

LESSON 4: GALATIANS 1:11-2:21

Justification by Faith

1. Why is Paul's personal testimony important as he defends himself against the Galatians (1:13ff.)? What authority does your testimony bear? What *is* your testimony? Are you prepared to "give the reason for the hope that you have"? (See 1 Pet. 3:15-16.)
2. Why do you think Paul "went immediately to Arabia" (1:17)? And what point is he trying to make by mentioning that he went to Jerusalem "after three years" (1:18)?
3. Compare Paul's account of his "first Jerusalem visit" (1:18-24) with the parallel account in Acts 9:26-31. Describe the scene and the outcome? Why was he sent off to Tarsus?
4. Paul writes of another visit to Jerusalem "fourteen years later" (2:1-10). Compare Luke's account Acts 11:19-30 Paul's account here. What are the similarities between these two accounts? Differences? How would you reconcile these seeming differences of emphasis?
5. What does Paul mean when he writes that he "set before them the gospel I preach among the Gentiles... for fear that I was running or had run my race in vain" (2:2)? And who are the "false brothers," to whom he "did not give in to them for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might remain with you" (v. 5). What is "the truth of the gospel," and what is the error Paul was opposing? How was the gospel threatened in Paul's day? In our own time?
6. "They saw that I was entrusted with the task of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles," Paul writes, "just as Peter had been to the Jews" (2:7). Explain this. Also, what would have happened if the gospel had not been authenticated? What is going on in the church today? Is anyone authenticating the preachers of the gospel? If you felt called by God to preach, what would you do first? Why?

7. What happened at Antioch that led Paul to rebuke Peter so strongly (2:11-12)? What is the “hypocrisy” into which Peter (and even Barnabas) were led astray, and why is it “hypocrisy” (2:13)? Why do you think Paul spoke to Peter “in front of them all” rather than privately (2:14)? Describe a time someone criticized you in front of others. How did you react?

8. What is the point of Paul’s question in 2:14? (*Extra credit:* Is Paul being entirely fair to lump circumcision and kosher laws under the label “Jewish customs” whose practice somehow leads us away from “acting in line with the truth of the gospel”? Is obedience to the law a bad thing?)

9. In 2:15-16 Paul makes the point that Jews and Gentiles alike are justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law. What does it mean to be “justified”? What is “faith”? Try to explain in your own words what it means to say that we’re “justified by faith”? (See also Eph. 2:8-9 and Rom. 3:21-26.)

10. Doesn’t God want us to be obedient to his word? What is the relationship between our faith and our faithfulness? Why is this so important to Paul (and for us)?

11. What does Paul mean when he writes that “through the law I died to the law so that I might live for God” (2:19)? Compare this verse with Romans 7:7-14. How was the law helpful to Paul? How can it be helpful to you? What is the role of the law?

12. What does Paul mean when he writes that “I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me” (2:20)? What does it mean, practically, to “live by faith in the Son of God”?

13. In 2:21, Paul writes, “I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!” How can the grace of God be set aside? What does Paul mean?

14. In this passage we see Paul's power and passion for the "truth of the gospel" on display. He is quite willing to be rather strong in taking a stand against any who would distort the purity of this gospel, rooted as it is in the principle of justification by faith. We normally think of "taking a stand" as something we do when someone is trying to lead us into immoral behavior, but Paul is taking a hard line against people who appeared to be and thought that they were super-moral. What man-made standards do we impose on others in our churches today? What would you think if a person came up to you in church and told you that God had revealed to him or her that people who dance/smoke/drink/gamble, etc., are not really saved? What would you say to that person?

FROM THE WESTMINSTER SHORTER CATECHISM:

WSC 29

Q. *How are we made partakers of the redemption purchased by Christ?*

A. We are made partakers of the redemption purchased by Christ, by the effectual application of it to us(1) by his Holy Spirit.(2)

(1) John 1:11,12; (2) Tit. 3:5,6

WSC 30

Q. *How doth the Spirit apply to us the redemption purchased by Christ?*

A. The Spirit applieth to us the redemption purchased by Christ, by working faith in us,(1) and thereby uniting us to Christ in our effectual calling.(2)

(1) Eph. 1:13,14; John 6:37,39; Eph. 2:8; (2) Eph. 3:17; 1 Cor. 1:9

WSC 31

Q. *What is effectual calling?*

A. Effectual calling is the work of God's Spirit,(1) whereby, convincing us of our sin and misery,(2) enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ,(3) and renewing our wills,(4) he doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ, freely offered to us in the gospel.(5)

(1) 2 Tim 1:9; 2 Thess. 2:13,14; (2) Acts 2:37; (3) Acts 26:18; (4) Ezek. 36:26,27; (5) John 6:44,45; Phil. 2:13

WSC 32

Q. *What benefits do they that are effectually called partake of in this life?*

A. They that are effectually called do in this life partake of justification,(1) adoption,(2) and sanctification, and the several benefits which in this life do either accompany or flow from them.(3)

(1)Rom. 8:30; (2)Eph. 1:5; (3)1 Cor. 1:26,30

WSC 33

Q. *What is justification?*

A. Justification is an act of God's free grace, wherein he pardoneth all our sins,(1) and accepteth us as righteous in his sight,(2) only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us,(3) and received by faith alone.(4)

(1)Rom. 3:24,25; Rom. 4:6-8; (2)2 Cor. 5:19,21; (3)Rom. 5:17-19; (4)Gal. 2:16; Phil. 3:9

WSC 34

Q. *What is adoption?*

A. Adoption is an act of God's free grace,(1) whereby we are received into the number, and have a right to all the privileges of the sons of God.(2)

(1)1 John 3:1; (2)John 1:12; Rom. 8:17

WSC 35

Q. *What is sanctification?*

A. Sanctification is the work of God's free grace,(1) whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God,(2) and are enabled more and more to die unto sin, and live unto righteousness.(3)

(1) 2 Thess. 2:13; (2) Eph. 4:23,24; (3) Rom. 6:4,6; Rom. 8:1

WSC 36

Q. *What are the benefits which in this life do accompany or flow from justification, adoption, and sanctification?*

A. The benefits which in this life do accompany or flow from justification, adoption, and sanctification, are, assurance of God's love, peace of conscience,(1) joy in the Holy Ghost,(2) increase of grace,(3) and perseverance therein to the end.(4)

(1) Rom. 5:1,2,5; (2) Rom. 14:17; (3) Prov. 4:18; (4) 1 John 5:13; 1 Pet. 1:5

WSC 37

Q. *What benefits do believers receive from Christ at death?*

A. The souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness,(1) and do immediately pass into glory;(2) and their bodies, being still united in Christ,(3) do rest in their graves,(4) till the resurrection.(5)

(1) Heb. 12:23; (2) 2 Cor. 5:1,6,8; Phil. 1:23; Luke 23:43; (3) 1 Thess. 4:14; (4) Isa. 57:2; (5) Job. 19:26,27

WSC 38

Q. *What benefits do believers receive from Christ at the resurrection?*

A. At the resurrection, believers being raised up in glory,(1) shall be openly acknowledged and acquitted in the day of judgment,(2) and made perfectly blessed in the full enjoying of God(3) to all eternity.(4)

(1) 1 Cor. 15:43; (2) Matt. 25:23; Matt. 10:32; (3) 1 John 3:2; 1 Cor. 13:12; (4) 1 Thess. 4:17,18

Justification Chart:

When someone sets their faith in Jesus, God justifies them (declares them totally innocent, perfectly righteous in his sight, only for the sake of Christ, “just-as-if-I’d” never been guilty or unrighteous.

Justification entails a complete and instant change in status, but no change in nature.

Sanctification entails a progressive change in nature.

Justification is declarative, forensic; it is an act of God, imputed to us all at once.

Sanctification is transformative, renovative; it is a work of God, imparted to us over time.

Everyone who believes in Jesus has been justified, by God’s gracious declaration, on the basis of what Jesus has done for them, as received by the instrumentality of faith.

Everyone who believes in Jesus is being progressively sanctified, though never perfectly in this life, by the operation of the Spirit working in and through us, applying Christ to us, making us more and more conformed to the image of Christ, who is the perfect and exact image of God.

Imagine a circle to represent each believer. The outer line around the circle is like a membrane of imputed righteousness which totally covers us (having been justified), even as the life within continues to develop and grow (being sanctified).

Christian life is a process and a progress by which we become more and more conformed in nature to what we were declared to be all at once in status. And only when we enter at last into the presence of God will our sanctification be complete, and be perfectly righteous, perfectly conformed, inside and out, to the image of Christ (i.e., glorified). Amen!

Justification entails a DOUBLE TRANSACTION:

Christ’s righteousness is imputed to us;

Our sin is imputed to him.

2 Corinthians 5:21:

He who knew no sin became sin for us, that we might become, in him, the righteousness of God.

Justification entails a DOUBLE IMPUTATION:

Christ’s “passive” obedience (his death) is imputed to our account (so that our sins are forgiven)

Christ’s “active” obedience (his life) is imputed to our account (so that we are deemed righteous)

Romans 4:25:

He was delivered over to death for our sins, and was raised to life for our justification.