**We Are Justified by Faith**

**by Pastor Fee Soliven**

**Galatians 2:16-21**

**Wednesday Evening**

**June 29, 2022**

**Galatians 2:16-21**

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.

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. 21 I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain."

**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.**

**Romans 3:20**

“Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin”

**Romans 3:20-24**

20 Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin. 21 But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,

22 even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus…

Saints, all people stand as condemned sinners before God: God-fearing, law-keeping Jews, and “Gentile sinners” alike.

But all are made right with God, not by doing what the law commands, but by faith in Jesus Christ. This is the doctrine of “justification.”

God justifies people despite their guilt, pardons them, and then makes them his children and heirs. The law to which he was referring could mean Jewish Scripture, plus the laws added by the Pharisees.

If people could be saved by obeying the law, then Christ did not have to die. But the reality is, no one will ever be saved by obeying the law.

**Romans 8:1-4**

1 There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.

3 For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, 4 that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

**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!**

Saints, in this verse, Paul responds to one objection that might be raised by his opponents. They might say,

**What if we seek to be made right with God through faith in Christ and then find out that we are still sinners?**

**Has Christ led us into sin?**

Saints, how could Paul claim that justification by faith is effective when Christians still sin? To say that the law doesn’t matter is to say that standards and morality don’t matter. This leaves the door open for people to become believers and then live any way they choose.

But Paul’s reply is vehement: Of course not! Sin does not result because people are justified; Christ is not responsible for promoting sin. Obviously, those who have been justified—Christians—can and do sin, for that, unfortunately, is part of our human nature (Paul details his own struggle with sin in Romans 7).

**Romans 7:7-10**

7 What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, "You shall not covet."

8 But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all manner of evil desire. For apart from the law sin was dead. 9 I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died. 10 And the commandment, which was to bring life, I found to bring death…

But the sin led to the need for justification, not the other way around. The Judaizers saw Christianity as an excuse to get out from under Jewish law.

But Paul (and the Jewish Christians who had experienced justification) knew that while offering freedom from the restrictive law, justification by faith demanded lifestyle and behavioral changes. When God truly gets hold of a life, nothing can remain the same.

Grace does not abolish the law with its standards and morality; rather, it moves it from an external standard impossible to keep to an inner motivation for living a pure and God—honoring life.

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

Saints, Justification by faith tore down the Pharisees’ “merit system” with all its laws and good deeds that attempted to rack up points with God.

To rebuild that, to be justified by faith and then return to that legal system as a basis for one’s relationship with God, would erroneously imply that Christ’s death was not sufficient. Paul saw the situation in Antioch with Peter as a clear illustration of the unnecessary burden that some wanted to place on Gentile believers.

Peter, through his act of pulling away from the Gentile fellowship, was giving law a place of authority that it no longer held. Justified people will sin, but they are moving onward and upward. The real sinner is the one who is justified and then returns to the law. Ironically, that person is actually guilty.

People under the law are more precisely described as lawbreakers than as law-keepers! The law cannot give salvation because no one can keep it perfectly. The best the law can do is prove our sinfulness and how much we need the Savior and his gracious offer of justification by faith.

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

Saints, the law itself could not save because no one can keep its perfect standards. The law thus cannot earn God’s approval; instead, it offers only failure and death.

So what is its usefulness? The law was a necessary instrument to show people the ultimate futility of trying to live up to God’s standard on their own.

But that very hopelessness created by the law can have a positive impact if it leads a person to the true hope, Christ himself. Christ took upon himself that death penalty—the death we deserved for being lawbreakers.

When Paul understood that the law was completely incapable of giving salvation, and when he embraced the one who could give salvation, he knew he could never go back to the law. Paul felt this so intensely that he expressed it in terms of death, I died to the law.

The perfect tense of the verbs indicates something that happened in the past but influences the present. Paul “died to the law” by being crucified with Christ. Christ completely fulfilled the law (past tense); this act influenced Paul in the present (who, as an imperfect human, could not keep the law).

Yet because of Christ’s death, the law no longer had a hold on either of them. The cross of Christ shows that although the law had to be kept, it was fulfilled by a perfect human. Christ paid sin’s penalty for imperfect humans. Being crucified with Christ refers to the conversion experience, a once-for-all transaction that has ongoing results.

Paul knew he had to die to the law before he could live for God. There can be no middle ground. It makes no sense to accept salvation by faith and then work for it, just as it makes no sense to accept a gift and then offer the giver money for it.

We must deny that our own efforts can accomplish anything in order to be able to humbly accept the gift that Christ offers. By identifying with Christ, we can experience freedom from the law that he procured for us by dying on our behalf.

**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.**

Saints, Paul claimed he had been “crucified,” but he was still alive. Paul had died with Christ, but it was his “old self” that had died: I myself no longer live. The self-centered, Jewish Pharisee, Christian-persecuting, law-abiding, violent, and evil Paul “no longer” lived. That person’s sinful life had been crucified with Christ on the cross.

**Romans 5:6-11**

6 For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. 7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. 8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

9 Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. 10 For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. 11 And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.

Saints, Paul was released, not only from the tyranny of the Mosaic law, but also from the tyranny of self. Instead, Paul was a “new person” (2 Corinthians 5:17) because, he explained, Christ lives in me. In other words, Paul had turned over his life to Christ.

**2 Corinthians 5:17-18**

17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. 18 Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation…

Saints, each of the phrases is a crucial aspect of the sequence of salvation: We relinquish our old life and turn to Christ for his life. The self-centered self now becomes the Christ-centered self. It is as if Paul was saying, “My old life, my old goals and plans, even old relationships were nailed to the cross with Christ.

Now I have a new life because Christ came in and filled the empty spaces all those old pursuits could not fill. Now he lives in me and is the focus of my life.

” To accomplish this, there must be a radical cleansing of our old selfish nature. But there must also be a turning to the empowering of Christ. Just as in repentance we turn away from sin and toward Christ, we must turn from the self in the flesh to the self hidden in Christ.

Paul no longer focused his life on trying to please God by obeying laws; instead, with Christ in him, I live my life in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Believers live in their bodies that are prone to sin while they remain on earth. But with Christ in charge, they are new creations, living life by faith. This faith is an attitude, a lifestyle.

**21 I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain."**

**Romans 4:22-24**

22 And therefore "it was accounted to him for righteousness." 23 Now it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him, 24 but also for us. It shall be imputed to us who believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, 25 who was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification.

Saints, Paul’s message of salvation by faith (without works of the law) did not treat the grace of God as meaningless. Instead, that is exactly what the Judaizers’ teaching did—they “set aside” or “nullified” God’s grace.

For if we could be saved by keeping the law, then the logical conclusion is that there was no need for Christ to die. However, it was because no one could obey God’s law perfectly that Christ came to both obey it, fulfill its penalty, and then set it aside as a means to salvation.

 That was the ultimate picture of God’s love and grace for sinful humanity. The basis of Christianity is God’s grace and Christ’s death for sin. Without these there is no faith, no gospel, and no hope of salvation.

Saints, Soon and Very soon, Jesus is about to appear, we are almost out of here!

**1 Thessalonians 4:13-18**

13 But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.

15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. 16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. 18 Therefore comfort one another with these words.

**1 Corinthians 15:50-54**

50 Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. 51 Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed-- 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. 54 So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."

**Short Movie Slide>**

**Acts 2:38-39**

38 Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."

**Let’s Pray! Benediction**

**"May The LORD bless you and keep you, May The LORD make His face shine upon you, May The LORD be gracious to you, May The LORD lift up His countenance upon you, and give you His (Shalom) peace.” In Jesus Name!**