



World Christian Fellowship

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Galatians

Lesson 13 Justification by Faith

Galatians 2:15-19, *We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles,* ¹⁶ *knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.* ¹⁷ *“But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is Christ therefore a minister of sin? Certainly not!”* ¹⁸ *For if I build again those things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor.* ¹⁹ *For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God.*

Church in Galatia region knew the gospel. They knew that they were saved by faith alone. Both the Gentiles and the Jews knew that very well. This is the reason why Apostle Paul was so shocked that they were drifting away from the Gospel.

Why were you leaning that way?

Peter is not openly saying, “I don’t believe the true gospel” but he was acting like as if what the Judaizers were right.

This is a very dangerous compromise. Anytime those who preach the true gospel affirm or embrace anyone who teaches a false gospel, confusion reigns.

2 Corinthians 6:14, *“Come out from among them and be separate. Light has no fellowship with darkness; Christ with Belial.”*

So, apostle Paul says to Peter, that you can't do this. Everyone in Antioch knows that you are living like a Gentile since the time you went to Cornelius house in Acts 10. You also lived that way here in Antioch. All know that you preach the gospel of grace, and you affirm the gospel of grace and faith alone. Now you are playing right into the hands of the Judaizers, by acting as if they are right by joining with them.

This threatens the integrity of the gospel. This is always about the gospel. This is a serious breach.

V15-16, *We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, ¹⁶ knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.*

Important word justified is mentioned three times here in these 2 verses and also again in verse 21. This is the first time Apostle Paul uses in this letter.

Paul is going to make a statement about the doctrine of justification, which explains the true gospel's view of faith and law. Paul unfolds this great core doctrine of justification by faith alone.

The Doctrine of Justification

Let us look at the contrast to understand better.

In the court, if someone declared that you are guilty and condemned then you would understand. The opposite is to someone, you are justified, and you are righteous.

Justification is just the opposite of condemnation.

- ✓ Condemnation says that you are guilty.
- ✓ Justification says you are not guilty.

- Condemnation says you are evil,
- justification says you are righteous.

- ❖ Condemnation says you are bad,
- ❖ justification says you are good. It is a legal term.

It is a legal term used in the law of court. To condemn someone is to declare them guilty, to justify someone is to declare them not guilty.

In the Bible, justification is God's free gracious act.

God declares a sinner

- not guilty,
- forgiven,
- pardoning that sinner, and
- accepting him into fellowship.

That is the foundation of true religion, Christianity, and the gospel.

Remember we started this study with the question from the Bible asked by Bildad in Job 25?

Job 25:4, *How then can man be righteous before God? Or how can he be pure who is born of a woman?*

How can a condemned sinner be declared just?

Paul answers, "By faith. By faith in Christ. By faith alone. Not by works."

So here we have the statement of justification by faith alone. But we can see here how Paul argue the Jewish with their argument.

V15, *“We are Jews by nature and not sinners from among the Gentiles,”*

Meaning Jewish Christians like Peter, Barnabas and himself and the other Jewish believers in Antioch, as we.

Paul says that we are all Jews by nature, those of us who are the sons of Abraham.

- ❖ We have lived all our lives under the law.
- ❖ We have lived all our lives with Scripture.
- ❖ We know the Jewish religious system well.
- ❖ The Jewish religious system dominated Jewish culture.
- ❖ It was a single soul, monolithic, monotheistic system.
- ❖ There weren't multiple religions in Israel like there were in the Gentile world.
- ❖ There was one religion which was Judaism.

We lived under that, and so we were not sinners as the Gentiles.

What is the meaning that you are not sinners?

Paul refers that the Judaism prescribed their lives in a visible, manifest, earthly sense.

Judaism restrained the Jews.

Gentiles are called sinners because they lived without restraint.

Gentiles polyethnic religion, many gods, millions.

Their gods are wretched.

Their gods are immoral.

Their temples are full of prostitutes.

Gentile religion is gross, immoral religion.

So, Paul is saying that we weren't like that. We know what it is to live under law. We haven't lived like Gentile sinners. The Law restricted us and constrained us. We tried to love God, and we tried to keep His commandments. We fasted, and we prayed, and we gave offerings.

What did they learn by living under the Law?

V16, *knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.*

In spite of all this we found out that a man is not justified by the works of the Law.

The Jews are saying that you must observe the Law. Paul says, we have experienced all of that. We have done by trying to establish our own righteousness.

Romans 10:3, *For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God.*

Paul gives his own testimony in the letter to the church in Philippi.

Philippians 3:3-10, *For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no*

confidence in the flesh, ⁴ though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: ⁵circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; ⁶concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. ⁷But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. ⁸Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ ⁹and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; ¹⁰that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,

Simply put across Paul says that we have done great deal to establish our own righteousness.

We found out that a man is not justified by the works of the Law. That's why we fled to Christ. That's why we're Christians.

Keeping the law, it was external. Jesus pointed that out in the Sermon on the Mount.

- ✓ You don't kill anybody, but you hate people hence you are a murderer in your heart.
- ✓ You don't commit adultery, but you lust hence you are a fornicator and adulterer in your heart.

"A man is not justified by the works of the Law,"

What did we find out?

"but through faith in Christ Jesus, but through faith in Christ Jesus.

That's why we are Christians.

On the cross He died for our law-breaking. He paid the penalty in full for our violations of the Law. He bore our sins in His own body on the cross. He became sin for us. All that is required for us to be justified is to acknowledge that sin and to repent of self-will, self-efforts and self-righteousness. Put our whole confidence in the work of Jesus Christ.

We did that. We believed that we were justified, and we were given the Holy Spirit and we had been living in the life that God gave us.

Nicodemus was the ruler of the Jews. He was a Pharisee, part of the elite leaders of Jerusalem. He is an extreme legalist at the most extreme level. Pharisees are such extreme legalists.

He comes to Jesus during all his extreme legalism with the question in his heart, “How do I get into the kingdom of heaven?”

So here is a Jew who has kept the Law as much as is humanly possible, to an extreme level. He knows he was not in the kingdom. Jesus doesn't say to him that I will give you few more things you need to do rather He says, “You need to be born again.

Your entire life of accumulated works is meaningless. You are as fast on your way to hell.

“How can that be?” says Nicodemus.

Jesus says, “You have to be born from above. You can't do it, God has to do it.”

All that sinner can do is to cry out to God to give him life.

“since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified.”

It's impossible.

Paul is saying to Peter that we have been there. We have been under the Law and it just condemned us.

“No flesh will be justified.” Paul quotes these three times in these two verses.

Reaction to Paul's statement.

V17, ¹⁷ *"But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is Christ therefore a minister of sin? Certainly not!*

For the sake of argument granting the Judaizer's point. The point of the Judaizers is this: "If all you're doing is trusting in faith, you're not saved. You need to go back to the Law, be circumcised, and adhere to the Law."

So, Paul says, if the Judaizers are right, then Christ set us up for sin, because He proclaims that salvation is through faith in Him alone. And if we do that, believe in Him, receive His grace, embrace it by faith. Judaizers say because we are not keeping the Law we are sinners. Christ set us free to lead us into sin.

If the Judaizers are right then seeking to be justified by faith alone in Christ apart from works, on turning out to be sinners because we don't keep the Law, then are you going to say Christ made us sinners?

Galatians 5:1, *Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.*

You are saying to us that if we don't go back to the Law, Christ has made us sinners. So, are you saying Christ is a minister of sin?"

Paul is talking to Peter and Barnabas, who has been a co-pastor with him for years.

Paul questions them saying what are you doing?

You are condemning Christ.

Very bold statement.

When Peter and Barnabas and others eat and function with Gentiles and accepted them as being brothers and sisters in Christ because of faith alone. Which is right.

But if Peter, Barnabas, and the rest join with the Judaizing legalists, then they are saying that their former freedom in Christ, which they enjoyed living since Acts 10 and the way they have been living in Antioch was sin. Therefore, Christ freed them into sin. By proclaiming that you are free from the Law, Christ made you a worse sinner than ever.

No, Christ is not promoting the sin but the Judaizers are the sin promoters.

V 18, *For if I build again those things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor*

Christ is not the transgressor by freeing us from the Law, you are the transgressor by taking us back to the Law.

Because you are rebuilding what you once destroyed in the gospel of grace.

V19, *For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God.*

Paul says, "This is a historical fact. I died to the Law."

As a Christian we don't define our life by the Law.
Legalists define their life by the observance of the Law.

Christians don't define their life by a relationship to the Law, but by the relationship to Jesus Christ.

I died to the Law. The Law is no longer my master. It is no longer sitting in condemnation on me. I died to the Law. That's a historical fact.

At salvation, at the time that I believed in Christ, I died to the Law.

I have no more connection to the Law.

- No more connection to circumcision
- No more connection to sabbaths,
- No more connection to feast days,
- No more connections to festivals, and
- No more connections to new moons.

Apostle Paul sums this up beautifully in Colossians 2

- It doesn't mean that I live a disobedient life quite the contrary happens to me.
- I have a new master, Christ.
- I obey Him out of love, not the Law out of fear.

The Law doesn't define my life.

I am not a legalist.

I don't live with a perspective toward the Law, I live to God.

How did that happen?

How did you go from the Law defining everything?

How did you fulfil the law of circumcision, all the restraints, all the restrictions, all the ceremonies, all the rituals, all the requirements?

How did you go from that to just living to God?"

V 20, *I have been crucified with Christ; 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 the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.*

This is a verse that defines what it is to be a Christian.

You have been crucified with Christ.

You have risen with Christ.

It's no longer you who live,

It's Christ living in you

The life which you now live you don't live under the Law,
You live by faith in the Son of God, who loved you and gave
Himself up for you.

We will look at V19 and 20 in details in our next lesson.