

"Is the Gospel Worth Fighting For?" Galatians 2:11-21

Justification — God declaring a person to be in right relationship with Him. Does this declaration occur through faith alone in the work of Christ only, or must we also do some form of good works? Even the most eminent of Christians (Peter, for example) can fall prey to the deceit that somehow we can add to the work of Christ. Thank God that on that all important day, we must only plead the blood of Jesus Christ. His work on our behalf — full, final, forever.

Peter is being confronted by Paul. Peter, prince of Apostles, leader of the movement. Peter is in error. Serious error. Public, personal confrontation. Frightening. Unnerving. If Peter can become confused and drift into error, anyone can.

Battle over the gospel is still being fought by Christians. Example: N.T. Wright, 2009

John Piper – they are both confused. I'm not saying all his writing is bad or that he is not a Christian. Scrutinize everything you hear. Including what you hear from me. Piper has written a lot of great stuff. So did Peter. Way off base on the gospel.

This is the great ground of joy in the word of the cross: justification is by *grace alone* (not mixed with our merit), through *faith alone* (not mixed with our works), on the basis of Christ *alone* (not mingling His righteousness with ours), to the glory of God *alone* (not ours).

—*When I Don't Desire God*, 83.

“These are just some of the conditions that the New Testament says we must meet in order to inherit final salvation. We must believe on Jesus and receive him and turn from our sin and obey him and humble ourselves like little children and love him more than we love our family, our possessions or our own life. This is what it means to be converted to Christ. This alone is the way of everlasting life.”

—*Desiring God*, 52

.. in the courtroom of God, my guilt for sin is removed by Christ's blood... and my title to heaven is provided by Christ's obedience...”

—*When I Don't Desire God*, 83

“The salvation of the elect depends on their not denying Christ and on their enduring in faith and obedience... For only by feeding on the Word can you grow, and only by growing can you persevere and attain final salvation.”

—*Brothers, We Are Not Professionals*

The future grace of inheriting the kingdom is contingent on not practicing the works of the flesh... we cannot count on the future grace of eternal life if we do not love.
—*Future Grace*, 253.

“Let us make no mistake: Our works of love are *necessary*.”
—*The Future of Justification*, 186, emphasis Piper’s

“...moral transformation (especially the fruit of love) [is] *necessary* for final salvation.”
—*The Future of Justification*, pp. 114-115, emphasis Piper’s
Important: No assurance of salvation!

IMPORTANCE: “This is the truth of the gospel. It is also the principal article of all Christian doctrine, wherein the knowledge of all godliness consists. Most necessary it is, therefore, that we should know this article well, teach it unto others, and beat it into their heads continually.”
—Martin Luther, p. 101

Next week – Q/A after the service. Why I think Piper/others are confused. This is a **current** issue. This is a **critical** issue. Will you plead the work of Christ, or His work and your works? Can you know today that you possess eternal life? Let’s listen to Paul.

READ 2:11-14. Peter, you are joining with those who destroy the gospel. Not a model for biblical conflict resolution. PUBLIC & PERSONAL

Distorting the gospel – 1:14a

Setting – One Community

Shared meal; Lord’s supper. Paul, Barnabas, Titus, Peter. Racial harmony. Powerful witness.

Faith AND works of the Law – these men were “believers” in Jesus
Works necessary for entrance into God’s family
Works necessary for status in God’s family
Obedience to Law necessary for moral transformation

Early Jewish Christians practiced Christianity within culture of Judaism. Kept Sabbath, sang Jewish songs, didn’t eat unclean food. Paul did not have a problem with any of this per se. Neutral issues became requirements for salvation, Paul put up a fight.

Effects of legalism

Divides the community
Destroys assurance of salvation

Paul's argument – 2:15-16

1. 2:15; We are Jews (raised as Law-keepers); they are gentiles (raised as law-breakers; ignorant and indifferent to the Law of Moses)
2. 2:16; Old common knowledge (or at least should be common knowledge) – no person can be put in right relationship with God through obedience to the Law

Universal principle, applicable to all people of all ages

Is. 64:6 For all of us have become like one who is unclean, And all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment

Romans 1-3

Abraham is paradigm – through faith a person can be declared righteous

Should have been common knowledge. However, Pharisaism and Judaizers are a perversion of God's intent. Strong current in Judaism which has infiltrated the Church. Faith AND works. Rom. 1:1-4

First time justify or righteousness is used by Paul; 5 times; justify and righteousness from same

Righteousness = to measure up, to conform to a standard

ex – 90% = "A"; you must get a 90%

Justification = God declares that you meet the standard. NOT God MAKING you moral or virtuous.

What is the standard?

Mt. 5:48; Romans 3:23 (glory of God)

"Do your best" is not enough; live by good intentions

ex - \$1000 to anyone who can jump and touch the 25 foot ceiling; jumping higher than others irrelevant
God doesn't make you a great jumper. Lifts you to the roof.

3. 2:16b, d; New shared knowledge – Christ's faithful, obedient work is the only work that can put us in right relationship with God. Phil. 2 – obedient to death

“justification” – Christ’s work alone can put you in right relationship

4. 2:16c; I enter into the faithful work of Christ through faith

Gal. 3:22; Rom. 3:22; Phil. 3:9

Objection/Accusation – 2:17

Grace produces sinful behavior. Faith alone in Christ alone without the Law is ineffective for producing righteousness.

Paul now breaks the Law; he eats with gentiles; he tells them they don’t have to keep the Law; they don’t have to become circumcised; he breaks the Sabbath; who knows what other sins he commits?

Gospel of grace promotes sin. Grace can’t conquer sin. Faith in Christ needs works of the Law added in order to overcome sin

Wherever Paul preached grace people objected. Too good to be true. You can’t really mean that. If no one objects to the way you explain the gospel, you are probably not explaining it right. Romans 6.

Response – 2:18-21

1. 2:18. If I go back under the system of the Law, the Law will only prove that I am still sinful. IOW, it is Law that can’t conquer sin.

Ex – Walk into a dark room. Turn on the lights. Roaches everywhere. Light can’t kill the roaches, just shows they are there.

2. 2:19. Role of the Law. One of the purposes of the Law (“through Law”) was to show its own inadequacy (“die to Law”) in order to lead me to true life.

3:21 – no life in the Law

3:24 – Tutor, guardian, guide

3. 2:20. Life in God. How can I have true life?

a. Sharing Christ’s death – 2:20a

Rom. 6; 7:1-6

b. Sharing Christ's life – 2:20b

Goal: not merely change of behavior; conformity to written standard

Goal: transformation of my character. No longer love things that are evil

c. Living by confidence (faith) in Christ's work and present power – 2:20c

The flesh profits nothing. Confidence in self will result in failure. You cannot change your character, but Christ can.

d. Confidence is based on His proven love for me – 2:20d

4. 2:21; Christ's work necessary and sufficient

- a. My opponents, not I, nullify the grace of God
- b. My sin does not invalidate God's system of grace
- c. Or, I don't reject the grace of God that was demonstrated by the revelation of the Law

Application

James 2 – Justification by faith and works

James 2 / Romans 4 next week; Q/A

What do you trust in?

Give thanks this week for finished work of Christ