life lived - how it can close the door on that cooperation where you have a mixture of God's gracious extension of the covenant and brings people into the covenant graciously and all those things. You see the issue of the reformation was not the necessity of grace. I mean the council of Trent condemned anyone who said you could be saved apart from God's grace. The issue of the reformation has never been the necessity of grace; the issue of the reformation has always been the sufficiency of grace and that's really where the issue is, the discomfort exists, shall we say. It also, I've just got to mention this and I'll just throw it out there because we can come to it later. Also, the issue of grounds touches on the issue of imputation and imputation has to be discussed a little bit later on.

[00:28:34 JB] We will talk about imputation. Right now we're going to go to a break - it's already time for our first break, believe it or not. And then we'll let Tom respond to some of James' concerns there. We're talking about St Paul and what he really said about justification.

My special guest, with me in studio today, is Professor NT Wright "Tom" as he's also known, "Tom Wright" - research professor of New Testament and Early Christianity, the Early Church at St Andrews University. Author of many, many books and of course this issue has been one that he's has written on a few times. Well, James White, director of Alpha and Omega Ministries is on the line from the States and we're getting their conversation on this whole area of 'What Paul Really Meant about justification'. Come back in a couple of minutes time and we'll be continuing.

[00:29:20 JB] Welcome back to *Unbelievable?* with me, Justin Brierley. Back into our discussion between NT Wright and James White in just a moment's time. Just a quick reminder, you can now register your interest to attend *Unbelievable?* the conference 2013, 'Jesus: Liar, Lunatic, Legend or Lord' happening on Saturday 25 May. Just visit the website premier.org.uk/jesus. And you can leave your email address with us, you'll get in return the full details of the conference, what the seminars are, who's going to be speaking about what and of course, you'll be the first to know once you can finalise your booking. premier.org.uk/jesus is the place to go. We're going to be joined by some amazing speakers. Alistair McGrath - one of the world's, frankly, foremost theologians and apologists, professor of theology, ministry and education, at Kings College London. Amy Orr-Ewing, travels the world as a speaker and trainer

for RZIM. Fazele Rama. Faz to his friends. Executive vice president of research and apologetics at Reasons To Believe; Peter S. Williams Christian Philosopher; Dr Trevor Stammers over 30 years' experience as a practicing GP, former head of the Christian Medical Fellowship. Find out more, premier.org.uk/jesus. You won't want to miss that.

Let's get back into today's discussion:

<Bumper music>

[00:30:48 JB] Tom, so we heard James in that section, laying out some of his concerns and essentially, what it sounded to me like is, he is worried that you are getting away from the fact that Paul was also talking about works righteousness and the idea that there was some kind of issue he was addressing around people trying to earn their way, and so on. He talked about this synergy that exists; so he's saying that it's both/and; he's not denying everything you're saying, but he's saying ...

[00:31:19 NTW] Yuh. Let me first say, I'm delighted and not surprised, because I know James is a reformed theologian. I've often said that if the predominant mood of Pauline scholarship had been reformed rather than Lutheran, the New Perspective would not have been necessary - because that would have been what we all believed. In other words, it's a positive view of Judaism; a positive view of God giving the Law to Moses; a positive view of the covenant, which is now fulfilled - rather than as with Lutheranism, and some other schemes, a negative view. That was a bad thing, the wrong sort of religion and Paul has blown it away. So James and I are clearly on the same page here. Actually, this conversation is an inner-reformed conversation, rather than other sorts. Anglicanism, classically is a variety of reformed theology, not everyone knows that - but there it is. It's also other things.

The real issue here is scripture. For me, as for the reformers, sola scriptura is the watch word. And what really worries me about the importation of medieval categories, like synergism, which is not something that's discussed in the Bible, is that it then strikes out certain bits of the Bible; and I'm committed to not striking out those bits of the Bible. And I'm thinking of Romans 2, where Paul says, "he will give everyone according to his works - to those who, by patience and well-doing seek for glory, and honour and immortality, he will give eternal life". And he emphasises that, "glory and honour and peace for everyone who does good. The Jew first and also the Greek".

And he then says, "It's not those who hear the law who will be righteous, but those who do the Law will be justified". That's Romans 2:12-13. So I want to stress to James, this isn't Tom Wright who's saying this - this is St Paul who's saying this. Now of course, many theologians have said, "Oh well, Paul sets up that category, but then later on he declares that it's null and void, that nobody actually fits into it. But that is a mistake, an exegetical mistake based on a dividing of Romans, sharply, between Romans 1-4 and 5-8 because in Romans 8, as I said before, Paul comes back and uses exactly the same language about judgement, about condemnation and about righteousness, about justification as he did before. Because this is talking about the future justification and it's very striking in Romans 8, that he actually says "that

those who mind the flesh, think of the things of the flesh; those who have the mind of the spirit, think of the things of the spirit” etc. “And the mind of the flesh cannot submit to God’s law” and then he says, “If you live according to the flesh, you’ll die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live”. And again, this is not Tom Wright, this is Paul.

What is the place of Romans 8:12-16 in final justification? The answer to this, and this has been missing from many accounts of justification - though not from Calvin - is the Spirit. The doctrine of justification is a trinitarian doctrine from top to bottom. It’s the grace of God which is the basis, it’s then the accomplishment, the unique sole, one-off death and resurrection of the Messiah, which is ... (and words like ‘ground’ and ‘basis’ have been very slippery in this discourse actually) but it’s the grace of God, it’s the unique accomplishment of Jesus that then again and again, in Paul, it’s the operation of the Spirit.

That’s why he says in Phillipians 1 “the one who began a good work in you, will bring it to completion at the day of Christ”. Now, when the Spirit works in you, first to produce faith - the faith by which you are then justified, but then to produce not only the fruits of character but also, ultimately the Resurrection - because that’s the work of the Spirit. Is this synergism or do we say it’s all the Spirit doing it and none of me? Somebody wrote a book a while ago, saying - sort of like an extreme Calvinist thing - saying it’s entirely the Spirit and we have nothing to do. But actually when the Spirit works, Paul would say, that’s when you’re mind has to be engaged. You have to be making moral decisions about, all of which, you will say, as Paul himself did “Yet, not I, but the grace of God that was with me”. That’s the paradox of Christian spirituality. And to be afraid of that, because of the danger of something called ‘synergism’ is to import a medieval roadblock right into the middle of what is a large Pauline highway, and I just hope we can avoid that.

[00:35:30 JB] James.

[00:35:31 JRW] Well, I don’t think that it’s a matter of being afraid of something. Obviously, what I’m concerned about ... I want to be and I believe are the same concerns that the Apostle Paul himself had - and when we look at, for example, Romans 2, I think that Tom would admit his exegesis of the application of Romans 2:13 and following is not Calvin’s. His [Calvin’s] understanding of that text, I think, is pretty much the same way that I’ve understood it and that is Romans chapter 2, Paul turns to the Jews, he closes the door on any ground of self-righteousness - whether it’s national or ethical or both.

He closes the door, demonstrates that if you’re going to possess the law, you have to be a doer of the law; but what’s the conclusion of all this? It’s the great catena of passages in Romans 3, drawn from the Jews own scripture, it says ‘no one does this’. We need someone to do that for us, which us takes then into Romans 4 and you have one of the major areas. And this is one of the things, I’m just going to lay it out, there’s no way in the amount of time we can even try to talk about the issue of Romans 4:1 or ... I do hope we can talk about 2 Corinthians 5:21, if we can at least talk about it briefly, to try to throw these things out so people can look at these things.

But he goes into Romans chapter 4 and he talks about Abraham and there's a very different way of reading that Tom would present in his commentary on Romans that basically says, 'Well, does this mean that we have Abraham as our forefather according to the flesh, in a covenantal sense'. The vast majority of interpreters have understood this in a very different way, that is, what did our forefather Abraham discover according to the flesh and specifically the assertion that even Abraham, righteous Abraham Why was he righteous? Well, Genesis 15, the most single important passage on justification in the New [sic] Testament. How was Abraham justified? He was justified by faith. And then the contrast is drawn between the kind of faith that justifies and the kind of faith that does not justify, and specifically in contrasting to the one who works - his reward is not reckoned according to grace but what is owed to him, categories of debt.

[0:37:45 JRW] continue

Tom would attach that due to *misthos* (μισθός) there back to Genesis 15. I think the closest textual connection there between *misthos* is the concept of owing or debt that has been introduced by Paul there, and then he contrasts that with one who does not work. And uses the exact same even word order, just puts in, the negation to show that he's giving you a 180 degree opposite concept here. The kind of faith that saves, is the empty hand of faith that can fit into the hand of God's grace.

And then he makes application not merely in the covenantal sense, which is still - it's always there - all this is always in Christ, it's always in the covenant of grace. It's always there, but it's intensely personal because he goes to David, and he goes to Psalm 32. and he says, 'You wanna talk about the blessed man? Who is the blessed man? The blessed man is the one to whom the Lord will not impute his sins' which brings us to *logizomai* (λογίζομαι) and imputation and all the rest of that stuff.

We do have covenant themes here, it's always only in Christ but my concern is ... and it becomes a very pastoral concern and hopefully we can ask this ... maybe I can ask this question now and get to it later, but let me go ahead and throw this out. As I stand - Lord willing I'm going to have the opportunity of debating, again in the East London Mosque, as I stand there dialoguing with men that you know Justin, men who have been in the studio with us - as I speak the gospel to them and I'm talking to them about having peace with God, Romans 5:1 'Therefore having been justified, we have peace with God'; true shalom. What is the grounds or basis for that?

How is it ... and this is very important in talking to Muslims, because the whole issue of jihad and Sharia and things like that comes in here and one of the things I say to them, and I'd be interested to hear what Tom would think about this, one of the things that I present - it's part and parcel of the gospel I present, is that the reason I have peace is nothing in my self. The reason I have peace is because I possess something, and this is something that hasn't come out yet, this is where Tom and I have to discuss - "the righteousness of God".

Now, I understand ... I think I understand what Tom understands, he says 'this is the covenant faithfulness of God, even when you talk about belief in the faithfulness of Christ, it's his faithfulness to his role as messiah, so on and so forth. I understand where he's coming from and we can talk about subjective and objective genitives till the cows come home, but from my perspective, central to the gospel proclamation, is the fact that the reason I have true shalom with God is because of the fact of the non-imputation of sin. Well how can he do that justly? This is where the death of Christ comes in. It's because my sins have been laid upon him - imputation - Isaiah 53. Tom and I believe a lot about the same things in Isaiah 53, but this is where I see it all coming together and that's why again we come back to this issue of ...

[00:40:40 JB] Okay ...

[00:40:40 JRW] ... What's the final basis?

[00:40:43 JB] What is the final basis? as it were for ... and we're talking about salvation here, we're talking about grace and 2 Corinthians 5:21 has already mentioned in this context. Let's talk about that then, in 2 Corinthians 5:21 do you want to respond first of all, then we'll get to imputation and things.

[00:41:02] NT Well just ... just briefly, we don't have time to go anything like hard enough into Romans 4; it's obviously too complex and technical - it's a very interesting little bit. Our disagreements are oblique; I'm not saying "no" to everything James has said and I don't think actually he's saying "no" to everything I've said. I'm struggling with the Greek and it's very difficult Greek, to see how the whole chapter makes the sense it makes and I notice people who emphasize what James emphasizes, many translations do - then have to put brackets around part of verses, perhaps 16 and 17 in Romans, which are actually the climax of the chapter but which if you take the main theme to be what James thinks it is, are actually falling off the edge, there an aside about something else. Now, we haven't got time to go into that, just to put down a marker that actually ... I've got an article coming out about this ... there's various things going on, but I really do want to go back to Romans 2 because all sorts of things happen there which are normally swept aside in exactly the way James did, by saying, "Oh well, you go to the catena in chapter 3, which shows that in fact nobody ever makes this". But actually, in Romans 2:25-29, Paul sets up in advance a category of Gentiles who keep the law, the people who are by nature uncircumcised but who fulfil the law, and they will judge you, the Jew who has the letter but breaks the law.

Paul is clearly here talking about Christian Gentiles who in some sense or other, keep the law. Now this is a tease. Paul hasn't told us how they keep the law and he teases us again at the end of Romans 3, when he talks about the law of faith. He does it again in Romans 8, when he talks about the 'mind of the flesh doesn't submit to the law', but the mind of the spirit, by implication, does. It's only when we get to Romans 10, that we discover that he's redefined what he means by keeping the law, namely it is by believing that Jesus was raised from the dead and by confessing him as Lord; and he aligns that with Deuteronomy 30, which is about the new

covenant, which is about, the true new covenant redeemed, post-exilic keeping of the law. So now we know who these people were in Chapter 2.

[00:43:11 NTW (cont'd)] It's all because of the Spirit and it's all because of grace, and so, at the end of the day, yes, if anyone thinks I was saved by grace to begin with but now I have to do a bit of working in myself on the side. Of course that's absurd, that's like taking a ladder into a lift or into an elevator as the Americans would say, so that while the lift is going up, you can do some climbing yourself - that's utterly ridiculous, why would you want to do that? But actually, when the Spirit works, we are caught up in that mysteriously. And Paul says, "I worked harder than them all, yet it was not I but the grace of God". It seems to me that is exactly the sort of statement that we expect people to make.

[00:43:48 NTW (cont'd)] As for the pastoral implications, yes, of course, if somebody says 'How can I know peace with God?' I'll say, 'Cling onto the cross where Jesus died for you and he took your sin and you keep your eyes on the cross and you won't go wrong, then you will find that you are standing on resurrection ground, but what is imputed in Paul, is not righteousness, but according to Romans 6 the death and resurrection of Jesus, now that ...'

[00:44:12 JB] Well, let's talk about imputation, righteousness and so forth. Just before we get to that, if you're listening and you'd like to respond yourself to either James or Tom, on today's program, then the email address is: unbelievable@premier.org.uk. Do check us out online as well, where you can find links to the facebook and Twitter account, and indeed links to both my guests today. www.premier.org.uk/unbelievable. This is the show that aims to get you thinking. Quite a high-level theology going on. I'm just about keeping abreast of what's happening, I'm desperately sort of, you know ... doing my doggie paddle while these guys are sort of, doing front crawls down the straits of the New Testament. It's funny, I don't think I've had anyone - you probably do this James - but Tom's here reading as though he's reading from an English Bible, he's actually got a Greek Bible in front of him but just translating on the go, as we go.

[00:45:15 JRW] Well, Justin I really do hope there's synergy, shall we say, on the program today because, honestly this issue is so vital and so important and unfortunately, I do think there's a lot of talking past and I think there's a lot of excess - really on both sides, in fact, Tom, I'll just have to tell you, you know I read John's book and I read yours and I'm not a geocentrist. You know. I suppose now you're going to have to explain that - I shouldn't have done that.

[00:45:50 NTW] Never mind, never mind

[00:45:51 JRW] But you know what I mean

[00:45:54 NTW] Yes, Yes.

[00:45:54 JRW] And I hope you can hear I am ... you know, one of the things John Dominic Crosson really appreciated about our debate was I spent 6 months listening to him, and he could tell that. And as a result, it was one of the best debates we ever had. That's not

happening enough here and partly because you are touching a live wire, you're touching something in ... and my suggestion to you Tom would be that you don't describe it as fear on our parts, as if we're just - there are people who have a knee jerk reaction, I understand that. And I understand being in your shoes, you've gotten a lot of people attributing things to you that you then say, 'that's not what I believe', cause they're not hearing you. I understand all of that. But at the same time, from my perspective, if it's helpful to you, I'm hearing you say certain things like, 'Well, you know low level protestant interpretation' or 'fear of these things' or ... really questioning our commitment to sola scriptura and that's what raises some of the heckles, it really does.

[00:46:54 JB] I understand. We need to make sure we're being fair to each side in this discussion. We try to do that on the program. If you want to find out more, as I say, do follow the links to both James and Tom's material. This is *Unbelievable?*, the show that aims to get you thinking.

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[00:47:19 JB] So coming back gentleman, let's talk about imputation, righteousness. 2 Corinthians 5:21 has these famous words, this is from, I think the NIV 'God made him who had no sin to be sin for us'. Why you looking ascense at the NIV there Tom?

[00:47:36 NTW] Because the NIV always gets Paul wrong by definition.

[00:47:39 JB] I should've got Tom's translation with me really, shouldn't I? But anyway ... you can correct this. 'God made him who had no sin to be sin for us so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God' often used as a text Tom to suggest that this is about a righteousness alien to us, from God, imputed to us at that moment of salvation, of accepting Christ and so forth. That this is what the righteousness is, this is what justification is - it's a special thing that happens when you become a Christian. And this is what James was saying in that last section, that he needs to be able to tell those who need to accept the gospel that this isn't about something we do, this is something about God imparts, imputes to us. James, let me just give you the option - am I correctly, sort of, more or less spelling it out right there.

[00:48:35 JRW] More or less, yes. The point is that when I'm speaking to my Muslim friends, what I'm presenting them - or anyone for that matter - what I'm presenting to them is the fact that when I stand before God, I will stand before Him, perfectly righteous - not because of anything I have done; now I believe, and Tom, hear me here: I stand firmly against anti-Lordship proponents who say that there is no repentance, there's no godliness and I believe everything I do is the work of the Spirit of God, it all revolves around the glory of God, all that is part and parcel of what I believe, but when they ask me: 'How is it that you continue to experience sin in your life and yet you have peace with God right now?' The answer I give to them is, 'Because I possess the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ, and that is why I have peace with God'. That's the issue.

[00:49:28 JB] Okay, Tom.

[00:49:29 NTW] There are a thousand issues here. The content, the substance of what James just said, I totally and utterly affirm. The language, I think, is misleading because it isn't Pauline. I regret the possibility that the strong pastoral concern, and I'm a pastor too, I have the same concerns, but we cannot let pastoral concerns dictate how we read verse by verse in the New Testament. Actually, I believe everything James has just said is firmly stated in the New Testament, in all sorts of ways - actually stated even more sharply and excitingly than that. But the texts which are now used, simply don't refer to that. My teacher George Cared, we used to fight about Romans 7, and frequently he would say I don't think Paul would disagree with what you just said, but I don't think that's what he's talking about in Romans 7. And finally after about five years, we came to a common mind eventually, and we both actually changed our minds. And it seems to me, that we have to pay attention.

And I'm sorry James, I'm not maligning you but I have been to America a lot and actually, I have to say, a lot of these debates are American rather than anywhere else, which is interesting - why is that culturally? I don't know. And that's quite a serious point. But let's not pursue that. But I have experienced the fear of those who react in this gut-reaction thing, you just took away my favourite toy - or whatever. That's what it comes across as. Again and again, this is not once or twice, this is dozens of time. Likewise I have experienced again and again, people who actually resist things which are in the text and will expound something and will cut-off, just at the point where Paul is going to say something else, which balances the ... so, I mean the question of sola scriptura is a very live one for me.

So going to 2 Corinthians 5; 2 Corinthians 3, 4, 5 and the first half of 6 are all about Paul's apostolic ministry and it's a defence of that. That's what the whole things is about. And the last three verses before 21, 5:21, he keeps on doing this balancing thing. Something has happened because of Christ, therefore something is now true of my ministry. God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not reckoning their trespasses against them - fantastic, of course, yes - and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. So he's going on, 'this what God has done in Christ, once and for all and this is the ministry we now have'. And the natural way of reading v21 is then the one who did not know sin, he made to be sin for us so that we might have this covenant faithfulness of God as the thing which we embodying in our ministry. And when you go on immediately, there's no chapter break for Paul - you find two verses later, a quote from Isaiah 49 which, in context, says 'I have given you as a covenant to the peoples and that's the basic argument. But the subsidiary argument is that the phrase, 'the righteousness of God' demonstrably in the Old Testament, in the thing called the Bible - Isaiah and the Psalms - means the faithfulness of God to his covenant, not a status which God imputes to his people.

We do have a righteous status that is stated in Philippians 3, but Paul does not call it the 'righteousness of God'; he calls it a 'righteousness from God'. That may sound like a technical distinction, but if you don't take this - then there's all sorts of good things which Paul is saying which will never be heard.

[00:52:54 JB] And for you it doesn't make sense then of all those other references where 'righteousness' is used which mean faithfulness, it doesn't make sense to say to God somehow transfers his faithfulness to us, that's not what going ...

[00:53:07 NTW] No ... God gives us the status of 'righteous in Christ' that's clear in Philipians, it's actually clear in Romans, it's clear all through. We have that righteous status, but this is not the same thing as the 'righteousness of God'. And actually, this is a concern, it's a John Piper like concern, for the utter glory of God and the utter sovereignty and majesty of God. God is faithful to his covenant and therefore all those who believe, He gives them a righteous status, which is exactly what James is talking about, but that is not what this verse is saying.

[00:53:41 JB] Okay, a couple of minutes to respond James.

[00:53:44 JRW] Yeah, just right there at the end. If we're united with Christ, then we have what he has. We are united with him. And why the incarnation? The incarnation - why 33 years of life? See, this is where reformed theology has very strongly emphasized, not only the active and passive obedience of Christ. And yeah, those are post-biblical words but they're descriptive of what the Bible itself is teaching and obviously, Tom and I would probably defend the trinity in very similar ways. You have to allow the text to speak, but you have to also hear all of what it's saying.

We go to 2 Corinthians 5; what is Paul talking about? I would agree. For example, I've dealt with this in dealing with the apostolic authority with various groups and things like that. There is obviously that emphasis. However, he then starts talking about reconciliation; he starts talking about very personal issues regarding sin; the preaching of the gospel to the world. And so when it talks about, 'we're ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us, we beg you on behalf of Christ be reconciled to God'.

This of course is deeply soteriological language and so, I think, I'm not sure if Tom has said this directly and he's very careful about this in his book; he says 'I don't like taking this perspective' in the sense 'I don't like disagreeing with what has pretty much been the universal interpretation of this text'. But he is taking a very unusual perspective and I think when you do take a very unusual perspective, that puts a greater burden upon you as far as exegesis and demonstration of it is concerned. When it says, 'he made him who knew no sin' that 'knowing of no sin' on Jesus' part is intensely personal. I mean, he was the spotless lamb of God; that is why he sweat as it were drops of blood. It wasn't fear of death, it was this exchange that was coming up. 'He made him he knew no sin to be sin on our behalf so that we might ...' and I would be interested, maybe if Tom could comment briefly on how he translated *genometha* (γενώμεθα) there ... Did you say 'obtained' (or something like that)?

[00:55:51 NTW] The normal translation is 'become'. I was actually going to ask you that because, if Paul meant what you said, I don't think he would have written *genometha*.

[00:55:59 JRW] Why's that?

[00:56:00 NTW] Because it means 'become' and you're not talking about becoming, you're talking about a status. And likewise, if he'd meant what you meant, he should have said *dikaisunē christou* (δικαιοσύνη Χριστοῦ) 'the righteousness of Christ' not the 'righteousness of God'. There's a very slippery thing going on here, where you're transferring from the righteousness, the supposed righteousness of God to the supposed righteousness of Christ, and then this word 'become' how do you translate *genometha*?

[0:56:27 JRW] Well a couple of things. The category that has already been introduced in the first part of the verse is 'he made Him', obviously *poieo* (ποιέω) does not mean that the Son became sin, in the sense of an ontological transformation. And so since there was a legal recognition on the part of the Father that the Son has taken a particular role - that's the only way *genometha*, that's the only context that we can translate that.

And secondly as for the 'righteousness of God', the 'righteousness of Christ', to distinguish between them in this context, I'm not trying to say that there's not a personal union with Christ here or something like that, but it is the Father who is the one who makes the judicial statement and it's the triune action that provides this righteousness for us. By the way, my point is that the the righteousness of God very frequently does have the meaning that you have, but the problem is, I think ... and I'm certainly not the only one who said this - to limit it to only God's covenant faithfulness so that there cannot be, for example, the expansion of the law court language that we find in Romans 8, where it's not just a judge and the person before the judge, but there is an intermediary. This enriches, and hence expands the category.

[0:57:50 JB] Okay, quick response from Tom, then we're going to go our break and we're going to have to go to our final thoughts

[0:57:50 NTW] I fully agree that what happens in Romans is the expansion of the law court category, and I think that happens because right from the beginning, the law court category was an expression in the Old Testament of the covenant. And so, what you have at the end of Romans is this seamless transition from God who is the judge, who is the one who will justify to the love of God and the love of the Messiah and they do flow together. I'm just very concerned first about the specific meaning of this phrase *dikaiousunē theou* (δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ) which everywhere else in Paul and everywhere else in the Old Testament means what I just said it meant, but also about the resonances of that Isaiah 49 quote in 2 Corinthians 6:2 where Paul, as so often quotes one verse but has the whole passage in mind, the whole passage is about - as you would expect, because Paul is talking about ministry of the new covenant in 2 Corinthians 3 and throughout, that this about God giving these apostles as covenant ministers, as a covenant to the people, a light to those in darkness and so on. So, I suspect theologically we're just not that far apart, I'm really concerned that we commit ourselves to working out the exegesis in its detail as well as its broad sweep.

[0:57:50 JB] We are going to have to go to a break and we'll allow James to respond, we'll have some time for getting together our final - we've obviously just touched on these issues, just

a few of the issues that come about in this discussion, but we'll try and start to draw our thoughts together to a close in the next section. You're listening to *Unbelievable?* - quite a high level theological discussion today, as we ask the question, 'What did St Paul really say about justification?'. My guest today, Professor N.T.Wright, and James White, director of Alpha and Omega Ministries. Come back in a short moment's time as we conclude today's program.

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[0:59:46 JB] Welcome back to the third and final part of today's *Unbelievable?* with me Justin Brierley. It's the program that aims to get you thinking and we've got a conference that we've been running now for the last two or three years, it's the third edition of the conference, this year. Saturday 25th May in Central London. Hope you can join us for that, because we've got some fantastic speakers coming along, Alistair McGrath, who is of course a well-known theologian and apologist in his own right, scientist by background, debated a number of high-profile atheists, best-selling author too; Amy Orr-Ewing also joins us, she's part of the Oxford Centre for Christian Apologetics, wonderful speaker; Faz Rana from Reasons To Believe will be with us, a bio-chemist by background himself; Peter S Williams a Christian philosopher is there and Dr Trevor Stammers, who is a practicing GP is going to be talking about issues like abortion and ethunasia and other guests too - find out more and register your interest at www.premier.org.uk/jesus - that's because the title of this year's conference is '*Unbelievable? the conference 2013: Jesus - Liar, Lunatic, Legend or Lord*'. How do we make the case for Jesus to people who are skeptical around us? Find out by attending - get yourself equipped, www.premier.org.uk/jesus - you can register your interest there and as soon as the booking lines are open we'll be sending you an email if you've registered your interest, and indeed, full details of the conference itself, so that's the place to go.

Next week on the show, I'm going to be joined by Randal Raser, I think that's how you pronounce his name - I've never actually asked him specifically, but I think that's that 'Randal Rauser' who's a Christian apologist out in the States, his new book 'The Swedish Atheist, the Scuba Diver and other apologetic rabbit trails' was recently published; how's that for a title? He's going to be telling us about that and he's going to be in conversation with atheist Ralph Jones who was recently published in Christianity Magazine. They do a little column an occasional column, called 'Why I'm not a Christian'. Well Ralph was very adamant about the reasons for his not being a Christian, he'll be presenting some of them to Randal and I'm sure they'll have a fascinating discussion, back to the normal format - Christian/non-Christian next week. Today though, we've been doing an inter-Christian and what a discussion it's been.

<Break>

[1:02:14 JB] So welcome back to this discussion between Tom Wright and James White. It's Wright and White, today, on the program that aims to get you thinking, *Unbelievable?* Tom has just been describing his understanding of this phrase - I'm not going to try and repeat the Greek again, it's all to do with whether Christ became sin for us and what was imputed was this righteousness of God imputed to us, that's the way James see it; Tom doesn't feel that does

justice to the text and the way that these words are used elsewhere and so forth. James are you holding on - and I think this is kind of the implication of what Tom's being saying so far - are you holding on to this understanding of justification and righteousness and imputation because that's been how it's been understood, you know, classically - from the reformers. Do you have the Biblical grounds for it though Tom asks. Is it time for a reformation of your reformation at this point.

[1:03:09 JRW] That does seem to be what a lot of people are hearing Tom saying, and given some of the examples that he's used regarding Luther and *Potatentio Magete* [*sic* – *actual words uncertain*] and *metanoiate* (μετάνοιατη) at the time of the reformation and things like that, that does seem to be categories in his mind, I'll let him comment upon that - obviously as a person who has defended sola scriptura repeatedly and for decades, in many, many different contexts against all comers - from atheists all the way through the entire spectrum. I feel that criticism very strongly and I have to hear what Tom is saying, that's why I hope he will at least give to me the credit of looking for his most current statement and trying to represent it as best I can in the brief amount of time that we have. But I really do believe that when we look at a passage like 2 Corinthians 5. There is something, I think it's appropriate to say, if a person comes up with a brand new interpretation that has not been known before - I'm not saying, that ... well I've got 1500 years or I've got 2000 years - that's not my argument, but my argument would be - if the Spirit of God has been active in pastors and teachers for all that period of time, how did everybody miss it for so long? That's the other side of the equation that I do think needs to be addressed.

[1:04:29 JB] Okay, you're saying that we need to be very cautious

[1:04:31 JRW] Yeah, I think that's a fair and appropriate thing. But in regards to 2 Corinthians 5:21, when we talk about reconciliation - see I, both - I hear Tom saying this all the time and I want him to hear me saying this all the time - I do think that you have to listen to everything that not only Paul says but all the New Testament says; and both sides think the other side's not doing that. And I see, when you talk about reconciliation - what's the basis of it? In light of the reality of sin and the alienation of God based upon that. In the sense of the wrath of God that is poured out and the fact that man is *katechonton* (κατεχόντων) - he's supressing the knowledge of God. All these things, reconciliation - what's the basis of that?

And that's what Paul's saying, is that 'He made Him who knew no sin' - we know sin. Jesus had to be different. 'He made him who knew no sin to be sin', *huper hēmon* (ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν) - in our place. What does that mean, that concept of substitution? What does that involve? In order that we might become - we might be made - the righteousness of God in him. And the categories of the law court, I love because I love Romans 8, but in Romans 8 there's something more than just the judge and the person being judged - there is the one, there is the intermediary - and so I go to Hebrews and I see the one standing before the throne, interceding and I bring all these things together and that's why I have to emphasize where I'm coming from - that's why I do believe that we have this dialogue and discussion going on.

[1:06:02 NTW] I hear all that. And obviously I want the rest of the NT in there and that's why I've spent my life teaching it and writing about it and trying to hold it all together, particularly against those who try to pull it apart.

James, you will forgive me for saying that it is still slightly amusing to hear somebody coming from where you're coming from, saying that basically the tradition has spoken and who do you think you are to bring this new idea? That's exactly what they said to Luther and Calvin in 16th Century.

Now I hear of course, if it's different let's argue it. I have argued it millimetre by millimetre, And I hope you'll see in my most recent work that 2 Corinthians 5:21 I've gone into it line by line and I think *genometha* doesn't mean 'be made' it means 'become'. May I just take you to another place? The place where Paul gives us the answer to the question, that I think you're asking, is Romans 6 verses, well, 9, 10, 11 but particularly 11. 'Likewise you should reckon yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in the Messiah Jesus'. This is the reckoning, this is the status we reckon that because of Jesus, and yes his substitutionary death - people have accused me of not believing in substitution - that's because they just haven't read what I've written, but I'm sure you won't accuse me of that. It's clear I believe in substitutionary atonement. So all that imputation of our sin to Christ, yes, absolutely fine - we're on the same page. But the thing that is then reckoned to us, according to Paul in Romans 6:11, is that we are alive to God in the Messiah. That is because we are in Christ, we stand on resurrection ground. That is the place, we stand and that's where we start, that's not because we have struggled against sin and finally won a victory, that's where we start, because of which we are then commanded to struggle against sin. I suspect you will agree with that, but for me that is the centre of the reckoning and it's a funny thing that we've gone to reckoning righteousness when Paul really wants to say a reckoning to the death and resurrection of Jesus. That's where I stand as a Christian on the ground that I have been put in through my baptism, through faith on the ground of Jesus' resurrection.

[1:08:08 JRW] Well let me just say in response to the assertion that I'm saying, well you're going against the grand tradition. That's not what I said. I tried to be very clear, I said, I think when we come up with an interpretation that's never been seen before after all this time, that there needs to be some examination of that, but I would never say that well, the traditional interpretation exists, therefore you somehow can't be right about this. I'm not making that argument at all.

[1:08:38 NTW] I hear that, can I just say - I do understand though why in the Western church the interpretation I'm proposing has not been brought out at all - because the Western church has been so stuck on the medieval language of *iustitia* - justice/justification, that it has seen that, misunderstood *dikaioSunē theou*, 'the righteousness of God', say in Romans 1:17 and Romans 3:21 and then has read that into Second Corinthians. We have to read the whole thing, ironically, in the light of a fully biblical theology i.e. Isaiah and the Psalms and so on.

[1:09:10 JRW] And if I can respond to Romans 6, I do see Romans 6 as the exhortation of a

Christian in light of the person standing to reckon themselves as dead to sin, In other words, if this has happened - if this great transaction, as I would see it, has happened, then this is the fulfilment of what Jesus said: 'Deny yourselves, take up your cross, join the death march'.

There has to be a ethical and moral response to a changed nature, if we have died to sin we can no longer live therein. There's no question that that is the message in the New Testament. But I think that a lot of folks are still frustrated because we still need to, I think, ask the question - and if I can get anything to come out of this, it might be good along these lines. When you say, Tom, that the final statement of justification will be based upon the life lived, you say you could never live that life apart from grace. Okay, I hear that, you're saying it's all of grace, it's the work of the Spirit, the Spirit works within us to conform us to the image of Christ, to bring forth the fruits of righteousness - again everything that's a part of my reformed tradition, God has a purpose in saving His people and he is conforming those people to the image of Christ and this is the essence of the new covenant, 'I will write my law up on their hearts', 'from the least to the greatest they will know me', all these things - part and parcel of what the New Testament teaches. We agree about that. But when you say at the end, the life lived, and you've already raised the term "basis," here's the question everyone has, and that is, 'When you stand before a Holy God, and you talk about the life that you've lived, from your perspective can you start along those lines and then lose that at some point down the round, or what is that final basis? Is it a grace inspired body of sanctifying work, based on Romans 2 and saying, you know it's the life that's lived toward seeking after, seeking after immortality, could you address that because that's the ...

[1:11:26 JB] Let's make this the final question we'll have to sort of start to conclude things.

[1:11:26 NTW] I understand the question and as far as I'm concerned when I think about, if I take a funeral and think about it in relation to someone else or if I think about it in relation to me, 'No this shall be all my plea / Jesus has lived has died for me'. You know all those hymns come back into their own. However, I also read in Romans 8 verses 12 through to 17, something very similar actually to what I read in Romans 2 and I read the same thing, and if anyone's listens to this who just wants to check out these passages, what does 2 Corinthians 5:10 mean, 'We must all stand before the judgement seat of Christ, that we each may receive what was done in the body, whether good or bad'? What does Romans 14:10 which says something very similar? we can't escape the fact that we are summoned to be holy, to be spirit-led, spirit-driven, holy people - not by some synergistic 'I do this bit, God does that bit' thing, but purely from the grace of God, which is operative within us. This is part of the mystery of spirituality, as I said before. But at the end of the day, we go before our maker, grasping on to the cross where our sin was dealt with, grateful for the spirit which has enabled us to believe, and hopefully what Paul says 'The one who began the good work in you will bring it to completion'. And when that happens we don't say, 'Here is something by the way that I've done on the side', we say 'Everything that has happened has been the work of God, the work of grace'. And all I'm trying to do is to hold together these different statements of scripture and not let one oust the other.

[1:13:10 JB] James, thank you for joining us today. Did you just want to conclude with a few

final words and we'll say good bye?

[1:13:14.6 JRW] Well, yeah, you know. I do think that that is what both of us are trying to do. We want to hear all of scripture; we're trying to hold it all together and each one of us has our worldview, our system for doing that and we need to be aware of what that system is.

I just think that there is a real concern for a lot of folks and I still continue to have a concern about the role that overriding presuppositions might have. We all have them. I recognise that. Tom Wright has them. Hopefully, we have at least gotten to the real issue here. That is, that we're talking about issues of what the righteousness of God means, what imputation means and hopefully as a result, there'd be at least little more clarity, maybe a little less of the anger and more of the real discussion that needs to be taking place in regards to this vitally important topic. Because look, we have a world that is looking to us and it needs a clear message. It needs a very clear message.

[1:14:12 JB] Absolutely. And if you're listening and you're an atheist listener - we have lots of atheist listeners and agnostics listen to this program - Tom they may be thinking ...'ohhh Christianity is very complicated isn't it? Goodness me'. When it boils to it, what is so important about this in the end, when it comes to people's lives, God, how they live them?

[1:14:35 NTW] I want to say first, human life is complicated. Any look at any person - life is very complicated. However, there is an essential simplicity to it. And the simplicity at the heart of the Christian faith is simply Jesus. That basically, when it all comes down to it, it's looking long and hard at Jesus for which you need the gospels, you need Paul, you need Hebrews, you need everything - but then realising something about what his death was about, something about the new world that began at his resurrection, something about the God we see in this Jesus - and I think most people, even little children can actually grasp that.

[1:15:12 JB] Well Tom, thank you for being with us. Thank you for talking about this very complex, but stimulating sort of subject: 'What did St Paul really say about justification?' We look forward to your new book coming out hopefully around November time this year [2013] on St Paul and the Faithfulness of God. But for the moment, thank you for joining me on the program today. Thanks also to James White.

[1:15:32] <Break>.

[1:15:41 JB] Well as ever, if you want to get in touch and leave your thoughts on today's program, why not get in touch by email, in the first instance, that's unbelievable@premier.org.uk you can call the phone line and leave a voicemail message that way, if you're listening, 08546 52 52 52 and select the option for *Unbelievable?*. Don't forget I'm sure a lot of chat will be happening on the *Unbelievable?* Facebook page and via Twitter. If you want to follow on Twitter, it's @unbelievablejb and www.facebook.com/unbelievablejb for the program page on Facebook. All the links and of course links to my guests Tom Wright's material and indeed James White's Alpha and Omega Ministries from the website from the podcast of this program.

You can find that at premier.org.uk/unbelievable.

[1:16:39] <Continues with audience feedback and annual Unbelievable? conference details>