

GALATIANS

Lesson 7 - 2:15-17 - “Death of the Law”

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Galatians 2:15-17 (N.A.S.B. – New American Standard Bible)

We are Jews by nature and not sinners from among the Gentiles; nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified.

But if, while seeking to be justified in Christ, we ourselves have also been found sinners is Christ then a minister of sin? May it never be!

Galatians 2:15-16 [CUV - Crawshaw Unauthorized Version]

We are (super)naturally those who are the chosen people of God; and yes, we are different from those who are heathen sinners. Even so, we know that a person is not made right in God’s eyes by what he does, but by what he correctly believes about Jesus Christ. This is true even for us Christians who have believed in Jesus. We too are made right in God’s eyes by what we believe about Christ in the core of our being, rather than by doing right things. Even by doing all that God would want, one could never be made right before God.

Today we examine the heart of the gospel message: “justified by faith.”

“JUSTIFIED”

To be “justified” is to be made right in someone’s eyes.

We use the “justify” when we say someone wants to “justify his actions.” What does this mean? – it means we want to find at least one person of consequence who will agree with our point of view. This might be a judge, a parent, a website, or even a friend. You see, if I can find one (or better more!) to agree with my point of view, I can internalize that my actions or choices have been “justified.”

And there is another way that I might seek to “justify my actions.” It is to perform enough “good” to outweigh a possible “bad” action or choice I have made. I might be trying to be made good in my own eyes, or in the eyes of someone else, but either way I find myself doing good things so that I, or another, can either forget about the bad I have done, or at least minimize it under the cover of many other good actions.

Are you following my train of thought? Let’s give an example.

Let’s say I have lost my temper at someone who I feel has wronged me, and I shout down this one with choice words of retribution and disparagement to their character.

Then let's say I still believe this one has wronged me, but I feel badly about my loss of temper and the way I have treated them. Perhaps this is especially so since a Christian friend heard me react in this way. So what happens next?

Well, what SHOULD happen is that I confess my wrong reaction and apologize to both the one I have shouted down and to the one who has heard me. And this would accompany an internal confession to God and resultant receiving of Divine forgiveness.

But what OFTEN happens is that I determine, somewhere in my fallen self, to "justify my action." So I might begin to talk to my friend about how rude or wrong this one had been who made me react so strongly. This would seek to amplify the other's wrong in hopes of diminishing my wrong. Or another common tactic would be to commence to speak sweetly and nicely to the one I had wronged seeking to "cover" the wrong attitude with enough good attitude. If I do this enough, I might even forget feeling bad about my anger and feel that my friend has done the same. Problem solved – action justified. But not really.

Do you see the sinister way of Satan's deceptions and our own internal sin nature?

The "sinister way" is to try to "justify" wrong behavior by good behavior.

Now take this to the level of trying to "justify myself" before a holy and righteous God. I know that I have many faults (God calls them "sin") and that I am not worthy to be accepted by God as I am. And if I am wanting to be made right in God's eyes, I would try to minimize my wrong by (1) rationalizing that I am better than most and/or (2) attempting to cover the wrong by doing many "good" things with which God would be pleased – such as going to church, reading my Bible, praying or doing charitable deeds.

DOES THIS SOUND FAMILIAR???

Galatians 2:16 states in no uncertain terms, "a man is not justified by the works of the Law" – meaning in practical terms, "one is not made right in God's eyes by doing good things."

THE TWO GREAT TEMPTATIONS IN DISTORTING JUSTIFICATION

1. Justification by COMPARISON (with others less good)

i.e. God grades on the "curve"

2. Justification by COVERING (with acts of goodness)

i.e. God grades on "extra credit"

"BY FAITH"

Now let's look at the remainder of this amazing, divine truth: JUSTIFIED BY FAITH and examine the "faith" part.

1. First of all let's acknowledge that faith is not something we do at all – at least, not something we initiate. Let's look at the familiar Ephesians 2:8-9.

***Ephesians 2:8-9** For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.*

I want us to especially note the “that not of yourself” part. The “that” can’t be referring to the grace that is “not of ourselves” – it is obvious that grace is God’s alone. Rather, the “that” which is “not of ourselves” must be referring to “saved through faith.” In other words, we even get the faith to believe from God – it is a gift he gives us when we are ready to receive it. SO WHAT? - “faith” to be saved can’t be considered as a “work” that we do – it is a gift given to us by God.

2. Secondly, let us acknowledge that faith is something internal – something that goes on inside of our being. Yes, it has outward manifestation (“faith without works is dead” – James 2:17), but is an inward acceptance of the truth of who Jesus is and what He has done on our behalf. It is this “faith” that saves us, or makes us right with God.

3. Thirdly, let us acknowledge that faith must be applied. Faith is not just a belief system (I believe in Jesus and that he died for sins and rose again - the demons believe this, and tremble [James 2:19]); rather it is the core belief of our being regarding the payment of God for our sin and provision of God for our salvation.

THEOLOGICALLY – THE 3-FOLD METHOD OF JUSTIFICATION

1. By the GRACE of God
2. By the BLOOD of Christ
3. By the FAITH of the believer

To put in another way, if God was to ask you “why should I let you into my heaven?” the correct “buzz words” are GRACE, BLOOD and FAITH.

When you speak of your salvation, and find yourself talking about “my decision” or “my journey” or “my church” this is an indication that you may not fully understand the concept of “justification.” Rather, our testimony should have more to say about the role of a loving Father, a saving Jesus and an indwelling Holy Spirit than about ourselves.

Remember: GRACE , BLOOD , and FAITH !

GALATIANS 2:17

The last verse of our study today, Galatians 2:17, raises another concern.

Paul says (to Peter, and to us):

***Galatians 2:17** But if, while seeking to be justified in Christ, we ourselves have also been found sinners, is Christ then a minister of sin? May it never be!*

Galatians 2:7 [C.U.V. – Crawshaw Unauthorized Version]

Do you ever find that while you are trying to live out your faith in Christ you still find yourself thinking ungodly thoughts, or even exhibiting ungodly behavior? (Sure you do, and so do I.) And we might be tempted to think that Christ is the cause since His grace makes it convenient to sin without immediate consequence. But no way could that ridiculous conclusion be true!

Yes, no matter how hard we try to live our life faithfully for God, we still fall into sin. But it would be crazy to blame this failure on God's grace. Rather, it is His grace that should be cause for great praise and motivation to drive us back to His mercy.

After all, it's not just being "right in God's eyes" that is the result of being "justified by faith." Let's close by looking at the 3 primary results of justification.

THEOLOGICALLY – THE 3 RESULTS OF JUSTIFICATION

1. REMISSION of the Penalty
2. RESTORATION to Favor
3. IMPUTATION of Righteousness

Paul fought hard for the truth of justification by faith alone to be the same standard for Jewish and Greek Christians alike.

And we must fight hard in our day to keep that standard pure and true in our everyday bought with sin. May we never combat our failings with justification by COMPARISONS or COVERINGS. Nor may we ever blame God for his grace.

Rather, may we learn and learn well that we must ever run to the Father's loving arms of grace and Jesus' shed blood to remove and cleanse our stain of sin. And when we do, may we breathe freely of the celestial air of being miraculously declared and treated as righteous in God's eyes – made righteous, not by one thing we have done, but by what HE has done on our behalf.

Praise God!

Psalm 19 [N.I.V. – Readers Version]

1 The heavens tell about the glory of God.

The skies show that his hands created them.

2
Day after day they speak about it.

Night after night they make it known.

3
But they don't speak or use words.

No sound is heard from them.

4
At the same time, their voice goes out into the whole earth.

Their words go out from one end of the world to the other.
God has set up a tent in the heavens for the sun.

5
The sun is like a groom coming out of the room where he spent his wedding night.

The sun is like a great runner who takes delight in running a race.

6
It rises at one end of the heavens. Then it moves across to the other end.

Nothing can hide from its heat.

7
The law of the Lord is perfect.
It gives us new strength.

The laws of the Lord can be trusted.
They make childish people wise.

8
The rules of the Lord are right.
They give joy to our hearts.

The commands of the Lord shine brightly.
They give light to our minds.

9
The law that brings respect for the Lord is pure.
It lasts forever.

The directions the Lord gives are true.
All of them are completely right.

10

They are more priceless than gold.

They have greater value than huge amounts of pure gold.

They are sweeter than honey that is taken from the honeycomb.

11

I am warned by them.

When I obey them, I am greatly rewarded.

12

Can I know my mistakes?

Forgive my hidden faults.

13

Keep me also from the sins I want to commit.

May they not be my master.

Then I will be without blame.

I will not be guilty of any great sin against your law.

14

Lord, may the words of my mouth and the thoughts of my heart

be pleasing in your eyes.

You are my Rock and my Redeemer.