

“The Gospel in Galatians
Lesson #4 Justification by Faith Alone

Gal 2:15–21; Eph 2:12; Phil 3:9; Rom 3:10–20; Gen 15:5, 6; Rom 3:8.

Galatians 2:20 (ESV) *I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*

Galatians 2:15–21 (NKJV) *We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles,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.”*

The Question of “Justification” (Gal. 2:15, 16).

Galatians 2:15 (NKJV) *We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, **Who is Paul Addressing here? Peter.***

Galatians 2:14 (NKJV) *But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, **I said to Peter before them all,** “If you, being a Jew, live in the manner of Gentiles and not as the Jews, why do you compel Gentiles to live as Jews?”*

The greek word here (hamartōlos) ἁμαρτωλός often signifies a heathen, merely one who had no knowledge of the true God.

Paul uses the word justified four times in Galatians 2:16, 17.

What does he mean by “justification”?

1. The action of showing something to be right or reasonable.
2. The action of declaring or making righteous in the sight of God.

Exodus 23:7 (NKJV) *Keep yourself far from a false matter; do not kill the innocent and righteous. For I will not justify the wicked.*

Deuteronomy 25:1 (NKJV) *“If there is a dispute between men, and they come to court, that the judges may judge them, and they justify the righteous and condemn the wicked,*

Works of the Law

Paul says three times in Galatians 2:16 that a person is not justified by “the works of the law.” What does he mean by the expression “the works of the law”?

Galatians 2:16 (NKJV) *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 2:15 (NKJV) *who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them)*

***Romans 3:28** (NKJV) *Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law.*

Romans 9:31–32 (NKJV) *but Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness.³² Why? Because they did not seek it by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone.*

The Basis of Our Justification

Trusting In Works

2 Kings 20:2–3 (NKJV) *Then he turned his face toward the wall, and prayed to the Lord, saying,³ “Remember now, O Lord, I pray, how I have walked before You in truth and with a loyal heart, and have done what was good in Your sight.” And Hezekiah wept bitterly.*

Nehemiah 13:14 (NKJV) *Remember me, O my God, concerning this, and do not wipe out my good deeds that I have done for the house of my God, and for its services!*

Nehemiah 13:22 (NKJV) *Remember me, O my God, concerning this also, and spare me according to the greatness of Your mercy!*

Phil 3:9 (NKJV) *“And be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith”*

Romans 1:17 *For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.*

***Romans 3:27** *Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith.*

“There is not a point that needs to be dwelt upon more earnestly, repeated more frequently, or established more firmly in the minds of all than the impossibility of fallen man meriting anything by his own best good works. Salvation is through faith in Jesus Christ alone.”—Ellen G. White, *Faith and Works*, pp. 18, 19.

Romans 4:5–8 (NKJV) *But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness, ⁶ just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works: ⁷ “Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, And whose sins are covered; Blessed is the man to whom the Lord shall not impute sin.”*

***Revelation 14:12** (NKJV) *Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.*

Galatians 2:16 *“Therefore we know that a man is not justified from the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus the Messiah, and we believe in him, in Jesus the Messiah, that from his faith, that of the Messiah, we might be justified, and not from the works of the law.”*

The phrase in Greek is translated literally as “the faith” or “the faithfulness” of Jesus. We are not justified on the basis of our faith but on the basis of Christ’s faithfulness for us, which we claim for ourselves through faith.

An early Syriac translation conveys Paul’s meaning well:

The Obedience of Faith

Genesis 15:5–6 (NKJV) *Then He brought him outside and said, “Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them.” And He said to him, “So shall your descendants be.” ⁶ And he believed in the Lord, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.*

John 3:14–15 (NKJV) *And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵ that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.*

Romans 4:3 (NKJV) *For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.”*

James 2:23 (NKJV) *And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, “Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” And he was called the friend of God.*

Faith is our response to believing God’s promises

Luke 6:46 (NKJV) *“But why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do the things which I say?”*

Does Faith Promote Sin?

Romans 3:31 (NKJV) *Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law.*

Romans 3:8 (NKJV) *And why not say, “Let us do evil that good may come”?—as we are slanderously reported and as some affirm that we say. Their condemnation is just.*

Romans 6:1–2 (NKJV) *What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? ² Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?*

Romans 6:15 (NKJV) *What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not!*

***Galatians 2:17** (NKJV) *“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!*

Galatians 5:13 (NKJV) *For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.*

1 Peter 2:16 (NKJV) *as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God.*

Jude 4 (NKJV) *For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Galatians 2:20–21 (NKJV) *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.”*

Romans 6:3–14 (NKJV) *Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? ⁴ Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, ⁶ knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. ⁷ For he who has died has been freed from sin.*