

## The Epistle to the Galatians: The Gospel of Grace

### Lesson 6: Justification by Faith Alone (2:11-21)

If you're like me (and Lord help your heart if you are), you've been waiting for this lesson. Within the text of this lesson lay some very serious doctrine. Doctrine that the church has cherished! Within the text of this lesson we will handle a key text that speaks with great clarity about our free salvation found in Christ alone. This is a favorite text of many. It is the message of the gospel—that hopeless sinners cannot justify themselves through obedience to the law, but we are justified by our faith in the finished atoning work of Jesus Christ on our behalf. But we're not quite there yet!

The apostle Paul is not quite finished explaining his right of authority as an apostle. He's been re-establishing his position, and silencing the critical Judaizers first. Paul has been giving the autobiographical account of salvation and calling to ministry since 1:11, for the purpose of making one important point. His aim has been to show that his salvation was freely from God (as a fellow gospel recipient), and that his message was entirely given to him by God. He made a point in verse 1:12 to say that he didn't receive the gospel from any man, nor was he taught it by any man. He said again in 1:17 that he didn't go to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before him after his Damascus road encounter. Why? Because he was underscoring to the Galatians that the Judaizers were wrong in their assessment, because Paul had no contact with them. Paul wasn't a disciple of the apostles. In 1:18 he mentioned a brief two-week visit to Jerusalem where he met only Peter and James. His purpose of mentioning that he saw none of the others is again to underline the importance that he was not under their influence. He adds in 1:22 that leaving from there he was still unknown in person to the churches in Judea.

In the last lesson, we saw that after fourteen years had passed, he finally made his way to Jerusalem. There he met with the apostles privately and presented before them the gospel that he had been preaching to the Gentiles. The response that Paul records is purely positive! James and Peter and John, when they saw what God had done in Paul's life, extended a hand of fellowship! (2:9) They welcomed Titus as a fellow believer (though he was a Greek), there was no push to see him circumcised before he became a Christian. (2:3)

Paul's entire point of recording this for the Galatians is to prove his apostolic authority. The same God who called what the Judaizers referred to as the 'pillars' of the faith (James, Peter and John) is the same God who called him. They were different, but they had the exact same gospel. And although they hadn't been acquainted, when they met together, it was very apparent that the same God was at work in them both. There was no one-upping, no gaining the upper-hand, no superiority. These were fellow brothers labouring for the same gospel. Then came the uncomfortable verses of 11-14,

**"But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. For before certain men came from James, he was eating with the Gentiles, but when they came he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party. And the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy. But when I saw that their conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, 'If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you force the Gentiles to live like Jews?'"**

These four verses speak of an argument between Cephas (Peter), considered by all to be the leader of the apostles, and Paul. We need to ask a few questions: What was the argument about? Was Paul right to oppose Peter? And the question that was first in my mind: Why insert this argument here in this letter? What bearing does it have on this letter? Let's try to handle these questions in the order above.

**What was the argument about?** The argument is concerning food, and who Peter ate it with. At one time, Peter was freely eating with Gentiles, but once the Jews arrived he hypocritically withdrew himself from their fellowship because he feared the Jews. I suppose a good question to ask here would be, "Why would Peter fear the Jews knowing that he ate with Gentiles?" Perhaps you're reminded as I was about the time when the Pharisees came upon Jesus reclining at the table with tax collectors and sinners. (Matt 9:10-13) There was an immediate judgment upon the cleanliness of Jesus for eating with such dirty and disgusting sinners as those. For Jesus to eat with such people as those, it was a testimony to the inner corruption of his own heart. Perhaps they would have judged Jesus using our modern saying "Birds of a feather, flock together."

To the Jews, what you ate, when you ate it, where you ate it, and who you ate it with had serious implications. In fact, your right-standing with God had in part to do with food, and the cleanliness of it. Just a second ago, I mentioned the passage in Matthew 9. The following paragraph in verses 9:14-17 was a question from the disciples of John to Jesus concerning fasting. The point being that for the Jews, what they ate, (or didn't eat in regards to fasting) was very important to their religion. What was Jesus' response to their question about fasting? **"No one puts a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch tears away from the garment, and a worse tear is made. Neither is new wine put into old wineskins. If it is, the skins burst and the wine is spilled and the skins are destroyed. But new wine is put into fresh wineskins, and so both are preserved."**

Don't you love how Jesus answers questions this way? Undoubtedly, if you were hearing these words first-hand, you would have better understood these words. Cultural divisions make this answer a little more difficult for us to understand. And to be honest, quite a bit of time could be spent commenting on the details of this answer, which will take us away from the point I'm getting at with this argument from our text. So I will summarize the answer of Jesus quickly. First to remember, Jesus isn't condemning fasting as sin, because fasting has a right time and purpose. But he is highlighting how fasting at the moment of that question was inappropriate. The question stems from new believers in Christ who clearly notice how the things that Jesus spoke of (free forgiveness of sin found by faith in Him alone) were radically different from the things they heard the Pharisees speak of (a right standing by God based upon law-keeping, including keeping strict dietary laws and fasting). Jesus' answer explains to them that the gospel of free forgiveness and cleansing (the new wine) cannot be poured into their previous religious traditions (old skins). The only skin that can safely house the new wine (the gospel) is a re-born man (a new wineskin). Keeping the OT food laws was one way for the Jews to demonstrate to the world that they were in fact God's chosen people, that they were in fact the only race that was right with God! But according to Jesus, the way to salvation had nothing to do with diet, and everything to do with new creation (a new heart, with eyes to see and ears to hear) repenting and believing the gospel.

So back in our text, we see Peter in Antioch. The dining habits of the Jews who were in Antioch created quite a problem for this church. At this time, Antioch would have had a population of about five-hundred thousand, and of that, approximately 10 percent would have been Jewish. You could imagine then, how a church of thousands with a membership that was one-tenth Jewish, would have had an interesting spread of food on the tables during their fellowship meals! This church would have been

made up of people from all walks of life, and be a blend of many cultures. But this blend brought to the surface some tension regarding dietary laws. Here we had at this church both a Jew and Gentile eating side by side! From the apostolic point of view, the issues regarding the necessity of the Gentile believers converting to Judaism, getting circumcised and following the Law of Moses had been settled in their last meeting in 2:1-10. The Jewish Christians were free to follow Christ, and keep the Law of Moses. While the Gentile Christians were just as much saved apart from keeping ceremonial and dietary laws of Moses. But there were many who were unsettled, and quite disruptive concerning these issues.

What is important to remember, so that we not lose sight of our text, is Peter's position (and deviation of his position), which sparked this opposition from Paul. Peter was one of those who agreed with Paul and gave the right hand of fellowship just a few verses prior. He gave his theological 'nod of approval' towards the issue of Jewish and Gentile Christians living in harmony. Peter himself saw no need of Titus receiving circumcision. More impactful was the vision from Heaven that Peter received dealing exactly with this issue. Let's read the rather lengthy portion of Acts 10:9-48. When the people received the report concerning the Gentiles who were being added to the family of God, the circumcision party was not happy and so they criticized Peter. Let's read their criticism and also note Peter's response to them, Acts 11:3-18. Here we see Peter understanding God's direction in the salvation of Gentiles under the New Covenant, and not standing in His way! Peter embraced these Gentile believers as authentic Christians, saved just as much as he was. Galatians 2:12 tells us that he was **"eating with the Gentiles"**, clearly using his liberty in Christ to eat the foods with them that he once abstained from.

Then came the men from James. These are men who were affiliated with James, or to say it better had come to Christ as result of his ministry. This James is the same James who gave the right hand of fellowship to Paul in 2:9, and was also the half-brother of Jesus. These men were believers in Christ, but their theology was not right. Being Jewish, it's probable that these men were converted Pharisees who were having a difficult time separating the necessity of law-keeping from the grace found in Christ alone. These men still placed a high premium on the traditions and rituals found in the Law of Moses. And here they come to Antioch, where they found Peter eating and acting like a Gentile, practically like a pagan! The pressure must have come on strong against Peter, since he **"drew back and separated himself, fearing"** them. Clearly Peter was trying to avoid offending anyone. He wanted to relate and be a blessing to the Gentiles, he also wanted to keep his testimony before the Jews and be able to lead them to Christ too. Having offended this group from James, his solution was to stop having fellowship with the Gentiles altogether.

This isn't the first time that we've seen Peter crumble under the pressure. Remember Jesus' prediction, **"You will all fall away because of me this night. For it is written, 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.'"** Peter confidently answered back, **"Though they all fall away because of you, I will never fall away."** Jesus confirmed, **"Truly, I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times."** Peter, knowing his heart more than his Creator did, said to Jesus again, **"Even if I must die with you, I will not deny you!"** (Matt 26:31-35) At the close of that chapter, we see Peter cowering, **"I do not know what you mean."** (v.70) **"I do not know the man."** (v.72) **"Then he began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear, 'I do not know the man.'"** (v.74) And now, for at least the fourth time, we see Peter doing a 180 and living in a way that was opposite to his official position in fear of this circumcision party.

**Was Paul right to oppose Peter?** Now that we've seen the problem, was it necessary, or even right, for Paul to publicly call Peter out? In our politically correct age, it's always wrong for anyone to tell

someone else that they're wrong. "Truth is relative", the world says, "What's true to me, isn't your truth, and what's true to you, isn't my truth. Who are we to judge one another?" Building off of that principle, the world has redefined loving someone as "accepting them just the way they are." Just this morning I was scrolling through Facebook and came across a post that a co-worker of mine put up. It was simply text with a rainbow backdrop (in support of the LGBTQ pride movement), the text contained only two hashtags (if you don't know what a hashtag is, Google it – if you don't know how to Google something, I can't help you). The text of his post was: #loveislove #donthate. This man, who is not L, G, B, T or Q, was supporting this idea that love is simply conforming to the standards of another. And again he confirmed in my mind, that if you disagree with the differences of another, you're hating them.

I say all of that to say that some in our culture might be offended at Paul's "unloving" attitude, he might be understood as "breaking the peace", "stirring the pot", or "damaging Peter's ego". I'll answer that objection by informing you that Paul doesn't care about your assessment. Paul didn't care about the Pharisees objections, or the Judaizers, or even Peter himself. Paul's life was played for an audience of One. Paul was interested in pleasing God, and living to proclaim the gospel with great clarity. Peter, being ashamed of the gospel, needed to be corrected, and Paul was ready to do it. We need to re-program our minds as to what the "loving" thing to do would be. Because Paul loved God, and loved the gospel, and loved Peter, he couldn't let this perversion (or blurring) of the gospel message continue. Peter's thinking needed re-orienting so that he could grow in holiness. And the people needed to know publicly that what Peter was doing was wrong. No one benefitted by a private tutoring of Paul to Peter. Many were watching Peter and learning that his cowardice was the right example. We see that in 2:13, **"And the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy."** Note how Paul added Barnabas by name in his shock! This was the same Barnabas who took him under his wing and introduced him to the church and defended him. This was the same guy who accompanied him on missionary journeys. And here, even Barnabas is being led astray by Peter.

Peter was acting hypocritically, and was therefore influencing Barnabas and the rest of the Jews to behave likewise. But just how exactly was he a hypocrite? Let me answer first by explaining the word. "Hypocrite" is a word that came from the Greek language, it was used in regards to their theater performances. Actors on stage would wear a mask that would have a visible emotion on it. Of course, this emotion was "put on", it had nothing to do with the emotion of the actor, they were...acting. Paul therefore, is not accusing Peter of actually believing the necessity of circumcision, or keeping dietary laws to be right with God, he's accusing him of "playing the part" of someone who does. He knows that Peter think of the Gentile Christians as fellow heirs in Christ, but he's "playing the part" before the James' party of someone who placed Judaism as a requirement for salvation. Paul knew Peter's heart, but unfortunately (for those learning through observation), Peter's actions screamed louder than his whispers. For Peter to withdraw from eating with the Gentile believers in front of James' men, he was telling the congregation that the Gentiles were still ceremonially unclean to eat with. And the Gentiles (not understanding well) got the message that they needed to become a Jew if they wanted to see God.

**Why include this incident in this letter? And at this point in the letter?** Paul had a bigger picture in mind here. Beneath the surface of Peter's hypocrisy and its' influence lay serious gospel implications. By including this incident here, Paul has finished setting the table, so that the Galatians might taste the gospel in all its' sweetness again. Also, by including this incident, Paul has shown in a public way that his apostolic authority was true, and that he used it on not just anyone, but the visible leader of Peter. And,

as far as we can determine from our text, Peter accepted this correction well. It is a fair assumption that these two men carried no hard feelings going forward. In Peter's second epistles, he includes Paul's writings as being the very Word of God. (2 Peter 3:16) So, I think for those reasons, it was fitting for Paul to add this to the letter, and having established his authority, he was now ready to share the good news with them once again.

The entire message of the gospel is that we are saved by God's grace alone, through the substitutionary sacrifice of Jesus Christ alone. There is no work, no law that could be obeyed, that would hope to hopeless sinners. Jesus has paid it all! He has accomplished the necessary redemption of our souls. Therefore, He gets all the glory in our salvation. This was the gospel that the apostles preached. They recognized that the Gentiles were just as much children of God as the Jews, although they were not under the Law of Moses.

One of the necessary, and natural elements of sharing a common faith with believers is fellowship. Believers' are to meet regularly for worship, to pray, and also to share their lives together. For a Christian to judge another Christian as a "second-class" believer and cease to fellowship with them is counter-gospel, anti-gospel. Even John said in his first epistle, **"Whoever says that he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness."** (1 Jn. 1:9) For a Christian to add qualifications for salvation that God Himself does not qualify is sinful. The problem with this group of men who have come from James is that they are Jews who are still stuck in their old ways. If they weren't Pharisees before they came to Christ, then they're engrained in their brains to think like one. (Side note: James himself has nothing to do with these men. We have no reason to believe that James sent them. We have no reason to believe that James shared their criticism. We have no reason to believe that Paul had an issue with James himself. These men were simply believers who had come from the region where they sat under the pastoral ministry of James.) These men have been taught that the externals were of utmost importance their entire lives. From their youths, being right with God had always been a matter of keeping an extremely long list of do's and don'ts.

Paul knew what it meant to be a Pharisee. In fact, if we look into our heart, we know what it's like to be a Pharisee too. It's our natural inclination to want to pride ourselves in our own worth and accomplishments. When Paul heard the criticism of the men from James, he was familiar with their position. What stunned him wasn't their error, it was Peter's! So Paul appeals to the Jewish roots that both he and Peter shared in verse 15, **"We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners."** Paul is stressing the point that they both at one point shared what they thought was the inside track to God. They both thought of themselves as belonging to the only race of people who would ever enjoy God forever, not like those Gentile scumbags. But then Paul repeats the simple gospel, **"Yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified."** (2:16)

You probably haven't seen this in person, but you likely have on television. The judge slams down his gavel and proclaims a person to be guilty (and gives the sentence) or innocent. The ruling of the judge is the final say. In the courtroom of God, where He sits as judge, we picture God in all of His holiness declaring the most heinous sinner to be innocent, because the penalty for his sin was paid for through his faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is what it means to be "justified". It means that God can justly declare the sinner as innocent because His wrath has been propitiated in the death of Christ.

Paul mentions “**works of the law**” here in our text, as being the thing that will not justify anyone in the sight of God. What works of the law is Paul dealing with specifically? Some have argued that Paul is specifically mentioning circumcision, and the food laws, both matters that are relevant to our text. And I would agree that those matters are definitely on Paul’s mind and in this category. I just don’t think we need to limit the “works of the law” to those matters, since they encompass every attempt to attain a right standing before God through obedience and moral uprightness. Paul lists his religious resume in Philippians 3:2-9, showing how his achievements amounted to dung. Nothing that Paul did brought him even an inch closer to being right with God.

By the works of the law no one will be justified. The intent of the law was never to do so. God was never holding a bar high above our heads and shooting “jump!” Rather, He was showing us through the law how far short of the bar we all fall. The problem has nothing to do with the law. The law is not evil. Neither is following the law evil. What is evil is the heart of one under the law. Paul summed up the relationship between sin and the law well in Romans 7:7-25. What the law does is expose how sinful we truly are. The longer we stare into the law and place it beside our lives in measurement, the more it convicts us!

All sinners are saved by faith in Jesus Christ, the only way to be justified before God. Paul mentions three times in 2:16 that it is “**through faith in Jesus Christ**” ... “**believed in Christ Jesus**” ... “**faith in Christ**”. Faith involves more than a mere approval of the fact of what Jesus accomplished in the cross. To have faith in Christ is to rest in the finished work of Christ. The reason that faith justifies is because prizes Jesus Christ, the One who is the Justifier. Faith in Christ is faith in the fact that He perfectly kept the very law that we have obliterated. It’s not that keeping the law was or is irrelevant, keeping the law is very relevant! And our Saviour is the only one who has done so, on our behalf.

I don’t want to us to lose our focus off of the context of this verse. We need to remember that Paul is reminding Peter of this very justification that they both shared. In verse 15 Paul says, “**We ourselves are Jews by birth**” (we being Paul and Peter), and then in 16, “**so we also believed in Christ Jesus**”. There is only one way to God, and it is through a personal commitment to Jesus Christ. It is the way every single person who will one day live with Christ for eternity enters in. If anyone could have been saved though the law, it was a Jew, the one to whom the law was entrusted. And if impossible for Paul and Peter and the rest of the apostles to keep it, so much that they needed to trust in Christ alone, than it was true that no one could be saved by the law. Paul’s whole point is to say to Peter (the one hypocritically holding the law of the heads of the Gentiles) that it was absurd for him to compel the Gentiles to keep the law that he had abandoned! Peter already trusted in Christ alone!

This very doctrine of salvation by God’s grace alone, through faith in Christ alone, to God’s glory alone, is completely unique. There isn’t another religion on earth that compares. Biblical Christianity is the only religion that promises Heaven apart from works. Becoming a Christian begins then with admitting that you aren’t moral, or even neutral, but rather totally depraved and against God by nature. The starting block of every Christian is the realization that there is no hope to be found in our own righteousness. There is no amount of good works that can save us. Our hope is found in nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness! Anyone who truly believes this is a Christian! The next step is to live like a Christian, which is for another lesson altogether. But this is the offer of free grace, and it is offered to everyone, regardless of race, sex, age, social status, bank account, or other.

Sola Fide, Sola Gratia, Soli Deo Gloria!!!

Galatians 2:17-21, **"But if, in our endeavor to be justified in Christ, we too were found to be sinners, is Christ then a servant of sin? Certainly not! For if I rebuild what I tore down, I prove myself to be a transgressor. For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. I have 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. I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose."**

Paul, continuing to cement his point that sinners are declared righteous before God (justified) by faith in Christ, now raises an objection. The clue to his objection is found in the word "sinners". Peter and Paul were found to be "sinners". Obviously every person is a sinner, so what is Paul getting at? The key is his use of "sinner" back in verse 15 when he referred to Gentile "sinners". The Jews looked down on the Gentiles as sinners, not because they were disgusting people, but simply because they didn't possess the law. And without the law, they couldn't obey and please God.

The objection here is one that Paul raises against both Peter and himself, by the Judaizers. It would have been the objection of the Judaizers that Peter and Paul, and their gospel of salvation to the Gentiles (apart from the law), had in fact become one with the Gentile sinners. They had gone against the Law of Moses, they had become unclean. They had gone from people who kept the law, to people who ate unclean food with uncircumcised Gentiles. The accusation, if it were hurled against them today, might go something like this, *"You're persuading these people to get right with God by throwing the law of God out the window?! You're not causing them to be right with God, you're stockpiling His wrath against them! You're telling them that it's okay to live in their Gentile sinful lifestyle when you know they need to become Jewish! You're making Christ look like someone who endorses a sinful life!"*

Martin Luther once said, *"A Christian is not someone who has no sin or feels no sin; he is someone to whom, because of his faith in Christ, God does not impute his sin."* Paul wasn't preaching a lifestyle of rampant, free sin. He wrote in Romans 6:1, **"What shall we say then? Are we to continue to sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?"** Christians are sinners, every single one of them. There isn't a single Christian who will defeat sin this side of Heaven. And there isn't a single Christian who hasn't already defeated sin in Christ today. So how does Paul answer this objection that their conduct with the uncircumcised Jews makes them equally sinners with them, and turns Jesus into a servant of sin? His response, **"Certainly not!"** The very thought of someone drawing the conclusion that somehow Jesus is happy to bless sinners along their sinful path into Heaven is blasphemous. James wrote, **"Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am being tempted by God,' for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one."** (James 1:13) Therefore, if a person lives in sin after confessing Christ, it is evidence that they never were in Christ, not evidence that Christ endorses sin.

The objection boiled down is this: If you preach to people a gospel that is justification by faith in Christ alone, you're going to create a lazy people who will take free grace and run headlong into sin. It's like God is holding a winning lotto ticket, and as soon as people cash the cheque, their first move will be to quit their job and put their feet up for the rest of their life. But if you preach that justification is by works of the law, you're going to create a hard-working, obedient and faithful people.

Paul's answer to this objection will now be to show that justification by law-keeping is what results in people being **"found sinners"**, not the other way around. He says in verse 18, **"For if I rebuild what I tore down, I prove myself to be a transgressor."** What's he talking about here? He's talking about the

Old Testament law. Paul tore down the law when he brought the free gospel to the Gentiles, as did Peter. But in this chapter we see Peter speaking out of the other side of his mouth, refusing to eat with the Gentiles in front of the circumcision party, attempting to rebuild the law and apply it to the Gentiles, the very law that he once tore down. Paul's point is to show the purpose of the law. The law only condemns. So if you attempt to rebuild the law and require adherence to it again, all that you've done is condemned everyone again. So you've judged everyone a sinner! The gospel of justification by faith alone in Jesus Christ doesn't trap people in sin, it frees sinners from bondage!

In Christ, the law has been destroyed as far as using it in an attempt to get right with God. The law had its place in showing us our need, Christ had His place in meeting our need. Paul continues in verse 19, **"For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God."** The first thing that we should note is that the law didn't die, but rather Paul died to the law. John Calvin said, *"To die to the law is to renounce it and to be freed from its dominion, so that we have no confidence in it and it does not hold us captive under the yoke of slavery."* As far as the Christian is concerned, the death penalty that the law requires has already been met in Christ. When Christ died, Paul died, as did everyone who would believe in Christ. And by die I mean that Paul (and we) died to the demands of the law upon us for our sin. Christ, as our substitute, paid the price that our sin deserved.

Verse 20, **"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."** There were four things that were nailed to the cross on that day. The first is obviously Jesus Christ. The second was the inscription that we read of in John 19:19, **"Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews."** The third was the debt of our sin, we read of that in Colossians 2:13-14, **"And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross."** And the fourth thing that was nailed to the cross, is every believer in Christ! Paul says, **"I have been crucified with Christ."** When Christ died on the cross, in the eyes of God, it was as if everyone who would ever be in Christ died there with Him. This is the doctrine known as our union with Christ, it is at the very heart of Christianity, what is to be "in Christ". Once we put our faith in Christ, we are what the scripture calls many times "in Christ". Martin Luther once said, *"By faith you are so cemented to Christ that He and you are as once person, which cannot be separated but remains attached to Him forever."*

The reason why this doctrine is so amazing is because it permanently joins us together with Christ. Every sin that we ever did is laid upon Him, so that when the Father looks at the cross he sees out penalty being paid in full. And likewise, when the Father looks at us, He sees the perfect character and righteousness of Jesus Christ in us. It's as if when the Father looks at us, he sees in us everything that Jesus ever did in righteousness. God attaches us to Christ in His life, death and resurrection. When we are in Christ, God considers us as righteous as His own Son, not because we are righteous, but simply because we are in Christ.

This is how Paul [and we] are dead to the law. We have been crucified with Christ. Therefore, the law has already been used to the full extent against us for our sin. The death penalty has already been charged against us, paid in full, and overcome. So as far as the law is concerned, we're dead. It can't kill us more than dead, nor can it somehow breathe life into us once again. Legally speaking, Paul [and we] can now live for Christ, because we are now dead to the law. How? Paul goes on, **"It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me."** Paul is literally saying that his life ended at the cross. Not his physical

life, but the life that he lived for self-seeking purposes died. His life had been transformed so that he lived for Christ alone. There was still a life to be lived by Paul, but the totality of that life was now to be spent proclaiming the great name of Jesus Christ to a lost and dying world. Paul continues, **“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.”** The totality of Paul’s life was now lived by faith in Jesus Christ, and then he speaks to the love of Christ for Paul to come and give His life as a sacrifice for him. This ought to be a staggering verse to us, since as believers in Christ, we can read our own names into the ‘me’ of this verse. It’s one thing to understand the finished work of Christ on the cross for the elect. It’s one thing to be able to define and articulate how Christ accomplished the salvation of His bride according to the Father’s plan from before the foundation of the world. But it’s another thing altogether when we personalize that thought. Do you know Christian that Jesus thought of you on the cross? When we think of the atoning work of Christ, it’s easy to look at it from the macro level, and talk about the salvation of sinners from across all continents and centuries. But have you ever paused to think that in the Lamb’s book of life, your name was intentionally recorded? If you’re saved, it’s because Christ has sought you out! He has purposed to love you! He selflessly offered Himself up for you!

Paul ends the chapter with this, **“I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose.”** I’m reminded of Romans 11:6, **“But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace.”** When it comes to the issue of salvation by the grace of God, or salvation through good works of the law, the sinner is at a fork in the road. There is no middle road. The two are beyond just being different, they are mutually exclusive to each other. Christmas gifts are given by grace from a loved one. Paychecks are given by your employer in return for your work. Reverse the two and you’ve understood how grace and works are completely incompatible. As far as salvation is concerned, there is only one way to Heaven, and that is by faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary, where he bore the sins of all who would believe on Him. It is faith in the Christ who defeated sin and death, rose from the grave, and resumed His rightful place on the throne of Heaven.

Paul, challenging the claims of the all who were perverting the gospel message by super-imposing the necessity of keeping the law, and becoming a circumcised Jew in order to be saved, says that a salvation that is attainable through obedience to the law is one that renders Jesus useless. What’s the point of coming and dying on the cross when we can easily attain Heaven with a little effort and self-control? This is what the Judaizers were doing. They were adding works on top of faith for justification before God. And by doing so, they were (intentionally or not) saying that Jesus’ death was not necessary. While they may not have been so flippant towards the grace of God, they certainly were sending the message that it wasn’t needed. Paul was certainly not going to be one who nullified God’s grace. Paul came to Christ purely because of God’s grace, and not of anything to do with his works. Let us also, in our day and age, be a people who live for God with our entire lives, because He has loved us, and given His life for us.