

**Justification by Faith: The Objective and Subjective
Dimensions
(Part 1)**

by

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Introduction

The subjective and objective dimensions of justification address the issue as to whether or not we are justified by our faith in Jesus or by the faithfulness of Jesus.

The difference has great practical value for our understanding of morality, doctrines, religion, remnant or “the right church” status, assurance of salvation, self worth, among other things. Ensure to read all three sections of this presentation in order to get the full scope.

Faith of/in Jesus

Our faith in Jesus = our subjective response
to Jesus/God

The faith of Jesus = Jesus' faithfulness
expressed ultimately on
the cross

Therefore, when Paul speaks of justification by faith, did he mean justification by **our** faith in Jesus or justification by the faithfulness of Jesus?

The differences have tremendous practical value

The phrase πίστewς Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (faith of/in Christ
Jesus) can be translated as a subjective genitive or an
objective genitive

As an objective genitive = faith in Jesus

As a subjective genitive = faith of Jesus

The context, theology, author's style and background determine
the translation

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Definition: Subjective/Objective Genitive

A subjective/objective genitive construction is formed when there is a noun in the genitive case followed by a noun of action (or pronoun), which is also in the genitive case most of the time.

It asks the question as to whether or not the noun in the genitive is producing or receiving the action implied by the noun of action.

Definition: Subjective/Objective Genitive

A noun of action is a noun which has a verbal form

Noun: *agape* love — verb= *agapaō* — I love

Noun: *basileus* king — verb = *basileuetō* — I reign

Noun: *pistis* faith — verb = *pisteō* — I believe

If the noun in the genitive is **producing** the action implied by the noun of action, then we have a **subjective** genitive.

If the noun in the genitive is **receiving** the action implied by the noun of action then we have an **objective** genitive

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πίστεως

(faith)



Noun of action

Ἰησοῦ

(Jesus)



Χριστοῦ

(Christ)



**Nouns in
genitive case**

πίστεως

(faith)



Noun of action

Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ

(Jesus Christ)



Nouns in genitive case

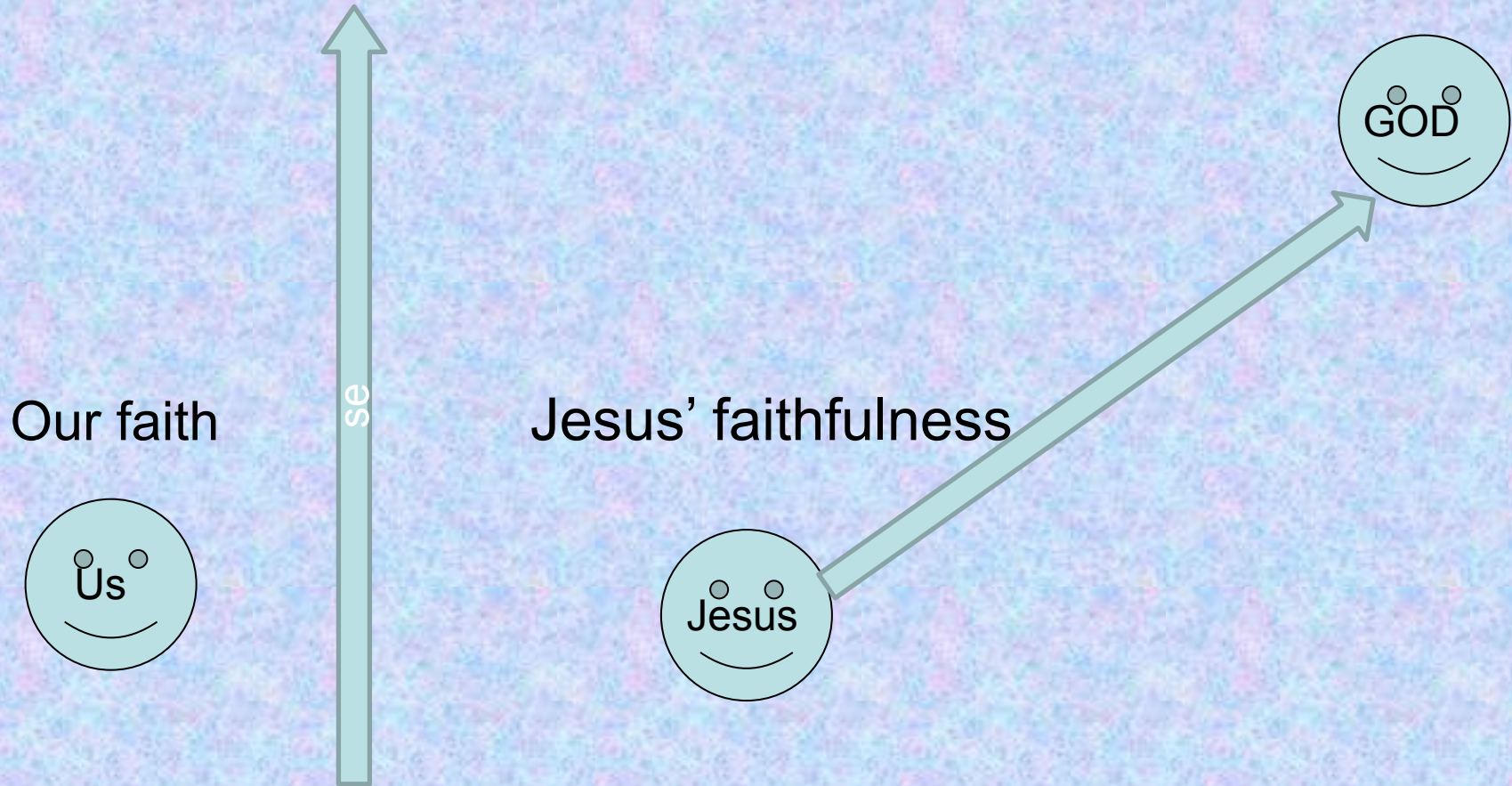
Is Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ producing the action implied by πίστεως (faith)? - Or
Is Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ receiving the action implied by πίστεως (faith)?
Is Jesus being the subject of faith - i.e. the one producing the faith? or
Is Jesus being the object of faith , i.e., the one receiving the faith?

If Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (Jesus Christ) **is producing the action implied by πίστεως (*pisteōs-faith*)** then it is a **subjective genitive** and thus translated “**faith *of* Jesus Christ**”

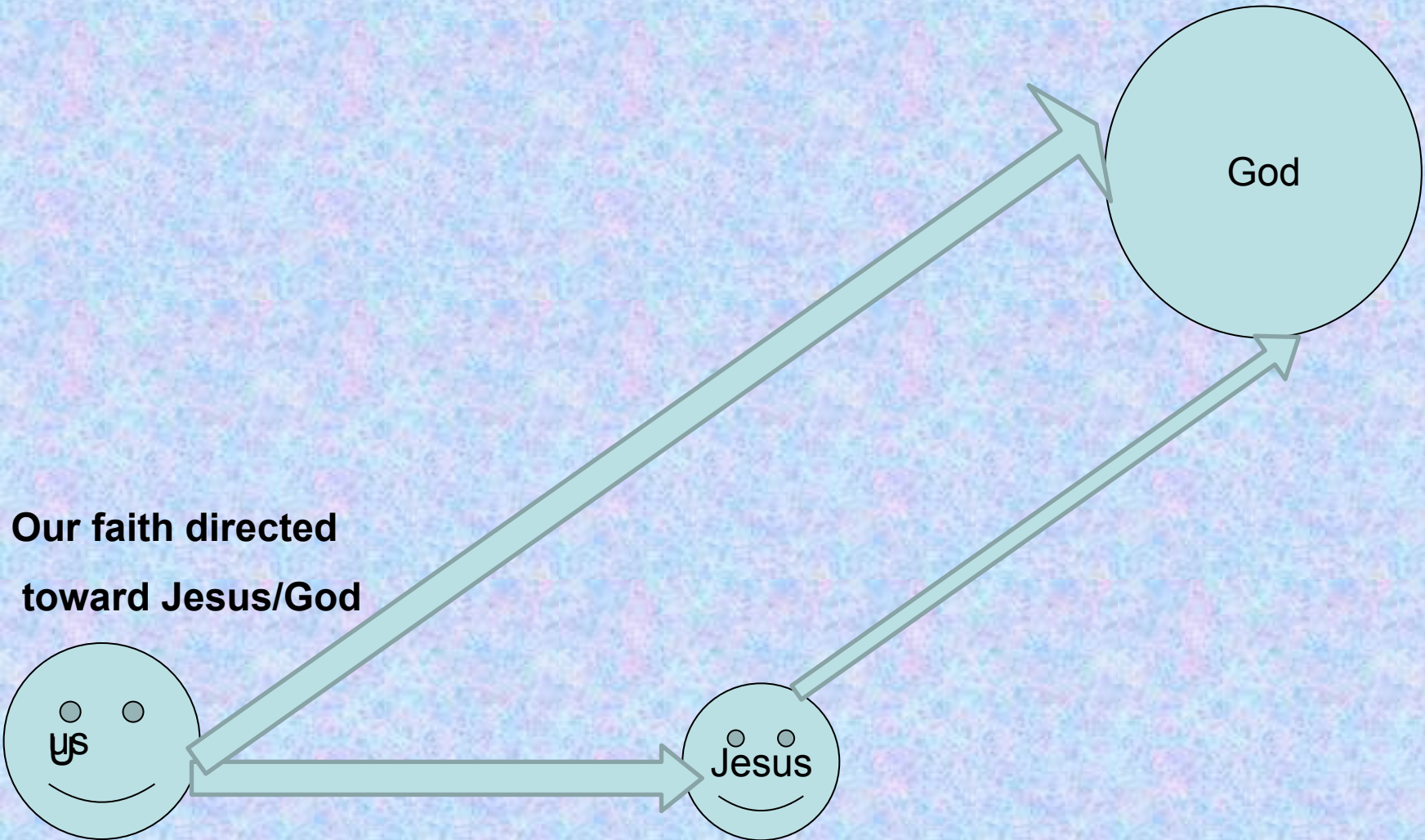
If Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (Jesus Christ) **is receiving the action implied by πίστεως (faith)** then it is an **objective genitive construction** and is translated as “**faith *in* Christ**”

Faith of Jesus

(subjective genitive)



Faith in Jesus (objective genitive)



The Subjective/Objective Genitive Construction in Paul

On seven/eight occasions, Paul uses the term faith [*pistis*] followed by a genitive form of Jesus or a Christological title, Christ or son of God.

The Subjective/Objective Genitive Construction

Rom 3:22: διὰ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ

Rom 3:26: πίστεως Ἰησοῦ

Gal 2:16: πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ

Gal 2:20 : πίστει ζῶ τῇ τοῦ ἑοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ

Gal 3:22 πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ

Phil 3:9 : διὰ πίστεως Χριστοῦ

Eph 3:12 διὰ τῆς πίστεως αὐτοῦ

(see translation on next slide)

The Subjective/Objective Genitive Construction

Romans 3:22: Even *the righteousness of God through faith in/of Jesus Christ* [**διὰ** πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ] *for all those who believe; for there is no distinction.*

Romans 3:26: *For the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in/of Jesus* (πίστεως Ἰησοῦ)

The Subjective/Objective Genitive Construction

Gal 2:16

Nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by works of law but through faith *in/of* Christ Jesus (πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ), even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith *in/of* Christ [ἐκ πίστεως Χριστοῦ] and not by works of law; since by the works of law no flesh will be justified .

The Subjective/Objective Genitive Construction

Galatians 2:20: I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in/of the Son of God*, [πίστει ζῶ τῇ τοῦ ἑαυτοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ] *who loved me and gave Himself up for me. NAB*

The Subjective/Objective Genitive Construction

Galatians 3:22 But the Scripture declares that the whole world is a prisoner of sin, so that what was promised, being given through faith of/in Jesus Christ [ἐκ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ] might be given to those who believe

The Subjective/Objective Genitive Construction

Philippians 3:9 and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from *the Law, but that which is through faith of/in Christ*, [διὰ πίστεως Χριστοῦ] *the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith.*

The Subjective/Objective Genitive Construction

Ephesians 3:12 In him and through faith in/of him [διὰ τῆς πίστεως αὐτοῦ] we may approach God with freedom and confidence.

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Thus, did Paul mean to say that we are justified by:

“The faith of Jesus?” (subjective genitive
or

“Faith in Jesus?” (objective genitive)

Theologically, Paul's argument is that humanity is justified not by what God is accomplishing within us, but by what He has accomplished in Jesus' life, death and resurrection, two thousand years ago. That is, Jesus produces the action that **causes** our justification. Thus we are justified by the faith[fulness] of Jesus and not by our faith in Jesus.

Note

The faith of Jesus is Jesus' faith separate and apart from our faith. It is Jesus' faithfulness. Our faith may connect with, or accept Jesus' faith[fulness] but our faith is not Jesus' faith. Our faith is *our* faith.

You may possess the faith of your parents but your parents' faith is not your faith.

Significance

Faith of Jesus = Jesus' faithfulness towards God manifested in his life, death and resurrection. Thus, Jesus apart from humanity is producing the act whereby we are justified.

Faith in Jesus = the actions produced by us (our faith) or by the power of God in us whereby we are justified.

Significance

Faith of Jesus (subjective genitive) signifies that that which accomplishes our justification is an entity completely outside of us, i.e. the historic event of the cross

Faith in Jesus signifies that that which accomplishes our justification is within us.
The cross brought within us.

Significance

The faith of Jesus is complete and makes perfect our faith while it connects with Jesus' faith. Our faith is always incomplete and in process

Faith of Jesus = what God did in Christ at the cross 2,000 years ago

Faith in Jesus = that which God is doing in us daily based on Jesus' faithfulness

Significance

Faith of Jesus signifies that, that which accomplishes our justification is an entity outside of us

Faith in Jesus signifies that, that which accomplishes our justification is **an entity within us empowered by God**

The faith **of** Jesus signifies that the very person of Jesus is our justification. Therefore, we have a perfect righteousness before God at all times as Jesus is perfection

Faith **in** Jesus signifies that only as Jesus enters us through the holy spirit does he, Jesus becomes our justification. However, whereas that which God is accomplishing within us is always lacking perfection, it would mean that we have less than perfect righteousness before God at all times.

Significance of Faith in Jesus (the Subjective Genitive)

1. In the faithfulness of Jesus' life, death and resurrection, God's righteousness is fully manifested. Thus, his historic life becomes the basis for our justification. Therefore, Jesus produces the action (his faithfulness) that causes our justification.
2. Faith *in* Jesus = Our faith directed towards Jesus/God. Thus, if we are justified by our faith *in* Jesus, then it means that God is producing an act within us that is causing our justification. This would be Christ-centered legalism.

End Part 1

*Please see Parts 2 & 3 for a continuation of the
discussion
discussion*