

(2:15-16) Christ justifies, not the law

"We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified."

(2:17-21) In Christ dead to the law, alive to God

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

1. Defining Terms

a. Righteousness/Justification

i. Background

1. Hebrew law court

a. Judge, Plaintiff, Defendant

b. Justification is the pronouncement of one party as "righteous." If it's the defendant then it is an acquittal. For the one in the right, it is a vindication.

2. Righteousness as a status and a covenant relationship

a. Ultimately, justification refers not just to an acquittal in court, but the pronouncement of a status - a declaration of righteousness. The Hebrew concept here is as much relational as it is legal. Those who are "righteous" are those who are in a covenant relationship with the Creator God.

b. This parallel between "righteousness" and covenant status is so fundamental, I want to at least give you a taste of how this works in the Old Testament. Take the account of Phinehas:

i. Numbers 25:10–13 (ESV)

10 And the Lord said to Moses, 11 "Phinehas the son of Eleazar, son of Aaron the priest, has turned back my wrath from the people of Israel, in that he was jealous with my jealousy among them, so that I did not consume the people of Israel in my jealousy. 12 Therefore say, 'Behold, I give to him my covenant of peace, 13 and it shall be to him and to his descendants after him the covenant of a perpetual priesthood, because he was jealous for his God and made atonement for the people of Israel.' "

ii. Psalm 106:28–31 (ESV)

28 Then they yoked themselves to the Baal of Peor,

1. and ate sacrifices offered to the dead;

29 they provoked the Lord to anger with their deeds,

1. and a plague broke out among them.

30 Then Phinehas stood up and intervened,

1. and the plague was stayed.

31 And that was counted to him as righteousness

1. from generation to generation forever.

c. Now, for an even more directly relevant example:

i. Genesis 15:1-6, a foundational passage for Paul as we'll see in Galatians 3:

Genesis 15:1–6 (ESV)

1 After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision: "Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great." 2 But Abram said, "O Lord God, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" 3 And Abram said, "Behold, you have given me no offspring, and a member of my household will be my heir." 4 And behold, the word of the Lord came to him: "This man shall not be your heir; your very own son shall be your heir." 5 And he brought him outside and said, "Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be." 6 And he believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness.

ii. In the remainder of the chapter, we see the covenant ceremony performed. Then in Chapter 17, we read how God gives Abraham circumcision as a sign of the covenant:

Genesis 17:9–11 (ESV)

*9 And God said to Abraham, “As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your offspring after you throughout their generations. **10** This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your offspring after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised. **11** You shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you.*

We won't have time to trace the full argument right now, but if you jump ahead to Paul's argument in Romans 4, you see that he makes the same move as the Psalmist did in the case of Phinehas:

Romans 4:11 (ESV)

11 He received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. The purpose was to make him the father of all who believe without being circumcised, so that righteousness would be counted to them as well,

- d. The point of that whole exercise is to demonstrate that, in the Hebrew mindset, when we speak of a person being 'righteous' before God, the language is going beyond a simple law court analogy. We're talking about the status of a person in regards to a covenant relationship with God.

3. Vindication of Israel against her enemies

- a. Now, as the story of Israel progresses, we see justification take on a different shade, still maintaining the law court and covenant background, but now speaking specifically of God's action to vindicate the righteous (in this case, Israel) over against her enemies who have oppressed her. Certainly, Israel has suffered judgment for her sins, but the righteous remnant within her looks for the day when God will bring forgiveness and ultimately vindicate Israel against her enemies. For example:

Micah 7:8–10 (ESV)

*8 Rejoice not over me, O my enemy;
when I fall, I shall rise;
when I sit in darkness,
the Lord will be a light to me.*

*9 I will bear the indignation of the Lord
because I have sinned against him,
until he pleads my cause
and executes judgment for me.*

*He will bring me out to the light;
I shall look upon his vindication.*

*10 Then my enemy will see,
and shame will cover her who said to me,
“Where is the Lord your God?”
My eyes will look upon her;
now she will be trampled down
like the mire of the streets.*

- b. We won't go there, but you can also see this at work, for example, in Isaiah 10:5-22 speaking of Assyria as the rod of YHWH's judgment that will them herself be judged and Israel restored.

4. Vindication on the last day

- a. Throughout the Psalms and the Prophets, and into the inter-testamental writings, you see this continued expectation of the Lord rising up in judgment, vindicating the righteous and judging the wicked. While the evidence of this righteousness of God in fulfillment of his promises is not seen in full in the present, the expectation is that on the last day there will be a great judgment, and those who are found righteous will be vindicated. The resurrection of the dead and the life of the age to come becomes the focus of this hope - those who are counted among the righteous will be able to share in these things.

Daniel 12:1–3 (ESV)

1 "At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people. And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time. But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book. 2 And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. 3 And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.

Cf. Also 2 Macc 7

- b. Ultimately, the question of justification comes down to - when God acts to set the world right, to manifest his righteousness, how can one be counted among the righteous who will share in the resurrection and the life of the age to come? How can we tell who they are? The debate about justification is specifically a debate about criteria of membership in the "righteous" - the members of the covenant.
- ii. Death and Resurrection of Jesus as God's judgment and vindication
 1. When we come to the NT, we see the death and resurrection of Jesus presented as the beginning of God's final end of time judgment and vindication.
 2. The death of Christ on the cross is the judgment of God against sin, taking upon himself the judgement that rightfully belongs to others on the last day.
 - a. Romans 3:21-26; 4:25 (cf. Isa 53)
 3. Among other things, the resurrection of Christ is God's deliverance of him, his vindication of Christ's righteous status, performing in the present and anticipating what will ultimately occur for the righteous at the final resurrection.
 - a. 1 Tim. 3:16
 - b. Acts 17:31
 - c. Isa. 50:4-11
 - d. Cf also the reversal at the end of Isa 53
 4. The Christian gospel has redefined the criteria of justification and righteousness around the death and resurrection of Jesus. It is those who are joined to the Messiah who share in the benefits of his death of judgment in their place, and who share in the benefits of his resurrection as vindication.
- iii. Redefinition of "the righteous" around Jesus
 1. So, two questions, which really are the same thing, are being asked when it comes to justification:
 - a. Who are the people of Abraham?
 - b. Who are the righteous that will be vindicated at the last day?
 2. The answer Paul gives to these questions is precisely what this passage begins to answer and more extensively in Chapters 3 and 4.
- iv. Justification in the present as anticipation of future justification
 1. It's important to understand that when we speak of justification, there are two time periods in view:
 - a. Justification, in the proper sense of the word, relates to the verdict which will be rendered on the righteous at the judgment. This is a future event for all believers.
 - b. When justification is spoken of in the present, it's present anticipation or assurance of that future verdict. To be 'justified' today is to be counted among the "righteous" - to be a member of that covenant people who will be vindicated at the last day. More properly, it's a present assurance that God will render his favorable verdict at the judgment.
- v. The basis of justification - What is the ground on which we stand? On what basis do we expect to receive a righteous verdict on the last day? How are the people of God demarcated? How do we know who is among the righteous?
 1. There are two answers in contention with each other and which form the substance of the debate in Galatians, and we need to define each of them to follow the argument.
- b. Works of the Law
 - **At a fundamental level, the phrase refers to those obligations placed upon Israelites as members of the covenant, instructions for the way in which they are to live within the covenant. It is everything the law requires.**

- By the time of Paul's day, however, Judaism was divided into several factions, each with different understandings of the law and the obligations to be followed. Those factions would often perceive other Israelites outside of their group as "sinners" similar to the way Gentiles were universally perceived.
- During this time, the "works of the law" took on the specific connotation of those specific parts of the law that would mark our one group from another and, in particular, would distinguish Jew from Gentile. These primary points of demarcation would be circumcision, food laws, purity rituals, Sabbath-keeping, and temple worship.
- So for our purposes, when we see this phrase we should understand the commands of the Mosaic covenant as being in view, with a particular focus on those boundary markers of circumcision, food laws, etc.

To be "justified from works of the law" means that we draw the line of the righteous based on those criteria - it is those who observe the law that we know are counted among the righteous and who will be justified on the last day.

c. "Faith(fulness) in(of) Jesus Christ"

- Compare these translations:
- Romans 3:19-26

<p>Romans 3:19–26 (ESV) 19 Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. 20 For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin. 21 But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— 22 the righteousness of God <u>through faith in Jesus Christ</u> [dia pisteōs Iēsou Christou] for all who believe. For there is no distinction: 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and are justified by his grace as a gift, <u>through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus</u>, 25 whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. 26 It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has <u>faith in Jesus</u> [ek pisteōs Iēsou]</p>	<p>Romans 3:19–26 (NET) 19 Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world may be held accountable to God. 20 For <i>no one is declared righteous before him</i> by the works of the law, for through the law comes the knowledge of sin. 21 But now apart from the law the righteousness of God (which is attested by the law and the prophets) has been disclosed—22 namely, the righteousness of God <u>through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ</u> [dia pisteōs Iēsou Christou] for all who believe. For there is no distinction, 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. 24 But they are justified freely by his grace <u>through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus</u>. 25 God publicly displayed him at his death as the mercy seat accessible through faith. This was to demonstrate his righteousness, because God in his forbearance had passed over the sins previously committed. 26 This was also to demonstrate his righteousness in the present time, so that he would be just and the justifier of the one <u>who lives because of Jesus' faithfulness</u> [ek pisteōs Iēsou].</p>	<p>Romans 3:19–26 (AV 1873) 19 Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. 20 Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. 21 But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; 22 even the righteousness of God which is <u>by faith of Jesus Christ</u> [dia pisteōs Iēsou Christou] unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: 23 for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; 24 being justified freely by his grace <u>through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus</u>: 25 whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; 26 to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which <u>believeth in Jesus</u> [ek pisteōs Iēsou].</p>
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○ Galatians 2:15-21

<p>Galatians 2:15–21 (ESV) 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 <u>through faith in Jesus Christ</u> [dia pisteōs Iēsou Christou], so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified <u>by faith in Christ</u> [ek pisteōs Christou] 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 <u>justified in Christ</u>, 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 <u>crucified with Christ</u>. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh <u>I live by faith</u> [en pistei] <u>in the Son of God</u>, who <u>loved me and gave himself for me</u>. 21 I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law, then <u>Christ died for no purpose</u>.</p>	<p>Galatians 2:15–21 (NET) 15 We are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners, 16 yet we know that no one is justified by the works of the law but <u>by the faithfulness of Jesus Christ</u> [dia pisteōs Iēsou Christou]. And we have come to believe in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified <u>by the faithfulness of Christ</u> [ek pisteōs Christou] and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no one will be justified. 17 But if while seeking to be <u>justified in Christ</u> we ourselves have also been found to be sinners, is Christ then one who encourages sin? Absolutely not! 18 But if I build up again those things I once destroyed, I demonstrate that I am one who breaks God's law. 19 For through the law I died to the law so that I may live to God. 20 I have been <u>crucified with Christ</u>, and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So the life I now live in the body, <u>I live because of</u> [or 'I live within'] <u>the faithfulness</u> [en pistei] <u>of the Son of God</u>, who <u>loved me and gave himself for me</u>. 21 I do not set aside God's grace, because if righteousness could come through the law, then <u>Christ died for nothing!</u></p>	<p>Galatians 2:15–21 (AV 1873) 15 We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, 16 knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but <u>by the faith of Jesus Christ</u> [dia pisteōs Iēsou Christou], even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified <u>by the faith of Christ</u> [ek pisteōs Christou], and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. 17 But if, while we seek to be <u>justified by Christ</u>, we ourselves also are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid. 18 For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. 19 For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. 20 I am <u>crucified with Christ</u>: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh <u>I live by the faith</u> [en pistei] <u>of the Son of God</u>, who <u>loved me, and gave himself for me</u>. 21 I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then <u>Christ is dead in vain</u>.</p>
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- The specific words in question, which the ESV translates as "faith in Christ" are *pistis christou*. The relationship between faith and Christ is somewhat ambiguous and depends heavily on the context. While there are actually a number of different possibilities, the primary two perspectives are what we call the "objective genitive" and the "subjective genitive," which are two of the possible Greek constructs.
 - **Objective Genitive** - If we understand the phrase this way, then we see Christ as the "object" of faith, and we translate it as "faith in Christ." That Christ is an object of our faith is not in question, but whether this particular construction is referring to that.
 - **Subjective Genitive** - In this understanding, Christ is the subject of the phrase, and the word *pistis* should be understood as 'faithfulness,' referring to his faithfulness as Messiah to God's redemptive purposes culminating in his death and resurrection. We would then translate it as the "faithfulness of Christ." That Christ was faithful to God's purposes and that this was supremely on display in the events of the gospel is not in question either, but whether this construction is referring to that.
- Since the "faith in Christ" view has been all many or most of you have ever encountered, I won't spend much time explaining it. Some of the key arguments for this reading:
 - (Dunn) But among the chief considerations in favour of the usual view are the following.
 - (1) 'Faith' = 'belief or trust in', as a religious term was familiar in the Hellenistic world (BAGD, *pistis* 2; TDNT vi.179–82). This would be the most natural sense to expect a reader to take, whereas 'the faithfulness of Christ' would require a good deal of unpacking, which Paul never provides.
 - (2) One would expect phrases using the verb to function as equivalent alternatives to phrases using the noun. This is just what we do find here (the next clause) and in 3:6–9, 22 (as still more clearly throughout Rom. 4); whereas we never read in Paul of Christ 'believing'.
 - (3) Both here in Galatians and in Romans the issue addressed by Paul is how someone is 'justified'. His key text is Gen. 15:6 (Gal. 3:6; Rom. 4:3), which he clearly understands to say that Abraham was justified by his faith. Gal. 2:16 is most obviously heard as sounding the first note of that theme.
 - (4) As an antithesis to 'works of the law', 'faith of/in Christ' is most naturally understood as posing alternative human responses to God's initiative of grace (so also in—3:2, 5, 14 and 5:5, 6). In short, the phrase is still best taken as expressing faith in Christ, that is, acceptance of the reliability of what was said by and about Christ (acceptance of the gospel message 3:2, 5) and trust in, reliance upon the Christ of whom the gospel thus spoke
 - Arguments for the subjective genitive:
 - (Longenecker) When πίστις is understood in terms of the Hebrew term **אֱמוּנָה**, *ēmūnâ*, which means both "faith" and "faithfulness," then it is not too difficult to view Paul as using πίστις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ much as he uses πίστις τοῦ θεοῦ ("the faithfulness of God") in Rom 3:3 and πίστις Ἀβραάμ ("the faith of Abraham") in Rom 4:16 (so even the κῆν reads "the faith of Jesus Christ" and "the faith of Christ" here at 2:16, and treats Gal 3:22, Rom 3:22, Eph 3:12, and Phil 3:9 similarly).
 - (Longenecker) In effect, then, Paul uses πίστις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ in his writings to signal the basis for the Christian gospel: that its objective basis is the perfect response of obedience that Jesus rendered to God the Father, both actively in his life and passively in his death. Thus in three places by the use of πίστις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ Paul balances out nicely the objective basis for Christian faith ("the faith/faithfulness of Jesus Christ") and mankind's necessary subjective response ("by faith"):
 - Rom 3:22, "this righteousness of God is διὰ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ('through the faith/faithfulness of Jesus Christ') εἰς πάντας τοὺς πιστεύοντας ('to all who believe');"
 - Gal 3:22, "so that the promise, ἐκ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ('which is based upon the faith/ faithfulness of Jesus Christ') δοθῆ τοῖς πιστεύουσιν ('might be given to those who believe');" and
 - Phil 3:9, "a righteousness τὴν διὰ πίστεως Χριστοῦ ('that is based upon the faith/faithfulness of Christ') and τὴν ἐπὶ τῇ πίστει ('that depends upon faith')."
 - (Longenecker) These are not just redundancies in the Pauline vocabulary, as so often assumed, but Paul's attempts to set out both the objective and the subjective bases for the Christian life.
 - (Wallace) Though traditionally translated "faith in Jesus Christ," an increasing number of NT scholars are arguing that πίστις Χριστοῦ (*pistis Christou*) and similar phrases in Paul (here and in v. 20; Rom 3:22, 26; Gal 3:22; Eph 3:12; Phil 3:9) involve a *subjective* genitive and mean "Christ's faith" or "Christ's faithfulness" (cf., e.g., G. Howard, "The 'Faith of Christ,'" *ExpTim* 85 [1974]: 212–15; R. B. Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ* [SBLDS]; Morna D. Hooker, "Πίστις Χριστοῦ," *NTS* 35 [1989]: 321–42). Noteworthy among the arguments for the subjective genitive view is that when πίστις takes a personal genitive it is almost never an objective genitive (cf. Matt 9:2, 22, 29; Mark 2:5; 5:34; 10:52; Luke 5:20; 7:50; 8:25, 48; 17:19; 18:42; 22:32; Rom 1:8; 12: 3:3; 4:5, 12, 16; 1 Cor 2:5; 15:14, 17; 2 Cor 10:15; Phil 2:17; Col 1:4; 2:5; 1 Thess 1:8; 3:2, 5, 10; 2 Thess 1:3; Titus 1:1; Phlm 6; 1 Pet 1:9, 21; 2 Pet 1:5)
 - Taking the subjective view, the argument is essentially this:
 - The basis of our justification is in the faithfulness of Christ in fulfilling God's purposes in the gospel. Christ himself is the boundary marker that delineates the righteous. We come to participate in this justification by being joined to Christ through our faith. It is those who are "in Christ" who are "the righteous."

2. Point of Agreement

a. What's the point of the distinction between being Jews by birth vs. Gentiles sinners?

- i. Paul begins with the common practice of dividing the world into two camps - Jews and Gentiles. He is speaking to the Jewish Christians in Antioch - "we", that is we Jewish Christians.
- ii. Jews are the physical descendants of Abraham. They are native born into the people of God and inherit the promises by birthright.
- iii. This privileged lineage is in distinction from the rest, who are sinners from the Gentiles
 - 1. For 'sinners' in Jewish thought meant pre-eminently those whose lawless conduct marked them out as outside the covenant, destined for destruction and so not to be consorted with (e.g. Pss. 1:1, 5; 37:34-6; 58:10; Prov. 12:12-13; 24:20; Sir. 7:16; 9:11; 41:5-11). Thus it could be used, as here, as synonymous with 'Gentiles', those who, by definition were lawless (outside the law) and whose conduct therefore was inevitably in breach of the law (Ps. 9:17; Tobit 13:6; *Jub.* xxiii.23-4 *Pss. Sol.* 2:1-2; Matt. 5:47/Luke 6:33) (cf. *TDNT* i.325-6, 328). Still more striking, however, is the fact that the same epithet was often used in intra-Jewish polemic, by one faction, who claimed to be 'righteous', against another faction, whom they regarded as 'sinners', because the latter failed to conform to their (sectarian) definition of 'righteousness'
- iv. **Is Paul saying that the Jews do not commit sins?**
 - 1. Not at all - the point, and Paul states it somewhat ironically, is that the Jews are by nature born into covenant relationship and are counted among the people of God. Even within the Mosaic covenant, there is concern for repentance, atonement, and forgiveness. The distinction between saint and sinner here is a distinction of covenant membership - that is, between "Israel" and "not Israel."
- b. Continuing with the point of agreement, he says "We are Jews by birth **but**, knowing that a person of works of the law is not justified, but only through the faith of Christ, **even we** have believed in Christ.
 - i. There is a chiasmic structure evident in this passage - **what is a chiasm?**
 - 1. **A - But we know that a person from works of the law is not 'declared righteous'**
 - a. **B - But only through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ** [The clause "but only" in Greek is "except". In Greek grammar, an exceptive clause may cover either the whole preceding clause or part of it. The except clause here covers the first part of the sentence "a man is not justified" - "Except through the faith of Jesus Christ" which is why it's translated "but only." This statement is ambiguous and perhaps intentionally so given the dispute with Peter. The point being that Peter clearly confessed that one is only justified by faith of Jesus Christ, yet he lived in Antioch as if that was not mutually exclusive from also being justified by works of the law.]
 - i. **C - So we also have believed into Christ Jesus** [notice the preposition 'into' - the point here is incorporation into the Messiah. Jesus is the faithful one, and he is the one who has been vindicated. We believe "into" Christ, in order that we might share in his vindication on the basis of his faithfulness.]
 - b. **B' - In order to be 'declared righteous' from the faithfulness of Christ**
 - 2. **A - And not from works of the law**
 - 3. **A - Because from works of the law "all flesh" will not be 'declared righteous'**
- c. We are Jews, he says, yet we know that the delineator between the righteous and the unrighteous is not to be found in the Jewish Torah, but only in the Messiah.

KEY POINT #3: Point of doctrinal agreement - Even Jews must believe into Christ Jesus in order to be justified

- d. The rhetorical force of this verse is twofold:
 - i. In the conversation with Peter: "Peter (and other Jewish Christians), you and I know that righteousness is not defined by the law, but only by the faith of Christ, and that's why be believed in the Messiah in order to be found righteous. You know this and believe this, so it makes no sense for you to act in such a way as to divide based on works of the law."
 - ii. In the context of the Galatians: "We Jewish Christians (Peter, Paul, and the others) know and believe that righteousness is defined in Christ, apart from the works of the law. If the teachers in Galatia are saying otherwise, they are not representative of us."
 - 1. (Garlington) He would have us think very much in terms of "them and us." One might paraphrase vv. 15-16: "As distinct from them, the Judaizers and their followers, we, notwithstanding our Jewish heritage, know that a person is not justified from works of Torah but by faith in Christ; even we, who share the same historic biblical values as our opponents, have trusted in Christ for justification." This confirms again the inconsistency of Peter and Barnabas in withdrawing from the Gentiles.
 - iii. In terms of the questions of Justification:
 - 1. What is the ground on which we stand? On what basis do we expect to receive a righteous verdict on the last day?
 - a. The faithfulness of the Messiah, Jesus (his vicarious death and resurrection)
 - 2. How are the people of God demarcated? How do we know who is among the righteous?

- a. Those who are joined to the Messiah by faith
- e. Now, let's take a closer look at the last verse in the section: "*because by works of the law no one will be justified.*"
 - i. This is a quotation of Psalm 143:2, and literally reads - "because by the works of the law "all flesh" will not be justified."

1. Psalm 143:1–2 (NRSV)

1 Hear my prayer, O Lord;
 give ear to my supplications in your faithfulness;
 answer me in your righteousness.

2 Do not enter into judgment with your servant,
 for no one living is righteous before you.

- 2. The psalmist is crying out to God and praying that his righteousness might be at work - that is, his faithfulness in keeping his covenant and his promise of salvation. He acknowledges that no one living is righteous (i.e. 'justified'), and deliverance must come at God's initiative and by his righteousness.
- 3. Paul tweaks the language of Psalm 143 to go from "no one living will be justified before you" to "from the works of the law no flesh will be justified." The emphasis on "flesh" fits with Paul's distinction between the flesh/old creation (marred by sin) and the Spirit/new creation (characterized by Christ-likeness), and that the "works of the law" are insufficient to justify one who is in the flesh. You can also see this played out in Romans 3:20/5:20 and 8:3.

3. Point of Disagreement

Now, having established a shared foundation of agreeing that justification can only come by being in Christ, Paul begins to hit on points of disagreement.

Notice the language he uses there to sum up the previous two verses - "seeking to be justified in Christ." Keep that in your hip pocket, for it is the foundation of a biblical doctrine of righteousness. We are in him, united with him by faith, and by virtue of that come to share in all the benefits that are his by right. What's in view here is that final future judgment - we place all of our hope and trust in being united with him.

a. Is Christ a servant of Sin?

What does Paul mean when he says, "in seeking to be justified in Christ, we too were found to be sinners, is Christ then a servant of sin?"

- i. Starting contextually, we have to look back consider what Paul has said so far. You have a couple key things to consider here:
 - 1. V15 - "sinners from the Gentiles" - this word sinners looks back to v.15 and begs to be understood in the same sense as it was used there.
 - 2. The narrative account of Peter's hypocrisy - Peter, who was one of those Jews seeking to be have his righteousness defined in Christ, is described in v14 terms of "you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not a Jew."
- ii. The basic thrust of the accusation is:
 - 1. If they are seeking righteousness in Christ, rather than the law, then they are (from the Judaizer's vantage point) essentially apostates and have shown themselves to be as unfaithful to the covenant. They are no better than the Gentiles at this point. This effectively makes the Messiah a promoter of sin or apostasy. The clearest evidence of this is their dismissal of Jewish purity by eating (most likely non-kosher) meals with uncircumcised pagans.
 - 2. One commentator writes: "v.17 might contain an echo of the kind of argument Peter had cast in his teeth by those of the circumcision party: "Peter, don't you realize that your open table fellowship with Gentiles is a repudiation of the law of God? You are actually engaging in sin, my brother! And, furthermore, when you try to justify this kind of behavior by appealing to our common faith in Christ, you are really making our Lord an agent of sin!"
 - 3. In a way, the accusation is appropriate for the disciple following the footsteps of his master, is it not? It certainly brings to mind the image of Christ, who came to serve. Luke 22:27 comes to mind:
 - a. **Luke 22:27 (ESV) 27** For who is the greater, one who reclines at table or one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at table? But I am among you as the one who serves.
What else was Jesus so readily accused of by his adversaries?
 - b. **Luke 7:34 (ESV) 34** The Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, 'Look at him! A glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!'
 - c. **Matthew 9:11 (ESV) 11** And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?"

- d. **Luke 15:1–2 (ESV) 1** Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him. **2** And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, “This man receives sinners and eats with them.”
4. Now, in the context of the gospels, Jesus' eating with sinners is evangelistic - inviting them to share in the redemption and life that he brings. That of the disciples is the next step, Jesus has received these Gentile sinners into life and salvation, so who are we to deny them table-fellowship.
- iii. Paul's Answer
1. Absolutely not!
 - a. **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.
 2. How does the logic of this passage work?
 - a. If, in seeking final justification in Christ, rather than in the law, believers are shown to be “sinners” (in the same sense Gentiles are sinners), this does not make Christ a servant/minister of sin -
 - i. Ironically, to now go and rebuild the wall between Jew and Gentile that has been torn down in Christ, as Peter's actions did and as the false teachers are doing, would be to make Christians transgressors. To return to the jurisdiction of the Torah is to return to the condemnation and curse, where the Torah itself will accuse them of transgression.
 - ii. For the law instigated sin and brought judgment, leading ultimately Christ's death for sin, which brought an end to the law. Through this death I (all of us) am dead to the law and alive to God.
 3. A couple points on the details:
 - a. "Rebuild what I tore down":
 - i. See, for example, Ephesians 2:11-22, where we see the bond between Jew and Gentile described as a tearing down of the wall.
 - b. "Prove myself to be a transgressor."
 - i. "By rebuilding the dividing wall, I am essentially denying the reality of the dawning of the new age through the Messiah's death and resurrection and returning to the old world where all stand condemned - as a Jew condemned by the law and as a Gentile condemned apart from the law. Anticipating the argument of Chapter 3, it is to go back under the curse."
 - c. "Through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ."
 - i. The full meaning of this is fleshed out at the end of Chapter 3, where Paul expounds on the true purpose of the Torah in the plan of God.

ii. What does it mean to “die to the law” “through the law”? How does that work?

 - Cf. Rom. 3:20; 5:20; 7:1-6; Gal. 3:19ff
 - Garlington explains: “Paul’s death to the law is patterned after none other than Jesus’ own death to “sin,” that is, the old creation and Adamic existence, and present life which he lives “to God” (Rom 6:10). (Throughout Romans 5-8, “law” and “sin” serve as synonyms of the old order of things.) Note the emphatic “I” (egō) at the beginning of v. 19, corresponding to the “we” and “even we” of the previous verses. Paul is the voice of all those Jewish Christians who have died to the law. In his case, the law has revealed sin and increased the trespass: he is an Israelite in whom the law has achieved its overall redemptive purpose. Therefore, those Galatians who are being seduced by the Judaizers must remember that all believers have been crucified with Christ (Rom 6:5-6). In this regard, comments Gorman, “The believer’s faith conforms to Christ’s faith. Specifically, the believer’s faith is cruciform because Christ’s faith(fulness) was expressed on the cross” (Cruciformity, 141). And in conforming to Christ, they must also imitate the apostle, recalling that they too once died to the law through the body of Christ (Rom 7:4). After all, the theme of 1:11-2:21 is Paul’s autobiography as paradigm.”

iii. (Longenecker) In vv 19–20 Paul presents in encapsulated form the essence of his own theology vis-à-vis Jewish nomism:

- (1) the law's purpose was to work itself out of a job and point us beyond itself to a fuller relationship with God;
- (2) Christ's death on the cross and our spiritual identification with his death effects freedom from the jurisdiction of the Mosaic law; and
- (3) the Christian's focus is to be on Christ, who lives within us and to whom we look for direction in life.

iv.(Dunn)

- As in 4 Macc. 7:19 and 16:25, the thought is of life beyond death, not just a different version of this life, but a life which has experienced death and over which death has no more say (Rom. 6:10–11). That meant, for Paul, an irreversible change: to return under the law was for him as inconceivable as for one who enjoys life beyond death to return to life before death, life under death.
- All this was possible, as Paul is about to make clear, because his dying and new life were a sharing in Christ's death and risen life (cf. Rom. 6:8–11; 7:4). By implication, Christ's death was also a dying through the law and to the law in order that the constraints of the law might be lifted (cf. 3:13–14), so that the encounter with and openness to his risen life meant ipso facto an openness to the Gentiles which Paul had previously fought against (1:13–16).

KEY POINT #4: The wall of separation is torn down; rebuilding would put us back under the curse.

KEY POINT #5: In our union with him, we share his death under the law, and now share his life.

NOTE: Who is "I" here?

- The "I" in verse 18-21 is emphatic throughout. Paul switches from the first person plural to the first person singular here, but he speaks representatively. While what he says is true of him personally, it is representatively true of all the Jewish Christians. The rhetorical result is very much the same as what we see in the second half of Romans 7.
- d. "It is no longer I who love, but Christ who lives in me" - **What is the implication of being crucified with Christ?**
- i. I no longer live, but Christ lives in me
 1. **In what way does Christ "live in me"?**
 1. It is no longer "I" who live - that is the identity which I had under Torah (all the things describes previously) - that "I" has died, and now my identity is wrapped up in Christ who lives in me and through me by his Spirit. This is the flip-side of the equation - those who are in Christ, have Christ dwelling in them.
 - e. "And that which I now live "in the flesh," I live within the faithfulness of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."
 1. Paul's identity has been redefined around the death of Christ. He has not renounced his Jewish identity (the live I now live **in the flesh**), but it is not longer defined by the law but by the faithfulness of the Messiah.
 2. This is relevant to the controversy in Galatia because Paul speaks as a Jew by birth to those who are being tempted to become Jews.
 3. As one commentator puts it (Garlington): This is an "affirmation that he and other Jewish Christians have found authentic existence in Christ apart from the law. If the law is not necessary for them...then it is not vital for Gentiles either."
 - f. "Who loved me and gave himself for me" - **What is significant about his description of Christ's death in verse 20:**
 - i. We see in this - "who loved me, and gave himself for me" - the personal, active, love of Christ for his people. He was not a passive participant in this plan of redemption. He did not merely go along with his father's will out of submissive obedience, but he loved us and voluntarily gave himself for us.

b. REBUTTAL OF THE CHARGE AGAINST HIM

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

- i. **What does he mean when he says “I do not nullify the grace of God”?**
 - **The law was God’s gift of grace to Israel and most likely here is actually a rebuttal of a charge against him - that by preaching the gospel he is preaching, Paul effectively renders null the grace of God in the Torah. On the contrary, says Paul, if righteousness is by the law then the grace of God in the Cross of Christ is rendered null. The very fulfillment of the purpose of the law is found in the death and resurrection of Christ, which ushers in a new age that has rendered the Torah obsolete.**

4. CONCLUSION

Note the strong parallels in thought between v.16 and vv. 19-21 (via Wright):

The Messiah's faithfulness in v.16 connect with:

- The Crucifixion of the Messiah (v.19)
- His loving self-giving on behalf of his people (v.20)
- His death, which cannot have been for nothing (v.21)

Verse 19-21

19b - I died to the law	20b - I live within the faithfulness of the Messiah, who loved me and gave himself for me
21b - If righteousness was through the law	21c - Then Christ died for nothing

Verse 16

16a - One is not righteous by works of the law	16b - but through the faithfulness of the Messiah
16e - Not on the basis of works of the law	16d - but on the basis of the faithfulness of the Messiah