



FREED THROUGH FAITH **Galatians 2**

If you have a Bible, and I hope you do, let me invite you to open with me to Galatians 2; Galatians 2. We've got a great Word to study today. Not that we don't have a great Word every week, but I am hoping, I am praying that this chapter of Scripture will come alive in this room and alive among hearts in this room...transforming hearts, lives, and, maybe, transforming many of our understanding of Christianity. So, I want us to pray together before we dive in.

God, we praise you for the breathtaking, awe-inspiring, shocking, startling truth that you became a man, and that the name of Jesus is Immanuel, which means "God with us." You are not a far off, distant God, separated from us, but you have dwelt among us. All glory be to your name. We praise you for giving us your Word that we have the opportunity to hear and listen to today. God, I praise you for the privilege of teaching and preaching your Word to this body of your people, and Father I want to be faithful to this text; I want to represent it clearly and accurately. It is good, so I pray that you bring my words in line with your Word, and that you would take your Word and do only what your Spirit can do through your Word, and you would open our hearts and open our minds to see the glory of Christ in your Word. That you would anoint this Word in our ears to transform our lives for your glory. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

Freed By Grace ...

Last week, we talked about being freed by grace. We're going to jump right into the notes you received in the worship guide when you came in, being freed by grace. The truth that we reiterated over and over and over again was that God's pleasure in you is not based on your performance for Him. God's pleasure in you is not based on your performance for Him. We saw that over and over again in Galatians 1, and in one sense, that truth is freeing, but in another sense, it's kind of frustrating because we want to please God. 2 Corinthians 5 says, "We make it our goal to please God." 1 Thessalonians 2:4, 4:1, both talk about living to please God. So, if we want to please God, and we live to please God...if that's our goal...but His pleasure in us is not based on our performance for Him, then how do we please Him? That's where we're going to dive in to Galatians 2 today.

Three Pictures ...

In Galatians 2, there are three different pictures I want to show you. Two episodes recounting something that had happened in the past and then, an explanation. Two episodes and an explanation. What I want us to do is, kind of, walk through each one of them, one by one, and we are going to camp out on the last one, but in order to understand

the last one, we have to have the first two pictures. So, we are going to read each one and think about them and camp out in that third one.

So, the first picture we see in Galatians 2:1-10. I want you to follow along with me. Just picture the scene that Paul was describing here, and then, we'll talk about it. Galatians 2:1, he writes,

Fourteen years later, I went up again to Jerusalem, this time with Barnabas. I took Titus along also. I went in response to a revelation and set before them the gospel that I preach among the Gentiles. But I did this privately to those who seemed to be leaders, for fear that I was running or had run my race in vain. Yet not even Titus, who was with me, was compelled to be circumcised, even though he was a Greek. This matter arose because some false brothers had infiltrated our ranks to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus and to make us slaves. We did not give in to them for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might remain with you.

As for those who seemed to be important – whatever they were makes no difference to me; God does not judge by external appearance – those men added nothing to my message. On the contrary, they saw that I had been entrusted with the task of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles, just as Peter had been to the Jews. For God, who was at work in the ministry of Peter as an apostle to the Jews, was also at work in my ministry as an apostle to the Gentiles. James, Peter and John, those reputed to be pillars, gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship when they recognized the grace given to me. They agreed that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the Jews. All they asked was that we should continue to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do.

A picture of legalism (Galatians 2:1-10) ...

So, here's the picture of Galatians 2:1-10. This is a picture of legalism. I've got it explained there in your notes as right behavior with wrong belief. Here's the...here's the situation: Biblical scholars debate exactly when this episode that's being described happened. There's a lot of folks, in fact, the majority of folks believe that it's referring to Acts 15, which we looked at a little bit last week, the Jerusalem Council, when they had this big discussion about whether or not people should be circumcised in order to become a part of the church, or needed to follow different Jewish rules or laws or customs. So, a lot of people think this is Acts 15.

Some people think it's before Acts 15. Not that it really matters to you, but I would fall into the category before Acts 15 and not where the majority of scholars...people much smarter than I am...believe this happened, but anyway, it doesn't matter. In the end, what is important is what was going on. They were having a discussion about entrance into the church. Do you need to follow Jewish rules, customs...do you need to be circumcised, in particular if you are a Gentile, in order to be saved?

Titus was there, a Gentile, uncircumcised, and the victory in this picture was in the fact that Titus was not compelled to be circumcised. If he had been compelled to be circumcised, that would've been a huge victory for the Judaizers. Now, remember, we talked about these guys last week. They were the ones in the church that were saying, "You need to be circumcised, or you need to follow these Jewish laws in order to be saved." So, if Titus had done that, that would have been a victory for them, and really, a resounding blow to the gospel of grace, because it would have been adding human requirements to necessitate

salvation. Instead, by telling Titus, "No, you don't need to do this.", they were affirming the gospel of grace that Paul was preaching.

So, the issue at stake there was legalism, which we talked about last week. Legalism is, either, working according to our own power or according to our own rules and, ultimately, legalism is working to earn the favor of God thinking, that by doing certain things, that we are earning or meriting favor before God.

Now, the reason I describe that as "right behavior with wrong belief" is because the Judaizers, these people who were saying, "We need to follow Jewish laws or customs; you need to be circumcised"...they weren't saying bad things needed to be done. These were good things. This is Jewish laws; this is Old Testament law; this is something that God had done among His people for years. So, this wasn't necessarily bad behavior. It is not good or bad, in and of itself, to be circumcised or not, but the issue was that became wrong when it was linked...those behaviors became wrong when they were linked with the belief that by doing those things, you were meriting or earning favor before God. I am going to say that one more time, and then we'll think about how this relates to us. These behaviors...good behaviors...became bad when they were linked with wrong belief. The belief that by doing those things, you could earn or merit favor before God.

The reason I emphasize that is because we are not having a lot of discussions in our day about circumcision or following this Jewish law or that Jewish law, but let's think about some good behaviors, good things to do. Having a quiet time, Bible study, coming to worship on a Sunday, serving people...these are good things, but don't miss it: They become legalistic, they become bad as soon as they are linked with the belief that, in doing those things, you are earning or meriting favor before God. That because you do these things, you have better standing before God; that because you had great quiet times this week, that you have better standing before God, less guilt on your conscience than the guy sitting next to you who just forgot to pray this week at all.

We start...we all...we talked about this some last week. We all are recovering legalists in a sense, because we are all born with a nature that says, "We can make our way to God, because certainly, when I do something, that counts for some kind of favor or merit before God." That's legalism; right behaviors but with wrong belief, thinking that those behaviors make us more acceptable before God, and we need to avoid that kind of thinking. That's the first picture, legalism: Right behavior with wrong belief.

Second picture, Galatians 2:11. This is one of the most tense, dramatic episodes in the New Testament described here. Listen to it. Galatians 2:11:

When Peter came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he was clearly in the wrong. Before certain men came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group. The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray.

Now, what that just described is a public confrontation between the Apostle Paul and the Apostle Peter. Can you imagine how cold it was in that room for just a couple of minutes? How tense it was? Paul is confronting Peter to his face. I mean, this is the guy who preached the first Christian sermon. This is the leader of the disciples. He's getting confronted by Paul? This is getting juicy right here. What happens is, they have a discussion

about an action, a behavior that Peter was doing, and in the first part of this chapter, we see a picture of legalism: Right behavior with wrong belief.

A picture of hypocrisy (Galatians 2:11-14) ...

In the second part of this chapter, we see a picture of hypocrisy, which is right belief with wrong behavior. Hypocrisy: Right belief with wrong behavior.

Let me help give some context to what Galatians 2:11-14 is describing. In fact, hold your place here and turn with me back to the left. Go to Acts 10. You'll go back a couple of books to the left, and you'll come to Acts. Find Acts 10, and while you're turning there, let me start to fill in some of the blanks.

Antioch was a church made up of predominantly Gentiles, non-Jews. Peter, it said in Galatians 2, had gone to Antioch, and he had sat down at the table with these Gentile Christians, and he was eating with them; he was fellowshiping with them, and things were going great; they were hanging out together. Now, that doesn't seem like a big deal, but it was a huge deal for Peter. Peter is a good Jewish man, and all throughout...for centuries, all throughout the Old Testament what we see is, the people of God are, first of all, given strict dietary laws. "You don't eat certain kinds of food." The Gentiles ate those kinds of food, and the Jewish people said, "No, those foods are unclean. You dishonor God when you eat those foods."

Then, there were all kinds of laws in the Old Testament that separated Jews from Gentiles to where they wouldn't even intermingle together, and God had actually designed it this way, because He did not want His people to fall into the immorality, the idolatry that was surrounding them in these pagan nations. So, there were laws, not only against intermingling, but also against eating certain foods. So, you can imagine, when Christianity comes in the first century, now Jews and Gentiles are in the church together, now they have to decide, "Do we even eat with each other? I don't know if I can eat your food, or I don't even know if I can be in the same room as you, sit at the same table with you." This is why you...remember in the Gospels, Jesus was...was startling the religious establishment when He would sit down and eat with tax collectors and sinners. They didn't know what to do with that. This was big.

Acts 10 gives us a little bit of a picture of how Peter came around on this picture. In the beginning of Acts 10, there is a guy named Cornelius. Now, follow with me here. Cornelius was a Gentile...a God-fearing Gentile. He was a Gentile, and he had a vision one day, and an angel told him in a vision, "You need to go find this guy named Peter, and bring...and have some people bring him to your house." Cornelius didn't know exactly why, but when you see an angel in a vision, and the angel tells you to do something, you do it. So, that's what he did. He sent some of his men to go find Peter.

After he had sent his men, while the men were traveling to go find Peter, pick up in Acts 10:9 what happened.

About noon the following day as they were on their journey and approaching the city, [where Peter was] Peter went up on the roof to pray. [where he was staying] He became hungry and wanted something to eat, and while the meal was being prepared, he fell into a trance. He saw heaven open and something like a large sheet being let down to earth by its four corners. It contained all kinds of four-footed animals, as well as reptiles of the earth and birds of the air. Then a voice told him, "Get up, Peter. Kill and eat." "Surely not, Lord!" Peter replied. "I have never eaten anything impure or unclean."

Peter says, "No, I don't eat that. That's unclean."

The voice spoke to him a second time, "Do not call anything impure that God has made clean." This happened three times, and immediately the sheet was taken back to heaven. While Peter was wondering about the meaning of the vision, [He's trying to figure out what's going on] the men sent by Cornelius found out where Simon's house was and stopped at the gate. They called out, asking if Simon who was known as Peter was staying there. While Peter was still thinking about the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Simon, three men are looking for you. So get up and go downstairs. Do not hesitate to go with them, for I have sent them."

Peter went down and said to the men, "I'm the one you're looking for. Why have you come?" The men replied, "We have come from Cornelius the centurion. He is a righteous and God-fearing man, who is respected by all the Jewish people. A holy angel told him to have you come to his house so that he could hear what you have to say." Then Peter invited the men into the house to be his guests.

Peter's wondering, "What in the world is going on?" at this point. He just went up on the roof to pray, and, all of a sudden, he sees these unclean animals, is told to eat those, and then, they are taken away, and this Gentile has now sent people for him to come and meet with this Gentile at his house. So, listen to what happens: *"The next day Peter started out with them, and some of the brothers from Joppa went along. The following day he arrived in Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends."* So, Cornelius decides he wants his whole family in on the party. So, now, not only is Peter going to meet with one Gentile, but now, we have a whole host of Gentiles; a packed out house full of Gentiles.

"As Peter entered the house..." You can imagine his nervousness. *"...Cornelius met him and fell at his feet in reverence."* This didn't help. *"Peter made him get up. 'Stand up,' he said, 'I am only a man myself.'"* Verse 27, *"Talking with him, Peter went inside and found a large gathering of people. He said to them..."* Listen closely, verse 28, *"You are well aware that it is against our law for a Jew to associate with a Gentile or visit him."* That's what we've talked about. This was against everything Peter knew. *"But God..."* Peter said, *"has shown me that I should not call any man impure or unclean. So when I was sent for, I came without raising any objection. May I ask why you sent for me?"* So, then, Cornelius begins to explain what happened.

Then, you get to verse 34 and listen to what Peter says. Peter says, *"I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right."* What he does then is he starts preaching the gospel. You get down to verse 44, and I want you to listen to how they respond.

While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. The circumcised believers [in other words, the Jewish believers] who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God. Then Peter said, "Can anyone keep these people from being baptized with water? They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have." So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days.

This was monumental in the first century. This was the entrance of Gentiles into the church. This is a mega-event in the New Testament church, and we see how important it is, and even how controversial it is based on what happens right after this. Look at Acts 11:1. *"The apostles and the brothers throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God."* How do you think they responded? Do you think they were happy? Listen to what they did. *"When Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcised believers [the Jewish believers] criticized him and said, 'You went into the house of uncircumcised men and you ate with them.'"* Why are you doing this?

Listen to what Peter said. It says, *"[Peter] began and explained everything to them precisely as it had happened..."* He recounts the whole story, and you get down to verse 17, and he says, *"If God gave them the same gift as he gave us, who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to think that I could oppose God? And when they heard this, they had no further objections and praised God, saying, 'So then, God has granted even the Gentiles repentance unto life.'"* Then, right after this is the picture we have...the first picture we have of the church in Antioch, which was made up of mainly Gentile believers, and even says down in verse 26, *"The disciples were first called Christians at Antioch."*

So, that gives you a little background. Now, we come back to this episode that Paul's talking about in Galatians 2, and he says, "When Peter first came to these believers at Antioch, in light of that transformation that happened in Acts 10 and 11, he was sitting down at the table with them; he was eating with them. Everything was good." However, then, this group of Judaizers comes to Antioch, and, all of a sudden, slowly, Peter starts backing away from the table. Before long, he is not even eating with the Gentiles anymore; not even associating with them, not even spending that time with them. Instead, he is over here with these Jewish believers who were teaching that you can't even be accepted before God unless you are circumcised and you follow these Jewish laws and customs.

So, Paul finds out about this, and he goes to Peter, and he confronts him to his face. The key phrase is in verse 14. He says, *"When I saw that they..."* He is talking about Peter and Barnabas. Barnabas was a part of starting the church at Antioch. He was doing the same thing. *"When I saw that they..."* Listen to this phrase, *"...were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel."* That's the hypocrisy. Right belief with wrong behavior. Peter believed the gospel; he knew the gospel. Peter preached the gospel, but his life was not reflecting the gospel. Right belief, wrong behavior. So, Paul confronted him on it.

"Now, thanks for the history lesson, but hey, what does this have to do with us?" Well, again, we are not talking about what we eat or who we eat with, but are there inconsistencies in our lives when it comes to the truth of the gospel. Are there areas where we claim to have right belief, but our behavior does not reflect that belief? Absolutely. That's a part of...part of why we walked through that "Radical" series last Fall, because if we really believe in a Savior who came for the sake of the poor and the powerless, then there is much in our wealthy lifestyles that does not add up, that is not in line with the truth of the gospel. It's hypocrisy, and that's what the Word does. It exposes that to us.

In the same way that if someone was living in sexual immorality day after day after day, and they claim to believe that Christ was their satisfaction. As followers of Christ, we would say to them, "No, your life is not in line with the truth of the gospel." It would be right; it would be good. We would...as a brother or sister, it would be necessary for us to confront a brother or sister in that and say, "Your gospel...the gospel you believe is not being reflected here." That's not legalistic to do. Paul's not being legalistic. That's Christianity, to help each other, to spur one another on so that our lives reflect the gospel.

You see, in these two areas, two extremes, or errors, we need to avoid. We need to avoid doing things in order to earn favor or merit favor before God. "The more I do, the better off I am." Legalism: Right behavior, doing good things, with wrong belief. At the same time, we have got to avoid hypocrisy, saying, "I believe in a gospel of grace, and I believe God loves me no matter what I do.", and living a life that looks like the rest of the world. That's hypocrisy. What we've got to do as a community of faith is help guard each other from both of these, and we need a word to help us do that.

I would even add one more thing in here that, as I was studying this passage and praying this week, I trust the Lord brought this to my mind, but I see in the first century church this dangerous tendency...temptation...to develop a two-tiered sense of Christianity, especially between Jews and Gentiles. You had Jews and Gentiles, and Jews, because they followed the Old Testament law in many ways, were seen as more favorable before God, and Gentiles, because they didn't, almost felt like second-class Christians at many points, and there is an unhealthy two-tiered Christianity that's there.

It's in other ways in the New Testament and other ways in the contemporary church, and I want us as a faith family to be very careful to guard against that in any way. That there is no two-tiered class of Christianity. That there is not Christians at Brook Hills that go on mission trips and Christians who don't, or Christians who give two percent, and those who don't; or Christians who drink, or those who don't; or Christians who do this or that, or don't do this or that. What happens is, we start to identify ourselves as, maybe, more spiritual because we do this or that, and those who don't do this or that are less accepted before God, and we have to be very careful to remember that we are all in this thing together. We are helping each other avoid legalism, and we are helping each other avoid hypocrisy, and we need to help each other avoid both of these.

A picture of faith (Galatians 2:15-21) ...

Now, how do we do that? How do we avoid right behavior with wrong belief and right belief with wrong behavior? How do we bring them together, and that's the third picture I want you to see. I want you to see a picture of faith in Galatians 2: Right belief and right behavior. How do you bring those two together? The answer is faith. I want to show it to you in Galatians 2:15. This is where Paul explains, brings all this to a conclusion. Listen to what he says:

We who are Jews by birth and not "Gentile sinners" know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified.

If, while we seek to be justified in Christ, it becomes evident that we ourselves are sinners, does that mean that Christ promotes sin? Absolutely not! If I rebuild what I destroyed, I prove that I am a lawbreaker. For through the law I died to the law so that I might live for God. I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!

Did you see the key word? It's mentioned four different times. Circle it when you see it. Verse 16...three different times in that one verse. "...know that a man is not justified by observing the law but by..." what? "faith in Jesus Christ." Circle it there. "So we, too, have put our faith in Christ..." Circle it there. "...so we may be justified by faith in Christ." Then,

you get down to verse 20, he says, *"The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God..."* Everything revolves around faith, Paul says. The whole picture revolves around faith. Not faith plus something else, not faith plus circumcision or this law or that custom or that practice, but faith and faith alone.

Faith Alone ...

Through faith in Christ, we are accepted before God.

So, I want to show you...I want to show you two results, two fruits of faith in Galatians 2. Two glorious fruits, results, of faith in Galatians 2. Number one...you've got this in your notes...through faith in Christ, we are accepted before God. Through faith in Christ...faith alone; not faith plus anything...faith alone, we're accepted before God.

What Paul is saying in verses 15 and 16, is he is going to Peter, and he's saying, "Listen, you and I, Peter, we're Jews, and we did not come to God or Christ by the law. The law couldn't do that. If the law could have done that, we wouldn't need Jesus to die on the cross." That's what he says at the very end, *"If righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing."* He continues, "You and I as Jews who have the law need faith in Christ, and just faith in Christ to come to God. In the same way, the Gentiles need faith in Christ." What he is saying to Peter is, "You are living like these Gentiles are not acceptable before God because they are eating those things, and you're separating yourself from them. If God accepts them by faith, then why are you not accepting them in their faith."

The picture that Paul gives us here is one of the golden nuggets...one of the most important words in all the New Testament for our understanding of salvation, and that word is "justified" or "justification." You see it mentioned four times too. Look in verse 16, *"...know that a man is not justified..."* You might circle or square that if you want to distinguish it. *"...justified by observing the law but by faith in Jesus Christ. And we too have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law because by observing the law, no one will be justified. If, while we seek to be justified in Christ..."* In fact, when you get to the very end of this chapter, verse 21, when it says, *"If righteousness could be gained through the law..."* that word "righteousness" is actually the same word in the original language of the New Testament for "justification." It's just translated there "righteousness."

This word is the key to unlocking so much of Christianity. It's translated throughout the New Testament as "justified," "just," "justification," "righteousness," "righteous," "right." The picture Paul is giving us here is the fact that we are justified before God by faith; justified by faith and faith alone. I cannot overemphasize how huge this is. Luther said, "The doctrine of justification by faith alone is the doctrine upon which the church stands or falls." Calvin said, "It is the hinge upon which everything turns." It was the heart of the Reformation, and it's the heart of Christianity.

Luther went on to say...he said...talking about justification by faith alone, he said, "This is the truth of the gospel. It is the principal article of all Christian doctrine, wherein the knowledge of all godliness consists. Most necessary it is, therefore, that we should know this article well, teach it unto others, and beat it into their heads continually." Luther said, "Beat it into people's heads." Justification, and that's what Paul is doing. "Justification," "justification," "justification." It sounds forceful, but why is this so important?

What I want to do is I want to walk us through a biblical definition of justification. Every word is extremely important based on this text of Scripture and other texts, especially that Paul wrote. I want us to see...every follower of Christ in this room needs a clear grasp...a firm grasp on justification.

So, what is justification? You've got it in your notes: Justification is the gracious act of God. Start there: the gracious act of God. It is something that God does by His grace. Here in Galatians 2:16, at the very end of that verse, "...by observing the law no one will be justified," Paul said. He's quoting there from Psalm 143:2. We don't have time to go back there. Psalm 143:1-2 is where the psalmist cries out...he is crying out, "Mercy." The psalmist says, "No one on earth is righteous before you. No one is just before you." Same picture we've got in Romans 3:9-20. "There is no one righteous, not even one; no one who understands; no one who seeks God." The picture is there is nothing in man that would cause God to justify him, that would initiate justification...would bring about justification. Absolutely nothing. It is all of God, not from man at all.

Now, we talk about this a lot. We talk about how salvation is by grace; it's all of grace. It's all the work of God, but we've got to be careful, even when we think about faith. We've got to be careful in how we think about faith in terms of it being a work of the law. This is why we talk sometimes about caution when praying a prayer or signing a card or doing this or that, because the tendency we have is to "Say these magic words, and this is what you do in order to be saved. Do this in order to be saved." The reality of what Scripture is teaching is in order to be saved, God has to do the work. Even faith itself is evidence of God's grace in our lives. There is nothing in us that causes us to reach out and want God. That is a work of the grace of God in our hearts.

It is the gracious act of God, by which God declares...key word there, "declares." Justification is a declaration. It's a declaration from God. The word picture in justification...this is a legal term, a forensic term, which basically means that the picture is a judge declaring a judgment on someone. Judge looks at a case and pronounces his judgment; declares something just or unjust, right or not right, guilty or not guilty.

Now, this is important, because justification in Scripture is an act, not a process. Follow with me here; this is extremely important. Justification is something that is declared at a point in time. Not a process. You can't be more justified today than you were yesterday. You can't be justified more tomorrow than you were today. You can't be more justified next year than you are today. Once you are justified...declared to be a certain way, then you are that way regardless of what happens. That's why, when you get to Romans 5:1, Paul says, "*We have been justified through faith...*" That's why we have peace with God, because we have been justified. God has made a declaration. So, we are not working for justification. Justification is something that happens at a point in time, not a process.

Now, it's a declaration that involves...next in the definition here...by which God declares a sinner. Justification is the gracious act of God by which God declares a sinner. In justification, the picture is God the judge dealing with man the sinner. Sinful man before a holy God; sinful, willfully rebellious man before the holy Judge of the universe.

This was so important for Paul, because Paul...remember when Paul came to Christ? Remember what he was doing? He was zealously obeying God's law. He was giving his entire life in trying to be good before God. Now, he was persecuting the church, and we think, "Well, that was really bad.", but the reality is, "Why was he persecuting the church?" Because he thought the church was undercutting the whole Old Testament law. He was trying his best to be as good as he could, and he says in Philippians 3, "I was doing better

than anybody else. You want to bring the best Jew up to me, and he won't be able to match what I'm doing."

What Paul realized was, when he came to Christ, he was not just confronted with all the bad things he had done. He was confronted with the fact that even the best things he had done paled in comparison. He says, "They are all loss." He says, "I count them as loss, as dung," Paul says. That's the language he uses because Paul was realizing that it wasn't just things he had associated with wickedness, but even his goodness was no where near what would be necessary to be in the presence of a holy God. That's where we remember that every single one of us...not just because we have done wrong things, but at the very core of our heart, who we are...we are willfully rebellious creatures against our Creator.

So, justification is the gracious act of God by which God declares a sinner righteous. Justification is the gracious act of God by which God declares a sinner righteous. That is one amazing truth. That the Holy Judge of the universe, God over all would look upon you or me in our willful rebellion against Him, with no desire for Him on our own, with desire for our own glory instead of His and with idolatry at the core of who we are, with guilt written all over our lives...that a holy God would look at you or me at that point and say, "Not guilty. Righteous. Innocent. Right before me; peace with me; accepted before me." It makes no sense. This is the gospel. The gracious act of God by which God declares a sinner right before Him, even though there is nothing in that sinner that causes him to say that.

So, how does He do it? How can He look at you or me...let's be honest. How can He look at you or me in all of our sin and all of our guilt and say, "Not guilty"? How can He be a true and just God, a just Judge and look at you or me and say, "Not guilty, innocent"? The only way He can do it solely on the basis of faith in Jesus Christ. How can a sinner be declared righteous in the eyes of God? What happens is, in justification, God takes the righteousness of Jesus Christ Himself, and He credits it to you. Think about it. This divine transaction that happens. 2 Corinthians 5 tells us about it, "*God made him who had no sin to be sin for us...*"

Don't miss it: God took all that was in your account, all your guilt, all the judgment due your sin, all the penalty due your sin, all the death due your sin, and He poured it out all on His Son. "You take record for all of that; you take credit for all of that. All of their sin is credited to you." What He does is He takes His Son, and the perfect righteousness of His very Son, and He takes it and puts it on you, and in the same way that God looked at His Son and said, "This is my Son, whom I love, with who I am well pleased...fully pleased", now He looks at you or me and says the exact same thing. We haven't done a thing; you haven't done a thing, and the righteousness of Christ is credited to you, and He has taken your sin. "*God made him who knew no sin to be sin for us in order that we might become...*" what? "*The righteousness of God.*"

Now you see why Paul is so vehemently opposing Peter on this and anybody else who would try to throw anything else into this mix, because as soon as you say, "Well, this sinner here did get circumcised, or did do this, or did make this statement, or did go through this action", then you are undercutting the power of the cross of Christ and the gift that Christ has given in justification. It is not based on what we do; it is solely based on faith in Christ Jesus. That's why he said in verses 16 and 17, "We are justified by faith in Christ, not by observing the law." Not by what we have done; God has done everything for us in Christ, and Christ has made it possible for us to have His righteousness.

Listen to question number 60 of the Heidelberg Catechism. This really sums up the Protestant understanding of justification, and it is an incredible statement. Listen to this. The question is in the Catechism...the question is, "How are you righteous before God?"

Now think about it. How would you answer that? "How are you righteous before God?" "How are you righteous before God?" The catechism says this:

Only by true faith in Jesus Christ. In spite of the fact that my conscience accuses me that I have grievously sinned against all the commandments of God and have not kept any one of them, and that I am still ever prone to all that is evil, nevertheless, God, without any merit of my own, out of pure grace, grants me the benefits of the perfect sacrifice of Christ, imputing to me His righteousness and holiness, as if I had never committed a single sin, or had ever been sinful, having fulfilled myself all the obedience which Christ has carried out for me, if only I accept such favor with a trusting heart.

Wow. As if I had never committed a single sin; as if you had never committed a single sin. God would look at you or me that way. A wealthy Englishman in London bought himself a Rolls Royce years ago, at a time when Rolls Royce was saying, "This is the car of all cars, and it will never break down. You will never have any problems with it." He bought himself one and drove it to France. When he got to France, his Rolls Royce broke down.

So, he called the Rolls Royce people, and he said, "I've got a problem. The car of all cars is broken down, and I need somebody to fix it." They said, "I'm sure that can't be." So, they flew a mechanic from England to France, who came to where this guy's car was, and it was indeed broken down, and the mechanic fixed it. The mechanic got back on the plane and flew back to England.

Weeks went by, and the owner of the car never received the bill. He thought, "You know, I've got means, I can pay this bill. I know it cost them a lot to send someone out of the country to come fix it." So, finally, he communicated to them, and he said, "You fixed my car. I'd like to pay my bill." They sent this car owner a note from the Rolls Royce office, and the note said, "Sir, with all due respect, we have absolutely no record of anything ever having gone wrong with your car."

Can I remind you, ladies and gentlemen, that the God of the universe looks upon your life, and by the shed blood of Jesus Christ, He says, "I have absolutely no record of anything ever having gone wrong in your life"? Is that not an amazing truth! No record, and it's not...don't miss it...it's not swept under the rug where He is pretending it's not there. He has taken the full record of your sins and my sins and put them on His Son. They have been paid for, so that when He looks at you and me, there is no record of sin whatsoever, as if we had never sinned.

Justification is one awesome, awe-inspiring truth...life-transforming truth. This is the gospel. Now, it almost seems too good to be true. It's why people in the Reformation were saying, "That's legal fiction. You are making this up. It's like a fairy tale. You don't have to do anything and you have the righteousness of Jesus Christ Himself credited to you without doing anything?"

It's the same thing the Judaizers were saying. "If that's the case, then what about the way people live? That's not a way to live. We have got to do something." This is where it gets really, really, really, really, really, good.

Through faith in Christ, we are alive to God.

Through faith in Christ, we are accepted before God, but not just accepted before God (as if that was not enough) but through faith in Christ, we are alive to God. Paul is saying to Peter and those who are with him, "You know that your salvation, your acceptance before God is

by faith alone, and their salvation, their acceptance before God is by faith alone." That changes the way you live. Look at verse 18 and 19. He says, *"If I rebuild what I destroyed, I prove that I am a lawbreaker. For through the law I died to the law so that I might live for God."*

What if faith is not only just the way we are accepted before God, the only way we are accepted before God? What if faith is also the only way we are able to live before God? What if faith is not just a one time decision where we pray a prayer and move on, but what if faith is central in every facet of Christianity...every facet of our lives. Paul has said, "We are justified by faith." Now, he is saying, "We live by faith." Paul has no room...no room...for supposedly praying a prayer, trusting in Jesus, and then your life looking the same after that. "It's not possible," Paul says, "It's not possible, because we live by faith." Faith is not just what saved us and brought us to salvation, faith is what enables us to live out our salvation day by day, moment by moment by moment.

This is when you get to verse 20, and you've got this loaded verse. If you do not have Galatians 2:20 hidden in your heart, let me encourage you to hide it in your heart this week. *"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, [not I] but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."* That verse is so loaded with meaning. *"I have been crucified with Christ..."*

Think about that. We know...we know there's a sense in which, what Christ did on the cross, only He could do as the perfect Son of God as a sacrifice for the sins of all of us, but what Paul is saying is that we were also involved in what was going on on that cross. Same thing he talks about in Romans 6. He says, "We were baptized into His death. We died with Him." William Perkins, a Puritan, put it this way. He said, "We are in mind and meditation to consider Christ crucified. First, we are to believe that He was crucified for us. This being done, we must go yet further, and as it were, spread ourselves on the cross of Christ, believing, and with all beholding ourselves crucified with Him."

What a thought! Spread yourself on the cross. You were crucified with Christ; you have been crucified with Christ. Now, what does that mean? Are we dead or alive? Dead and alive? How does this work? Here's what Paul says. He says, "Both." We die to sin. That's the point. All of our sin is put on the cross. He takes all of our sin...past sin, present sin, future sin...it has all been put on the cross. It has been crucified. All of it. Christ has taken all of it. This is good news. All our sin...all our sin taken and put on the cross.

This is why justification...why we need to know this word and what it means, because justification is different than forgiveness. You ask forgiveness for something, then you go do something else, and you ask for forgiveness for that. Justification...we talked about this...a once for all declaration. You are right before God. Your standing before God is not dependent on whether or not you make it through tomorrow perfect, because you are declared right before God. He has taken all your sin...past, present, future sin...and He has put it on the cross. It's all there. Christ has taken it all. We die to sin; we are dead to sin.

Not just sin, we die to ourselves. Paul says, "I no longer live. I no longer live." This is where the "easy believeism" that is sold in our culture today under the guise of the gospel is completely undercut. Paul is talking about this point of salvation being a crucifixion of self. A point in which our heart of stone and our pride is crushed, is shattered...slain, crucified. "I no longer live." Paul says, "The 'I'...the desired things of this world. The 'I' that thought this world revolved around him. The 'I' that lived for the pleasures and the preferences of this world. The 'I' that indulged in that which would promote self-esteem and self-confidence

and self-justification and self-glorification. The 'I' that revolved around himself, that 'I' is gone. Dead. Crucified. I no longer live."

You see, when you get back up to verse 16 when he is talking about faith in Jesus Christ, the word there, literally, is "into." It's faith "into" Jesus Christ. Running into Christ. It's throwing yourself. I love what Perkins said...that Puritan said, "Spread yourself on the cross." Die to yourself. Gone. I know longer live. Does that mean we are completely dead? No, but Christ lives in me.

Well, what does Christ do? Christ covers our sin...He covers our sin. We have talked about this. He takes all of our sin upon Him. His blood covers it. Romans 5:8-9, "*While we were still sinners, Christ died for us...and we have been,*" verse 9 says, "*since we have been justified by his...*" anybody remember what the next word is in Romans 5:9? "*Since we have been justified by his blood.*" Blood. We are justified by His blood. His blood covers our sin. It covers our sin. Not swept under the rug; covered over by the blood of Jesus Christ.

But He doesn't just cover our sin; He changes our lives. This is where that word, "I have been crucified..." Bear with me for a little Greek grammar here. I promise you it will be worth it. "I have been crucified..." That verb, "have been crucified," it's a perfect tense verb. Follow with me here. It is a perfect tense verb which means it happened in the past, but it has present, ongoing implications. That's cool. That's worth, like, three years of Greek just for that right here. It happened in the past with present, ongoing implications. "I have been crucified with Christ, and that radically affects the way I live today, because I am dead to sin, dead to myself, and alive to Christ. He has covered my sin, and He has changed my life. It is no longer about me. It is about Christ living in me. It's about trusting..." and this is the key. Faith is the key. Trusting Christ to live in me. Trusting Christ to work in me. This is the picture: faith. "I live by faith. Every moment, every day, I'm trusting Christ." Not just, "I trusted Christ back then when I was eight years old, but I'm trusting Christ today. I'm living by faith today. I'm believing Christ for everything I need today."

We have talked about this before. We are not in debt to Christ. We're not in debt to Christ. This is how we normally view Christianity. We talk about what Christ did for us. Christ died on the cross way back then. That's what He did for me, so now, I live for Him. Christ did this for me...sometimes, this is how we hear it preached. "Christ did this for you. The least you can do is live for Him. Christ did this, now live for Him." Now, the only problem with that is, yes, Christ did this, but Christ does not stop doing. He is still doing. He is doing it right now. Everything we have is because Christ is still doing, still working in our lives at this very moment. He has not stopped. The reason we are not in debt to Christ, the reason we are not paying Christ back is because He is still paying us. He is still serving us. He is still empowering us. He is still enabling us. He is doing everything that we need. He has given us every single thing we need.

We are not in debt to Christ; we are indwelt by Christ. That is a word. I promise, that's a word, "indwelt." My small group said, "It's not a word." I looked it up; it's a word. "Indwelt." Christ in you. Think about it: What if...what if the Christian life is not about you living for Christ, what if the Christian life is actually about Christ living for you, and through you, and in you, and Christ working in you moment by moment, and day by day with His indwelling presence, and we are trusting Him by faith at every single second.

This is what Luther talked about. Accepted before God, alive to God by faith. He said, "By faith, you are so cemented to Christ that He and you are as one person, which cannot be separate, but remains attached forever." Isn't that a great picture? Do we realize this privilege, this pleasure? You are cemented to Christ as one person. You are one person with

Christ. Calvin said, "The Christian does not live by His own life, but is animated by the secret power of Christ, so that Christ may be said to live and grow in Him."

It's not just the Reformers. This is the testimony of men and women throughout Christian history. It was seen and realized, this freedom, this reality of Christ in us. Ian Thomas, the leader of Intervarsity, who worked in the slums in London. He talked at one point about a time in his journey...spiritual journey...he was a Christian, but everything changed at this particular moment when he realized the truths we are talking about here. I want you to hear what he said, because I'm convinced that this reflects, this describes, so many Christians. Listen to what he said. He said,

I had been reduced to a state of complete exhaustion spiritually, until I felt that there was no point in going on. And then one night in November, just at midnight, I got down on my knees before God, and I just wept in sheer despair. I said, "Oh, God, I know that I am saved. I love Jesus Christ. I am perfectly convinced that I am converted. With all my heart I have wanted to serve thee; I have tried to my uttermost, and I am a hopeless failure." That night, things happened. I can honestly say that I had never once heard from the lips of men the message that came to me then, but God that night simply focused upon me the Bible message of Christ who is my life. The Lord seemed to make plain to me that night, through my tears of bitterness, "You see, for seven years, with utmost sincerity, you have been trying to live for me on my behalf the life that I have been awaiting for seven years to live through you."

Are you there? Are you there? George Müller, we've talked about him, helped multitudes of orphans in a ministry completely based on prayer. He was asked the secret to his life and ministry, and this is what he said: "'There was a day when I died, utterly died.' As he spoke, he bent lower and lower until he almost touched the floor," his biographer said. Muller continued, "I died to George Müller, his opinions, preferences, tastes, and will. I died to the world, its approval, or censure; died to the approval or blame even of my brethren and friends, and since then I have studied only to show myself approved unto God."

Hudson Taylor...his whole biography is called *Hudson Taylor's Spiritual Secret*, because he found this; he saw this, and he said, "Oh, it is joy to feel Jesus living in you, to find your heart all taken up by Him, to be reminded of His love by His seeking communion with you at all times, not by your painful attempts to abide in Him." I want to share one more. Ian Thomas, the guy who said the first thing, he gives us a caution here that I want to put before all of us this morning.

Beware, [he said] lest even as a Christian, you fall into Satan's trap. You may have found and come to know God and the Lord Jesus Christ, receiving Him sincerely as your Redeemer. Yet, if you do not enter into the mystery of godliness and allow God to be in you, the origin of His own image, you will seek to be godly by submitting yourself to external rules and regulations, and by conforming to behavior patterns imposed upon you by the particular Christian society that you have chosen, and in which you hope to be found acceptable. You will in this way perpetuate the pagan habit of practicing religion in the energy of the flesh, and in the very pursuit of righteousness, commit idolatry in honoring Christianity more than Christ.

Ladies and gentlemen, this is the key: it is faith. It is faith, not just in the Christ who died 2,000 years ago on your behalf, but it is faith in the Christ who lives and dwells in you now to give you every single thing you need to live out the Christian life today, and tomorrow,

and the next day, and the day after that. It is faith in Christ, believing in Christ every single moment. "I believe; I believe; I trust in you Christ. I trust in you."

So that when we hear tough commands like we did this Fall in the "Radical" series, we don't walk away venturing into legalism. "If I do these things, and do these things, I am right before God." Though we don't want to go there, we also don't want to ignore these truths. That's hypocrisy. It doesn't line up with the truth of the gospel in our lives. What do we do then? We try to muster up? Do we try to make things right? No, we say in our hearts, "I need Christ. I need Christ. I can't do it without Christ. I need Christ to take more of me; I need Christ to change more of my desires and change me more. I believe you; I trust you. You are right, so make your Word come alive in me." That's where He does this work by grace. We are freed by grace through faith.

Freed Through Faith ...

God's pleasure in you is based on Christ's performance for you.

This is where we come back to where we started. How do we please God? How do we do 2 Corinthians 5; 1 Thessalonians 2 and 4. How do we live to please God? We make it our goal to please God. How can you and I please God? We said, "God's pleasure in you is not based on your performance for Him." Because God's pleasure in you is based on Christ's performance for you. It's based on Christ's performance for you. So that, when you are tempted to sin and tempted to hang on to the stuff in this world...this world says, "You need this." Then, you look to Christ and you say, "Christ I need you to overcome my sin. I need you to give me grace to let go of this, and I trust you. Give me everything that I need."

How do you know He is going to give it to you? How do you know that He is good? Later today when you are tempted to sin to give you everything you need, how do you know He is going to give it to you later this week, later this year, when things aren't going exactly as you planned? How do you know that He is going to be good to give you every single thing you need in those moments? Paul says, "I know because He loves me, and He gave Himself for me." It is...I'm convinced, in the New Testament...one of the most personal, poignant moments in all of Paul's writings, where he gets extremely personal, and he says, "I know this. I live by faith, because Jesus loves me, and Jesus gave Himself for me."

I want to remind you that you can trust Him, because He is passionate about you. He loves you. I know that we talk a lot around here about God's love for and passion for the world, and the nations and all peoples in all nations, and we talk about those things because it is thoroughly biblical, and we need to realize those things. We need to realize the very purpose for which we are here. However, in that process, we must be careful not to lose sight of the fact that, yes, God has love for all peoples in all nations, and Christ has died for the sake of all peoples and all nations, but at the core, Christ has also died for you. Not just the person sitting beside you, in front of you, behind you...right where you are sitting, Jesus died for you. For you. For you. He died for you. He is passionate about you.

The God of the universe is passionate about you. Let this soak in. Let it soak in like a waterfall you are sitting under. The God of the universe is passionate about you; He loves you; He pours out his grace on you. This is an incredible truth, and it is extremely personal. He is passionate about you, and we know that, because He has paid a price for you. He has given Himself for you. He gave Himself, so that all that He has, all of His benefits, presently and eternally, could be yours, not based on anything you do but based on trusting in Him. That's why we are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.

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