

PAUL'S EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS
THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO GALATIANS
Justification by Faith Alone:
“Justified by Faith Alone, In Christ Alone”
Rev. Charles R. Biggs

^{ESV} **Galatians 2:1** Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along with me. ² I went up because of a revelation and set before them (though privately before those who seemed influential) the gospel that I proclaim among the Gentiles, in order to make sure I was not running or had not run in vain. ³ But even Titus, who was with me, was not forced to be circumcised, though he was a Greek. [Titus was a Greek and did not need to be circumcised according to the Law of Moses and he was an example of Paul standing against Christ plus something else!]

⁴ Yet because of false brothers secretly brought in- who slipped in to spy out our freedom that we have in Christ Jesus, so that they might bring us into slavery- ⁵ to them we did not yield in submission even for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you. [“secretly brought in- -who slipped in to spy out our freedom that we have in Christ Jesus,” serpentine language (notice: “false brothers” ...to bring us into slavery)]

⁶ And from those who seemed to be influential (what they were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality)- those, I say, who seemed influential added nothing to me. ⁷ On the contrary, when they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel to the circumcised ⁸ (for he who worked through Peter for his apostolic ministry to the circumcised worked also through me for mine to the Gentiles), ⁹ and when James and Cephas and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given to me, they gave the right hand of fellowship to Barnabas and me, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. ¹⁰ Only, they asked us to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do.

¹¹ But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. ¹² For before certain men came from James, he was eating with the Gentiles; but when they came he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party. ¹³ And the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy. [See notes and comments below]. ¹⁴ But when I saw that their conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, "If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you force the Gentiles to live like Jews?"

¹⁵ We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; [clean and unclean categories of Mosaic Law] ¹⁶ yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, [Mutually exclusive: justified by faith in Christ vs. works of the Law] because by works of the law no one will be justified. [The Law condemns, it does not save].

¹⁷ But if, in our endeavor to be justified in Christ, we too were found to be sinners, is Christ then a servant of sin? Certainly not!

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

¹⁹ For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. ²⁰ I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. ²¹ I do not nullify the grace of God, for if justification were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose. [Focus of our lives: Crucified with Christ and yet I love in Him versus seeking justification through the Law].

Part II: Imputation of Christ's Righteousness and Faith Alone

Introduction

Throughout Church history there has been a tendency to recover by God's grace a focus on Christ alone and his righteousness received by faith, only to find that within a few years the same old problem (read: heresy) continues to raise its powerful head: to turn from Christ and what he has done, **to a righteousness found in Christ and man's cooperation.**

It is imperative when learning justification by faith alone in Christ alone that we are reminded of "beating this doctrine into our heads daily" (Luther's language) and keep our eyes of faith upon Jesus Christ, the Author and Perfecter of our faith.

We must learn again in our time to turn from what man is doing with God, or in cooperation with God's grace, back to Christ alone again! There is no righteousness found within us according to the Apostle Paul in Galatians, the clear teaching of Scripture. The only righteousness that God has revealed is in Christ alone!

God's verdict of "guilty" or condemnation and God's vindication-justification or pronouncement of "not guilty" is found only in Christ alone- -and not in us. Even as we obey God by faith as a Christian, none of our works are meritorious in any way; rather, the works we perform by loving obedience (Gal. 5:6) is evidence of the fact that God has justified us and declared us "not guilty" by faith in Christ alone.

"CHRIST WILL DO ALL FOR YOU, OR NOTHING FOR YOU."

—J. GRESHAM MACHEN

Do you allow Christ do all for you with regard to your right standing before God, or do you nullify or make void the gospel by trying to add to it? Remember the words of Paul in Galatians 2:19-21:

^{ESV} **Galatians 2:19-21:** For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. ²⁰ I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. ²¹ I do not nullify the grace of God, for if justification were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose.

In the Christian life, our assurance of who we are in Christ is not found in what we are doing for him, but what he has already done for us in his life, death, resurrection, and ascension.

Now—beat that into your head one more time!

Quotations on the Importance of Understanding Justification

Evangelicals have all but forgotten the importance of the Reformation, and particularly the doctrine of Justification by faith alone which was the article upon which the Church stands or falls (Luther).

Dr. Michael Horton wrote: “The evangelistic energy of evangelical Protestants has added to the tendency to bury concern over the actual content of the evangel (“good news”). One might say that in all of the activity, evangelism is too busy to be troubled with the evangel.

In his broadly representative crusades, the **Reverend Billy Graham** was simply following in the footsteps of an earlier generation of evangelicals whose missionary and evangelistic zeal encouraged them to play down doctrinal issues when founding the World Council of Churches. Reverend Graham recently reasserted his view of Roman Catholicism:

‘I have found that my beliefs are essentially the same as those of orthodox Roman Catholics’.”- Quoted in ‘Faith Alone’ by R. C. Sproul, pg. 11 (Graham quote from magazine ‘Berean Call’, Sept. 1994).

WHAT DOES THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH TEACH CONCERNING JUSTIFICATION? HEAR THIS CLEARLY FROM THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CATECHISM (THEY ARE STILL UPHOLDING THEIR JUDGMENT AGAINST THE REFORMERS FROM THE COUNCIL OF TRENT-1545-1564):

CANON IX.-If any one saith, that by ***faith alone the impious is justified***; in such wise as to mean, that nothing else is required to co-operate in order to the obtaining the grace of Justification, and that it is not in any way necessary, that he be prepared and disposed by the movement of his own will; let him be anathema.

This is obvious Semi-Pelagianism of the worst sort, and this is what the Apostle Paul was confronting in the Epistle to the Galatians!

CANON XI.-If any one saith, that men are justified, either by the sole imputation of the justice of Christ, or by the sole remission of sins, to the exclusion of the grace and the charity which is poured forth in their hearts by the Holy Ghost, and is inherent in them (remains in them); or even that the grace, whereby we are justified, is only the favour (good will) of God; let him be anathema.

This is a confusion of justification as forensic, and sanctification which is transformative and grace is infused.

Roman Catholicism still confuses justification and sanctification by calling God’s anathema, curse, or wrath on those who would say that justification is forensic,

and an imputation of Christ's righteousness, not a righteousness that is created through faith and works in the believer!

CANON XXXIII: "If anyone says that the Catholic doctrine of justification as set forth by the Holy Council and the present decree, derogates in some respect from the glory of God or the merits of our Lord Jesus Christ,...let him be anathema."

Yet Evangelicals and Catholics are getting together in our time because they are (1) Ignorant of the differences, (2) Do not think the differences amount to that much at all, or (3) They are both Semi-Pelagian in their belief systems and are closer to one another than one would like to imagine!

This is a point worth noting! Roman Catholics are not Pelagians, they have condemned any kind of "works salvation". Roman Catholics uphold the decisions of the Synod of Carthage (418) that condemned Pelagianism (works righteousness), and the Council of Orange (529) that condemned Semi-Pelagianism and the Council of Trent upheld these condemnations.

Rome may have condemned any salvation by works alone, but they teach, affirm and continue to uphold that salvation is by grace and works.

The Catholic Encyclopedia defines justification in this way: "Primarily and simply justification is the possession of sanctifying grace....We are justified by Christ...and by good works,...."

The Roman Catholic *Catechism of the Catholic Church* defines justification this way (Article 2: Justification and Grace, section 1992, pg. 482, Linguori Publications): "Justification has been *merited for us by the Passion of Christ* who offered himself on the cross as a living victim, holy and pleasing to God, and whose blood has become the instrument of atonement for the sins of all men..."

So far, so good (except that last part that denies the biblical doctrine of definite atonement)...but so far, so good with regard to justification and an agreement that we have with Rome. However, it continues...

"...Justification is conferred in Baptism, the sacrament of faith. It **conforms us to the righteousness of God, who makes us inwardly just by the power of his mercy.** Its purpose is the glory of God and of Christ, and the gift of eternal life" (Council of Trent, 1547: DS 1529).

This is the infusion of grace. This is grace plus works, and it makes justification transformative through infusion whereby the person actually becomes righteous and then they're justified. The biblical teaching is that we are not made righteous, but that the righteousness of Christ **is imputed to us while we are yet sinners and ungodly.**

This is why Martin Luther taught that we are “simultaneously righteous and sinful” in opposition to this erroneous teaching!

"The gospel teaches that what could not be found in us and was to be sought in another, could be found nowhere else than in Christ, the God-man (*theanthropos, Gk.*); who taking upon himself the office of surety most fully satisfied the justice of God by his perfect obedience and thus brought to us an everlasting righteousness by which alone we can be justified before God; in order that covered and clothed with that garment as though it were of our first-born (like Jacob), we may obtain under it the eternal blessing of our heavenly Father." -

Francis Turretin, 'Institutes of Elenctic Theology'

Declaration/Imputation of righteousness NOW- - Not merely at the end of the Age. The righteousness of God, the justification of people, making them right in their standing before God has appeared now in Christ!

Heidelberg Catechism Question 60: On Justification

How are thou righteous before God?

Answer. Only by a true faith in Jesus Christ; so that though my conscience accuse me, that I have grossly transgressed all the commandments of God, and kept none of them, and am still inclined to all evil; notwithstanding, God, without any merit of mine, but only of mere grace, grants and imputes to me, the perfect satisfaction, righteousness and holiness of Christ; even so, as if I never had had, nor committed any sin: yea, as if I had fully accomplished all that obedience which Christ has accomplished for me; inasmuch as I embrace such benefit with a believing heart.

Remember Justification by faith alone is forensic and not transformative as we learned in our last study. Professor Mark Seifrid wrote: "...God's saving righteousness and his righteous wrath stand in a synthetic relation, rather than a strictly antithetical one. That is to say, there can be no justification of the sinner which is not simultaneously a justification of God in his wrath against the sinner: the revelation of the saving righteousness of God is based upon the righteousness of God's wrath which is revealed against all idolatry and hypocrisy (Rom. 1:18, 29, 32; 2:5, 8, 13). 'Justification' for Paul is therefore fundamentally a forensic event precisely in its earthly, saving character."- *Christ, Our Righteousness: Paul's Theology of Justification*, pg. 171.

Dr. Francis Turretin, Italian Reformer (1623-1687) writes concerning justification being forensic: "[Justification] is called by Luther, **the article of a standing and falling church**; by other Christians it is termed the characteristic and basis of Christianity not without reason, the principle rampart [bulwark] of the Christian religion, and, **it being adulterated or subverted, it is impossible to retain**

purity of doctrine in other places. Whence Satan in every way has endeavored to corrupt this doctrine in all ages; as has been done especially in the Papacy: ***for which reason it is deservedly placed among the primary causes of our Secession from the Roman Church and of the Reformation.***”

Imputation vs. Infusion

Let us learn two important theological terms that Christians should know with regard to justification by faith alone. The two terms are **imputed and infused.**

Definition: What is Imputation? - Simply put: “A Declaration, or reckoning of Righteousness”. Imputation is that God gives to the ungodly, spiritually dead, sinful person who believes the perfect righteousness of Christ! We are in a right standing before God based on Christ’s works for us. Paul says Abraham was reckoned/declared/considered (*logizomai*- Greek) *justified based on faith alone.* Paul uses the term “*logizomai*” 12 times in this passage in Romans 4 to make the point crystal clear.

As believers, we are clothed in Christ’s righteousness, and we are reckoned/declared/considered righteous as was Abraham. We receive an “alien righteousness” from God, the righteousness that was earned by Jesus Christ and **is imputed to us.** This is a monergistic work of grace (meaning “no cooperation” between God and sinners), where God clothes us in Christ’s righteousness and this is received by faith alone!

Definition: What is Infusion? - Simply put: “To become righteous”. This is a synergistic work, or cooperation between God and sinful man! What the first century Israelite, the modern Roman Catholic, and some who are misguided who call themselves “Christians” claim, is that we become righteous- - then we are justified. Now this makes the eternal difference between heaven and hell.

It is true that once a person is united to Jesus Christ by faith alone in their justification, then that person does become righteous or Christ-like; this is called “sanctification”. But we must make sure that justification by faith alone because of God’s grace alone must ***precede our sanctification.***

God justifies the ungodly sinner by faith alone. He does not justify or declare righteous those who are already righteous by virtue of having “tried hard” to be good, or those who merely have gone through the motions in the visible church, going to church, listening to the Word, and participating in the sacraments, or those who have tried to work hard in any way cooperating with God’s grace in order to be justified!

Those who have worked hard have not worked hard enough (and never will!)- -in fact they are condemned before God’s Holy Tribunal! Why? Because they fall short of God’s glory and can never match the perfect and complete work of Jesus Christ!

Only in Christ are we justified! When we believe and rest in Christ's righteous work for us, God imputes to us the righteous works achieved by Christ!

The Reformed Pastor John Calvin in his Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans wrote concerning the good news of justification by faith alone:

"When...we come to Christ, we first find in Him the exact righteousness of the law, and this also becomes ours by imputation."

"Therefore, we explain justification simply as the acceptance with which God receives us into his favor as righteous men. And we say that it consists in the remission of sins and the imputation of Christ's righteousness."- Institutes in the Christian Religion, Calvin, 3.11.2.

Professor John Murray wrote concerning justification by faith alone:

"It is our Lord's whole work of obedience in every phase and period that is described as active and passive, and we must avoid the mistake of thinking that the active obedience applies to the obedience of his life and the passive to the obedience of his final sufferings and death. The real use and purpose of the formula is to emphasize the two distinct aspects of our Lord's vicarious obedience. The truth expressed rests upon the recognition that the law of God has both penal sanctions and positive demands....Christ's obedience was vicarious in the bearing of full judgment of God upon sin, and it was vicarious in the full discharge of the demands of righteousness.

[Christ's] obedience becomes the ground of the remission of sin and of actual justification."- *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*, pgs. 21-22.

"Those whom, God effectually calls he also freely justifies, not by infusing righteousness into them, but by pardoning their sins, and by accounting and accepting their persons as righteous; not for anything wrought in them or done by them, but for Christ's sake alone; not by imputing faith itself, the act of believing, or any other evangelical obedience to them as their righteousness, but by imputing the obedience and satisfaction of Christ unto them, they receiving and resting on him and his righteousness by faith, which faith they have not of themselves, it is the gift of God"

– WCF Ch 11

Does Paul's doctrine of free grace in Justification by faith alone encourage sin and sinful behavior?

"Is Christ a minister of sin?" (Gal. 1:17)

Judaizers apparently were saying that Christ was an agent who showed in his life the way a Jew should live and uphold the Law in an exemplary way. Some were challenging Paul saying that this “Agent of Law-Keeping” had now become an “Agent of sin”. Paul is saying our life and hope is found “in Christ” (in union with Jesus Christ by faith, see below).

Fung’s Galatians Commentary helps our understanding of what Paul is saying here in Galatians 1:17 (pg.119-20): “...To seek to be justified in Christ is to abandon the law (premise 1); to abandon the law is to become a sinner (premise 2); then Christ abets or serves sin (conclusion)....

“...Although it is true that in order to be justified in Christ it is necessary to abandon faith in the law as a means of salvation (premise 1) and hence to become sinners in the sense of being reduced to the level of the ‘Gentiles and sinners’ of v. 15 (premise 2), the conclusion does not follow that Christ thereby becomes an agent of sin (in the sense of a promoter of actual wrongdoing), support for this statement being given in vv. 18-20.”

Leon Morris wrote in his commentary on this passage: “If sinners can do nothing to bring about their salvation, if they simply trust Christ to put away their sin, then, some apparently reasoned, does it not follow that sin does not matter? Will not Christ do what is necessary? May not Christ’s people then live sinful lives? But no sooner does Paul raise this possibility than he dismisses it emphatically, *By no means.*” - Galatians, pgs. 87-88.

Burton wrote: “The vice of legalism is that it comes between the soul and God, interposing law in place of God,” commenting on Paul’s comment of “dying to the Law” in Galatians 1:19.

Union with Christ was Paul's focus. We are justified by faith alone and we receive all of the benefits of Christ's redemption "in Him" by being united to him: "God forbid" that Christ is a servant of sin

We live in union with Christ as new creations in a new position before God's holy tribunal and throne. Why would we rebuild the partition of Law that has separated Jews from "Gentile sinners" when the whole world's hope (both Jew and Gentile) is in Christ alone! If I rebuild, or go back in redemptive-historical time, I become a transgressor! Paul speaks about this partition in Ephesians 2:

We are "in Christ" (Gal. 1:17)- Justification is a benefit of being united to Jesus Christ by faith. As the Westminster Larger Catechism teaches:

"I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. ²¹ I do not nullify the grace of God, for if justification were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose." –Galatians 1:20-21

Paul says: "I have been crucified with Christ." He wants the believer to know that it is all of grace that one is saved in union with Jesus Christ. "We were there being crucified with Christ" when Christ was crucified just as truly as the two other thieves crucified "with Christ" on the hill of Golgotha. In Romans 6, the Apostle Paul states the same reality and truth:

^{ESV} **Romans 6:5-11:** For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. ⁶ We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. ⁷ For one who has died has been set free from sin. ⁸ Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. ⁹ We know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. ¹⁰ For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. ¹¹ So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

WLC 69 What is the communion in grace which the members of the invisible church have with Christ? A. The communion in grace which the members of the invisible church have with Christ, is their partaking of the virtue of his mediation, in their justification,(1) adoption,(2) sanctification, and whatever else, in this life, manifests their union with him.(3) (1)Rom. 8:30 (2)Eph. 1:5 (3)1 Cor. 1:30

"Crucified with Christ" (Gal. 1:19-20)- Something that happened in the past that is still a present-tense powerful reality!

“Loved me, and gave himself for me...” (Gal. 1:20). Notice the personal focus of Paul’s knowledge of Christ- -it was more than “God so loved the world”, but that God loved me in Christ, and “loved me, and gave himself for me.”

Note on Paul and James?

“By Faith Alone”

“By faith”, not on “account of faith!” Big difference!

Faith is the instrument whereby we receive the righteousness of God in Christ.

Martin Luther: “Wherefore Christ apprehended by faith, and dwelling in the heart, it the true Christian righteousness, for the which God counts us righteous and gives us eternal life.” (Commentary on Galatians, pg. 135).

Heidelberg Catechism (1563), Q: 21. What is true faith? **A:** True faith is not only a certain knowledge whereby I hold for truth all that God has revealed to us in His Word; but also a hearty trust, which the Holy Spirit works in me by the Gospel, that not only to others, but to me also, forgiveness of sins, everlasting righteousness and salvation are freely given by God, merely of grace, only for the sake of Christ's merits (*Heidelberg Catechism*).

- A. Faith is **NOT a work, or any kind of cooperation with God that achieves merit!** This separates the “men from the boys theologically” - - not only that, this makes the difference of heaven and hell, so it is not theological nit-picking!
- B. Faith is a **fruit of regeneration- - a gift** as Ephesians 2 teaches.
- C. Faith is “empty hands” humbly held out to receive what God has provided for one in a right relational standing before God, found only in the righteousness of Christ that is revealed in the gospel!
- D. “Where boasting is present, faith is absent”- Mark A. Seifrid, *Christ, Our Righteousness: Paul’s Theology of Justification*, pg. 133.
- E. Paul believes in faith “working through love” as Galatians 5:6 teaches:

^{ESV} **Galatians 5:6** For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, **but only faith working through love.**

- F. "Faith alone, but not a faith that is alone; it is a working faith."
- G. "Faith entails constant motion...": Professor Mark Seifrid writes: "**By virtue of its inseparability from hope and love, faith entails constant motion**, a 'forgetting what lies behind, and reaching forward to what lies ahead' (Phil. 3:13-14). It is this 'certitude' of hope and not a present 'security' which belongs to the believer, according to Paul [because of our union with Jesus Christ] (emphasis mine). *Christ, Our Righteousness: Paul's Theology of Justification*, pg. 150.

The one word "alone" in the phrase "saved by grace alone" (Eph. 2:8-10) separates us not only from our Roman Catholic friends today, but any other person who believes in a "cooperative" or "synergistic" way of God and man working together to achieve salvation.

Galatians 2:15-21: We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; ¹⁶ yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified. ¹⁷ But if, in our endeavor to be justified in Christ, we too were found to be sinners, is Christ then a servant of sin? Certainly not! ¹⁸ For if I rebuild what I tore down, I prove myself to be a transgressor. ¹⁹ For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. ²⁰ I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. ²¹ I do not nullify the grace of God, for if justification were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose.

The Reformed teaching (and Biblical teaching, I might add) is that we are saved by a monergistic work of God (*monergistic*: mono= "one", ergo= "work"). This means that God alone works in us to achieve our salvation and we are saved not by cooperating with God (even with our faith!), but by believing that God has fully accomplished in the Person and Work of Christ our salvation- - and this is believed by faith alone - -which is not our work, but a gift of God!

Faith receives God's grace held out in Christ, but faith is not a work in any way that is meritorious before God!

Professor J. Gresham Machen wrote: "...If a man has faith in Jesus to help the works of the law out, he can be justified by the works of the law after all; it would mean that, while a man is not justified by works alone, he is justified by works

and faith together. **Thus faith would become merely the means by which a man's works become effective for salvation.** (emphasis mine, pg. 147).

Faith is a gift- -not a work, let faith itself becomes a 'work of the law'.

Canons of Dort (1619). Rejection of Errors Second Head: Paragraph 4. [We reject those:] Who teach: That the new covenant of grace, which God the Father, through the mediation of the death of Christ, made with man, does not herein consist that we by faith, in as much as it accepts the merits of Christ, are justified before God and saved, but in the fact that God, having revoked the demand of perfect obedience of faith, regards faith itself and the obedience of faith, although imperfect, as the perfect obedience of the law, and does esteem it worthy of the reward of eternal life through grace. For these contradict the Scriptures, being: "justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood (Rom 3:24-25)." And these proclaim, as did the wicked Socinus, a new and strange justification of man before God, against the consensus of the whole Church.

You see, this is the Apostle Paul's point in Ephesians 2:1-10: Dead men, separated from God and following the prince of the power of the air will not and cannot believe, unless God in his mercy makes us alive and gives us the gift of faith. That is why Paul contrasts the gift of faith with our works! He says:

Ephesians 2:1-10: And you were dead in the trespasses and sins ² in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience- ³ among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. ⁴ But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ- by grace you have been saved- ⁶ and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷ so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰ For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

WCF 14.2 By this faith, a Christian believeth to be true whatsoever is revealed in the Word, for the authority of God Himself speaking therein;(1) and acteth differently upon that which each particular passage thereof containeth; yielding obedience to the commands,(2) trembling at the threatenings,(3) and embracing the promises of God for this life and that which is to come.(4) But the principal acts of saving faith are accepting, receiving, and resting upon Christ alone for justification, sanctification, and eternal life, by virtue of the covenant of grace.(5) (1)John 4:42; 1 Thess. 2:13; John 5:10; Acts 24:14. (2)Rom. 16:26. (3)Isa. 66:2.

(4)Heb. 11:13; 1 Tim. 4:8. (5)John 1:12; Acts 16:31; Gal. 2:20; Acts 15:11.

Quotations and Theological Reflections on Scripture from other faithful teachers in Church History

Robert Traill on “by faith”: "Faith in Jesus Christ...in the office of justification, is neither condition nor qualification...but in its very act a renouncing of all such pretences."

The very act of faith by which we receive Christ is an act of utter renunciation of all our own works and righteousness as a condition or ground of salvation.

Horatius Bonar profoundly remarks: "Faith is not work, nor merit, nor effort; but the cessation from all these, and the acceptance in place of them of what another has done—done completely, and forever."

John Girardeau notes, "Faith is emptiness filled with Christ's fulness; impotency lying down upon Christ's strength."

B. B. Warfield appropriately summarizes: "It is from its object [Jesus Christ] that faith derives its value.... The saving power of faith resides thus not in itself, but in the Almighty Savior on whom it rests....It is not faith that saves, but faith in Jesus Christ....It is not strictly speaking, even faith in Christ that saves, but Christ that saves through faith."

"Strictly speaking, the true Christian church does not teach justification by faith. It teaches justification by Christ. Where does the faith come in? It is simply the uniting with, becoming one with, the Lord Jesus Christ. Being married to Christ, all that is His becomes His bride's, the believer's...that is the meaning of the word 'reckons' or imputes or credits. The justified one 'does not work, but trusts God who justifies the wicked'(Rom. 4:5)."- **John Gerstner, 'Justification by Faith Alone'**

Calvin concludes his sermon on Galatians 2:15-16 with these words: "Let us, therefore, understand that there is no salvation whatsoever outside of Jesus Christ, for he is the beginning and the end of faith, and he is all in all. Let us continue in humility, knowing that we can only bring condemnation upon ourselves; therefore, we need to find all that pertains to salvation in the pure and free mercy of God. We must be able to say that we are saved through faith. God the Father has appointed his Son the Lord Jesus Christ that he might be both the author and finisher of our salvation. We are to deny ourselves and give ourselves to him wholly and completely, that all the praise might belong to him.

Now let us fall before the majesty of our great God, acknowledging our sins, and asking that he would make us increasingly aware of them, that we may hate them more and more, and grow in repentance (a grace that we need to exercise

all our lives). May we learn so to magnify his grace, as it is shown to us in the Lord Jesus Christ, that we might be completely taken up with it; and may we not only do so with our lips, but place our entire trust in him. May we grow in that trust until we are gathered up into our eternal home, where we shall receive faith's reward. May he not only grant this grace to us, but to all peoples, etc." http://www.the-highway.com/Calvin_Gal2a.html

Paul quotes Psalm 143:2 (Galatians 1:16):

ESV Psalm 143:2 Enter not into judgment with your servant, for no one living is righteous before you.

Nullification of Christ's Work

What does "nullify" "render void" mean? Two important definitions for us to consider:

1. to render or declare legally void or inoperative: to nullify a contract.
2. to deprive (something) of value or effectiveness; make futile or of no consequence.

Professor Richard Longnecker (quoted in Morris, pg. 91) sees this summary statement of Paul in Galatians 1:21 (concerning "nullification of Christ's work") in a very interesting and helpful way. He says that Paul is dealing with 'legalism' (the attempt to gain favor with God by means of Torah observance) and 'nomism' (the response of faith to a god who has acted on one's behalf by living a life governed by Torah). The whole of the Christian's life from beginning to end is due to the grace of god, not human merit or achievement."

"All claims that salvation is through belief in Jesus Christ plus something else are blasphemous, satanic lies. There can be no effective or acceptable human addition to Christ's work." -John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Galatians*, Moody Press, 1987, page 57

Dr. Michael Horton reminds us all of our hope that we have in the teaching of justification by faith alone:

"...It is good to know--especially when facing the next world--that for every time we have failed to conform to God's will in thought, word, and deed, by actively sinning or failing to conform to his revealed will, his Son has fulfilled the obedience that we owe. By never once giving in to the lust, pride, sloth, greed, selfishness, and malice that are so often allowed space in our overcrowded hearts, Jesus Christ becomes our Savior not only in his atoning death but throughout his life. In this way, every day of his life was as necessary for our salvation as that dark afternoon on Golgotha. He was the only "fully surrendered,

victorious, sold-out," Christian who ever lived! Our surrender is halfhearted and partial; our victories seem always to be sullied by pride. Even if we could live the "higher life," could God not smell our smugness? Wouldn't our best works be sabotaged by our own depravity?

These good works would be corrupt enough to condemn us on the last day, so what we require is the obedience of someone else to stand in for us. It is not only Christ's atoning death, but his saving life during the thirty-three years of his conformity to the Father's will that shelters us from God's just sentence. "This is why," wrote Charles Hodge, "the believer, when arrayed in this righteousness, need fear neither death nor hell. This is the reason why Paul challenges the universe to lay anything to the charge of God's elect."- Michael Horton, '[A Dying Man's Consolation](#)', Modern Reformation, 1996.

In conclusion, because I believe this teaching of justification by faith alone is greatly misunderstood by modern, well-meaning Christians, I am going to do something that I normally do not do (Don't try this at home in other words!).

I do not much care for the use of acrostics for summing up Biblical truth. I believe that acrostics can overly simplify and trivialize the Biblical message many times, and I remember the wise words of Marshall McLuan: "The medium is the message". This aphorism means that how we communicate something in form can undermine or trivialize the content (For example, watch how the television-form undermines the worship of God when you watch it on TV!).

So, I am going against my better judgment and even the advice of Marshall McLuan (and Neil Postman!), but I think it is good in this case to make an exception IF it will aid Christians in more precisely understanding the important Biblical teaching of justification by faith alone. So, here is my acrostic taken from Romans 4, offered by faith to you, with hopes that it will help you to know more precisely this teaching and that it will be a reality in your own life!

It is the acrostic C-H-R-I-S-T:

C- Christ Alone in His active and passive obedience, in his life and death, is sinful man's only hope (Romans 3:23-26).

H- Humility is our only response as Christians! We were saved by grace plus nothing we did for God (Romans 3:27; 4:1-2).

R- Real Righteousness is given to us, not a "legal fiction", but the real righteousness that was earned by Christ for us, this alien righteous, was given to us and received by faith alone! (Romans 4:3).

I- Imputation is when God imputes, reckons, considers, declares us righteous by giving to ungodly sinners the righteousness of Jesus (Romans 4:5-8).

S- Saved by Christ through Faith. To summarize what the great B. B. Warfield once said: "It is not so much that we are saved by faith. Rather, we are saved by Christ through faith." The emphasis is not on our faith, but on Christ who saves through faith! (Romans 4:16-17)

T- Total Confidence on Judgment Day! We stand NOW, and we will stand THEN in Christ alone! We will be justified-vindicated before God's Throne because of Christ's justification-vindication! (Romans 4:21-25)

Let us remind ourselves as the people of God how the Heidelberg Catechism in the first question teaches us concerning our hope in Jesus alone! This devotional catechism is excellent for memorization!

Question 1. What is thy only comfort in life and death? Answer: That I with body and soul, both in life and death, am not my own, but belong unto my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ; who, with his precious blood, has fully satisfied for all my sins, and delivered me from all the power of the devil; and so preserves me that without the will of my heavenly Father, not a hair can fall from my head; yea, that all things must be subservient to my salvation, and therefore, by his Holy Spirit, He also assures me of eternal life, and makes me sincerely willing and ready, henceforth, to live unto him.

Oh! How comforting this doctrine is. So greatly comforting for our assurance of God's love, that Puritan preacher the Rev. Thomas Brooks (1608-1680) wrote:

First, ***let all believers know for their comfort that in this imputed righteousness of Christ there is enough to satisfy the justice of God to the uttermost farthing and to take off all His judicial anger and fury.*** The mediatory righteousness of Christ is so perfect, so full, so exact, so complete, and so fully satisfactory to the justice of God that divine justice cries out, "I have enough, and I require no more! I have found a ransom, and I am fully pacified towards you!" (Eze. 16:61-63; Hebrews. 10:10-12, 14; Isaiah 53:4-6)....

.... When a believer casts his eyes upon his many thousand sinful commissions and omissions, no wonder that he fears and trembles. But then, ***when he looks upon Christ's satisfaction, he may see himself acquitted and rejoice. For if there be no charge, no accusation against the Lord Jesus, there can be none against the believer*** (Romans. 8:33-37). Christ's expiatory sacrifice hath fully satisfied divine justice.

And upon that very ground every believer hath cause to triumph in Christ Jesus, and in that righteousness of His by which he stands justified before the throne of God (2 Cor. 2:14; Revelation 14:4, 5)."- Thomas Brooks, *Nine Strong Consolations on the Imputation of Christ's Righteousness* (emphasis mine). CRB

Sermons available at www.sermonaudio.com/kcpc

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How can we subtly nullify the grace of Christ?

a. Do you do the following?

1. When you sin, do you seek forgiveness and grace in Christ alone, or do you seek to do a “little work” that might make God favor you?
2. When you do something sinful do you underestimate the grace of God by believing that God cannot and perhaps will not forgive that one...especially repeatable, “characteristic flesh” Or do you feel pretty good about yourself when you sin and do something according to God’s Word? Both fail to understand the gospel of grace.
3. Do you see yourself as better than other “sinners”? This is subtle, so be very careful. Our sinful hearts crave attention, respect, and desire to rule over others and to be better because of our insecurity.
4. Remember: God’s grace is available for when you are tempted, when you sin, and when you confess and ask forgiveness.
5. Do you live for Christ because of your gratitude for his grace and mercy, or you trying to live for Christ to be better in God’s eyes, to earn a little more approval, or the approval of others?
6. Have you considered how easy it is to try and NOT DO certain activities, but how difficult it is love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength, and your neighbor as yourself and all the implications that go along with it?
7. Are you patient with the sins of others, or are you implicitly saying “I don’t need grace, I have arrived a mature level of Christ-likness”.
8. Have you understood the gospel as being I am saved by grace and therefore I can sin as I please? (cf. Romans 6:1-14)? Remember, Paul was being frustrated by the Judaizers *just because* they thought he was teaching a gospel without Law.
9. Do you ask *how far can you go before you break the Law* before you sin? Then you have already broken it and misunderstood it for the Law is for the immature. The mature know that by God’s grace they love and live the Law only in Christ!
10. Remember: There is only One Mediator between God and Man, it is not the LAW, but it is Christ Jesus the Law-Keeper!
11. Do you truly meditate upon Galatians 2:20, that Christ *loved me* and gave himself up *for me*?

“CHRIST WILL DO ALL FOR YOU, OR NOTHING FOR YOU.”

–J. GRESHAM MACHEN

- a. Paul was a man with boldness, and honesty in the face of error (1 Corinthians 15:58; Ephesians 6:10-18).
 1. Judaizers had “slipped in” (sneaky, devilish language). You make a public profession of your faith before God and man if you are real, you do not “sneaky-like, tippy-toe in order to slip in unnoticed in order to spy and to deceive!
 2. Fight the good fight: a constant battle to fight for the gospel at whatever place it is being challenged in our time (Gal. 1:8-10; 2:11-15)- -whether it is against Judaizers or the Apostle Peter himself!
 1. Importance of accountability between officers in the Church.
 2. Importance of judging the messenger by the Message, and not the other way around!
 3. Paul recognized the importance of the apostolic office, but the Judaizers were placing the importance of the apostles in them as mere men (Gal. 2:6-10- Judaizers were saying: “How could Paul have the true gospel when great pillars such as James, John and Peter have not authorized him, or sent him?” the Judaizers were saying deceptively.)
- b. A Wise Man who knows when to accommodate, and when not to accommodate.
 1. A matter of faith in the gospel: hard and dead set against any threat.
 2. A matter of weak conscience: loving and allowing concessions in order to make the gospel known.

Martin Luther wrote concerning this: “...As concerning faith we ought to be invincible, and more hard, if it might be, than the adamant stone; but as touching love (charity), we ought to be soft, and more flexible than the reed or leaf that is shaken with the wind, and ready to yield to everything.” –Luther, pg. 112.

Titus is not circumcised because Paul and Titus were preaching to the Gentiles; Paul does circumcise Timothy

(Acts 16) because he was a half-Jew, and they were preaching to the Jews. Paul's priority was always on the gospel: (1) Never add to the gospel in any way (Titus example); (2) Never unnecessarily hinder the gospel in any way (Timothy example).

- c. Paul did not compromise! "No compromise" with half-way gospels which are no gospels at all!
- d. Paul was not a Fearful Man as he proclaimed and made the gospel of Christ known.
 - 1. Peter feared the circumcision party (Gal. 2:11-13), but Paul stood up to Peter and rebuked him to stand firm consistently with the gospel he preached and believed.
 - 2. Importance of having each other to sharpen us, to point out to us when we fail to live out the gospel in our life and doctrine.
- e. Paul was not a Hypocritical Man
 - 1. Sees himself in light of the Law "in Christ"
 - 2. Never forgets from where he was called.
 - 3. Judgmental spirit
 - 4. "Holier than thou"