

## Defining Terms

Justification

Works of the Law

The Faithfulness of Jesus Christ

## The passage

### Rigid Translation

We are by nature Jews and not sinners from the nations.  
But, knowing that a man from the works of the law is not found righteous  
except through the faith of Jesus the Messiah,  
we also have believed into the Messiah Jesus,  
so that we would be found righteous by the faith of the Messiah  
and not from the works of the law,  
because from the works of the law all flesh will not be found righteous.

But, if seeking to be found righteous in the Messiah we were found also ourselves to be sinners, then is the Messiah an agent of sin?

By no means!

For if I build up again the same things I tore down, I demonstrate myself a transgressor.

For I myself, through the law, died to the law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with the Messiah.

And I myself no longer live, but the Messiah lives in me.

And that which I now live in flesh, I live by faith – the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and delivered himself up for me.

I do not nullify the grace of God,

for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died in vain.

### Point of Agreement (v. 15-16)

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

- i. We are Jews, he says, yet we know that the righteous verdict which delivers us from sinful flesh is not to be found in the Jewish Torah, but only in the work of the Messiah.
- ii. The rhetorical force of this verse:
  1. 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."
  2. In the context of the Galatians: "We Jewish Christians (Peter, Paul, and the others) know and believe that righteousness is found in Christ, apart from the works of the law. If the teachers in Galatia are saying otherwise, they are not representative of us."
  3. In terms of the questions of Justification:
    - a. What is the ground on which we stand? On what basis do we expect to receive a righteous verdict on the last day? The faithfulness of the Messiah, Jesus (his vicarious death and resurrection)
    - b. How are the people of God demarcated? How do we know who is among the righteous? Those who are joined to the Messiah by faith
- iii. 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.*"
  1. This is a quotation of Psalm 143:2, and literally reads - "because by the works of the law "all flesh" will not be justified."  
**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.

## The Argument

- iv. So, the point of agreement is clear
  - a. Justification can only come to us by virtue of our being “in Christ” - 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.
- v. Paul then raises the question, “if seeking to be found righteous in the Messiah we were found also ourselves to be sinners, then is the Messiah an agent of sin?”
  1. What does he mean by “we were found also ourselves to be sinners?” Starting contextually, we have to look back consider what Paul has said so far. You have a couple key things to consider here:
    - a. 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.
    - b. 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."
  2. The basic accusation would look like this:
    - a. If they are seeking to be found righteous 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.
    - b. 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:
      - i. **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?**
      - ii. **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!’
      - iii. **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?”
      - iv. **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.”
    - c. 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
- vi. Paul's answer
  1. Absolutely not! (v.18-20)

For if I build up again the same things I tore down, I demonstrate myself a transgressor.  
For I myself, through the law, died to the law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with the Messiah.
  2. How does the logic 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. Specifically, for Peter, to submit again to the law after mixing freely and eating with Gentiles makes him a transgressor of the law.
  - ii. Likewise, on the flip side, returning to the separation of Jew and Gentile after the coming of the Messiah and the uniting of one body in him is to transgress against the new norm in the Messiah. In that sense Peter (and the Galatians) stand doubly condemned
  - iii. "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?**
    1. Cf. Rom. 3:20; 5:20; 7:1-6; Gal. 3:19ff
    2. 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. (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. (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. (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)
    1. 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.
    2. 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).
- d. "It is no longer I who live, 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

**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.**

### 1. In what way does Christ “live in me”?

- a. 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."
  - i. 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.
  - ii. 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.
  - iii. 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.

### 4. Implications

- a. **What does he mean when he says “I do not nullify the grace of God”?**
  - a. **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.**

### 5. What is this passage asking of us?

- a. Our Gentile identity as part of the people of God is bound up in our union with the Messiah
- b. Reverting to Torah (or any fleshly system) is akin to returning to the dead after resurrection.
- c. All of Romans 6 is application here
- d. The Messiah continues to live out his faithfulness in us and through us