

NOTES

**A note on Galatians 2.16**

... a person is justified not by the works of the law but through *faith in Jesus Christ*. And we have come to believe in Christ Jesus, so that we might be justified by *faith in Christ*, and not by doing the works of the law, because no one will be justified by the works of the law.

(NRSV text, italics added)

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(NRSV footnote, italics added)

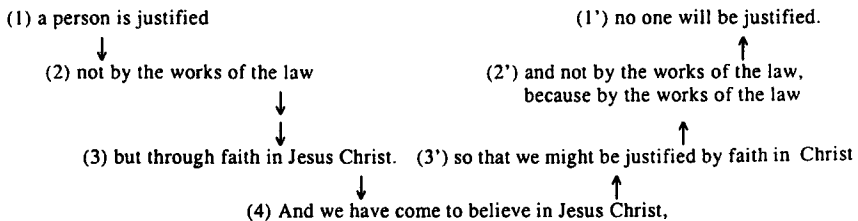
Scholars have argued for many years about which of these translations is correct, and they still do not agree. If the NRSV text is right, Paul is speaking here about our faith or trust in Christ. If the NRSV footnote is right, Paul is probably speaking about Christ's faith or trust in God, or his faithfulness to God.

A choice between these alternatives cannot be made by adding up the number of translations and commentaries which choose one or the other. The Greek can be equally well understood in either way, though the NRSV footnote translation is more literal.

In translation, we often find it necessary to translate nouns by verbs; and this involves saying clearly who is doing what. In this case, the NRSV text "through faith in Jesus Christ" would become: "through our believing in Jesus Christ," or "because we trust Jesus Christ"; and similarly later in the verse. The NRSV footnote "through the faith of Jesus Christ" would become: "through Jesus Christ's trusting God" or "because Jesus Christ was faithful to God."

Those who believe that Paul is speaking here about our faith point out that that is exactly what Paul does. As well as using a noun, "faith," he also uses the corresponding verb: he writes "we have come to believe in Christ Jesus."

There is however another reason, not often noted, for preferring the NRSV text. This has to do with the structure of the passage. The words we have quoted from NRSV follow almost exactly a pattern known as chiasmus, in which the second half repeats the first, but in the opposite order. The text can be set out as follows:



(We have slightly altered the NRSV order towards the end of the verse, to bring it closer to the Greek.)

The pattern is not perfect, because in the second half of the passage Paul expands what he has said in the first, in (3') by repeating "so that we might be justified," and in (2') by repeating the reference to "the works of the law." But the general structure is clear.

In this kind of structure, the central section usually expresses the main point of the statement; and so it is here. The earlier and later references to "faith in (Jesus) Christ" are emphasised and made more specific by the statement: "we have come to believe in Jesus Christ." For good measure, the word "we" is itself emphasised in the Greek.

There is much more to be said about this passage and other places where Paul speaks about faith. But the structure of Gal 2.16 seems to strengthen the argument that here, Paul is speaking about our faith or trust in Christ.

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### A note on the translation of Isaiah 49.23

The relative clause that forms the conclusion to Isaiah 49.23 is usually translated as an independent statement. The most likely reason is that the subject of the clause is a plural, "those who wait . . .," whereas the antecedent to which the clause refers is Yahweh. This short note will suggest how it might be best rendered in translation. Examples of some of the standard renderings are:

- (N) RSV, REB Then you will know that I am the *Lord*;  
those who wait for me shall not be put to shame.
- NIV, NJB I am the *Lord*;  
those who hope in me will not be disappointed.
- NAB I am the *Lord*,  
and those who hope in me shall never be  
disappointed.
- NJPSV I am the *Lord*—  
Those who trust in me shall not be shamed.

GNT, CEV, and other modern language translations all seem to follow this same pattern.

LXX has a slightly different tradition in that it is literally, "... you will know that I am the *Lord* and you will not be ashamed."

The Hebrew relative pronoun '*asher*, with which the final clause begins, is used here in what is called a resumptive manner. That is, it resumes or refers back to the antecedent noun. In this case that antecedent is "Yahweh." In Hebrew it is '*ani yhw'asher lo'yeboshu qoway*. In other words, our Hebrew text is saying that the people "will know that I am Yahweh who ..." Examples of a resumptive use of the relative pronoun that are similar to the example in Isa 49.23 can be found throughout the Hebrew Bible. See the many examples in Waltke and O'Connor's *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*,