



September 29, 2019
Galatians 2:15-21
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No Longer I, But Christ

Hi Everyone. Thank you for reading this message. At Golden Hills we are committed to exalting Jesus and preaching the Word. Your downloading of this message is a great encouragement to us, as we know that our ministry is going out to spread God's Word all over the world.

We want you to know, too, that in no way do we intend these messages to be a replacement for your involvement in a good local church, where, sitting under the authority of pastors and other teachers, you can learn to worship, grow and serve and be engaged with a body of believers where you can grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We realize also, that some of you may be in areas of the world where there is no local church. Therefore, we hope you are using this message to gather with your family or other believers, or people from the community and that it will be a great encouragement to you, as you hear God speak into your life, helping you to become disciples who are true, reproducing followers of Jesus Christ.

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Today is a significant day in this series. To be honest, I was marking this day on my calendar, because I knew that at some point we'll get to this particular text. Today is the day. It is significant because this text today is the text that really defines what it means to be a Christian. So if you are not Catholic, or not Orthodox (Greek or Russian Orthodox), then your spiritual heritage is really rooted in this text. Not only that, but the whole Reformation was built on this. The apostolic teaching you read about in Acts 2 is built on this. It is the heart and core of the gospel. **It is justification by faith.**

So when you have that much riding on this paragraph – I have to get this right! So there is a lot of pressure. I'll be honest with you. I've been feeling it. I hope the Lord comes through on this.

I'm going to pray that our time together would be helpful, that there will be clarity and we'll have confidence to know what scripture says about this particular topic.

Father, we ask in Christ's name that You would meet with us and that You would grant us the things that we are going to need, according to Your grace. The need to be able to say what needs to be said with clarity and accuracy. And for those of us gathered here, for ears to hear and hearts to believe the things we see in scripture. God, would You grant us the posture and humility we need to receive Your word. We pray too that You would grant us clarity of thought so that, in hearing about this significant, essential doctrine, that we would confidently leave, having better understood what Your word says about this. So God, we are entrusting this to You. We're asking that You would come through for us. We give You thanks for what You'll do – in Jesus' name, Amen.

Before I read the text, I want to give a little bit of a reminder of where we've been, real quickly. There were three main things we've been talking about.

The first is this: the apostle Paul is a true apostle, no matter what people say. There were some people suggesting that the apostle Paul was not a true apostle, because he wasn't one of the original 12. They also found that his spiritual gifts were less than spectacular, so he was defending his apostolic ministry. We see this in Galatians 1:1, where he said he became an apostle, not through any man or group of men, or anything like that, but it came from God. We see, as we trace this through chapter 2, is that Paul then defends his apostolic authority and ministry, by reminding us that he encountered Jesus on the road to Damascus. Then he recounts for us the travel that he did right after he became a Christian, and how he did not have enough time to actually meet with the Jerusalem apostles. Except 14 years later, he was able to meet with them, but when he did, they didn't add anything to what he was preaching. They said he had it right. He was good to go. This leads to the second thing ...

Second ... that legitimizes Paul's apostolic authority to do two things: (1) to preach the gospel. We saw this in chapter 2:9, where Paul finally encounters the Jerusalem apostles (James, John and Peter) and he lays out his gospel. They don't do anything to correct him, and they don't add anything to it – they say, *you've got it*. Then they perceive the grace of God in his life. They give him the right hand of fellowship and they actually send him off, on his way to preach the gospel to the Gentiles.

And the second thing his apostolic authority gives him is (2) the ability to correct where necessary. To correct people who were out of step with the truth of the gospel. We saw that last week in v 11-14, where Paul confronts Peter. We see that in verse 11, where he opposed him to his face, and verse 14, Paul writes – when I saw that their conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter before them all, “If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you force the Jews to live like Gentiles?” Paul is basically using his apostolic authority to correct (not just anybody but) the apostle Peter. This shows us – he is legit! He can say these hard things because God has truly made him an apostle.

Third – in the churches of Galatia, there was a distortion happening. Some false teachers had infiltrated the church. They had begun to teach that yes, you need to believe in Jesus in order to be saved, but you also need to be circumcised.

So last week I talked about how there is a distinction, but we also need to make sure we don't divide this concept of what the gospel **is**, with what the gospel **does**. Remember that? So what happened with the apostles was, they all agreed on what the gospel is. They got the doctrine and theology right. But they were having a disagreement about Peter's understanding of what the gospel **does**. So Paul was confronting him because he was out of step with what the gospel actually does.

The reality is, when we distort what the gospel is, the consequence or result of that is that, what the gospel **does** becomes veiled. It becomes hard to understand what we ought to do about the gospel, if we got what the gospel **is**, wrong. Conversely, if you see somebody out of step with the gospel, they are not walking in faithful obedience to what the gospel demands, it is an indication that something is off in regards to their understanding of what the gospel is. So that's why Paul had to come to Peter and remind him about what he was doing, and why he ought not to act like that. He did so by reminding Peter of what the gospel is.

So, let me refresh your memory a little bit. Ephesians 2:14-16. This is what Paul wrote about this little scenario:

¹⁴ For he himself is our peace, who has made us both [Jews and Gentiles] one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility ¹⁵ by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, ¹⁶ and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.

So, in Christ, there is one new man, one new body, in place of the two (Jew and Gentile). Now there is one. That one is called the church. So making peace (v 16) “and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.”

So what the gospel does is to break down the dividing wall of hostility. It reconciles sinners to God and to one another. It creates a single body, called the church, that is comprised of both Jews and Gentiles. That is what the gospel **does**.

Now, remember, Peter was eating with a bunch of Gentiles. Then some Jews came in and he saw them and then he began to separate himself from the Gentiles. He began to disassociate. He was acting as though what the gospel did, didn't actually happen. In other words, when Peter began to separate himself from the Gentiles, he was living as though the gospel did not break down the dividing wall of hostility, and did not create a single body called the church. Therefore, by his actions, the very gospel itself is thrown into question. It is being compromised. He was living out of step with the truth of the gospel.

We need to make sure we understand what the gospel is, because what flows out of the gospel, is what the gospel does. Its implications. Its demands for our obedience. If we get that wrong, this will also be wrong. If you are out of step in one area, it is an indication something is going wrong in another area. That is the interaction that happened.

So, we'll go to Galatians 2:15-21. I'll read it then we'll go line through it and see how the apostle Paul unpacks the doctrine of justification by faith.

¹⁵ We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; ¹⁶ 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.

¹⁷ 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! ¹⁸ For if I rebuild what I tore down, I prove myself to be a transgressor. ¹⁹ For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. 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. ²¹ I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose.

This is Paul's explanation of justification by faith. It is such a significant doctrine. It is so huge. This basically encompasses what it means to be a Christian, here in those sentences. It is the key to understanding the rest of the book of Galatians. These paragraphs are actually the heart of the gospel itself. So weighty are these issues that Martin Luther actually wrote this about his doctrine, this truth about justification by faith. He wrote: “If this article of justification stands, the church stands. But if this article collapses, the church itself collapses.” He is not speaking hyperbole here; this is legit. We have to get this right. Everything else flows from this.

So let's begin in verse 15. Each of these verses, in the original, is one sentence. I'm going to have to break verse 16 up into segments. We'll go segment by segment. (you're thinking – *we'll never leave!*) (laughter)

Verse 15. Paul uses the pronoun "we". He is doing this because in the original Greek, you don't have punctuation or quotation marks. So we're not exactly sure where to put the quotation marks, but in the English Bible, it usually ends right after the word "Jews" in verse 14. But there is good reason to believe it extends all the way through verse 21 in this section. So the "we" there is an indication that Paul is talking in reference to "we" as in himself and Peter. You'll see what it can't be Paul and us as Christians today. Because he says, "We ourselves are Jews by birth." So it doesn't work for many of us. He says "we ourselves are Jews by birth," so he is talking about he and Peter are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners.

I want to explain this because it sounds kind of harsh. Paul is making a distinction between the Jewish people and the non-Jewish people, called Gentiles. He refers to the Gentiles as "sinners." What does that phrase mean? It means that they are not included in the Jewish people. You have to remember, the Jewish people were the chosen people of God (see Deuteronomy 7). God chose them, not because they were great or because they were awesome. He simply put His love upon them. God gave the Jewish people the covenants through Abraham, through Moses, through David. Remember we studied the covenants a few months ago.

The Jewish people, in Exodus 19:5 are called by God as His treasured possession. He just loves them and considers them His treasured possession. So they are a privileged people, distinct from the Gentiles who do not have that same kind of privilege. We see this in Ephesians 2:11-12, where Paul writes:

¹¹ Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called "the uncircumcision" by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands— ¹² remember that you were at that time separated from Christ [Messiah], alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

So Paul makes that distinction. He is not negating that there is a distinction; he is saying there is. But the reality is in verse 16. Things have dramatically changed. Paul wants to remind Peter just how much things have changed. Remember the rest of chapter 2, the distinction between Jew and Gentile, that dividing wall of hostility, has been broken down. Now, in place of the two, God has made one. It's called the church.

Paul is going to do this (v 16), to remind Peter of what has happened. He says, "¹⁶ yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ." Paul wants to remind Peter of something very significant. Remember, Peter has separated himself from the Gentiles. So Paul is correcting him. Now, Paul is saying you have to remember, that *we know that a person is not justified by works of the law, but through faith in Jesus Christ*. The word "know" emphasizes personal experience, rather than the apprehension or comprehension of knowledge with the mind. There is a difference between things you know, and things you know by experience. (Tracking with me?)

So Paul is reminding Peter of an experiential knowledge, something they shared together as a common experience. *We know that a person is not justified by works of the law, but through*

faith in Jesus Christ. Paul wants to remind Peter about justification and the way in which a person is justified.

Before we get into how a person is justified, we need to define justification. Justification is a legal term. It is used in the court of law. It means “to be proclaimed innocent, to be acquitted, to be cleared of all charges and wrong doing.” So in the biblical sense, it means “to be declared righteous before the bar of God’s justice.” So imagine for a moment, that God is a judge, black robe and everything. He is at the bench. You are standing in the courtroom. The whole reason why you are there with God as judge is because there is a trial – about whether you are innocent or guilty when it comes to breaking His law. So what are you going to say to God, the judge, about whether or not you are guilty or innocent, regarding obedience to His law? Well, if you are smart and honest, you would say “I am guilty. I have broken God’s law.”

Now, the penalty for breaking God’s law is that there is no admission into God’s presence. So, you will have to face the consequences for law-breaking. But justification is that in that very same courtroom, where you acknowledge your guilt before a holy and perfect God, who demands perfect righteousness, perfect pristine, faultless obedience to His law – but instead of a guilty verdict being rendered by God the judge, instead you hear “Not guilty!” But it is more than just not guilty. It is “not guilty, but righteous, perfect, holy, blameless, innocent.” That is the concept of justification. It is also translated in verse 21 as “righteousness”. It means to be declared righteous. To be declared holy. To be declared innocent. It’s a justice term.

So what is the means by which someone is declared righteous? How do you receive a verdict of “not guilty”?

Paul gives us two options. They are contrasted. He says, “*that we know that a person is not justified by works of the law, but through faith in Jesus Christ.*” So there is a contrast. There are two approaches to justification: you can either approach God through works or the law OR you can approach God through faith in Jesus. Those are your two options.

I’m going to simplify the idea of works of the law by using this phrase “law works”. Because in the Greek, it is the only words that are there. So you approach God for justification according to your law works. OR you approach Him by faith in Jesus. Your two options. It’s important that we see this: Paul says nobody is justified by law works. This means, if you go into the courtroom, standing before the Holy God, and you are pleading your case, you will not be declared innocent or righteous when you lay before God, all your achievements and all your accolades and all your obedience. That won’t do it for you because God demands perfection. So nobody is justified by law works.

What does he mean by law works (works of the law)? Paul understands this to be an observance of the entirety of the Mosaic Law. We see this in chapter 3:10, where Paul says that, “For all who rely on law works are under a curse.” Why are you under a curse if you rely on law works? Because it is written, “Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, and do them.” Notice – all things. Everything. Obedience demands obedience in everything. It’s hard. In 5:3, Paul says, “I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision, that he is obligated to keep the whole law.”

So, law works is the idea that you can endeavor to be counted righteous and gain life through observing law works. Particularly the law works that pertain to the cultural distinctiveness of being Jewish. So, the distinctiveness of being Jewish includes Sabbath-keeping, circumcision and dietary laws (what you can and cannot eat). Those were the things that the Jews especially emphasized in order to distinguish themselves from the icky world out there. Except that they banked on those things as the reason why God would justify them, why He would accept them.

But, Paul is saying, you are not justified or accepted because of law works. Nobody is. That is because nobody can keep the entirety of the law perfectly.

We live in a world today where there are a lot of people who are trying to live by law works. Many, including some of you sitting in this room! Let me give you examples:

Some people try to be good. They try to live by some moral standard. I find it interesting that people define 'good' very differently. Usually, the bar they set for themselves is much lower than the bar they set for other people. We're pretty selfish like that.

Another way people try to live by law works is, they look at the Ten Commandments and they think – that's a pretty good idea. I'll try not to steal or lie (very much). Except for when I need to, to make things more comfortable.

Or people try to live by law works by trying not to be mean, unless of course the person deserves it.

Or, they try to live the positive side of it. Try to live by law works by being nice and polite to other people, especially when it is to your advantage.

Or we try to live by law works, even as Christians, by avoiding negative things and doing positive things – an example: we live by law works when we try to live by not drinking, not dancing, not using tobacco, making sure you don't watch icky, R-rated movies (Game of Thrones would be out of the question), don't be unequally yoked. That kind of stuff. Or the positive side of it: make sure you do your quiet time, share your faith, read your Bible, serve in a ministry – or else. That's living by law works.

You may be sitting here, thinking *Phil is making that stuff sound like stuff we shouldn't do. He is making it sound like it's bad.* No, follow with me. Real clear. I don't want the emails. (laughter) Paul doesn't call the law bad. Romans 7:12, 18 he calls the law "good." In 1 Timothy 1:8, he actually calls the law "holy." But how the law is good and holy is if it is used appropriately. If you misuse the law, now you've made the law bad. Not that it is in itself bad, but its usage is bad. Likewise, it is good to not watch R-rated movies, it is good to read your Bible and share your faith and all that stuff – as long as you approach those things appropriately.

But if we try to approach this kind of law works, even the good things (don't do certain bad things, but do do certain good things) – if we try to pursue those law works as the basis for our justification and acceptance before God, we have just misused those things. Now they have become bad. Because we're using those things (whether principles or laws or wisdom) as our basis to say before God, *God, You should accept me for these reasons. Look at all the mission trips I've been on. Look at all the Bible studies I've been in. I memorized entire books of the Bible. I have 31 Bibles in my home! 31 different translations! Look how big my collection of books is! I'm the only one serving in this ministry – look at those lazy people who do nothing.*

We present these things before God as the basis for our justification, the basis for our righteousness, the basis for our acceptance by God. But the reality is, once we do that, we spoil those very good things. Because they cannot serve as the basis of our justification. Why? Because, as Paul says, "Nobody is justified by law works." Even good Christian law works.

So how can a person be justified? He says, by faith in Jesus. Pastor and professor Tom Schreiner defines this as ...

a reminder by Paul that Peter must not impose the law on Gentiles, for both he and Peter already know that human beings will not be vindicated before the divine tribunal on the basis of their obedience to the law, but only through faith in Jesus Christ.

So Paul is reminding Peter – *Dude! You know better! You can't distance yourself from the Gentiles and force them to live like Jews because you know that we are not justified by law works. We are justified by faith. You should know better, Peter!*

A point in this week's amazing study guide, and I want to quote it, is the reminder that "merely believing Jesus existed is not the same thing as having faith, rather, having faith is a sincere trust in who Jesus is, and what Jesus has done." It is a sincere in the person of Jesus, and in what He has done.

Saving faith, justifying faith – is a sincere trust that Jesus has done everything necessary for me to be justified. It is trust that I am going to live in such a way that I will continually trust that Jesus is enough. This results in a way of life that I will trust in nothing but Jesus for my justification. My hope is built on nothing less, than Jesus' blood and righteousness.

Many people will say *Ah! Yes, I'm justified. I'm saved. Why? Why do they have that assurance? Because I prayed a prayer when I was 11. I would say – that isn't what justifies you. What justifies you is – are you trusting the sufficiency of Jesus Christ alone?* By your answer, you are not. You're trusting in a prayer, not Jesus. Trust Jesus. Jesus is to be trusted not only once, but continually. Every day I wake up and I go - My religious performance today is not the determining factor in whether or not I am accepted by God. My religious performance in the last 10 years is not the reason why I am accepted by God. My religious performance in the next 10 years will not be the justification for why God declares me righteous before Him. Instead, I am accepted in the past, accepted in the present, and trust I will continue to be accepted because I trust in Jesus' righteousness alone. Not my own. (applause)

That's verse 16a. Let's go to 16b. It begins with the word "so." Paul writes,

so we also have believed in Christ Jesus,

The word "so" here indicates the truth of what he just said. He just said, *Peter, you and I know, nobody is justified by law works. We are justified by faith in Jesus. You know that ...* so we have believed in Jesus Christ. You know that! That's why we chose to believe in Jesus Christ – because we know that no one is justified by law works.

16c. Now there is a purpose for why they believe in Jesus. It is ...

in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law,

The phrase "in order to" is an indication of the purpose of what he just said previously. So it goes like this: we (Paul and Peter, you and I) believed in Christ Jesus for the purpose of being justified by faith in Christ alone, not by our law works. In other words, the whole reason why you and I put our trust in Jesus is so that we would be justified, declared righteous before God. Don't you remember? Don't you remember what happened? Why in the world are you now returning to something from which we have been delivered?

So Paul is trying to remind Peter of the glorious truth that we place our faith and trust in Jesus because in doing so, God declares us righteous.

How does that work? Simply like this: all of us have fallen short of God's glorious standards. All of us have failed to obey God's law perfectly. Therefore, none of us is righteous. None of us. However, God sent Jesus to live as a human being. Jesus lived in perfect obedience to God's law, which means He is the only one who has ever lived on the face of the earth who can rightly be called "perfect." This perfection of Jesus, His obedience to the law in every imaginable way, we are told by God that if we will place our trust in Him, which means we look at ourselves and say, "I am not good. I am not righteous. I am not holy. I am not obedient." We turn from our self-righteousness. We turn from our attempts to justify ourselves. Instead, we turn to Christ and say, "But, I trust Jesus' righteousness to be sufficient for me." Then God transfers Jesus' righteousness to our ledger, and whatever was on our ledger (nothing but sin) is then transferred off our side of the ledger, to Jesus' side. Jesus takes upon Himself the sin which is ours. There, He becomes a curse for us, taking upon Himself the punishment for our sins, even though He Himself knew no sin. The great exchange is – (we say) *Here, Jesus, this is my sin.* Jesus says, *Great, here is My righteousness.*

So when we stand before God, as judge, and He says, "Why should you be permitted into My presence?" we don't claim any righteousness of our own. Instead, we plead nothing but the blood of Christ, which has purchased us. God has imputed His righteousness to us, and so we simply say, "God, I don't stand on my merits. I stand on Christ's merits. I believe they are sufficient." (applause).

When you begin to trust Jesus, the goal for you is, every day to continue to trust in Jesus. It is not as though He was sufficient when you prayed the prayer at age 11. He is sufficient every day.

We just, every day, preach the gospel to ourselves. I woke up this morning, thinking *I'm about to sin today. I probably already did, before I even realized it. Yet I know that Your grace is sufficient. I know that I am not counted worthy or righteous because of anything I do, but I stand on Christ. I stand on His grace, on His mercy, His merit and His righteousness.*

If you are not a Christian here, and you're wondering what all this Christianity thing is about – please – I know in the media and various places, many people are foolishly thinking Christianity is that we Christians are portraying ourselves as being perfect. No, that is actually a disqualification for being a Christian. Not the qualification. You can't be a Christian without first acknowledging – "I am not good. I am not righteous. I am not holy." That's step one. In fact, it is those who aren't Christians who are the arrogant ones who say, "I think I can do it on my own." See the difference? So I would appeal to you, if you are not a Christian and don't identify as a Christian, consider it. Think through what I am saying. Be reminded – verse 16d, I compel you, put your faith in Jesus for your salvation because you can't ever do enough to save yourself. Why? Because by law works, no one will be justified. That is the truth of God. No human being will ever be justified by their law works. No one. You can't ever be good enough.

Next paragraph. One of the objections Paul faced in his day is still being leveraged in our day. The objection that Paul had which we face often also, is this: if you put your trust in Jesus to be justified, that you are trusting that by God's grace alone, through your faith in Jesus alone – that that will save you. Some people will say that is dangerous because now, all of a sudden, you are giving people a license to sin. Think about it – if you say, *ok, don't rely on your law or your works; rely on faith*, then can't people just say "I have faith," but then they go about their life,

sinning their brains out all day long. Yeah – that happens. I’m not denying that. The book of Jude talks about this, that there are imposters who come into the church and use the grace of God as a license for immorality. So I would say, there are no bona fide, legitimate Christians who ever use the grace of God as a reason to sin their brains out. People who use the grace or mercy of God, or faith as a “Get out of Hell free” card – then they go about sinning their brains out. That’s what we call “unbelievers.” I know that sounds harsh and straight-forward, but we’ll see how this fleshes out.

Paul, in verse 17-19, accounts for this. He says,

¹⁷ 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!

In other words, if I’m trying to find my own justification, and I see that God has laid it out for me that I can be justified by faith, doesn’t that mean that if, in that process, I come to realize I’m a sinner, a law-breaker, that my pursuing faith in Christ for justification really just promotes sin? Isn’t that what you’d be saying? If you get rid of law, aren’t you saying that there is no law, so you can do whatever you want?

But remember – as Christians the very first thing we must do is confess that we are not good, that we are not righteous. So, if the guilty verdict is *you are guilty* and we’re found out to be guilty, rotten sinners who break God’s law, in order to be justified by Christ (that comes first) doesn’t that mean that Christ promotes sin? Paul answers, “Certainly not!” Certainly not! How can you think like that?!

I have had conversations with many Mormons and many Muslims who find the Christian teaching of justification by grace alone through faith alone, to be problematic. Their answer would be – *if you are truly justified by faith, then there is no reason to be obedient*. Is that true? That’s Paul’s point here – verse 18. How is he going to unpack this for us? He says

¹⁸ For if I rebuild what I tore down, I prove myself to be a transgressor.

What does he mean by that? Paul tore down the law through faith in Jesus. If the law, being torn down, he turns back around and begins to rebuilt it, all that will happen is that he will prove that he really is a law-breaker. Why? Remember, no one is justified by the law. So to return to the law, in order to have life and justification, is to deny that the new age of redemption in Christ has come. So now, you are rebuilding the law in order to try to live by law works, and those law works will only expose how disobedient you really are.

Let me put it plainly: the more that we pursue the law, the more we will become aware of our own sin. The more that you are pursuing law works, the more you will be exposed as a sinner, a law-breaker. (You are not good, you are not perfect.)

So, if you decide, *ehh, Christ? Ehh. No, I’m going back to the law* – all you’re saying is, I don’t want the solution of sin. I want to go back and I want more of the exposure of sin. I want to know more and more how sinful I really am. That’s what I really want. I want to constantly fail. Paul is saying, why in the world would you do that? If you go back to the law, you are just proving that you are a transgressor. You are not being justified by squat. You haven’t gained anything!

The reason is because they aren’t using the law properly. God gave the law for three reasons: 1) sin was rampant around the world, so God gave the law in order to curb or contain sin.

2) so that people who are living crazy can look at the law and then evaluate themselves compared to the law. Then they will conclude – uh-oh, I don't obey.

3) Then, in looking at yourself and seeing that you are a sinner and you don't obey the law of God as you ought to, you can then go back to God and ask Him what you should do.

In the law itself, God gave animal sacrifices. They are the way sins are atoned for. But now that Christ has come, for us to go back to the law would be to say that Christ's blood is not sufficient; the blood of doves and goats is. But Hebrews tells us that's not true! So Romans 5:20 helps us to understand this. Paul writes:

²⁰ Now the law came in to increase the trespass [to increase your awareness of your own sin, that you are not good or righteous], but where sin increased [when you became more aware of your own wretchedness], grace abounded all the more, ²¹ so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

In other words, when Christ came, He actually obeyed the law with perfect obedience and became the curse for us, according to the law, so that our sin is punished in Him, and we get His righteousness. To return to the law would be madness. All you're doing is setting aside your own justification. You'd be like – *give me more sin!* No, the law was given to show you how sinful you are. Yet remember, God also offers the righteousness of Christ to people who don't deserve it. That's called grace. The more you recognize your own sinfulness, the more you realize, *oh my goodness! – I'm in need, God! What should I do?!* In God's grace, He simply says, *repent and trust in My Son and I'll give you His righteousness. You don't deserve a lick of it, but I'm giving it to you by grace.* So, the more that we see our own sin, and the more that we keep repenting and turning to Christ, you become more and more aware – *I'm filthy! His grace is sufficient!*

But if you try to resolve your own sin problem by ignoring the grace, and instead try to figure out your own law works system – you only get worse and worse. You have to cope somehow. So you go shopping, drinking, you have to watch Netflix for ten hours. Instead, the solution is – grace.

Chapter 6:1 Paul says,

6 What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?

That's the problem. *Are you saying that God's grace forgives you of sin? Yes! But if you just focus on grace, won't that cause you to sin more? What? Can't you just use grace as a license to sin more? What are you talking about?*

Titus 2 says, "The grace of God has appeared, teaching us to say no to ungodliness and yes to godliness." I look at that and say – grace is our tutor. If you want to learn how to kill sin, grace is the way. If you want to know how to live in righteousness, grace is the way. Grace doesn't promote sin! Grace kills sin!

So, this is significant for us. Paul says in 2:19 ¹⁹ "For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God." I put the law to death, so that I might live to God. How does this work? Romans 6:2 – he says, how can we, who died to sin, still live in it? If by the grace of God, you've been given the righteousness of Christ, knowing you don't deserve it (the definition of grace), then the proper response of a received righteousness by grace alone – is obedience. The obedience looks like this: I find sin in my life and I kill it. I find the righteousness that God demands, and I pursue it.

So those who have trusted in Christ for their justification, they actively put to death sin in their lives. They don't continue to live in it.

So, does the grace of God give you a license to sin more? No. The grace of God gives you the power to put sin to death.

Romans 8:2-4 Paul writes:

² For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.

You are enslaved to sin and its consequence is death, but the Spirit has set you free, in Christ.

³ For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do.

Brothers and sisters – there is something the law cannot do. Whatever the law cannot do (it says in verse 3), God has done. So the law can't do something – what can't it do? Whatever God did, the law can't do. So here is what God did:

By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh,

In other words, God the Son was born of a virgin. He lived a sinless life. He was crucified on a cross to condemn sin in His own body. The purpose? What did He accomplish? Paul says:

⁴ in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

What can't the law do? The law cannot give you life. It cannot give you the power to obey what it demands.

So, knowing that the law can't give you life, and knowing that the law cannot give you the power to obey what it demands, God sent Jesus to live a sinless life. Crucified and risen, victoriously sitting at the right hand of God, and He has sent the Holy Spirit in us – to do what? The Holy Spirit is sent to indwell us, so that we would have life, and that we would be empowered to do the things that God has demanded. If you don't have the Holy Spirit, you can't obey God.

Brothers and sisters – we have to get this through our minds. The more we disciple our children, consciously, subconsciously, intentionally, unintentionally through the means of law works – the worse we will make the situation. So if your kid is disobedient you add more law! More law! More law! All law does is to increase trespass! It arouses disobedience. It encourages kids to rebel.

So, we would say – look at you, filthy rotten scoundrel of a kid! We point our children and people we disciple, not to more law, but to grace. We show them the terrific extraordinary grace of God. And as they behold the beauty and the wonder and the grace of God, they will be compelled to submit themselves to the loving care of God. In so doing, in hearing what God has done in sending Jesus to rescue us from our sins, the Holy Spirit will indwell these kids and now they will have the power to put sin to death, and the power to live in righteousness. But if we never get to grace, we never give our kids the very thing they need most.

I remember when I put this theory to the test. Our kids were doing something stupid. I can't remember what it was. But I remember it was stupid. Probably they were fighting. We had just come from the store and had bought armfuls of ice cream. We brought it home and set it on the counter. They were all excited. *Do we get ice cream?* We said, *No! What do you think?! You're not getting any, the way you've behaved! That's ridiculous.* So it went into the freezer. Heather

and I were eating the ice cream. Whooping it. Running down my chin. I didn't even care. Looking at the kids. You don't get ice cream because you misbehaved. Do you think you deserve ice cream? *No.* You're right, you don't. So, I grabbed two bowls, went to the ice cream, scooped it, put some chocolate on it. Slid them to the kids. I said, *do you deserve this?* No. *Well, your dad is giving you grace. You don't deserve this, but I'm going to give it to you anyway.* It was awesome. My daughter was about 9, she looked at me and her eyes started to glass over. I said, "What are you thinking right now?" She said, "I don't know if I want to eat the ice cream, because I don't deserve it." I said, "Yeah, but now, you are saying that grace isn't good enough. You'll do something on your own. So eat the ice cream, because that will bring me joy." So she did. To this day, what is awesome, is to remind my kids time and again, when disobedience arises – that they need to put this kind of behavior to death because God has given them grace. It has been awesome to watch my kids respond to that kind of stuff. They're like – that's right, God has given us grace.

We prayed as a family. We celebrated the grace of God that has been given to us by Christ Jesus.

So Paul (verse 20), the most famous verse in this section. You probably memorized it.

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.

Let me just say two things about this text. How is it that we died to the law and we live to God? It is that we have been crucified with Christ. When Christ was crucified, we have to understand, that by faith we are united with Him, so therefore, we were crucified. He died to sin, so therefore we died to sin. He rose from the dead; likewise we were united to Him in a death like His, but we're also united to Him in a resurrection like His. So we no longer live in the patterns of the flesh and the sin. Instead, we need to live in the pattern of His righteousness, of the resurrection. We do so according to the Spirit, which has been given to us as we repent and believe the gospel, to empower us to do the very things that God has commanded. As we walk by the Spirit and we walk by faith, we'll see an increase in our desire to kill sin and to live in righteousness.

So Paul says you can either live by faith in the Son of God, or you can live by law works. It's up to you. I know people (this is going to sound crazy) who will stand before God and will say, "You should accept me because I memorized Galatians 2:20." You may have memorized it but you certainly don't understand what it says. You can't live by law works. You have to live by faith in the Son of God. Your Awana badges won't get you into the kingdom. You have to remember that. Grace. Grace alone.

So Paul says, (v 21) "I do not nullify the grace of God." How do you nullify the grace of God? You live by law works. He says,

²¹ I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose.

Our study guide says, "Jesus is either all-sufficient, or not sufficient at all." There is no in-between. Therefore, we trust Jesus completely, because He is sufficient, OR, we trust Him not at all. I will plead with you, if you are not yet a Christian, you need to abandon all hope in your own effort and work. Instead, Jesus has done everything that is necessary for you to be saved from your sins. All you have to do is turn from your self-trust and instead turn to Him.

If you are a Christian, and you put your faith in Jesus, I would say, do it again. Every morning, do it again. It's not that you get saved every morning, it's that you remind yourself that Jesus has reconciled you to a Holy God. So remember the gospel every day. Preach the gospel to yourself every day. The grace of God is sufficient. No one will be justified by law works, but we will be justified by faith in Jesus.

Father, I thank You so much for doing what the law could not do. You have done (past tense – it is complete, finished). So Lord, may we, in this place, if we need to, would You grant us repentance for trying to live our lives according to law works. Instead, would You remind us through the Holy Spirit that we are to walk by faith, not by sight, that we should live by faith in the Son of God because, as the gospel says, You loved us and You gave Your son Jesus for us. Lord, thank You for these beautiful truths. As we sing in response to these things, I pray that You would receive our worship and that You would reorient our hearts to gratitude for Your grace and for how great a love we have in You. Amen.