

Title: "Two Peoples – One Way" (Part 4)

Passage: Galatians 2:16-17

Theme: Paul's Central Point: Justification by Faith

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{{Read Passage}}

[i] We've camped out on verse 16 (spent quite a bit of time here)

Reason: Central to the rest of Paul's argument. A (the?) key verse.

One writer ==>

'This is the text on which all that follows in the Epistle is commentary' [Duncan 64–5, cited by Dunn, 134]

[ii] Allow me to read 2 additional quotes from 2 contemporary commentators

Tom Schreiner (Prof. of NT at Southern Seminary). Writing in his contribution on Gal. in the Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (2010) ==>

Clearly 2:16 is one of the most important verses in all of Galatians. It is packed with some of the most important themes in the letter. Three times Paul asserts that right standing with God does not come by keeping the law but only through faith in Christ. The redundancy of the verse as a whole supports the idea that we have an objective genitive here ("faith in Christ"). Neither Peter nor anyone else can stand before God on the basis of what they have done. Salvation is of the Lord, and it is received by faith alone. [Schreiner, 167]

Timothy George, Dean of Beeson Divinity School, addresses a different question. Writing in his Gal. Comm. (in The New American Commentary series) ==>

Given all these wonderful benefits of “life under the law,” why should Jewish Christians have moved beyond the law to faith in Jesus Christ? Obviously they should have because there was a fundamental disjunction between the best that could be obtained by observing the law and the gift of salvation freely offered through Jesus Christ. This is the point Paul was making in Gal 2:15–16. We can paraphrase his argument thus: “Forget the Gentile sinners. We know they are outside the covenant and hopeless before God. But even we Jews who could claim all the privileges of the chosen people, even we had to realize that no one could be justified by observing the law. We too, no less than the Gentiles, have been accepted by God through faith in Jesus Christ.” [George, 189–190]

[iii] That last quote leads us to the main point of this passage

\*Two Peoples – One Way\*

Jew or Gentile - there's only one way to be justified before God.

W/that in mind ==>

I. Essential Elements of the Gospel in Galatians (vv. 15-21)

A. The Universal Nature of Sin (v. 15-16a)

Sin, human depravity/corrupt., is universal. Rom 3:23 (“all” contextually = Jew/Gentile).

**15 We [are] Jews by nature and not sinners from among the Gentiles. 16 Yet we know that a man is not justified by works of the Law but through faith in Jesus Christ. . . .**

*“Forget the Gentile sinners. We know they are outside the covenant and hopeless before God. But even we Jews who could claim all the privileges of the chosen people, even we had to realize that no one could be justified by observing the law. We too, no less than the Gentiles, have been accepted by God through faith in Jesus Christ.”*

## **B. Justification Is by Faith Alone (v. 16)**

### ***1. Unpacking Three Key Concepts in Verse 16***

#### ***a. "Justified" (Verb δικαιωω) - used 3x in v. 16***

**Yet we know that a man is not justified by works of the Law but through faith in Jesus Christ. And we have believed in Christ Jesus so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the Law, since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified.**

We noted who this NT Gk. verb corresponds to t/OT Heb. word *tsadiq* which relates to t/concepts of “justice” / “righteousness.” Heb. verb in its active form means “to declare righteous.”

Aside from all t/contrary voices out there (RC; Lib.; NPP) – we have no good reason to see justification as anything other than that which declares a condemned sinner right b4 G.

I don't mean that just. “makes us right” – what I mean is that justification is God's declaration that we are “right” (forgiven) because of our relationship to another: JC.

We also spent some time looking at ==>

**b. "Works of the Law" (εργα νομου)**

Deeds/Human actions that are demanded in obedience to the Mosaic Law.

**c. "Faith in Jesus Christ"**

**B. Justification Is by Faith Alone (v. 16)**

Sola Fide. (Go back to v. 16)

**Yet we know that a man is not justified by works of the Law but through faith in Jesus Christ. . . .**

**Yet we know . . .**

**2. "we" = Paul and Peter**

This verse (end of chapt.) is a continuation of t/conversation started in v. 14 {cite}

Paul is relating to t/Galatians his confrontation w/Peter which happened in Antioch (v. 11).

Paul addresses Peter formally and t/Galatians materially (text moves from personal applic. in Antioch to univ. applic. for t/Galatians – and by way of t/Spirit's inspiration – to us today).

**3. Not justified by works but through faith**

Not that, but this. Note it's "through" faith. Faith, belief, trust, is t/hand that receives t/gift. Why by grace thru faith.

**Yet we know . . .**

Hypocrisy. Peter, you and I both know this!

No one is justified before God by doing what the law requires; only through faith in JC that anyone can be right before God.

Romans 3:19–24 19 Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, that every mouth may be closed, and all the world may become accountable to God; 20 because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin. 21 But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, 22 even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus;

Romans 4:3,5 3 For what does the Scripture say? “AND ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS.” 5 But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned as righteousness,

**Yet we know that a man is not justified by works of the Law but through faith in Jesus Christ. . . .**

Cf. v. 21 ==>

**for if righteousness [comes] through the Law, then Christ died for no purpose**

**a. Note the rest of the verse:**

**. . . And we have believed in Christ Jesus so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the Law, since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified.**

## (1) Sounds a little repetitive

### (a) Flow of thought develops

#### i. Begins with knowledge – “we know” [what?]

First premise: No one is justified by works but only through faith.

**a man is not justified by works of the Law but through faith in Jesus Christ. . . .**

Second Premise: We've believed in Christ so that we might be justified by faith alone

**. . . And we have believed in Christ Jesus so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the Law . . .**

Conclusion: It can't be both.

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

## 4. Overtones of Psalm 143:2 (142:2 in LXX)

Psalm 142:2 **And enter not into judgment with your servant, for in your sight shall no man living be justified.** [LXX]

### a. Background of the Psalm

David is being pursued by his enemies / ridden w/guilt. He pleads for God to deliver him but knows he is guilty – deserving of judgment.

He pleads for mercy because he realizes that he cannot stand before God on the basis of his works, but only by virtue of God's mercy.

Paul seems to have this verse from Psalms in mind here. If that's t/case, it speaks against those who would limit “wotL” to ceremonial

boundary markers that divided Jew/Gentile since that's t/last thing David had in mind when he wrote this Psalm.

#### 5. Some of the tenses have a future element

*We may be justified* (subjunctive)

*no flesh will be justified* (future tense)

#### a. Is justification past or future?

Can someone say, *“I have believed in JC as my Lord and Savior, t/One who lived, died, and rose again for me. It is by faith in Him alone that I have been saved (justified).”*

Of course.

Romans 5:1 **“Having been justified by faith we have peace with God.”**

#### (1) Ultimately, Finally, that declaration will also be future

Future day of judgment (Rev. 20:11-15) when everyone will stand B4 God to give an account. And those whose names were not written in t/Lamb's BOL from b4 t/found. of t/world (God's elect) will be cast into hell for eternity.

When you are born again & you believe in JC God declares you righteous because you are now “in X.”

**\*\*But it is an advanced declaration of a future announcement.\*\***

Now it's secret. No one has seen God declare any one of us “righteous in Christ alone”. No one has seen any one of us “saved.” We see evidence, but not t/substance.

Now it's secret. But at t/final judgment it will be public.

**\*\*it is an advanced declaration of a future announcement.\*\***

On that Day God will publicly announce b4 all Creation that those who are in X belong to X and are saved from eternal judgment.

Comes by faith.

I love this quote, but it's deep, real deep. By Moises Silva:

To recognize the apocalyptic overtones of this clause, however, is not to undermine the traditional application of the verse, for in this very passage Paul is stressing the significance of faith for his own personal—yes, present—justification and that of his Jewish-Christian contemporaries. The point, nevertheless, is that the truth is set within the context of cosmic, eschatological realities. In other words, the 'subjective' experience of justification is not divorced from the 'objective' judgment at the end of the age. Quite the contrary, it is grounded in that final judgment, so that our sense of assurance (cf. 4:6-7) is not merely some psychological strategy that bypasses reality, but rather a proleptic manifestation of God's righteous verdict. [CNTOT, 791]

***I. Essential Elements of the Gospel in Galatians (vv. 15-21)***

***B. Justification Is by Faith Alone (v. 16)***

**6. Here's where the proverbial rubber meets road . . .**

After all, this is all about t/Good News. Good News is that JC saves sinners from death & hell by virtue of His gift received by faith.

When your conscience condemns you for your sin.

When you are downhearted because of your failures.

You have failed. As a parent // a spouse; // friend // worker // in your witness of X // in your battle against sin // your prayer life //

You fail to love God as you should and obey Him as you ought.

Yes, t/Law condemns us. You can't keep it. It's demands escape you like sand through your fingers.

Nevertheless, simply by faith our Loving God, out of pure grace, has given you all t/benefits of X's perfect righteousness.

If you are a born again believer: He has credited to you His inexhaustable righteousness & before God it is if you had never committed a single sin or have ever failed to obey any command.

JC carried out t/obedience you never could.

Being in X t/Father can look at you and say of you, as He did of X:  
“This is my beloved in whom I am well pleased.”

You have failed—at least in part. We all have. Doesn't make us failures.

Hear the words of t/Wittenberg Reformer Martin Luther as he reflected on this passage nearly 500 years ago ==>

First a person must learn to know himself from the Law. With the prophet he will then confess: "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." And, "there is none that doeth good, no, not one." And, "against thee, thee only, have I sinned." Having been humbled by the

Law, and having been brought to a right estimate of himself, a man will repent. He finds out that he is so depraved, that no strength, no works, no merits of his own will ever deliver him from his guilt. He will then understand the meaning of Paul's words: "I am sold under sin"; and "they are all under sin." At this state a person begins to lament: "Who is going to help me?" In due time comes the Word of the Gospel, and says: "Son, thy sins are forgiven thee. Believe in Jesus Christ who was crucified for your sins. Remember, your sins have been imposed upon Christ." In this way are we delivered from sin. In this way are we justified and made heirs of everlasting life. In order to have faith you must paint a true portrait of Christ. The scholastics caricature Christ into a judge and tormentor. But Christ is no law giver. He is the Lifegiver. He is the Forgiver of sins. You must believe that Christ might have atoned for the sins of the world with one single drop of His blood. Instead, He shed His blood abundantly in order that He might give abundant satisfaction for our sins. Here let me say, that these three things, faith, Christ, and imputation of righteousness, are to be joined together. Faith takes hold of Christ. God accounts this faith for righteousness. This imputation of righteousness we need very much, because we are far from perfect. As long as we have this body, sin will dwell in our flesh. Then, too, we sometimes drive away the Holy Spirit; we fall into sin, like Peter, David, and other holy men. Nevertheless we may always take recourse to this fact, "that our sins are covered," and that "God will not lay them to our charge." Sin is not held against us for Christ's sake. . . . After we have taught faith in Christ, we teach good works. "Since you have found Christ by faith," we say, "begin now to work and do well. Love God and your neighbor. Call upon God, give thanks unto Him, praise Him, confess Him. These are good works. Let them flow from a cheerful heart, because you have remission of sin in Christ." When crosses and afflictions come

our way, we bear them patiently. "For Christ's yoke is easy, and His burden is light." When sin has been pardoned, and the conscience has been eased of its dreadful load, a Christian can endure all things in Christ. . . . This doctrine brings comfort to consciences in serious trouble. When a person is a Christian he is above law and sin. When the Law accuses him, and sin wants to drive the wits out of him, a Christian looks to Christ. A Christian is free. He has no master except Christ. [Luther, 42-44]

## *I. Essential Elements of the Gospel in Galatians (vv. 15-21)*

### *A. The Universal Nature of Sin (v. 15)*

### *B. Justification Is by Faith Alone (v. 16)*

Third (just cover part of this)

### *C. The Believer's Union With Christ (vv. 17-20)*

What is our "union with X"? We've touched on this quite a bit lately.

Theologian John Murray wrote that ==>

"union with Christ is . . . the central truth of the whole doctrine of salvation. . . . It is not simply a phase of the application of redemption; it underlies every aspect of redemption" (Redemption—Accomplished and Applied [Eerdmans, 1955], pp. 201, 205).

Two complementary themes in Xn theology: Believers are described as being "in Christ" and at t/same time "Christ is in them"

As it relates to this passage we see t/pinnacle/summit of this in v. 20  
{cite}

But we see this concept "Union with Christ" introduced in v. 17 (note the words "in Christ" toward t/beg. of t/v.) ==>

**But if while seeking to be justified in Christ, we ourselves were found to be sinners, is Christ then a minister of sin? . . .**

### **C. The Believer's Union With Christ (vv. 17-20)**

Several sub-points taking us all t/way to v. 20. First ==>

#### **1. To be “In Christ” is not to be “In Sin” (17)**

Here's t/? ==> *“If to be justified in X is to be found a sinner, does it follow that X is a minister, or servant of sin?”*

#### **a. Difficult Verse!**

*“The meaning of the verse is intensely debated.”* [Schreiner]

#### **b. Break it down into its 3 main parts**

3 propositions (statements), t/first 2 are assumed to be true.

#### **(1) First proposition**

**But if while seeking to be justified in Christ . . .**

#### **(a) 1<sup>st</sup> class condition with εἰ (“we are” - “since we are”)**

No problem here. Paul is reminding Peter (and everyone else) that they are seeking final justification before God based solely on their being “In Christ.”

#### **(2) Second proposition**

**. . . we ourselves were found to be sinners, . . .**

(also assumed to be true). Here's t/problem. What does this mean?!

#### **(a) What did we see in v. 15? (same word - ἁμαρτωλοί)**

There it stood for Gentiles / Pagans. Seems to be t/connection.

**(b) Why were t/Gentiles sinners?**

Because they lived outside of the Law!

This seems to be what Paul is saying here.

Cf. flow of that from v. 15-16-17.

To rest in t/assured hope of our justif. solely because we are in X (that by faith) is to abandon t/Law (or any works) as a means to that end.

For t/Jews, this puts them in t/same category as the Gentiles (v. 15) "sinners" who do not live by the Mosaic Law.

**(c) This no doubt reflects t/charges brought against them by the Judaizers** See vv. 11-14.

Philip Graham Ryken writes:

“The Gentiles were 'sinners' not so much because they were immoral, but because they lived outside the boundaries of the law. According to the Judaizers, this was precisely the problem with Peter and Paul: they had become outlaws. In their personal habits, they were living like Gentile sinners rather than like Jews. They used to keep the law in all its detail. Now they were doing things like eating unholy food with uncircumcised Gentiles.” [Ryken, 70]

Romans 10:1–4 1 Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation. 2 For I testify about them that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge. 3 For not knowing about God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God. 4 For Christ is the end (τέλος) of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

**(1) First proposition**

**But if while seeking to be justified in Christ . . .**

**(2) Second proposition**

**. . . we ourselves were found to be sinners,**

**(3) Third Proposition**

**. . . is Christ then a minister (διάκονος) of sin? . . .**

*Accusation: You have abandoned the Law as a means to righteousness. Therefore, you are like the pagans who have no Law. If this is where X leads you, then He is a minister of sin.*

Accusation leveled against Jesus during His ministry on earth. He breaks the Sabbath; He hangs out with sinners.

This is always t/legalist accusation against grace: Grace alone will lead you to sin.

Romans 5:20–6:2 **20** The Law came in so that the transgression would increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, **21** so that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace would reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. **1** What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? **2** May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?

New Covt. - Law written on hearts of flesh rather than tablets of stone.  
Cf. 5:13-14, 16.

### (3) *Third Proposition*

... is Christ then a minister of sin? ...

#### (a) Answer

**May it never be!** (μη γένοιτο.) Cf. Rom. 6:2.

Strong objection. Phrase Paul favors whenever there's an accusation that freedom from the Law breeds sinful conduct.

Paul will explain why this is false in t/verses to follow which we'll get to next time.

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Charles Spurgeon ==>

“Faith alone and not works justify the soul before God. He who does not believe this rejects the gospel. Nothing is more plainly revealed in Scripture than this: that by the works of the law shall no man be justified. Yet men in some shape or other stick to the hope of legal righteousness. They will have it that they must prepare for grace, or assist mercy, or in some degree deserve eternal life. They prefer their own flattering prejudices to the declaration of the heart-searching God.” [Spurgeon 2:15–16]

John Newton / slave trader / Amazing Grace

In evil long I took delight,  
Unawed by shame or fear,  
Till a new object struck my sight,  
And stopp'd my wild career:  
I saw One hanging on a Tree  
In agonies and blood,

Who fix'd His languid eyes on me.  
As near His Cross I stood.

Sure never till my latest breath,  
Can I forget that look:  
It seem'd to charge me with His death,  
Though not a word He spoke:  
My conscience felt and own'd the guilt,  
And plunged me in despair:  
I saw my sins His Blood had spilt,  
And help'd to nail Him there.

Alas! I knew not what I did!  
But now my tears are vain:  
Where shall my trembling soul be hid?  
For I the Lord have slain!

A second look He gave, which said,  
"I freely all forgive;  
This blood is for thy ransom paid;  
I die that thou may'st live."

Thus, while His death my sin displays  
In all its blackest hue,  
Such is the mystery of grace,  
It seals my pardon too.  
With pleasing grief, and mournful joy,  
My spirit now if fill'd,  
That I should such a life destroy,  
Yet live by Him I kill'd!