

LESSON 5: GALATIANS 2:15-3:14

Justification by Faith (cont'd)

1. 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.)
2. 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)?
3. 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?
4. 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”?
5. 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?
6. 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 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?

7. What do you think Paul is getting at when he writes in 3:1 that “before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified”? What message had the Galatians once clearly understood?

8. Read Paul’s five questions in verses 2-5 again. Note the emphasis on the Spirit. What point is Paul making? What answer from the Galatians’ own experience is Paul expecting? What’s the connection of all this talk of the Spirit with the crucifixion of Christ?

9. What major concepts are contrasted in these verses? What is the connection between “observing the law” (v. 2) and “being perfected by the flesh” (v. 3)?

10. In verse 6, Paul quotes Genesis 15:6. He also writes about Abraham in Romans 4:1-3 and 9:12. In your own words, explain why Abraham was right with God. Why is it so appropriate to speak of Abraham as “the man of faith” (v. 9)?

11. What, and on what basis, is our relationship to Abraham (v. 7)? What was God’s plan for all people predicted from the time of Abraham (vv. 8-9)?

12. How might the answer to the preceding question differ from what the Galatians were apparently being taught by the false teachers? How did Jesus handle an argument about what makes a person a “son of Abraham”? (See John 8:39-45.)

13. In your opinion, why do people want to work for salvation? Consider how much emphasis is placed today on the necessity of certain works and experiences.

14. In 3:10-13, Paul quotes three Old Testament passages (Deut. 27:26; Hab. 2:4, and Lev. 18:5). What do these Old Testament passages tell us about the law? (See NIV Study Note for Lev. 18:5, one of the best in the whole Bible!) Do you think by “law” Paul means simply the marks of Jewish identity (like circumcision and kosher laws), or does he mean something more?

15. Paul’s quotation of Deuteronomy 21:23 in verse 13 gives us a new and still deeper insight into the nature and accomplishment of Christ’s crucifixion?

16. Galatians 3:14 is one of the towering verses in a letter full of towering verses. In your own words, what point is Paul making here? Compare verses 3:5,9,11, and 14. What benefits come through faith?

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.