

Exegetical Notes for Galatians 2:15-21

KEY

- ATR** = Robertson, A.T. *Word Pictures in the New Testament*. Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1933.
- BAG** = Bauer Arndt and Gingrich. *A Greek-English Lexicon to the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*.
- Bruce** = F.F. Bruce. *The Epistle to the Galatians: a Commentary on the Greek Text. New International Greek Testament Commentary*. Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1982.
- Calvin** = John Calvin. *Calvin's Commentaries: Galatians*.
- Carson, Moo, Morris** = D.A. Carson, Douglas Moo, Leon Morris. *An Introduction to the New Testament*.
- CNTOT** = Beale and Carson, Eds. *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*.
- Cole** = R. Alan Cole. *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: Galatians*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1988.
- Comfort** = Philip W. Comfort. *New Testament Text and Translation Commentary*.
- Dunn** = James D. G. Dunn. *The Epistle to the Galatians: Black's New Testament Commentary*. London: Continuum, 1993.
- Erdman** = Charles R. Erdman. *The Epistle of Paul to the Galatians*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966.
- George** = Timothy George. *Galatians. Vol. 30. The New American Commentary*. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994.
- Gill** = John Gill. *Gill's Commentary on the Bible*.
- Jerome** = Raymond Edward Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, and Roland Edmund Murphy. *The Jerome Biblical Commentary*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1996.
- Keener** = Craig S. Keener. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*.
- Lexham** = Douglas Mangum, and Derek R. Brown. *Galatians: Lexham Bible Guide*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012.
- Lightfoot** = J.B. Lightfoot. *St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians. A Revised Text with Introduction, Notes, and Dissertations*. 4th ed. Classic Commentaries on the Greek New Testament. London: Macmillan and Co., 1874.
- Luther** = Martin Luther. *Commentary on Galatians*.
- MacArthur** = John MacArthur. *MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Galatians*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1987.
- Metzger** = Bruce M. Metzger. *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*.
- Ryken** = Philip Graham Ryken. *Galatians: Reformed Expository Commentary*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2005.
- Schaff** = Philip Schaff. *Saint Chrysostom: Homilies on Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Thessalonians, Timothy, Titus, and Philemon. Vol. 13. A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, First Series*. New York: Christian Literature Company, 1889.
- Schreiner** = Thomas R. Schreiner, *Galatians, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010.
- Simeon** = Charles Simeon. *Horae Homileticae: Galatians-Ephesians. Vol. 17*. London: Holdsworth and Ball, 1833.
- Spence-Jones** = H. D. M. Spence-Jones, Ed. *Galatians. The Pulpit Commentary*. London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1909.
- Stott** = John Stott. *The Message of Galatians*. Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1971.
- Strauss** = Lehman Strauss. *Devotional Studies in Galatians and Ephesians*. New York: Loizeaux Brothers, 1957.
- Spurgeon** = C.H. Spurgeon. *Galatians: Spurgeon Commentary – Spurgeon Commentary Series*. (Elliot Ritzema, Ed.). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2013.
- UBS** = Arichea, Daniel C., and Eugene Albert Nida. *A Handbook on Paul's Letter to the Galatians*. UBS Handbook Series. New York: United Bible Societies, 1976.
- Utey** = Robert James Utey. *Paul's First Letters: Galatians and I & II Thessalonians*. Vol. Volume 11. Study Guide Commentary Series. Marshall, TX: Bible Lessons International, 1997.
- Wallace** = Wallace, Daniel B. *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996.

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Witherington = Ben Witherington. *Grace in Galatia: A Commentary on St. Paul's Letter to the Galatians*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998.

Wright1 = Wright, N.T. *Paul for Everyone: Galatians and Ephesians*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004.

Wright2 = Wright, Tom. *Paul for Everyone: Galatians and Thessalonians*. London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2004.

Vincent = Vincent, Marvin Richardson. *Word Studies in the New Testament*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1887.

Wuest = Wuest, Kenneth S. *Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament: For the English Reader*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997.

Wycliffe = Pfeiffer, Charles F., and Everett Falconer Harrison, eds. *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary: New Testament*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1962.

Parsing Verbs and Declining Nouns

Verbs:

ποιμανατε (ποιμαινω = to tend, shepherd || Verb: Aorist Active Imperative, Second Person Plural).

ἀποκαλυπτεσθαι (ἀποκαλύπω = to reveal, disclose || Verb: Present Passive Infinitive).

Nouns (gender before case):

πατηματων (παθημα = suffering || Noun: Neuter Genitive Plural).

Participles (gender before case):

μελλουσης (μελλω = to be about to || Participle: Feminine Genitive Singular Present Active).

Adjectives (gender before case):

(ἐπιεικης = gentle, kind || Adjective: Masculine Dative Plural).

Independent Personal Pronouns:

ἡμιν (ἐγω = I || First Person Independent Personal Pronoun: Dative Plural).

ὑμιν (συ = you || Second Person Independent Personal Pronoun: Dative Plural).

αὐτῷ (αὐτος = He, Him || Third Person Independent Personal Pronoun: Masculine Dative Singular).

Demonstrative Pronouns (gender before case):

(τουτο = this || Near Demonstrative Pronoun: Neuter Nominative Singular).

Reflexive Pronouns (only masculine and feminine - the genitive is the lexical form as there is no nominative case):

(ἐμαυτου = myself || First Person Reflexive Pronoun: Masculine Genitive Singular).

(σεαυτου = yourself || Second Person Reflexive Pronoun: Masculine Genitive Singular).

(ἐαυτου = himself, herself, oneself || Third Person Reflexive Pronoun: Masculine Genitive Singular).

Relative Pronouns:

(ὃς = who/that, of whom, to whom, whom [referring to people]; that/which, of which, to which, which [referring to things] – Translation depends on case || Relative Pronoun: Masculine Nominative Singular)

Sentence Structure

Sentence

Segment Clause

15 Ἡμεῖς
we

Segment Clause

φύσει Ἰουδαῖοι
by nature Jews

Appositional Clause

καὶ
and

Segment Clause

οὐκ
not

Prepositional Phrase

ἐξ ἔθνῶν
from among the Gentiles

[Segment Clause (continued)]

ἁμαρτωλοί,
sinners

[Segment Clause (continued)]

16 εἰδότες δὲ
knowing but

Subordinate Clause

ὅτι οὐ δικαιούται ἄνθρωπος ἐξ ἔργων νόμου
that not justified a person by the works of the law

Subordinate Clause

ἐὰν μὴ
if not

Prepositional Phrase

διὰ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ
by faith in Jesus Christ

[Sentence]

καὶ
and

Segment Clause

ἡμεῖς
we

Prepositional Phrase

εἰς Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν
in Christ Jesus

[Segment Clause (continued)]

ἐπιστεύσαμεν,
have believed

Subordinate Clause

ἵνα δικαιωθῶμεν
so that we may be justified

Prepositional Phrase

ἐκ πίστεως Χριστοῦ
by faith in Christ

[Subordinate Clause (continued)]

καὶ οὐκ
and not

Prepositional Phrase

ἐξ ἔργων νόμου,
by the works of the law

Subordinate Clause

ὅτι
because

Prepositional Phrase

ἐξ ἔργων νόμου
by the works of the law

[Subordinate Clause (continued)]

οὐ δικαιωθήσεται πᾶσα σὰρξ,
not be justified all flesh

Sentence

Subordinate Clause

17 εἰ
if

[Sentence]

δὲ
but

Participial Clause

ζητοῦντες
seeking

Infinitival Clause

δικαιωθῆναι
to be justified

Prepositional Phrase

ἐν Χριστῷ
by Christ

[Subordinate Clause (continued)]

εὐρέθημεν καὶ αὐτοὶ ἁμαρτωλοὶ,
have been found ourselves sinners

[Sentence (continued)]

ἄρα Χριστὸς ἁμαρτίας διάκονος;
then Christ of sin an agent

Sentence

[Sentence]

μὴ γένοιτο·
never be

Sentence

Subordinate Clause

18 εἰ
if

[Sentence]

γὰρ
for

Relative Clause

ἃ κατέλυσα
which I destroyed

[Subordinate Clause (continued)]

ταῦτα πάλιν οἰκοδομῶ,
these again I build up

[Sentence (continued)]

παραβάτην ἑμαυτὸν συνιστάνω.
a transgressor myself I show

Sentence

Segment Clause

19 ἐγὼ γὰρ
I for

Prepositional Phrase

διὰ νόμου
through the law

[Segment Clause (continued)]

νόμῳ ἀπέθανον
to the law died

Subordinate Clause

ἵνα θεῶ ζήσω·
in order that God I might live

Sentence

Segment Clause

Χριστῷ συνεσταύρωμαι·
Christ I have been crucified with

Segment Clause

20 ζῶ
live

Segment Clause

δὲ
and

[Segment Clause (continued)]

οὐκέτι ἐγώ,
no longer I

Segment Clause

ζῆ
lives

[Segment Clause (continued)]

δὲ

[Segment Clause (continued)]

ἐν ἐμοὶ Χριστός·
in me Christ

Relative Clause

ὃ
that

[Segment Clause (continued)]

δὲ
and

[Relative Clause (continued)]

νῦν ζῶ
now live

Prepositional Phrase

ἐν σαρκί,
in the flesh

Prepositional Phrase

ἐν πίστει
by faith

Segment Clause

ζῶ
I live

Relative Clause

τῆ τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ
in the Son of God

Relative Clause

τοῦ

Predicate

ἀγαπήσαντός με
who loved me

[Relative Clause (continued)]

καὶ
and

Predicate

παραδόντος ἑαυτὸν
gave himself

Prepositional Phrase

ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ.
for me

[Sentence]

21 οὐκ ἀθετῶ τὴν χάριν τοῦ θεοῦ.
not declare invalid the grace of God

Subordinate Clause

εἰ
if

Subordinate Clause

γὰρ
for

Prepositional Phrase

διὰ νόμου
through the law

[Subordinate Clause (continued)]

δικαιοσύνη,
righteousness

[Subordinate Clause (continued)]

ἄρα Χριστὸς δωρεὰν ἀπέθανεν.
then Christ to no purpose died

Galatians 2:15–21¹

15concessive (to 16ab) For even though we are Jews by nature and not sinners from the Gentiles,

16assertion
a nevertheless, **we know that a person by works of law, but is not justified only by faith in Jesus Christ.**
contrast (to 16a)
c inference (from 15–16a–b) Therefore, **we also have believed in Christ Jesus,**
d purpose (of 16c) in order that we might be justified by faith in Christ, and
e contrast (to 16d) not by works of law,
f basis (of 16d–e) because by works of law no flesh shall be justified.

17simultaneous
a And if ...
(to 17b) while seeking to be justified in Christ,
b condition ... we also are found to be sinners,
c question **then is Christ a minister of sin?**
d answer **By no means!**

18condition
a For if I build again those things which I have destroyed,
b basis (of 17d) **I demonstrate myself to be a transgressor.**

19assertion
a For **I through the law died to the law,**
b purpose (of 19a) to live to God.
c assertion **I have been crucified with Christ.**

20result (of 19c)
a **(As a result) I no longer live,**
b contrast (to 20a) but **Christ lives in me.**
c progression And **the life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God,**
d explanation who loved me and
e explanation gave himself for me.

21inference (of 15–20) (Therefore) **I do not reject the grace of God.**
a
b condition For
c basis (of 21a) if righteousness comes through the law,
then Christ died for nothing.

1 Thomas R. Schreiner, *Galatians*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 151–152.

15 We [are]
Jews by nature (and not)
sinners from among the Gentiles.

16 Yet
we know that
a man is not justified
by works of the Law (but through)
faith in Jesus Christ.
And we have believed in Christ Jesus
so that
we may be justified
by faith in Christ
and not by works of the Law,
since by the works of the Law
no flesh will be justified.

17 But
if while seeking to be justified in Christ,
we ourselves were found to be sinners,
is Christ then a minister of sin?
May it never be!

18 For if I rebuild what I once destroyed,
I prove myself to be a transgressor.

19 For through the Law I died to the Law, (so that)
I might live to God.
I have been crucified with Christ –
and it is no longer I who live,
but Christ 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 up for me.

21 I do not nullify the grace of God:
for if righteousness [comes] through the Law,
then Christ died for no purpose.

TRANSLATION, OUTLINE AND CENTRAL PROPOSITION

GREEK TEXT (NA27):

15 Ἡμεῖς φύσει Ἰουδαῖοι καὶ οὐκ ἐξ ἐθνῶν ἁμαρτωλοί· 16 εἰδότες [δὲ] ὅτι οὐ δικαιοῦται ἄνθρωπος ἐξ ἔργων νόμου ἐὰν μὴ διὰ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, καὶ ἡμεῖς εἰς Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν ἐπιστεύσαμεν, ἵνα δικαιωθῶμεν ἐκ πίστεως Χριστοῦ καὶ οὐκ ἐξ ἔργων νόμου, ὅτι ἐξ ἔργων νόμου οὐ δικαιωθήσεται πᾶσα σὰρξ. 17 εἰ δὲ ζητοῦντες δικαιωθῆναι ἐν Χριστῷ εὐρέθημεν καὶ αὐτοὶ ἁμαρτωλοί, ἄρα Χριστὸς ἁμαρτίας διάκονος; μὴ γένοιτο. 18 εἰ γὰρ ἂ κατέλυσα ταῦτα πάλιν οἰκοδομῶ, παραβάτην ἐμαυτὸν συνιστάνω. 19 ἐγὼ γὰρ διὰ νόμου νόμῳ ἀπέθανον, ἵνα θεῷ ζήσω. Χριστῷ συνεσταύρωμαι· 20 ζῶ δὲ οὐκέτι ἐγώ, ζῆ δὲ ἐν ἐμοὶ Χριστός· ὁ δὲ νῦν ζῶ ἐν σαρκί, ἐν πίστει ζῶ τῆ τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ἀγαπήσαντός με καὶ παραδόντος ἑαυτὸν ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ. 21 Οὐκ ἀθετῶ τὴν χάριν τοῦ θεοῦ· εἰ γὰρ διὰ νόμου δικαιοσύνη, ἄρα Χριστὸς δωρεὰν ἀπέθανεν.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION:

15 We [are] Jews by nature and not sinners from among the Gentiles. 16 Yet we know that a man is not justified by works of the Law but through faith in Jesus Christ. And we have believed in Christ Jesus so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the Law, since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified. 17 But if while seeking to be justified in Christ, we ourselves were found to be sinners, is Christ then a minister of sin? May it never be! 18 For if I rebuild what I once destroyed, I prove myself to be a transgressor. 19 For through the Law I died to the Law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ – 20 and it is no longer I who live, but Christ 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 up for me. 21 I do not nullify the grace of God: for if righteousness [comes] through the Law, then Christ died for no purpose.

PASSAGE SUBJECT/THEME (what's t/passage talking about): Justification

PASSAGE COMPLEMENT/THRUST (what's the passage saying about what it's talking about): is the same for Jews and Gentiles: by faith in Jesus Christ apart from the Law.

PASSAGE MAIN IDEA (central proposition of the text): Justification is through faith apart from the works of the Law

CENTRAL PROPOSITION OF THE SERMON: Two races under sin have one hope of salvation (faith in Christ apart from works of the Law)

SERMONIC IDEA/TITLE: "Two Peoples – One Way" (multiple parts)

SERMON OUTLINE:

I. Essential Elements of the Gospel in Galatians (vv. 15-21)

A. The Universal Nature of Sin (v. 15)

B. Justification Is by Faith Alone (v. 16)

C. The Believer's Union With Christ (vv. 17-20)

1. To be "In Christ" is not to be "In Sin" (17)

2. To be "In Christ" is to have died to sin and the Law (18-19)

3. To be "In Christ" is to have been crucified with Christ (20)

a. Implications as to:

(1) Salvation (In Christ We Are Justified)

(2) Sanctification (In Christ We Live)

(3) Satisfaction (In Christ God Is Satisfied With Us and In Us)

(4) Sin (In Christ We Battle the World, the Flesh, and the Devil)

(5) Suffering (In Christ We Endure All that Life Throws Our Way)

(6) Security (In Christ Everyone Gets Home Safely)

D. Sola Gratia and Solus Christus (v. 21)

HISTORICAL/CULTURAL/GRAMMATICAL CONTEXT

** See my first message in this series 0215Ga2.15a(16) for an overview I did regarding context and key words / phrases, including the New Perspective on Paul. **

General Overview of chapters 1-2:

Having set forth the issues and alternatives that would dominate his Letter to the Galatians, Paul now began in earnest to develop the first major section of the epistle, a historical overview of his conversion, call, and ministry prior to his evangelistic work in Galatia. This long autobiographical account runs from 1:11 through 2:21 and is itself divided into three discrete subsections: Paul's early Christian experience and his first encounter with church leaders in Jerusalem (1:11–24), the summit meeting between Paul and the Jerusalem leaders over the scope and sphere of his missionary work (2:1–10), and the confrontation with Peter at Antioch leading to the central pronouncement of justification by faith (2:11–21).

These verses contain the longest and richest autobiographical material we have from the pen of Paul. They supplement in significant ways what Luke said about Paul's background, conversion, and early missionary activity. This entire section and the prominence it holds in the structure of Galatians, occupying as it does nearly one-fourth of the book, underscore the fact that Christianity is a historical faith. It is based upon certain specific, irreversible, and irreducible historical events. Jesus was born during the imperial reign of Caesar Augustus. He was crucified under Pontius Pilate, he rose again on the third day, and was taken up into heaven forty days later. Christianity is not a philosophy of life, or yet a set of moral precepts, or a secret code for mystical union with the divine. At its core Christianity is the record of what God has once and for all done in the person and work of his Son, Jesus Christ. Among these mighty acts of God, we must include the calling of the apostle Paul, for it too belongs among the foundational events of salvation history.

.....

Galatians 1–2, then, establishes a historical context for the expressly theological content of Gal 3–4, which issues in turn in the ethical outcome of Gal 5–6. From the beginning, however, the theological issue is paramount, as we have seen already in the introductory verses. In the historical narrative also Paul was concerned not merely to recount the story of his life but to relate how “the truth of the gospel” (2:14) had manifested itself in his life story.

Paul was not quoting in these verses from his personal spiritual diary; unlike Augustine, he was not given to reminiscence and left behind no “Confessions of St. Paul.” Rather he surveyed his life and selectively recounted certain incidents in order to make a theological point. The theological thrust of his presentation is seen in the fact that the historical narrative flows almost imperceptibly into his theological exposition. Thus it is unclear whether 2:15–21 constitutes the conclusion of his declaration to Peter (as the NIV has it with quotation marks around the entire

passage) or the commencement of his special address to the Galatians on the theme of justification.

In any event, the entire historical narrative is evidently intended as a prolegomenon to the central thesis that “a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ” (2:16). The polemical tone we have encountered in the early verses of chap. 1 continues to dominate Paul’s rehearsal of his life and ministry here. Clearly he was responding to a certain representation of his career that his opponents had disseminated among the Galatian churches. If, as seems likely, these agitators had close ties to Jerusalem Christianity, they may well have represented themselves as the true ambassadors of the mother church there while depicting Paul as a renegade evangelist, one whose authority was wholly derived and subordinate to the Jerusalem apostles. Paul, they perhaps claimed, had totally distorted the message of these great church leaders while they, on the other hand, offered a pure replication of it.

Thus Paul was concerned to clarify his relationship to the church at Jerusalem, and especially to Peter and James. Each of these leaders is mentioned three times in the first two chapters. First, just a few years after his conversion Paul paid a “get acquainted” visit to Peter and James in Jerusalem (1:18–19). Then, well over a decade later, he encountered them again at Jerusalem in a strategic conference related to his missionary work among the Gentiles. And, finally, he confronted Peter at Antioch in a crisis over table fellowship prompted by certain individuals affiliated with James. We will have to examine more closely what these verses tell us about Paul’s relationship to the church at Jerusalem and its leaders. It is clear, however, that Paul wanted to assert his apostolic independence over against Peter, James, and all other human intermediaries. [Timothy George, Galatians, vol. 30, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 105–107.]

How far to the quotes extend? NIV; NKJV; NASB = all the way to the end of the chapter. NAB; RSV; NRSV; ESV; HCSB; NET = through v. 14.

The NIV includes the entire section (vv. 15–21) in quotations, indicating that we have here a summary, if not a transcript, of Paul’s address to Peter at Antioch. While this may be true, we should bear in mind that Paul’s reason for rehearsing the Antioch episode in the first place was to show its relevance to the situation in Galatia. Thus what begins as an address to Peter in 2:15, “We who are Jews by birth,” ends with an appeal to Paul’s readers in 3:1, “You foolish Galatians!” [George, 187]

Moo believes that the quotes should extend through v. 21 (end of chapter).

Context as it directly relates to 2:15-21:

This section reflects back on the Gospel (1:11-12). 2x Paul refers to the “truth of the Gospel” (2:5,14) w/o stating what the Gospel is. In those verses the truth is contrasted with a negative. Here the truth is portrayed from the standpoint of affirmation: justification comes by faith in Christ not by works of the law.

Schreiner (2010, 177) suggests Paul's concise description of the gospel in terms of justification in Gal 2:15–21 functions as a transition within the main body of the letter (Gal 1:11–4:7). In the preceding part of the letter, Paul defended his apostleship—including his call by God, trip to Jerusalem, and confrontation with Peter in Antioch (Gal 1:11–2:14). Now Paul turns to a defense of his gospel (Gal 3:1–4:7). Wedged between these two apologies is a description of the basis of justification. Galatians 2:15–21 concludes Paul's defense of his apostleship since it marks the end of the narrative of Paul's ministry, and it begins the section on Paul's defense of his gospel in that he addresses the Galatians directly to clarify the nature of his gospel. Galatians 2:15–21 also anticipates the major theological themes of the remainder of the letter. First, Paul rejects the suggestion that a person can be justified by the “works of the law”—an issue he will tackle in depth in Gal 3:6–29. Second, Paul clarifies that justification is possible only “by faith in Christ,” a point that Paul will make repeatedly as his argument progresses (see Gal 3:2, 11, 14, 22, 26). Third, Paul describes his present Christian life in terms of Christ's presence in him (Gal 2:20), which, as McKnight (1995, 123) observes, is a reference to God's gift of the Spirit to the believer. Paul will return to the Spirit's role in the believer's life in Gal 5:22–26, where he lists the fruit of the Spirit. [Douglas Mangum and Derek R. Brown, Galatians, Lexham Bible Guide (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012), Ga 2:1–21]

Key words (cf. Moo, 153):

νομος – 6x here; 27x in the rest of the letter; 0x in 1:1-2:14
 εργα νομου – 3x; 3x in the rest of the letter; 0x in 1:1-2:14
 δικαιοω – 4x here; 4x in the rest of the letter; 0x in 1:1-2:14
 δικαιοσυνη – 1x here; 3x in the rest of the letter; 0x in 1:1-2:14
 πιστις – 3x here; 18 times in the rest of the letter; 1x in 1:1-2:14 (2:7)
 ζαω – 5 times here; 3x in the rest of the letter; xx in 1:1-2:14 (2:14)

Key Terms:

Forensic Justification (PSA)

Sanctification

New Perspective on Paul

Thus, Paul in this section is intro. key themes/concepts that will be expanded upon in the rest of Galatians.

The argument is misperceived if it is seen as some sort of general polemic in favor of faith and against ‘works righteousness’ or a works mentality or a works religion, or the human attempt to feel after God and find God. Paul is not even arguing against the general concept of ‘legalism’. He has something much more specific in mind when he speaks of works, namely ‘works of the Law’, obedience to the Mosaic Law and seeking to be part of the community that relates to God on the basis of the Mosaic covenant. As we shall see Paul is not anti-works, not anti-obedience to God, not even anti-Law, indeed he will argue for the ‘Law of Christ’ as the guiding principle for Christians. His complaint has to do specifically with the Mosaic Law and the covenant of

which it is a part. The Mosaic Law and obedience to it is not, in Paul's view, how one got into Christ, how one stays in Christ, or how one goes on in Christ.⁷ It is no longer what defines and delimits who the people of God are and how they ought to live and behave. [Witherington, 172]

3-fold division of the letter: 1) Verses 15-16: Main Theological Point (Jewish Xns like Peter and Paul know that they are justified only by faith in Christ apart from the works of the Law); 2) Verses 17-20: Implications of Justification in Christ as related to the Law; 3) Verse 21: Why righteousness cannot come by way of the Law.

Two themes: Justification by Faith (15-16) / Union with Christ (19-20). Both themes dominate (perhaps wrongly UWC is overshadowed by JBF). "The person who is joined to Christ enjoys both forensic justification (vv. 16,21) and transformation (vv. 19-20). They are inseparable but distinct effects of our union with Christ." [Moo, 155]

Contrasts:

Thus "Jews by birth" are contrasted to "Gentile sinners"; justification "by observing the law" is contrasted to justification "by faith in Jesus Christ." The rebuilding of the old structures of salvation by works is contrasted to their destruction by the gospel. And, finally, Paul's "dying to the law" is contrasted to his "living for God." All of this was intended to impress upon the Galatians the radical choice that confronted them. This is the reason Paul immediately, without so much as a break in his narrative, extrapolated the doctrine of justification from the incident at Antioch. [George, 188]

Question of the relationship between this passage and vv. 11-14: Many scholars take a position that Paul here addresses Peter formally and the Galatians materially (the text moves from personal application in Antioch to universal application for the Galatians).

2:15 EXEGESIS

GREEK TEXT:

Ἡμεῖς φύσει Ἰουδαῖοι καὶ οὐκ ἐξ ἔθνῶν ἁμαρτωλοί·

Ἡμεῖς (εγω || First Person Independent Personal Pronoun: Nominative Plural).
φύσει (φύσις = nature || Noun: Feminine Dative Singular).
Ἰουδαῖοι (Ἰουδαῖος || Adjective: Masculine Nominative Plural).
καὶ οὐκ ἐξ ἔθνῶν (ἔθνος || Noun: Neuter Genitive Plural).
ἁμαρτωλοί· (ἁμαρτωλός || Adjective: Masculine Nominative Plural).

ENGLISH TRANSLATION:

We [are] Jews by nature and not sinners from among the Gentiles.

CONTEXTUAL, GRAMMATICAL, THEOLOGICAL, APPLICATIONAL ANALYSIS:

We [are] Jews by nature and not sinners from among the Gentiles. (Ἡμεῖς φύσει Ἰουδαῖοι καὶ οὐκ ἐξ ἔθνῶν ἁμαρτωλοί·)

Either / or proposition. Jew by birth or sinner (pagan). Contrast: we are Christians by birth and not pagans. However, in the Jewish understanding, to be born a Jew was to be born under the covenant. Not all Jews were regenerate.

Paul is using ἁμαρτωλός in typical Jewish perspective (cf. Eph. 2:11-13) in which “the world is seen as divided into two distinct groups—Jews and the rest, Jews and ‘the nations’ (see on 2:13). More striking still is the description of Gentiles as ‘sinners.’ 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 . . .” [Dunn, 132–133] Cf. Psa. 1:1-5 which would be understood as a contrast with the world.

We are here introduced to an issue of interpretation: does this verse (and any verses that follow) belong to the address to Peter that Paul began in v. 14? Opinions are divided and one cannot be dogmatic. I may be included to include this verse and view Paul as drifting off into general doctrinal exhortations regarding justification in v. 16 ff. The UBS Handbook offers a different perspective. As to verses 15-18:

These verses do not seem to be addressed to Peter alone, but to a wider audience. Their main burden is the question of how the Galatian believers have been put into a right relationship with God. Paul’s answer is that this has happened, not by their following the Law, but by their faith in Jesus Christ.

A problem that is hard to resolve is the translation of the first person plural pronoun “we” in these verses. Should it take the exclusive or the inclusive form? The solution of this problem is

tied up with the relation of this section to the quotation in verse 14. If one regards verses 15 ff. to be part of the quotation (that is, Paul is still speaking publicly to Peter and to the Jewish Christians in Antioch), then the pronouns will take the inclusive form. If, however, one restricts the quotation to verse 14 and believes that Paul is no longer talking only to Jewish Christians, then the exclusive form should be used. English translations usually do not bother about this problem, because there is no inclusive—exclusive distinction in this language (but note Phps, where it is made clear that the exclusive form should be read: “And then I went on to explain that we, who are Jews by birth,” etc.). It is also possible to interpret this paragraph as being addressed not to the wider audience in Antioch but as a commentary by Paul to the people in Galatia to whom he was writing. Under these circumstances the form of “we” would also be exclusive. There is clearly a shift to the Galatians in the mind of Paul, since at the beginning of chapter 3 he specifically addresses them. To imply that the contents of verses 15–18 were directed to Peter would seem to be overdoing the matter. A shift of audience can be introduced, and in fact it is necessary in some languages, by the introduction of a verb of speaking in a different tense form, for example, “Indeed I say to you who are....” [UBS, 44]

Emphasis on the special privileges of the Jews as in Rom. 3:1ff. and 9:1ff.

Sinners of the Gentiles (ἐξ ἔθνῶν ἁμαρτωλοί). Lit. sinners taken from the Gentiles, or sprung from. Sinners, in the conventional Jewish sense; born heathen, and as such sinners; not implying that Jews are not sinners. The Jew regarded the Gentile as impure, and styled him a dog (Matt. 15:27). See Rom. 2:12; 1 Cor. 6:1; 9:21; Eph. 2:12; L. 18:32; 24:7. [Vincent, 104]

Gentiles understood in the sense of pagans. (ἁμαρτωλοί synonyme for ἔθνη

Joseph Barber Lightfoot, ed., *St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians. A Revised Text with Introduction, Notes, and Dissertations.*, 4th ed., *Classic Commentaries on the Greek New Testament* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1874), 115. Historically, all groups outside of Jewish (OT) and Christian (NT) influence are pagans. Becomes a worldview issue. Cf. the entire concept of civilization within a Christian worldview.

The NIV renders the term “Gentile sinners” in quotations, indicating that it was likely a technical term in the Antiochene debate over table fellowship. What was so insidious in the separatism of Peter and his associates was the fact that they were acting as if their Gentile Christian brothers and sisters were still sinners while they, because of their ritual purity and obedience of the law, stood in a different, more favorable relationship to God. [George, 181]

Contrast comes in v. 16. The gospel reveals that all, Jew and Gentile, are sinners and equally in need of Christ's righteousness.

2:16 EXEGESIS

GREEK TEXT:

εἰδότες [δὲ] ὅτι οὐ δικαιούται ἄνθρωπος ἐξ ἔργων νόμου ἐὰν μὴ διὰ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, καὶ ἡμεῖς εἰς Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν ἐπιστεύσαμεν, ἵνα δικαιωθῶμεν ἐκ πίστεως Χριστοῦ καὶ οὐκ ἐξ ἔργων νόμου, ὅτι ἐξ ἔργων νόμου οὐ δικαιωθήσεται πᾶσα σὰρξ.

εἰδότες [δὲ] (οἶδα || Masculine Nominative Plural Perfect Active Participle).

ὅτι οὐ δικαιούται (δικαιοῶ || Verb: Present Passive Indicative, 3S).

ἄνθρωπος (ἄνθρωπος || Noun: Masculine Nominative Singular).

ἐξ ἔργων (ἔργον || Noun: Neuter Genitive Plural).

νόμου (νόμος || Noun: Masculine Genitive Singular).

ἐὰν μὴ (ἐὰν = If || Adverbial Conjunction). “b. ἐὰν μὴ if not, unless...” [BAG]

“It seems that the best solution is to argue that the Greek phrase (ἐὰν μὴ) here means “but” instead of “unless” or “if not.” Context is the decisive criterion in interpretation, and such a reading is the judgment of many interpreters throughout history who were well acquainted with Greek grammar.⁴⁷ Zerwick argues that the construction (ἐὰν μὴ) here is equivalent to “but” (ἀλλά).⁴⁸ Such a reading for the phrase (ἐὰν μὴ) is possible, especially since an equivalent construction (εἰ μὴ) has in some instances an adversative meaning (cf. Rom 14:14; 1 Cor 8:4),⁴⁹ and interestingly two of the examples stem from Galatians (1:7, 19). Understanding the phrase (ἐὰν μὴ) as adversative could also have a Semitic background. The Hebrew phrase “except” or “but” (kî ’im) often has an adversative meaning (e.g., Deut 7:5; 10:12; Josh 23:8; 1 Sam 2:15; Isa 42:19; Mic 6:8), though it is not translated in the LXX as ἐὰν μὴ. Interestingly, the Hebrew translation of the New Testament renders the phrase (ἐὰν μὴ) here as kî ’im (HNT), and the Hebrew is almost certainly adversative here. Hence, an adversative meaning for the construction (ἐὰν μὴ) is certainly lexically possible, and contextually it is the most probable.” [Schreiner, 163]

διὰ πίστεως (Noun: Feminine Genitive Singular).

Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, (Noun: Masculine Genitive Singular). Objective Genitive.

καὶ ἡμεῖς (ἐγώ = I || First Person Independent Personal Pronoun: Nominative Plural).

εἰς Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν (Noun: Masculine Accusative Singular).

ἐπιστεύσαμεν, (πιστεύω || Verb: Aorist Active Indicative, 1P).

ἵνα δικαιωθῶμεν (δικαιοῶ || Verb: Aorist Passive Subjunctive, 1P).

ἐκ πίστεως (Noun: Feminine Genitive Singular).

Χριστοῦ (Noun: Masculine Genitive Singular).

καὶ οὐκ ἐξ ἔργων (ἔργον || Noun: Neuter Genitive Plural).

νόμου, (νόμος || Noun: Masculine Genitive Singular).

ὅτι ἐξ ἔργων (ἔργον || Noun: Neuter Genitive Plural).

νόμου (νόμος || Noun: Masculine Genitive Singular).

οὐ δικαιωθήσεται (δικαιοῶ || Verb: Future Passive Indicative, 3S).

πᾶσα (πᾶς || Adjective).

σὰρξ. (σὰρξ || Noun: Feminine Nominative Singular).

ENGLISH TRANSLATION:

Yet we know that a man is not justified by works of the Law but through faith in Jesus Christ. And we have believed in Christ Jesus so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the Law, since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified.

CONTEXTUAL, GRAMMATICAL, THEOLOGICAL, APPLICATIONAL ANALYSIS:

Clearly 2:16 is one of the most important verses in all of Galatians. It is packed with some of the most important themes in the letter. Three times Paul asserts that right standing with God does not come by keeping the law but only through faith in Christ. The redundancy of the verse as a whole supports the idea that we have an objective genitive here (“faith in Christ”). Neither Peter nor anyone else can stand before God on the basis of what they have done. Salvation is of the Lord, and it is received by faith alone. [Schreiner, 167]

Given all these wonderful benefits of “life under the law,” why should Jewish Christians have moved beyond the law to faith in Jesus Christ? Obviously they should have because there was a fundamental disjunction between the best that could be obtained by observing the law and the gift of salvation freely offered through Jesus Christ. This is the point Paul was making in Gal 2:15–16. We can paraphrase his argument thus: “Forget the Gentile sinners. We know they are outside the covenant and hopeless before God. But even we Jews who could claim all the privileges of the chosen people, even we had to realize that no one could be justified by observing the law. We too, no less than the Gentiles, have been accepted by God through faith in Jesus Christ.” [George, 189–190]

‘This is the text on which all that follows in the Epistle is commentary’ [Duncan 64–5, cited by Dunn, 134]

Yet we know that a man is not justified by works of the Law but through faith in Jesus Christ.
(εἰδότες [δὲ] ὅτι οὐ δικαιοῦται ἄνθρωπος ἐξ ἔργων νόμου ἐὰν μὴ διὰ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ,)

This is probably a continuation of Paul's rebuke of Peter. Therefore, Paul is appealing to common ground. Peter's hypocrisy was evident. However, Peter knew (εἰδότες) that no one is justified before God by doing what the law requires; only through faith in Jesus Christ is one right before God.

“we” = Paul and Peter.

διὰ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, = Objective Genitive.

The genitive Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ could be objective (so we take it) or subjective, as though the phrase meant ‘through Jesus Christ’s faith (fulness)’. This latter construction has been defended by J. Haussleiter, *Der Glaube Jesu Christi und der christliche Glaube* (Leipzig, 1891); G. Kittel, ‘πίστις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ bei Paulus’, *TSK* 79 (1906), 419–436; K. Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, *ETr* (Oxford, 1933), 41, 96; A. G. Hebert, ‘“Faithfulness” and Faith’, *Theology* 58 (1955), 373–379; T. F. Torrance, ‘One Aspect of the Biblical Conception of Faith’, *Exp Tim* 68 (1956–57), 111f. (with reply by C. F. D. Moule, *ibid.*, 157); E. R Goodenough with A. T. Kraabel, ‘Paul and the Hellenization of Christianity’, *Religions in Antiquity: Essays in Memory of E. R Goodenough*, ed. J. Neusner = *Suppl. Numen* 15 (Leiden, 1967), 35–80; G. Howard, ‘On the “Faith of Christ”’, *HTR* (1967), 459–465, ‘Romans 3:21–31 and the Inclusion of the Gentiles’, *HTR* 64 (1970), especially 228–231, ‘The “Faith of Christ”’, *Exp Tim* 85 (1973–74),

212–214, and Crisis, 57f.; D. W. B. Robinson, “‘Faith in Jesus Christ’—A NT Debate’, RTR 29 (1970), 71–81.

When the genitive is taken as subjective, the phrase is variously interpreted as meaning ‘Christ’s faith’ (in God), or ‘Christ’s faithfulness’ (to God), or God’s faithfulness revealed in Christ (so Barth, Hebert).

In defence of the objective genitive see, in addition to C. F. D. Moule (cited above), J. Murray, Romans, 363–374; J. Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (Oxford, 1961), 161–205. C. E. B. Cranfield (Romans, 203 n. 2) briefly dismisses the subjective interpretation as ‘altogether unconvincing’.

The principle and, indeed, conclusive argument for taking the genitive to be objective here is that, when Paul expresses himself by the verb πιστεύω and not by the noun πίστις, Christ is the undoubted object of the faith, as in the clause immediately following: καὶ ἡμεῖς εἰς Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν ἐπιστεύσαμεν (‘even we have believed in Christ Jesus’). This determines the sense of the preceding διὰ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ and of ἐκ πίστεως Χριστοῦ in the next clause. See C. H. Dodd, *The Bible and the Greeks* (London, 1935), 65–70. [Bruce, 138–139]

For an excellent defense of the objective-genitive position, see pp. 789-90 in Beale & Carson's *Commentary on the NT use of the OT.*, which reads, in part:

“The NT as a whole, and Paul in particular, regularly and indisputably use both *pistis* and *pisteuo* of the individual's faith in God or Christ, but they never make unambiguous statements such as *episteusen Iesous* ('Jesus is believed') or *pistis estin Iesous* ('Jesus is believing/faithful'). These and other considerations explain why the early fathers who spoke Greek as their native tongue never seem to have entertained the idea that this genitival construction has Jesus Christ as the subject of the implied verb.” [789-90]

See also Moo, 38 ff.

Peter and Paul both recognize, therefore, that being Jewish grants no saving privileges. Before God they are just ordinary humans (so ἄνθρωπος), standing in need of God’s grace. Two crucial definitions that affect how we interpret the rest of Galatians must be resolved at this point. What does Paul mean by the word “justify” (here δικαιόυται), and how should we define the phrase “works of law” (ἔργα νόμου)? I will argue that the verb “justify” means “declare righteous,” and that “works of law” refers to all that is commanded in the law. Both of these issues warrant an In Depth discussion.

In Depth: The Meaning of Justification in Paul

The verb “justify” (δικαιόω) is used eight times in Galatians, including three times in this verse (cf. also 2:17; 3:8, 11, 24; 5:4). Not surprisingly the other place where the verb is often found is in Romans, where it occurs fifteen times (Rom 2:13; 3:4, 20, 24, 26, 28, 30; 4:2, 5; 5:1, 9, 6:7; 8:30 [2x], 33). This verb refers to God’s verdict of not guilty on the day of judgment (Rom 2:13). God’s eschatological verdict has now been announced in advance for those who believe in Jesus Christ.¹³ Those who have been justified by the blood of Christ will be saved from

God's wrath at the eschaton (Rom 5:9). God will announce publicly to the world the verdict of not guilty on the last day, though this verdict already belongs to those who are united with Christ Jesus. God's pronouncement of "not guilty" is hidden from the eyes of the world, and believers receive such a promise by faith.

The forensic and legal character of the term "justify" (δικαιόω) derives from the verbal form of "justify" (sdq) in the OT. Judges are to declare the righteous innocent and condemn the wicked (Deut 25:1; cf. 2 Sam 15:4; 1 Kings 8:31–32; 2 Chr 6:23; Prov 17:15; Isa 5:23). Judges do not "make" anyone righteous. They pronounce on what is in fact the case—if they are righteous judges. In other words, the verbal form belongs in the forensic realm, and Paul does not use the verbal form to denote a righteousness that transforms us or "makes us" righteous.¹⁴ For example, God will pass judgment on whether Paul is acquitted before the Lord on the judgment day (1 Cor 4:4).

When Paul says doers of the law will be justified (Rom 2:13), a declaration of righteousness is intended. God will pass judgment as to whether people are righteous, i.e., whether they have done what is right and good. If they have lived righteously, according to Rom 2:13, he will declare them to be righteous. This last example, as Westerholm has argued, is the ordinary sense of righteousness.¹⁵ It is ordinary in the sense that it conforms with the way human judges are supposed to conduct themselves. They pass judgment against the wicked, and they pronounce in favor of the righteous.

In Paul, however, we also have what Westerholm labels an extraordinary meaning of righteousness.¹⁶ In this instance, God declares those who are sinners to be in the right before him if they trust in Jesus Christ for their salvation. This is extraordinary because such a verdict violates the normal and just procedure for a judge. Judges who declare the guilty to be righteous violate the standards of justice. Paul, of course, does not think God violates any standard of justice, for Christ bears the curse that sinners deserved (3:10–13).¹⁷ Four other arguments support a forensic reading.¹⁸

(1) The law-court background of "justify" is clear in Rom 8:33 (ESV): "Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies." On the last day some may bring charges against God's chosen at the divine tribunal, but all charges will be dismissed because God has declared believers to be in the right before him. As the judge, he has declared that they are innocent of all the accusations leveled.

(2) Paul often says that human beings are righteous by faith (e.g., Rom 1:17; 3:22, 26; 4:3, 5, 9, 13; 9:30; 10:4; Gal 2:16; 3:6, 11; 5:5; Phil 3:9).¹⁹ In such contexts Paul contrasts righteousness by faith with righteousness by works. Righteousness by faith refers to the gift of righteousness given to human beings by God. Human beings are not righteous by virtue of doing but believing. The righteousness given to believers, then, is alien since it is not based on anything they have done but on God's work in Christ. This suggests that righteousness as a gift is granted to those who believe.

(3) That righteousness is a forensic declaration is also supported by the link between righteousness and forgiveness. Paul slides easily from justification to forgiveness in Rom 4:1–8. David's forgiveness of sins is another way of speaking of his justification—his being in the right before God (4:6–8). The idea is not that David is transformed by God; the text calls

attention to David's sin and his forgiveness by God, for he blots out his sins and declares him to be in the right.

(4) The idea that righteousness is counted (*λογίζομαι*) to believers indicates that righteousness is not native to human beings, that it is granted to them by God (Rom 3:28; 4:3–6, 8–11, 22–24; 9:8; Gal 3:6). This argument is strengthened when we add that righteousness is counted to those who believe—not to those who work. God does not “count” sins against those who have put their faith in Christ (2 Cor 5:19). This is a strange reckoning or counting indeed when those who have done evil are considered to be righteous. This fits with the notion, however, that believers have received “the free gift of righteousness” (Rom 5:17 ESV).

Believers are righteous because they are united to Christ in both his death and resurrection.²⁰ Because they are in Christ, they now enjoy the same vindication that Jesus enjoyed when God raised him from the dead (1 Tim 3:16). [Schreiner]

George adds:

Justification. In its most basic meaning, justification is the declaration that somebody is in the right.¹⁷⁷ A. E. McGrath observes that in Pauline vocabulary the verb *dikaioō* “denotes God’s powerful, cosmic and universal action in effecting a change in the situation between sinful humanity and God, by which God is able to acquit and vindicate believers, setting them in a right and faithful relation to himself.”¹⁷⁸ In Pauline usage the term has both forensic (from Latin *forum*, “law court”) and eschatological connotations. Justification should not be confused with forgiveness, which is the fruit of justification, nor with atonement, which is the basis of justification. Rather it is the favorable verdict of God, the righteous Judge, that one who formerly stood condemned has now been granted a new status at the bar of divine justice. The classical Protestant understanding of justification is set forth with great clarity in Question 60 of the Heidelberg Catechism: “How are you righteous before God?” The following answer is given:

Only by true faith in Jesus Christ. In spite of the fact that my conscience accuses me that I have grievously sinned against all the commandments of God, and have not kept any one of them, and that I am still ever prone to all that is evil, nevertheless, God, without any merit of my own, out of pure grace, grants me the benefits of the perfect expiation of Christ, imputing to me his righteousness and holiness as if I had never committed a single sin or had ever been sinful, having fulfilled myself all the obedience which Christ has carried out for me, if only I accept such favor with a trusting heart.¹⁷⁹

According to this definition, justification is by imputation, that is, the righteousness of Christ is counted or reckoned to the sinners so that their standing before God is “as if” they possessed the kind of standing before the Father that would allow him to say of them, as he did of Christ, “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.”

The radical character of this doctrine was as shocking to Paul’s opponents as it was to Luther’s and as it still is to many people today. It goes squarely against the gospel of self-esteem and undercuts all programs of autosalvation. Beginning with Albrecht Ritschl in the nineteenth century, many Protestant theologians have joined their Roman Catholic counterparts in protesting the forensic understanding of justification, preferring to emphasize the infusion of God’s grace rather than the imputation of what Luther called an “alien righteousness.”¹⁸⁰

However, as G. C. Berkouwer has pointed out, it is well to remember that “many objections to declarative justification are part and parcel with a rejection of the substitutionary suffering and death of Jesus Christ. Terms common to jurisprudence have been used in connection with Christ’s death: satisfaction, sufficiency, payment, purchase, ransom, and punishment. And these terms have made men angry.”¹⁸¹

It is equally important to grasp the eschatological character of justification in Paul’s thought. Deeply embedded in Jewish apocalyptic thinking was the idea of a future judgment at which God would finally vindicate his people, right all the wrongs of human history, and render his final and eternal verdict on the fate of all peoples, that is, the sorting out of the sheep and goats (cf. Matt 25:31–46). While Paul fully accepted the futurity of the final judgment, along with the alternative destinations of heaven and hell, he believes that the ground of God’s final judgment has moved from the end of history to its center, that is, from the parousia to the cross and resurrection. Not only is the event of Jesus Christ the “climax of the covenant,” to use Wright’s suggestive term, it is also the “climax of the cosmos.” On the cross the debt of sin has been fully paid, Satan has been unmasked, and hell has been put on notice that time is running out. In the meantime, between the No Longer and the Not Yet, God’s righteous verdict of justification has been pronounced upon all those who place their trust in the crucified and coming Messiah. This does not mean that Christians will be exempted from accountability, for “we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ” (1 Cor 3:12–15). However, it does mean that the basis of our standing before God has shifted from the future (last judgment) and the present (our moral strivings) to the past (the finished work of Christ on the cross). This was, of course, the very point that so irritated the Judaizers who wanted to make obedience to the law the prerequisite of a right standing with God. [George, 191–193]

The verb ‘justify’ is predominantly Paul’s word in the NT (the Pauline corpus contains 27 of the 35 NT occurrences), and Galatians (8) and Romans (15) dominate Paul’s usage, with four of Galatians’ eight coming in 2:16–17. It is a metaphor drawn from the law court to describe the judge’s responsibility to give a fair verdict and to ‘justify’, that is, acquit the innocent, as in typically Jewish usage (Exod. 23:7; Deut. 25:1; 2 Sam. 15:4; Pss. 51:4; 82:3; Isa. 5:23; 43:26; Mic. 6:11). As used here, therefore, it reflects the axiomatic assumption among Jews (cf. Rom. 3:6) that God exercised and would exercise the role of end-time judge in relation to the world, both Jew and Gentile (see e.g. TDNT iii.935). The one thus ‘justified’ or acquitted was thereby found to be ‘righteous’; the ground of a favourable judgement was the ‘righteousness’ of the one judged (all three words come from the same root in both Hebrew and Greek); to be ‘justified’ was to be formally recognized as ‘righteous’. [Dunn, 134]

Justification is a declarative act by God; it's not a process we ourselves must do. Therefore, no Christian is “more justified” than another Christian (Rom. 5:1). Anything other than God's declaration brings in works and when works are part of the equation, salvation is a process that can be lost but never gained.

1. God declares the believing sinner righteous; He does not make him righteous.
2. Justification is not the exact same thing as forgiveness. Someone could be forgiven, sin, and become guilty again (cf. Luther). Once a sinner is justified before God, he or she cannot ever be found guilty again.
3. Justification is different from pardon. A pardoned criminal still has a record. For the believer, the record is Christ.

4. Justification does not mean we have license to sin.
5. Justification does not mean we will not be held accountable or face future judgment.

Thus the verb δικαιόω is used forensically and relationally by Paul to indicate the status or standing in relation to God of a person who is in Christ. For such a person there is now no condemnation (Rom. 8:1). Paul, however, does not just use the δικαιόω language and related terms to refer to someone at the point of entry into the body of Christ. He will also talk about final justification before the divine tribunal as well (cf. Gal. 5:5 ‘we ... await the righteousness [δικαιοσύνης] for which we hope’ cf. Rom. 6:16), and it is clear enough that this involves an assessment of the Christian’s behavior and works (cf. 1 Cor. 3:12–15; 2 Cor. 5:10; Phil. 3:8–14). [Witherington, 174]

The theologically significant use of the word δικαιόω (all with the δικ- root) lies in the LXX along with Paul's usage reflective of the Jewish/OT background. As Moo observes, “words with the δικ root consistently (though not universally) translate words from the קָדַשׁ (*sdq*) root . . .” [48]. The idea of covenant and God's character lie behind the OT use of קָדַשׁ. In the Hiphil קָדַשׁ means “to declare righteous.” See Moo, 50 ff.

Every occurrence of the δικ- language in Galatians (with the possible exception of δικαιός in 3:11) relates to the doctrine of justification; and in Galatians, justification is forensic. The issue in the letter is all about status before God.” [Moo, 56]

Note the Moo believes that most of Paul's references to justification in Galatians are gnomic or future. “Overall, then, justification language in Galatians has a timeless and, if anything, future-oriented focus . . .” [60]. On page 62, Moo writes: “In Galatians, then, righteousness tends to have the idea of vindication.” This does not do away with the idea that justification occurs in the past in conjunction with faith. The already-not-yet tension within the NT is ever present, even with the doctrine of justification.

In Depth: The Meaning of “Works of Law”

Before considering the meaning of “works of law,” the significance of the preposition (ἐκ) used in the phrase must be assessed. Garlington argues that the preposition has a “partisan” sense, focusing on the group to which one belongs.²¹ Thus, the issue is not whether one is justified by doing or believing, according to Garlington; the focus is on salvation history. Does one belong to the old era of works of law or to new era of faith in Christ?

Certainly salvation history is part of what Paul communicates here, but Garlington’s construal of the preposition is misplaced, and it is more likely that it denotes means. Garlington overemphasizes the distinction between prepositions, as if they are technical terms. In actuality, prepositions are function words, and they often overlap in meaning. We see in 2:16 that Paul alternates between “by means of” (ἐκ) with reference to the law and “through” (διὰ) with reference to faith in Christ. The differences between the two prepositions should not be pressed. We see the same phenomenon in Rom 3:30, where Paul shifts from “by means of” (ἐκ) to “through” (διὰ), arguing that both Jews and Gentiles are saved by means of faith. Most commentators of Romans rightly argue that no exegetical significance should be gleaned from the difference.²² The precise word that we use to translate the preposition (ἐκ) in English can therefore be overemphasized. Robertson says that the term may denote “occasion” or “cause.”²³ English translations such as “by,” “when,” “from,” and even “because” may be appropriate. The significance of the function word must be discerned in context. Lambrecht

rightly argues in an article that takes issue with Garlington that the preposition (ἐκ) often signifies “means” or “instrumentality” in Paul; hence, Garlington’s interpretation should be rejected.²⁴ Reading the preposition as designating means fits nicely with Rom 5:1, where Paul says believers “are justified by faith” (δικαιωθέντες ... ἐκ πίστεως). Using the English word “by” to translate the construction is, in my judgment, perfectly legitimate. Paul teaches that human beings are not justified by means of the works of law.

Righteousness does not come by works of law, but the meaning of the phrase “works of law” (ἔργα νόμου) is controversial in scholarship today.²⁵ The genitive could be construed as subjective, “works produced by the law,” but such an interpretation reads too much into the phrase.²⁶ It is probably best to identify the genitive as descriptive, speaking generally of the works demanded by the law.²⁷ The phrase has been intensely debated, and three main views have been proposed. The phrase refers to (1) legalism;²⁸ (2) the social boundary markers of the law;²⁹ or (3) the deeds commanded by the law.³⁰ Before we comment briefly on the various interpretations, we should note that Paul uses the expression “works of law” eight times in his letters (Rom 3:20, 28; Gal 2:16 [3x]; 3:2, 5, 10). In every instance it is introduced in contexts where the issue of justification or receiving the Spirit is prominent. We also should note that it is invariably contrasted with faith.

Explaining the three most common interpretations further should be helpful. (1) We could paraphrase the legalistic view this way. “Those who rely on the law to gain merit before God are under a curse.” The legalistic view argues that “works of law” refers to legalism, so that it has the idea of trying to bribe God or gain his favor or merit his approval on the basis of the works that are accomplished. This view is defective, but we need to be careful in explaining why it is unsatisfactory. It is likely that the Judaizers were attempting to base their standing before God on their obedience to the law (5:4). Still, such a view must be distinguished from a definition of the phrase “works of law.” The phrase “works of law” does not denote legalism (the desire to gain righteousness on the basis of works performed) in and of itself. “Works of law” refers to the deeds demanded by the law.³¹

(2) The notion that “works of law” refers to the boundary markers of the law is increasingly popular today. This interpretation has gained currency since 1977, when E. P. Sanders wrote his massive *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*.³² Sanders argued that the Judaism of Paul’s day was not legalistic, contrary to the traditional view inherited from the debate between the Reformers and the Roman Catholics. The common pattern in Jewish religion, says Sanders, was covenantal nomism, in which God’s people became members of the covenant by God’s grace, and they maintained their place in the covenant by obedience. Sanders rejects any notion that the Jews believed that they were saved by the weighing of merits or by the notion that they had to be 51 percent obedient. Through an analysis of rabbinic literature, the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Apocrypha, and the Pseudepigrapha, Sanders defended the idea that Judaism was a religion of grace. Those who identify the Judaism of Paul’s day as legalistic read it through the spectacles of the Reformation debate with Roman Catholics.

Sanders’s construal of Judaism has been enormously influential and has led many to reassess Paul’s theology of the law and justification. The “new perspective” on Paul, whose leading proponent is perhaps James Dunn,³³ has proposed a new understanding of “works of law” and law in Pauline theology. Dunn maintains that “works of law” refers to the entire Mosaic law. He sees, however, a focus on the laws that divide Jews and Gentiles from one another culturally, so that “works of law” brings to the forefront circumcision, food laws, and Sabbath. These laws

were “identity markers” or “boundary markers” for Jews. They segregated and distinguished Jews from Gentiles. Dunn concludes that Paul criticized his opponents in Galatia for their exclusivism in which they demanded that Gentiles become Jews. The root problem, then, is not legalism or “activism” or even a failure to keep the law. Paul found fault with his adversaries because of their ethnocentrism, their narrow and sectarian spirit.³⁴

The work of Sanders and the “new perspective” have had a salutary impact, in that it was easy previously to caricature Judaism as legalistic. Scholars have been compelled to reexamine the sources to determine what they say. The Judaism of Paul’s day was complex and cannot be isolated into a single strand. Still, Sanders oversimplified the evidence. The claim that Judaism was free from all legalism cannot be substantiated from the sources. The literature betrays an emphasis on God’s grace in some instances and a focus on human obedience in others.³⁵ Final vindication on the basis of works is evident in some Jewish sources.³⁶

(3) This brings us to the third view. The term “works of law” most likely refers to all the works prescribed by the Mosaic law.³⁷ In support of this, Paul emphasizes in 3:10b the obligation to do all that the law requires, and hence limiting “works of law” to only a part of the law fails to convince.³⁸ This also fits with 5:3 as well, where Paul reminds the Galatians that those who adopt circumcision are required “to do the whole law,” not just part of the law. We should also bring in Rom 3:20 at this point, where Paul affirms that “no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law.” Here Paul summarizes the argument of Rom 1:18–3:20 as a whole and emphasizes that all deserve judgment since all have sinned and violated God’s law (cf. 3:23). It is hardly credible to claim that the Jews were condemned for their bad attitude of excluding Gentiles. They were liable to judgment because they had not kept the entirety of God’s law.³⁹ [Schreiner, 154–161]

Issue as to whether works of the law (or the Mosaic Law) was essentially legalistic. While the law itself was not to be applied legalistically, the Jews did misuse the law in a legalistic fashion. Contrary to the NPP folks, there were 1st c. Jews who were guilty of this as illustrated in this epitaph from a 1st c. tomb:

“Here lies Regina . . . She will live again, return to the light again, for she can hope that she will rise to the life promised, as a real assurance, to the worthy and the pious in that she has deserved to possess an abode in the hallowed land. This your piety has assured you, this your chaste life, this your love for your people, this your observance of the Law, your devotion to your wedlock, the glory of which was dear to you. For all these deeds your hope for the future is assured.” [Pieter W. Van Der Horst, “Jewish Funerary Inscriptions,” *Biblical Archeology Review* 18:5 (Sept./Oct.): 55. Cited in Ryken, 62]

Ultimately, the problem isn't with the Law, which was good; the problem is with our lawlessness, our inability to keep the Law perfectly.

“In contrast to the claims of some interpreters, the Reformers did not miss the original historical reference in the phrase. In the preface to his commentary on Galatians, for instance, Calvin notes that the phrase refers to 'the ceremonies,' but, he argues, more than ceremonies are involved. He claims, 'The question could not be settled without assuming the general principle, that we are justified by the free grace of God; and this principle sets aside not only ceremonies, but every other kind of works.' Similarly, in his comments on 2:16, he notes that Origen and Jerome take 'works of the law' to refer to ceremonies. He agrees but the argues that Paul extends the significance of the phrase to the larger and more consequent issue. Paul deals with

works 'of the law,' then, partly because they are demanded by God; they are the highest form of works.” [Moo, 174, footnote 19]

In Depth: What Does Paul Mean by the “Faith of Jesus Christ”?

One controversy follows another in this verse, and scholars dispute vigorously the meaning of the phrase “faith of Jesus Christ” (πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ).⁵⁰ Two main interpretations vie for acceptance: faith in Jesus Christ, and the faithfulness of Jesus Christ. The phrase is also used in Romans and Philippians, necessitating a wider discussion.

We shall consider first those who translate the phrase “the faithfulness of Christ” rather than “faith in Christ.”⁵¹ The construction is in the genitive—“faith of Christ” (πίστις Χριστοῦ)⁵²—so that both “faithfulness of Christ” and “faith in Christ” are grammatically feasible.⁵³ A number of arguments are presented in support of “faithfulness of Christ”:

1. In Rom 3:3 “the faith of God” (τὴν πίστιν τοῦ θεοῦ) clearly means “the faithfulness of God.”
2. In Rom 4:12 the phrase in context refers to “the faith of our father, Abraham” (πίστεως τοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν Ἀβραάμ).
3. It is argued that the genitive in such constructions is most naturally understood as subjective.
4. If one takes the genitive as objective, “faith in Christ” is superfluous since in the key texts (e.g., Rom 3:22; Gal 2:16; Phil 3:9) Paul already mentions the need to trust in Christ.
5. The “faithfulness of Jesus” is another way of referring to Jesus’ obedience, which was necessary to achieve our salvation (Rom 5:19; Phil 2:8).
6. The coming of “faith” refers to redemptive history (3:23, 25), designating the faithfulness of Christ at the key point in salvation history.
7. The focus in Paul’s theology is the work of God in Christ, not the human response of faith.

Despite the arguments supporting a subjective genitive, there are still good reasons to prefer an objective genitive, so that Paul refers to “faith in Christ”:⁵⁴

1. The genitive object with “faith” is clear in some instances (Mark 11:22; Jas 2:1).⁵⁵
2. A genitive object with other verbal nouns shows that an objective genitive with the verbal noun “faith” is normal grammatically: e.g., “knowledge of Christ Jesus” (τῆς γνώσεως Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ, Phil 3:8).⁵⁶ Therefore those who claim that the genitive must be subjective fail to convince.
3. The texts that use the verb “believe” in a verbal construction and the noun “faith” with the genitive are not superfluous but emphatic, stressing the importance of faith to be right with God. Readers hearing the letter read would hear the emphasis on faith in Christ,⁵⁷ and thus this interpretation is to be preferred as the simpler of the two options.⁵⁸
4. Paul often contrasts works and human faith in his theology. Therefore, seeing a polarity between works of law and faith in Christ—both human activities—fits with what Paul does elsewhere.
5. Nowhere does Paul in speaking of Jesus Christ use the word “faith” (πίστις) to describe his “obedience.”
6. The salvation-historical argument fails to persuade as well. Certainly, Gal 3:23, 25 refer to the coming of faith at a certain time in redemptive history. But such an observation hardly excludes faith in Christ, for faith in Christ becomes a reality when he arrives and fulfills God’s saving promises. We should not pit redemptive history against anthropology.

7. Nor is the emphasis on faith in Christ somehow Pelagian, as if it somehow detracts from God's work in salvation. A human response of faith does not undercut the truth that God saves, particularly if God grants faith to his own (Eph 2:8–9).

Given our long discussion, we must sum up briefly Paul's argument in 2:16. Paul reminds Peter that he must not impose the law on Gentiles, for both he and Peter already recognize that human beings will not be vindicated before the divine tribunal on the basis of their obedience of the law, but only through faith in Christ Jesus. [Schreiner, 163–166]

The issue is the object of faith: Jesus Christ. Cf. quote by Eisenhower (cited by Ryken, 63): America “is founded in a deeply felt religious faith—and I don't care what it is.”

And we have believed in Christ Jesus so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the Law, (καὶ ἡμεῖς εἰς Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν ἐπιστεύσαμεν, ἵνα δικαιωθῶμεν ἐκ πίστεως Χριστοῦ καὶ οὐκ ἐξ ἔργων νόμου,)

“we” = Paul and Peter.

Personal faith in JC as Lord unites the believer into the New Covenant community.

Union with Christ: Those who belong to Christ are in Christ. What is true of Him is true of them. Wright claims that “The roots of this idea are in the Jewish beliefs about the king. The king represents his people (think of David fighting Goliath, representing Israel against the Philistines); what is true of him is true of them.” [Wright1, 25–26]

The old marker of identity was circumcision, along with food and dietary laws. The new marker of identity is faith – faith alone in Christ alone. (Cf. how other religious groups add to faith alone, thus making their own “markers of identity”).

since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified. (ὅτι ἐξ ἔργων νόμου οὐ δικαιωθήσεται πᾶσα σὰρξ.)

Here, as later in Rom. 3:20, Paul substitutes πᾶσα σὰρξ of the LXX (ὅτι οὐ δικαιωθήσεται ἐνώπιόν σου πᾶς ζῶν, which follows Heb. kol ḥāy) and inserts ἐξ ἔργων νόμου before οὐ δικαιωθήσεται. It may be inferred that for him at least this paraphrase of Ps. 143 (LXX 142):2 had become a habitual proof-text for the doctrine of justification by faith apart from works of law. [Bruce, 140]

Psalm 143: Davids is being pursued by his enemies and is struggling with guilt. He pleads for God to deliver him but he knows that he is guilty and deserving of judgment.

Psalm 143:1–2 1 HEAR my prayer, O LORD, Give ear to my supplications! Answer me in Thy faithfulness, in Thy righteousness! 2 And do not enter into judgment with Thy servant, For in Thy sight no man living is righteous.

This is the issue: no one is righteous before God (cf. Romans 3). “It is entirely by the intervention of Christ's righteousness that we obtain justification before God.” [Calvin, cited in Ryken, 69]

“no flesh” = no one. See Romans chapters 2-4 for important points and parallels. Cf. the goodness of the Law (Romans 7:12) and the purposes for the Law (cf. 1 Timothy 1:8-11 and Galatians 3:19-29).

But now that Paul, Peter, Barnabas and other ‘Jews by birth’ have embraced the way of faith in Christ, the barrier is down and there is no distinction between Jew and Gentile either in respect of sin (Rom. 3:22) or in respect of access to God’s justifying grace (Rom. 10:12). [Bruce, 137]

For no one is put right with God by doing what the Law requires seems to be a quotation from Psalm 143:2, following the Septuagint. That is, the Septuagint reads “each one who lives” whereas Paul has “all flesh.” Also, the Old Testament verse does not have the phrase “works of Law” but instead has “before you.” No one is literally “no flesh,” with “flesh” equivalent to “human being.” [UBS, 46]

Paul appeals here to Ps 143:2 (142:2 in LXX), “Do not bring your servant into judgment, for no one living is righteous before you” (καὶ μὴ εἰσέλθῃς εἰς κρίσιν μετὰ τοῦ δούλου σου, ὅτι οὐ δικαιοῦθήσεται ἐνώπιόν σου πᾶς ζῶν).⁶³ David in this psalm pleads for mercy because he realizes that he cannot stand before God on the basis of his works, but only by virtue of God’s mercy.⁶⁴ Paul applies what David said to all members of the covenant people, and hence he adds the phrase “all flesh.” Furthermore, the word “flesh” emphasizes human fallenness and weakness, signifying further why human beings need forgiveness.

The allusion to Ps 143:2 verifies that righteousness cannot come via works since David acknowledges that judgment is deserved because of his unrighteousness (i.e., sin).⁶⁵ Therefore, it anticipates and supports what Paul teaches in Gal 3:10, where he affirms that the curse of the law applies to all since all violate God’s requirements. The verb “he shall be justified” (δικαιοῦθήσεται) most likely refers to the future day of judgment, so that justification is understood as an eschatological event.⁶⁶ [Schreiner, 167]

If the apostle is indeed quoting (or even alluding to) Ps. 143 as confirmation of his teaching, two important points follow. In the first place, this feature casts considerable doubt on the attempt to restrict ‘works of the law’ to ceremonial practices. The latter certainly form part of the background to Gal. 2:6, but it is evident that the psalmist was hardly thinking of national ‘badges’ that distinguished him from the Gentiles. Paul’s appeal to the psalm, then, confirms what the context of Gal. 2-3 strongly suggests: the apostle is thinking of the dietary regulations and circumcision as part and parcel of the broader concept of the law considered as a whole, and, therefore ‘works of the law’ designate obedience to the commandments in toto (Dunn [1993: 140] further suggests that Paul changed ‘living person’ to ‘flesh’ specifically because the latter is ‘the realm where outward and ethical distinction is most clearly marked’; however, we have no evidence that the common idiom *pasa sarx*, which is emphatically universal in character, would have been understood as alluding to such as distinction.) [CNTOT, 791]

Note the future aspect of justification here which is in keeping with the context of the Psalm. Cf. 3:19, 5:5. Beale and Carson write (CNTOT, 791):

To recognize the apocalyptic overtones of this clause, however, is not to undermine the traditional application of the verse, for in this very passage Paul is stressing the significance of faith for his own personal—yes, present—justification and that of his Jewish-Christian contemporaries. The point, nevertheless, is that the truth is set within the context of cosmic, eschatological realities. In other words, the 'subjective' experience of justification is not divorced from the 'objective' judgment at the end of the age. Quite the contrary, it is grounded in that final judgment, so that our sense of assurance (cf. 4:6-7) is not merely some psychological strategy that bypasses reality, but rather a proleptic manifestation of God's righteous verdict.

In Rom 8:3 Paul would spell out more fully what he announced here in Gal 2:16, “For what the law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh” (NASB). Paul’s point was that no one could find salvation by keeping the law simply because no one can keep the law. [George, 190–191]

The threefold occurrence of ἐξ ἔργων νόμου in this sentence is striking. C. E. B. Cranfield, ‘St. Paul and the Law’, SJT 17 (1964), 43–68, especially 55 (cf. his Romans, 845–862, especially 853), points out that Paul had no ready word or phrase in Greek to express what we mean by ‘legalism’, and therefore had to use ‘law’ (as in Gal. 3:11, ἐν νόμῳ) or a phrase containing ‘law’ (such as ἐξ ἔργων νόμου) to express it. In fact, as C. F. D. Moule points out (‘Obligation in the Ethic of Paul’, Knox FS, 392), Paul had no distinctive word or phrase for other particular aspects of law; hence the necessity of deducting from the context of the nuance which he has in mind. Moule distinguishes in particular what he calls the ‘revelatory’ and ‘legalistic’ senses of νόμος, and by means of this distinction is able to give a satisfactory answer to the question whether, in Paul’s view, Christ has abrogated the law or not (cf. Rom. 10:4). ‘Paul saw Christ as the fulfilment of law, when law means God’s revelation of himself and of his character and purpose, but as the condemnation and termination of any attempt to use law to justify oneself. And it is this latter use of law which may conveniently be called (for short) “legalism”.’ If ‘law means the upward striving of human religion and morality, and therefore colours all human activity with sin, for it represents man’s attempt to scale God’s throne’ (C. K. Barrett, Romans, 129The Doctrine of Justification), it is Moule’s latter use of law that is presumably implied.

In making this affirmation, Paul was in a strong position: if any one could base a claim on ‘works of law’, it was he. His pre-Christian record, ‘as to righteousness by law’, was ‘blameless’ (Phil. 3:6). But he learned that even this record did not justify him before God; now his hope was founded on ‘not having a righteousness of my own, based on law, but that which is through faith in Christ’ (Phil. 3:9). [Bruce, 137–138]

At the Jerusalem Council Peter declared that same truth in response to the Judaizers. “Why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they [the Gentiles] also are” (Acts 15:10–11).

No amount of law-keeping can make a person righteous, because the root of sinfulness is in the fallenness of man’s heart, not in actions. Man’s basic problem is in what he is, not in what he does. Sinful acts are but the outward expression of a depraved nature that contains sinful

thoughts. A person who hates is inwardly a murderer, whether or not he ever takes another person's life (Matt. 5:22). A man who has immoral thoughts about women is an adulterer, whether or not he ever commits the physical act of adultery (5:28).

Consequently, no amount of works of the Law can save a person, because even the best of human works cannot change the nature of the person doing them. "We know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, that every mouth may be closed, and all the world may become accountable to God; because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight" (Rom. 3:19–20). The law is important as a mirror to show us our sinfulness; but it can only reveal sin, not remove it. "But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. . . . For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law" (3:21–24, 28). [MacArthur, 56-57]

MacArthur errs, however, in equating repentance with faith:

Faith in Christ is not mere intellectual assent to the fact that Jesus died and rose for man's sin but is personal trust in His death to remove and forgive one's own sins. It is total commitment to submit to Him as Lord (cf. James 4:7). [MacArthur, 57]

Luther quotes (fit nicely with Romans 4):

God sent His only-begotten Son into the world that we may live through His merit. He was crucified and killed for us. By sacrificing His Son for us God revealed Himself to us as a merciful Father who donates remission of sins, righteousness, and life everlasting for Christ's sake. God hands out His gifts freely unto all men. That is the praise and glory of His mercy. The scholastics explain the way of salvation in this manner. When a person happens to perform a good deed, God accepts it and as a reward for the good deed God pours charity into that person. They call it "charity infused." This charity is supposed to remain in the heart. They get wild when they are told that this quality of the heart cannot justify a person. They also claim that we are able to love God by our own natural strength, to love God above all things, at least to the extent that we deserve grace. And, say the scholastics, because God is not satisfied with a literal performance of the Law, but expects us to fulfill the Law according to the mind of the Lawgiver, therefore we must obtain from above a quality above nature, a quality which they call "formal righteousness." We say, faith apprehends Jesus Christ. Christian faith is not an inactive quality in the heart. If it is true faith it will surely take Christ for its object. Christ, apprehended by faith and dwelling in the heart, constitutes Christian righteousness, for which God gives eternal life. [Luther, 42]

First a person must learn to know himself from the Law. With the prophet he will then confess: "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." And, "there is none that doeth good, no, not one." And, "against thee, thee only, have I sinned." Having been humbled by the Law, and having been brought to a right estimate of himself, a man will repent. He finds out that he is so depraved, that no strength, no works, no merits of his own will ever deliver him from his guilt. He will then understand the meaning of Paul's words: "I am sold under sin"; and "they are all under sin." At this state a person begins to lament: "Who is going to help me?" In due time comes the Word of the Gospel, and says: "Son, thy sins are forgiven thee. Believe in Jesus

Christ who was crucified for your sins. Remember, your sins have been imposed upon Christ." In this way are we delivered from sin. In this way are we justified and made heirs of everlasting life. In order to have faith you must paint a true portrait of Christ. The scholastics caricature Christ into a judge and tormentor. But Christ is no law giver. He is the Lifegiver. He is the Forgiver of sins. You must believe that Christ might have atoned for the sins of the world with one single drop of His blood. Instead, He shed His blood abundantly in order that He might give abundant satisfaction for our sins. Here let me say, that these three things, faith, Christ, and imputation of righteousness, are to be joined together. Faith takes hold of Christ. God accounts this faith for righteousness. This imputation of righteousness we need very much, because we are far from perfect. As long as we have this body, sin will dwell in our flesh. Then, too, we sometimes drive away the Holy Spirit; we fall into sin, like Peter, David, and other holy men. Nevertheless we may always take recourse to this fact, "that our sins are covered," and that "God will not lay them to our charge." Sin is not held against us for Christ's sake. . . . After we have taught faith in Christ, we teach good works. "Since you have found Christ by faith," we say, "begin now to work and do well. Love God and your neighbor. Call upon God, give thanks unto Him, praise Him, confess Him. These are good works. Let them flow from a cheerful heart, because you have remission of sin in Christ." When crosses and afflictions come our way, we bear them patiently. "For Christ's yoke is easy, and His burden is light." When sin has been pardoned, and the conscience has been eased of its dreadful load, a Christian can endure all things in Christ. . . . This doctrine brings comfort to consciences in serious trouble. When a person is a Christian he is above law and sin. When the Law accuses him, and sin wants to drive the wits out of him, a Christian looks to Christ. A Christian is free. He has no master except Christ. A Christian is greater than the whole world. [Luther, 42-44]

2:17 EXEGESIS

GREEK TEXT:

εἰ δὲ ζητοῦντες δικαιωθῆναι ἐν Χριστῷ εὐρέθημεν καὶ αὐτοὶ ἁμαρτωλοὶ, ἄρα Χριστὸς ἁμαρτίας διάκονος; μὴ γένοιτο.

εἰ δὲ ζητοῦντες (ζητεω || Masculine Nominative Plural Present Active Participle). Adverbial-Temporal Participle.

δικαιωθῆναι (δικαιοω || Verb: Aorist Passive Infinitive).

ἐν Χριστῷ (Noun: Masculine Dative Singular). Dative/Locative of Sphere.

εὐρέθημεν (εὐρίσκω || Verb: Aorist Passive Indicative).

καὶ αὐτοὶ (αὐτος = He, Him {here it's intensive/predicative = "ourselves" || Third Person Independent Personal Pronoun: Masculine Nominative Plural).

ἁμαρτωλοὶ, (ἁμαρτωλὸς || Adjective: Masculine Nominative Plural).

ἄρα (ἄρα = then || Interrogative Particle). "The interrogative particle ἄρα, accented with a circumflex as in UBS3, Nestle-Aland26 and other editions, occurs nowhere else in Paul, whereas the inferential particle ἄρα (accented as paroxytone) is quite frequent (cf. v 21; 3:7, 29; 5:11; 6:10). If ἄρα be read here, it yields excellent sense: 'Is Christ then (in that case) a servant of sin?' See J. Lambrecht, 'The Line of Thought in Gal. 2.14 b–21', NTS 24 (1977–78), 489f., with bibliographical references in footnotes. C. F. D. Moule, *Idiom-Book*, 196, and 'A Note on Galatians 2:17, 18', *Exp Tim* 56 (1944–45), 223, agrees with the accentuation ἄρα but treats the clause not as a question but as a statement of the necessary implication of Peter's behaviour, which Peter answers with a μὴ γένοιτο." [Bruce, 141]

Χριστὸς (Noun: Masculine Nominative Singular).

ἁμαρτίας (ἁμαρτία || Noun: Feminine Genitive Singular).

διάκονος; (διάκονος || Noun: Masculine Nominative Singular).

μὴ γένοιτο. (γίνομαι || Verb: Aorist Optative Middle, 3S). Optative

ENGLISH TRANSLATION:

But if while seeking to be justified in Christ, we ourselves were found to be sinners, is Christ then a minister of sin? May it never be!

CONTEXTUAL, GRAMMATICAL, THEOLOGICAL, APPLICATIONAL ANALYSIS:

Difficult verse to interpret. See the 2 main options outlined by Moo (below).

Note the 3 parts to this verse.

1. One interpretation holds that Paul is reflecting on the experience that he, Peter, and other Christian Jews had when they first came to Christ to be justified. At that moment, they found themselves to be sinners—that is, they understood that they were truly as sinful as the Gentiles they had scorned, and accordingly they needed to depend on Christ alone for justification. But this discovery did not make Christ a servant of sin, for their sin existed all along. Verse 18 explains: it is when people (whether Jewish Christians or Gentile Christians, such as the Galatians) try to go back to the law (again) that they become "transgressors," either in the sense that they become guilty of their sin again or in the sense that they break the fundamental "law of

the gospel." (For this general interpretation, see, e.g., Lightfoot 1881: 116-17; Ridderbos 1953: 101-3; Smiles 1998: 147-59; Lambrecht 1978; 1987; 1996; Hunn 2010).

2. Other interpreters think that Paul has in view a postconversion situation. Peter, Paul, and other Jewish Christians are seeking to find ultimate justification in their union with Christ and, in doing so, have recognized the implications that Paul states in verse 16: they have abandoned the law as a means of finding that justification. They therefore "find themselves" to be in the same category as the Gentiles (v. 15): "sinners" who do not live by God's law. But this does not make Christ the servant of sin (in the ultimate sense of that word). This would be the case only if Jewish Christians would "rebuild" the law as a fundamental authority; they would then truly be "transgressors." (So, in general, Burton 1921: 124-30; Betz 1979: 119-21; Dunn 1993a: 141-42; Martyn 1997: 254-56; Kruse 1996: 69-71; Winger 1992: 142-45.)

Neither interpretation is without its problems (and hence the division of opinion among scholars), but the second reading has fewer problems. The following exposition of these verses will seek to demonstrate this. [Moo, 164]

There are in essence three propositions here, one to do with seeking to be justified in Christ, one about being found sinners, and one about Christ as a servant or minister of sin. The first two are part of the protasis of this conditional sentence. By type we are dealing with a first class condition with εἰ, which normally means we are meant to assume that both of these two propositions are true.⁴⁷ Paul's point seems to be this—if one grants that we Christians are seeking to be justified in Christ (locative sense)⁴⁸ and not elsewhere, and in the process even we Jewish Christians are found to be operating and acting outside of the sphere of the Law, living and acting beyond the pale and so subject to the complaint that we are like Gentile sinners (cf. 2:14), then the question becomes, is Christ a minister of sin? [Witherington, 185]

But if while seeking to be justified in Christ, (εἰ δὲ ζητοῦντες δικαιωθῆναι ἐν Χριστῷ)

To be put right with God by our union with Christ is literally "to be justified in Christ." Many interpret the clause to mean that Christ is the active agent of justification (JB "looking to Christ to justify us"), while others see this to mean that Christ is the means of our justification. A literal translation would, of course, be ambiguous. TEV understands God to be the primary source or causative agent of justification, and therefore the implicit subject of the passive verb, and the phrase "in Christ" to refer to means (as in 2:4), namely, the intimate fellowship between Christ and the Christian. One may also translate this expression as "to get into the right relationship with God because we are joined to Christ," "... because we have become one with Christ," or "... by means of our being so closely associated with Christ." It is rare that one can use in a receptor language a literal rendering of "in Christ." [UBS, 46–47]

ἐν Χριστῷ likely = union with Christ (cf. 2:19–20). Believers died to the power of the law when they were crucified with Christ.

If Jews like Peter and Paul sought to be vindicated before God on the last day through union with Christ, it follows that as Jews they had no advantage over the Gentiles. They were sinners just like the Gentiles. They testified that the Mosaic covenant was not adequate to gain end-time salvation. Hence, Peter's refusal to have fellowship with Gentiles unless they kept the covenantal regulations contradicted his own experience and theology. For Peter had himself

confessed that salvation and forgiveness are found only in Christ, not the Mosaic law. [Schreiner, 168]

we ourselves were found to be sinners, (εὐρέθημεν καὶ αὐτοὶ ἁμαρτωλοί.)

The connection is likely to verse 15: ἁμαρτωλοί. This is a key support to the view taken here.

is Christ then a minister of sin? (ἄρα Χριστὸς ἁμαρτίας διάκονος;)

This was an accusation leveled against Christ during his earthly ministry.

Wuest summarizes:

Verse seventeen. The word if is from ei (εἰ), referring to a fulfilled condition. The Christian Jews, in seeking to be justified in Christ, were shown to be sinners just like and in the same class as the Gentiles. When they sought justification in Christ and thus by grace, it was an admission on their part that there is no justification by works, that the seeker is not justified, and is therefore a sinner. The attempt to be justified in Christ awakens the consciousness of sin, and compels the Jew to put himself on the plane of the Gentile. The Jew who calls the Gentile a sinner, in seeking to be justified by faith, is forced to admit that he is a sinner also. He has found that the law has failed him as a justifying agency.

Paul repudiates the false assumption of the Judaizers who charged that Christ is the promoter and encourager of sin in that He causes the Jew to abandon the law as a justifying agency, and in doing so, puts himself on the common plane of a Gentile whom he calls a sinner and a dog. The Judaizers argued that in view of the fact that violation of the law is sin, therefore, abandonment of the law in an effort to be justified in Christ is also Sin. Thus Christ is the Promoter of sin. [Wuest, Ga 2:17]

Schreiner summarizes this verse and interpretive options:

2:17a–b And if while seeking to be justified in Christ, we also are found to be sinners (εἰ δὲ ζητοῦντες δικαιοθῆναι ἐν Χριστῷ εὐρέθημεν καὶ αὐτοὶ ἁμαρτωλοί). Paul and Peter as Jews have been shown to be sinners before God (just like the Gentiles!), for they sought righteousness in Christ (showing that they were not righteous in themselves) rather than in their observance of the law. Paul probably continues his speech to Peter, for “we” here stands for Jewish Christians, such as Paul and Peter, over against the Gentiles in Antioch. Another reason for thinking Paul continues to address Peter is that what is written here likely reflects the charges brought against Peter by other Jewish Christians.

The meaning of the verse is intensely debated. The verse is typically interpreted in two different ways. In the first view, the charge leveled against Paul and other Jewish Christians is unfounded. They were accused of being sinners since they had abandoned the Torah, but Paul was not a sinner, since he had died and been raised with Christ.⁶⁷ The second view, which is favored here, argues that the charges are in fact true. Paul accepts in the “if” clause the reality of the charge. In other words, Peter and Paul had been found to be sinners in seeking to be justified in Christ, and they recognized that they were no better than Gentiles. The only way to be righteous is through faith in Christ.⁶⁸

In the first view, the post-conversion status of Peter and Paul is in view; they were found to be sinners after becoming believers because they had abandoned the law. In the second view, the preconversion status of Peter and Paul is in mind; they were found to be sinners in that they recognized that forgiveness can be found only in Christ. Another way to identify the two views follows. In the first view, the charge that Peter and Paul were sinners is rejected. They were not sinners in rejecting the Torah, for a new era of salvation had dawned in which the Torah was no longer binding. In the second view, Peter and Paul acknowledged that they were sinners, for they confessed that they did not and could not keep the law, but they had found forgiveness for their sins in Christ.

The interpretation that sees Peter and Paul as actual sinners has one major point in its favor: it best explains the use of the word “found.” The word “found” (εὐρέθημεν) has a legal and forensic meaning, denoting one’s standing before God as Judge and Lord of all. It refers to the verdict pronounced by the Divine Judge, whether one is “found” to be guilty or innocent. (cf. also Sir 44:17, 20; Acts 5:39; 24:5; 1 Cor 4:2; 15:15; Phil 3:9; 1 Pet 1:7; Rev 5:4). Both Peter and Paul as Jews were found to be “sinners” (ἁμαρτωλοί), so that before God they occupied the same status as “sinners from the Gentiles” (ἐξ ἐθνῶν ἁμαρτωλοί, 2:15). Such an interpretation fits with the interpretation proposed for 2:16 above. Paul argues that it is clear from the OT (Ps 143:2) that no one is righteous by works of law. Instead, the law uncovers human sin. The interpretation supported here must be explained further. When were Peter and Paul (and by extension all Christian Jews) found to be sinners before God? It was “while [they were] seeking to be justified in Christ.” Both Peter and Paul, in turning to Christ, did not try to establish their own righteousness (cf. Rom 10:3) on the basis of the Sinai covenant. They sought instead to stand in the right in Christ before the Divine Judge. The language of “seeking” here points to the day of final judgment, indicating that justification is eschatological.⁶⁹ [Schreiner, 167–168]

Paul could be saying that he and Peter were found to be sinners because they were no longer observing the Law. This was in the eyes of their opponents who would liken them to Gentile sinners.

This interpretation is possible but is probably not on target.⁷² For Paul refers to the status of Jewish Christians before God in the word “we have been found” (εὐρέθημεν . . .). If the second view were true, Paul would have written something like, “we have been accused to be sinners,” or, “we have been charged to be sinners.” In writing “we are also found to be sinners,” Paul emphasizes the place of Jewish Christians before God. Hence they really and truly were sinners before God. As Jewish Christians they sought justification in Christ, for righteousness could not come via the law since they had failed to keep the law and had sinned against God. [Schreiner, 168–169]

Luther's comment on v. 17 “Is therefore Christ the minister of sin?”:

This is Hebrew phraseology, also used by Paul in II Corinthians, chapter 3. There Paul speaks of two ministers: The minister of the letter, and the minister of the spirit; the minister of the Law, and the minister of grace; the minister of death, and the minister of life. “Moses,” says Paul, “is the minister of the Law, of sin, wrath, death, and condemnation.”

Whoever teaches that good works are indispensable unto salvation, that to gain heaven a person must suffer afflictions and follow the example of Christ and of the saints, is a minister of the Law, of sin, wrath, and of death, for the conscience knows how impossible it is for a person to

fulfill the Law. Why, the Law makes trouble even for those who have the Holy Spirit. What will not the Law do in the case of the wicked who do not even have the Holy Spirit?

The Law requires perfect obedience. It condemns all do not accomplish the will of God. But show me a person who is able to render perfect obedience. The Law cannot justify. It can only condemn according to the passage: “Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.”

Paul has good reason for calling the minister of the Law the minister of sin, for the Law reveals our sinfulness. The realization of sin in turn frightens the heart and drives it to despair. Therefore all exponents of the Law and of works deserve to be called tyrants and oppressors.

The purpose of the Law is to reveal sin. That this is the purpose of the Law can be seen from the account of the giving of the Law as reported in the nineteenth and twentieth chapters of Exodus. Moses brought the people out of their tents to have God speak to them personally from a cloud. But the people trembled with fear, fled, and standing aloof they begged Moses: “Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die.” The proper office of the Law is to lead us out of our tents, in other words, out of the security of our self-trust, into the presence of God, that we may perceive His anger at our sinfulness.

All who say that faith alone in Christ does not justify a person, convert Christ into a minister of sin, a teacher of the Law, and a cruel tyrant who requires the impossible. All merit-seekers take Christ for a new lawgiver.

In conclusion, if the Law is the minister of sin, it is at the same time the minister of wrath and death. As the Law reveals sin it fills a person with the fear of death and condemnation. Eventually the conscience wakes up to the fact that God is angry. If God is angry with you, He will destroy and condemn you forever. Unable to stand the thought of the wrath and judgment of God, many a person commits suicide.

May it never be! (μὴ γένοιτο.)

This is explained further in the next verse. On μὴ γένοιτο see other uses by Paul.

Paul emphatically denies such a suggestion by means of μὴ γένοιτο. This phrase is interesting and also difficult to translate. It is a very strong exclamation, not dissimilar to the modern slang ‘No way!’, or to use more proper English ‘Absolutely not!’ It is interesting that the positive γένοιτο is found in the LXX to render the Hebrew ‘Amen’ (cf. Ps 72:19; 71:19 in the LXX), and thus the negation of ‘Amen’ would mean something like ‘I strongly disagree’ or even ‘may it certainly not be so’. As Bruce says, Paul seems particularly prone to say μὴ γένοιτο when it is suggested that freedom from the Law will encourage people to sin (cf. Rom. 6:1ff; 6:15).⁵³ This suggests two things: (1) Paul was certainly one who thought that Christ had set his people free from observance of the Mosaic Law; and (2) he was rather regularly having to fend off suggestions that this made his Gospel anti-nomian, or that his message fostered immorality. [Witherington III, 186–187]

2:18 EXEGESIS

GREEK TEXT:

εἰ γὰρ ἃ κατέλυσα ταῦτα πάλιν οἰκοδομῶ, παραβάτην ἑμαυτὸν συνιστάνω.

εἰ γὰρ ἃ (ὅς = who/that, of whom, to whom, whom [referring to people]; that/which, of which, to which, which [referring to things] – Translation depends on case || Relative Pronoun: Neuter Accusative Plural).

κατέλυσα (καταλυω = to destroy, overthrow || Verb: Aorist Active Indicative, 1S).

ταῦτα (τοῦτο = this || Near Demonstrative Pronoun: Neuter Nominative Plural).

πάλιν (Adverb).

οἰκοδομῶ, (οἰκοδομεω = to strengthen, build up || Verb: Present Active Indicative, 1S).

παραβάτην (παραβάτης = Violator, transgressor || Noun: Masculine Accusative Singular).

ἑμαυτὸν (ἑμαυτου = myself || First Person Reflexive Pronoun: Masculine Accusative Singular).

συνιστάνω. (συνιστημι = to demonstrate, show || Verb: Present Active Indicative, 1S).

ENGLISH TRANSLATION:

For if I rebuild what I once destroyed, I prove myself to be a transgressor.

CONTEXTUAL, GRAMMATICAL, THEOLOGICAL, APPLICATIONAL ANALYSIS:

For if I rebuild what I once destroyed, (εἰ γὰρ ἃ κατέλυσα ταῦτα πάλιν οἰκοδομῶ,)

The contrast between “destroy” (καταλυω, *katalyo*) and “rebuild” (πάλιν οἰκοδομεω, *palin oikodomeo*) refers most naturally to the law: if Peter, as a Jewish Christian, should try to reinstitute the law as an absolute authority for conduct (as his actions at Antioch suggested he was doing), then he would, in effect, be rebuilding that which, in coming to Christ alone for justification, he had earlier torn down (καταλυω is used with reference to the law in the well-known Matt. 5:17; cf. Betz 1979: 121, for the “legal sense” of the word).²

i.e. return to the law of Moses. Cf. Eph. 2:14-15.

Rebuild and tore down are figures of speech derived from the construction of buildings, but the Greek text does not specify what is being rebuilt or what was previously torn down. The reference may be (1) to the statutes of the Law which Paul had declared as no longer valid for the Christian (NAB “If ... I were to build up the very things I had demolished”); (2) to the whole system of man being put right with God by means of obedience to the Law (NEB “If I start building up again a system which I have pulled down”; Phps “But if I attempt to build again the whole structure of justification by the law”); or (3) to one’s favorable attitude toward the Jewish idea of being put right with God by means of law (JB “If I were to return to a position I had already abandoned”). [UBS, 48]

I prove myself to be a transgressor. (παραβάτην ἑμαυτὸν συνιστάνω.)

A return to the Law would be a return to an age that's past. The Law can reveal sin, not atone for it. "Paul turns the tables on his critics. Christ does not promote sin. It is those who live under the law who are revealed to be transgressors." [Schreiner, 169]

Elsewhere in his letters, Paul expresses the idea that Christ's death brings to an end the reign of the Law (for example, Rom 7:4; 10:4; Col 2:14) and that the Christian is free from the Law by participating in Christ's death (for example, Col 2:20; Gal 3:13). Paul may be expressing the same thought here. [UBS, 49–50]

"Any one who, having received justification through faith in Christ, thereafter reinstates law in place of Christ makes himself a sinner all over again." [Bruce, 142]

Here Paul explains why Christ is not a minister of sin.⁷⁴ But what exactly is the argument? We need to look at it piece by piece. The things torn down or "destroyed" refer to the OT law. The verb "I destroy" (καταλύω) is used elsewhere to refer to the abolishing or tearing down of the OT law (cf. Matt 5:17; 2 Macc 2:22; 4:11; 4 Macc 4:20, 24; 5:33).⁷⁵ In using the pronoun "I" here, Paul continues to address Peter, but he refers to himself as a representative of the Jewish people. Perhaps Paul universalizes the discussion by referring to himself because he wants to take the spotlight off the conflict between him and Peter.

If Paul rebuilds the OT law, which is abolished now that Christ has come and a new era in redemptive history has arrived, then he has violated God's will and is to be deemed a transgressor.⁷⁶ Hence, for Peter to say, in effect, that Gentiles must observe the OT law to belong to the people of God is contrary to God's will. Reinstating the law transgresses God's will because it denies that righteousness is in Christ and returns to the old era of salvation history.⁷⁷ Therefore, to reach back to the law for righteousness constitutes sin since it denies righteousness is in Christ. The old age was dominated by sin and the law, but the new age in Christ is marked by righteousness and life. This interpretation is preferable because it also explains the ground "for" (γάρ) in 2:19. Paul would prove himself to be a transgressor if he reinstated the law because he had already died to the law when he died with Christ. The era of the law had ceased with the death and resurrection of Christ. [Schreiner, 169–170]

Luther:

We must not drag good works into the article of justification as the monks do who maintain that not only good works, but also the punishment which evildoers suffer for their wicked deeds, deserve everlasting life. When a criminal is brought to the place of execution, the monks try to comfort him in this manner: "You want to die willingly and patiently, and then you will merit remission of your sins and eternal life." What cruelty is this, that a wretched thief, murderer,

robber should be so miserably misguided in his extreme distress, that at the very point of death he should be denied the sweet promises of Christ, and directed to hope for pardon of his sins in the willingness and patience with which he is about to suffer death for his crimes? The monks are showing him the paved way to hell.

These hypocrites do not know the first thing about grace, the Gospel, or Christ. They retain the appearance and the name of the Gospel and of Christ for a decoy only. In their confessional writings faith or the merit of Christ are never mentioned. In their writings they play up the merits of man, as can readily be seen from the following form of absolution used among the monks.

“God forgive thee, brother. The merit of the passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of the blessed Saint Mary, always a virgin, and of all the saints; the merit of thy order, the strictness of thy religion, the humility of thy profession, the contrition of thy heart, the good works thou hast done and shalt do for the love of our Lord Jesus Christ, be available unto thee for the remission of thy sins, the increase of thy worth and grace, and the reward of everlasting life. Amen.”

True, the merit of Christ is mentioned in this formula of absolution. But if you look closer you will notice that Christ’s merit is belittled, while monkish merits are aggrandized. They confess Christ with their lips, and at the same time deny His power to save. I myself was at one time entangled in this error. I thought Christ was a judge and had to be pacified by a strict adherence to the rules of my order. But now I give thanks unto God, the Father of all mercies, who has called me out of darkness into the light of His glorious Gospel, and has granted unto me the saving knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord.

We conclude with Paul, that we are justified by faith in Christ, without the Law. Once a person has been justified by Christ, he will not be unproductive of good, but as a good tree he will bring forth good fruit. A believer has the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit will not permit a person to remain idle, but will put him to work and stir him up to the love of God, to patient suffering in affliction, to prayer, thanksgiving, to the habit of charity towards all men.

Lesson of Hebrews? If the law finds its *telos* in Christ (Rom. 10:4 / Gal. 3:24-25) then to return to the Law is to deny Christ.

You can't transgress that which you have died to. But when you make yourself alive to it again, you become alive to sin again. Cf. v. 19.

2:19 EXEGESIS

GREEK TEXT:

ἐγὼ γὰρ διὰ νόμου νόμῳ ἀπέθανον, ἵνα θεῷ ζήσω. Χριστῷ συνεσταύρωμαι·

ἐγὼ γὰρ διὰ νόμου (νόμος || Noun: Masculine Genitive Singular). Emphatic.

νόμῳ (νόμος || Noun: Masculine Dative Singular).

ἀπέθανον, (ἀποθνήσκω = to die || Verb: Aorist Active Indicative, 1S).

ἵνα θεῷ (θεός || Noun: Masculine Dative Singular).

ζήσω. (ζαω || Verb: Aorist Active Subjunctive, 1S).

Χριστῷ (Noun: Masculine Dative Singular).

συνεσταύρωμαι· (συσταύρωω = || Verb: Perfect Passive Indicative, 1S). Word that's used in the gospels (Matt. 27:44; Mk. 15:32; J. 19:32) and by Paul here and in Rom. 6:6.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION:

For through the Law I died to the Law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ –

CONTEXTUAL, GRAMMATICAL, THEOLOGICAL, APPLICATIONAL ANALYSIS:

For through the Law I died to the Law, (ἐγὼ γὰρ διὰ νόμου νόμῳ ἀπέθανον,)

The believer's obituary. cf. 4:4–5. Once the Law exacted its death penalty, there was no more that it could do. Someone can only be executed once, and once that person is executed by the Law, the Law has no more claim upon that person. The Law's demand of death was satisfied in the death of Christ.

What did Paul mean when he said, “I died to the law”? We must avoid two errors in interpreting these words.¹⁹⁰ In the first place we must avoid reducing the law in this context to its ceremonial aspect. True, the burning issues in Galatia were circumcision, feast days, and food laws, all of which were external rites or ceremonies called for by the law of Moses. However, the issue at stake was not these ceremonies as such, for to Paul they were “things indifferent”; his concern was rather the theological baggage the false teachers were placing on such rites. As J. G. Machen put it, “Paul is contending in this great epistle not for a ‘spiritual’ view of the law as over against externalism or ceremonialism; he is contending for the grace of God as over against human merit in any form.”¹⁹¹

When Paul said he died to the law, he was referring to nothing less than the God-given commandments and decrees contained in Old Testament Scriptures. However, he was not saying here that the law of God had lost all meaning or relevance for the Christian believer. This is the error of antinomianism, which Paul was at pains to refute both here in Galatians as well as in Romans. Later in Galatians, Paul would exhort his readers to carry one another’s burdens and thus “fulfill the law of Christ” (6:2). There is an ethical imperative in the Christian life that flows from a proper understanding of justification. Paul would return to this theme in the last two chapters of the epistle.

Elsewhere Paul used the expression “to die to” not only with reference to the law but also in relation to the self, sin, and the world.¹⁹² In each of these cases Paul meant that his relationship to these entities—self, sin, world, law—had been so decisively altered by his union with Christ that they no longer control, dominate, or define his existence. By saying that he died to the law “through the law” Paul is anticipating his later discussion of the provisional role of the law in the history of salvation. The law itself, by revealing the inadequacy of human obedience and the depth of human sinfulness, set the stage, as it were, for the drama of redemption effected by the promised Messiah who fulfilled the law by obeying it perfectly and suffering its curse vicariously. [George, 198–199]

“In Pauline usage, 'to die to' something is to cease to have any further relation to it (cf. Rom 6:2, 10-11; 7:2-6). Conversely, 'to live to' someone means to have a personal, unrestricted relationship with that one (cf. Rom 6:10-11; 14:7-8; 2 Cor 5:15).” [Longenecker, 91]

Cf. believers have died to sin / self/ the world, etc.

All believers died to the law when they died with Christ. “You also have died to the law through the body of Christ” (Rom 7:4 ESV). The death of Christ brought to an end the reign of the Law. To reinstate the Law is to turn back the clock on redemptive history. Hebrews has much to say about this.

Schreiner asks:

But how does this second interpretation explain the words “through the law”? If Rom 7:4 unpacks how believers died to the law by being incorporated into Christ’s death, in what sense did death to the law become a reality “through the law”? It seems that Gal 4:4–5 provides the answer. In a confessional type statement Paul affirms that Jesus as God’s Son was “born under the law” (4:4). Even though Jesus was “under the law” and lived in the old era of redemptive history, he was not under the power of sin, for he always did the will of God and kept God’s law perfectly. Hence, as the true Son of God and as the sinless one he was qualified to redeem and liberate those who were under the law (4:5).

To put it another way, since Jesus lived under the law, he could free those who lived under the dominion of sin and the law. The reign of the law ended, therefore, “through the law.” Jesus in his death took the full penalty of the law upon himself, even though as the sinless one he did not deserve its curse (3:10, 13). By dying under the law he ended the era of the law, and those who have died with Christ share in his victory over the law. [Schreiner, 170–171]

All believers in Christ have ‘died in relation to sin’ (Rom. 6:2, 11), but the point stressed here is that, at the same time, they have ‘died in relation to law’—Jewish believers specifically and consciously so. Paul—for he puts the case in the first person singular—no longer lives under the power of the law; he has been released from its dominion and has entered into new life. ‘With death obligations towards the law have ceased’ (H.-J. Schoeps, Paul, 193). It is fundamental to Paul’s understanding of the law that he can define one and the same experience as death to law (cf. Rom. 7:4–6) and death to sin (Rom. 6:2). To be under law is to be exposed to the power of sin, for ‘the power of sin is the law’ (1 Cor. 15:56); it is the law that provides sin with a vantage-point from which to invade Mansoul (cf. Rom. 7:7–11). But to those who have entered into new life in Christ the assurance is given: ‘sin will have no more dominion over you, since

you are not under law but under grace' (Rom. 6:14). Cf. P. Benoit, 'La loi et la croix d'après Saint Paul (Rom VII,7–VIII,4)', RB 47 (1938), 488–509 (especially 502 n. 3). [Bruce, 142–143]

On any showing, vs. 19a is difficult—'for I myself through the Law died to the Law, in order that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ', It is perhaps helpful if we consider for a moment Paul's discussion in Rom. 7:1–4 about dying to the Law. There Paul reminds his audience that the Law is binding on a person so long as they live. Verse 4 is crucial where Paul says that his audience has died to the Law (cf. vs. 6 discharged from the Law) through the body of Christ, so that they might belong to another (i.e., to Christ) in order that they might bear fruit. [Witherington, 188]

Luther on v. 19:

Here Paul plays the Law against the Law, as if to say: "The Law of Moses condemns me; but I have another law, the law of grace and liberty which condemns the accusing Law of Moses." On first sight Paul seems to be advancing a strange and ugly heresy. He says, "I am dead to the law, that I might live unto God." The false apostles said the very opposite. They said, "If you do not live to the law, you are dead unto God."

The doctrine of our opponents is similar to that of the false apostles in Paul's day. Our opponents teach, "If you want to live unto God, you must live after the Law, for it is written, Do this and thou shalt live." Paul, on the other hand, teaches, "We cannot live unto God unless we are dead unto the Law." If we are dead unto the Law, the Law can have no power over us. Paul does not only refer to the Ceremonial Law, but to the whole Law. We are not to think that the Law is wiped out. It stays. It continues to operate in the wicked. But a Christian is dead to the Law. For example, Christ by His resurrection became free from the grave, and yet the grave remains.

Peter was delivered from prison, yet the prison remains. The Law is abolished as far as I am concerned, when it has driven me into the arms of Christ. Yet the Law continues to exist and to function. But it no longer exists for me.

"I have nothing to do with the Law," cries Paul. He could not have uttered anything more devastating to the prestige of the Law. He declares that he does not care for the Law, that he does not intend ever to be justified by the Law.

To be dead to the Law means to be free of the Law. What right, then, has the Law to accuse me, or to hold anything against me? When you see a person squirming in the clutches of the Law, say to him: "Brother, get things straight. You let the Law talk to your conscience. Make it talk to your flesh. Wake up, and believe in Jesus Christ, the Conqueror of Law and sin. Faith in Christ longer concern you, because you are dead to the Law and dead to sin."

Blessed is the person who knows how to use this truth in times of distress. He can talk. He can say: "Mr. Law, go ahead and accuse me as much as you like. I know I have committed many sins, and I continue to sin daily. But that does not bother me. You have got to shout louder, Mr. Law. I am deaf, you know. Talk as much as you like, I am dead to you. If you want to talk to me about my sins, go and talk to my flesh. Belabor that, but don't talk to my conscience. My

conscience is a lady and a queen, and has nothing to do with the likes of you, because my conscience lives to Christ under another law, a new and better law, the law of grace.”

We have two propositions: To live unto the Law, is to die unto God. To die unto the Law, is to live unto God. These two propositions go against reason. No law-worker can ever understand them.

But see to it that you understand them. The Law can never justify and save a sinner. The Law can only accuse, terrify, and kill him. Therefore to live unto the Law is to die unto God. Vice versa, to die unto the Law is to live unto God. If you want to live unto God, bury the Law, and find life through faith in Christ Jesus.

We have enough arguments right here to conclude that justification is by faith alone. How can the Law effect our justification, when Paul so plainly states that we must be dead to the Law if we want to live unto God? If we are dead to the Law and the Law is dead to us, how can it possibly contribute anything to our justification? There is nothing left for us but to be justified by faith alone.

This nineteenth verse is loaded with consolation. It fortifies a person against every danger. It allows you to argue like this:

“I confess I have sinned.”

“Then God will punish you.”

“No, He will not do that.”

“Why not? Does not the Law say so?”

“I have nothing to do with the Law.”

“How so?”

“I have another law, the law of liberty.”

“What do you mean—‘liberty’?”

“The liberty of Christ, for Christ has made me free from the Law that held me down. That Law is now in prison itself, held captive by grace and liberty.”

By faith in Christ a person may gain such sure and sound comfort, that he need not fear the devil, sin, death, or any evil. “Sir Devil,” he may say, “I am not afraid of you. I have a Friend whose name is Jesus Christ, in whom I believe. He has abolished the Law, condemned sin, vanquished death, and destroyed hell for me. He is bigger than you, Satan. He has licked you, and holds you down. You cannot hurt me.” This is the faith that overcomes the devil.

Paul manhandles the Law. He treats the Law as if it were a thief and a robber. He treats the Law as contemptible to the conscience, in order that those who believe in Christ may take courage to defy the Law, and say: “Mr. Law, I am a sinner. What are you going to do about it?”

Or take death. Christ is risen from death. Why should we now fear the grave? Against my death I set another death, or rather life, my life in Christ.

Oh, the sweet names of Jesus! He is called my law against the Law, my sin against sin, my death against death. Translated, it means that He is my righteousness, my life, my everlasting salvation. For this reason was He made the law of the Law, the sin of sin, the death of death, that He might redeem me from the curse of the Law. He permitted the Law to accuse Him, sin

to condemn Him, and death to take Him, to abolish the Law, to condemn sin, and to destroy death for me.

This peculiar form of speech sounds much sweeter than if Paul had said: “I through liberty am dead to the law.” By putting it in this way, “I through the law am dead to the law,” he opposes one law with another law, and has them fight it out.

In this masterly fashion Paul draws our attention away from the Law, sin, death, and every evil, and centers it upon Christ.

“When Paul therefore claims that he has 'died to the law,' he means that he has been released from the binding authority of the Law of Moses.” [Moo, 168]

How foolish to return to that which you have died to.

Purpose of dying to the law==>

so that I might live to God. (ἵνα θεῷ ζήσω.)

Rom. 6:10, 11.

“Do this and live, the law commands, but gives me neither feet nor hands. A better word the gospel brings. It bids me fly and gives me wings.”

Cf. Rom 7:1-6. – If a man is convicted of murder and is put to death, the law has no more claim on him. He has paid his debt to society. Even if he were to rise from the dead, he would be innocent before the law which would have no claim on him. So it is with the believer who has died with Christ and has risen to new life. The law – sin – has no more claim upon him.

Viewing the next clause as part of v. 19 helps to clarify:

Even more importantly the statement ‘I have been crucified with Christ’ is probably part of vs. 19, and provides a clue to Paul’s meaning.⁶³ The place where the Law was abolished or set aside was on the cross of Christ. It was Christ himself, taking on the curse of the Law who died to the Law for all, through the execution of the Law’s curse on him. Inasmuch as Paul or any Christian was crucified ‘with’ Christ on that occasion (Christ being both representative and corporate head of his group of followers), he or any Christian also as a result died to the Law. This meant they were no longer under the Law’s jurisdiction, no longer obligated to keep the Law, no longer under the Law’s power, free from the Law’s curse and its demands. It also meant that the “distinction between sinner and righteous is no longer determined by Torah”.⁶⁴ They now lived in a new sphere of influence, namely Christ, or to put it another way they were now part of the eschatological new creation. They were now under a new mandate, namely the Law of Christ, which meant first and foremost following the example of Christ, of his self-sacrificial community-creating obedience and faithfulness expressed pre-eminently on the cross. [Witherington, 189]

I have been crucified with Christ – (Χριστῷ συνεσταύρωμαι·)

Perfect tense: I'm still hanging there!

20. I am crucified with Christ (Χριστῷ συνεσταύρωμαι). This compound verb is used by Paul only here and Rom. 6:6. In the gospels, Matt. 27:44; Mk. 15:32; J. 19:32. The statement explains how a believer dies to the law by means of the law itself. In the crucifixion of Christ as one accursed, the demand of the law was met (see Gal. 3:13). Ethically, a believer is crucified with Christ (Rom. 6:3–11; Philip. 3:10; 1 Cor. 15:31; 2 Cor. 4:10), and thus the demand of the law is fulfilled in him likewise. Paul means that, “owing to his connection with the crucified, he was, like him, legally impure, and was thus an outcast from the Jewish church.”* He became dead to the law by the law’s own act. [Vincent, 107]

“I have been crucified with Christ.” In the Greek text this expression, along with the one just before it, “so that I might live for God,” are a part of v. 19, thus completing Paul’s earlier thought. Thus the flow of the sentence would be: “I have died to the law in order that I might live for God having been crucified together with Christ.” The new life Paul had received flowed from his identification with the passion and death of Christ. [George, 199]

But what does it mean to be “crucified with Christ”? In one sense this is presumptuous language because the mystery of atonement requires that the death of Christ be unique, unrepeatable, and isolated. The two thieves who were literally crucified with Christ did not bear the sins of the world in their agonizing deaths. On the cross Christ suffered alone forsaken by his friends, his followers, and finally even his Father, dying, as J. Moltmann puts it, “a God-forsaken death for God-forsaken people.”¹⁹⁴ With reference to his substitutionary suffering and vicarious death, only Jesus, and he alone, can be the Substitute and Vicar. And yet—this was Paul’s point—the very benefits of Christ’s atoning death, including first of all justification, are without effect unless we are identified with Christ in his death and resurrection. As Calvin put it, “As long as Christ remains outside of us, and we are separated from him, all that he has suffered and done for the salvation of the human race remains useless and of no value for us.”¹⁹⁵ Thus to be crucified with Christ is, as Paul said elsewhere, to know him in the “fellowship of his sufferings” (Phil 3:10). To be crucified with Christ is the same as being dead to the law. This means that we are freed from all the curse and guilt of the law and, by this very deliverance, are set free truly to “live for God.” As Calvin said again, “Engrafted into the death of Christ, we derive a secret energy from it, as the shoot does from the root.”¹⁹⁶ It is this experience of divine grace that makes the doctrine of justification a living reality rather than a legal fiction. [George, 199–200]

At least 4 things were on the cross. 1) Jesus Himself; 2) A public announcement (cf. John 19:19); 3) Debt of our sin (Col 2:13-14); 4) the Christian. The first 2 you can see, the latter 2 you cannot.

“We are in mind and meditation to consider Christ crucified and first, we are to believe that he was crucified for us. This being done, we must go yet further, and as it were spread ourselves on the cross of Christ believing and withal beholding ourselves crucified with Him.” [Cambridge Puritan William Perkins, 1558-1602, cited in Ryken, 73]

2:20 EXEGESIS

GREEK TEXT:

ζῶ δὲ οὐκέτι ἐγώ, ζῆ δὲ ἐν ἐμοὶ Χριστός· ὁ δὲ νῦν ζῶ ἐν σαρκί, ἐν πίστει ζῶ τῆ τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ἀγαπήσαντός με καὶ παραδόντος ἑαυτὸν ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ.

ζῶ δὲ (ζῶω || Verb: Present Active Indicative, 1S).

οὐκέτι (οὐκέτι = no longer || Adverb).

ἐγώ, ζῆ δὲ (ζῶω || Verb: Present Active Indicative, 3S).

ἐν ἐμοὶ (ἐγώ = I || First Person Independent Personal Pronoun: Dative Singular). Emphatic. Dative of reference.

Χριστός· (Noun: Masculine Nominative Singular).

ὁ δὲ (ὅς = who/that, of whom, to whom, whom [referring to people]; that/which, of which, to which, which [referring to things] – Translation depends on case || Relative Pronoun: Neuter Accusative Singular).

νῦν (νῦν || Adverb).

ζῶ (ζῶω || Verb: Present Active Indicative, 1S).

ἐν σαρκί, (σαρξ || Noun: Feminine Dative Singular).

ἐν πίστει (πίστις || Noun: Feminine Dative Singular).

ζῶ (ζῶω || Verb: Present Active Indicative, 1S).

τῆ (ἡ || Definite Article: Feminine Dative Singular).

τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ (Noun: Masculine Genitive Singular).

τοῦ ἀγαπήσαντός (ἀγαπαω || Masculine Genitive Singular Aorist Active Participle).

με (ἐγώ = I || First Person Independent Personal Pronoun: Accusative Singular).

καὶ παραδόντος (παραδιδωμι = to hand over, to deliver, to give up || Masculine Genitive Singular Aorist Active Participle).

ἑαυτὸν ἑμαυτοῦ = myself || First Person Reflexive Pronoun: Masculine Accusative Singular).

ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ. (ἐγώ = I || First Person Independent Personal Pronoun: Genitive Singular).

ENGLISH TRANSLATION:

and it is no longer I who live, but Christ 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 up for me.

CONTEXTUAL, GRAMMATICAL, THEOLOGICAL, APPLICATIONAL ANALYSIS:

and it is no longer I who live, (ζῶ δὲ οὐκέτι ἐγώ,)

Paul often uses the idea of dying with Christ (Gal. 5:24; 6:14; Rom. 6:8; Col. 2:20) and burial with Christ also (Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12).

Paul explains what constitutes true Christian righteousness. True Christian righteousness is the

righteousness of Christ who lives in us. We must look away from our own person. Christ and my conscience must become one, so that I can see nothing else but Christ crucified and raised from the dead for me. If I keep on looking at myself, I am gone.

If we lose sight of Christ and begin to consider our past, we simply go to pieces. We must turn our eyes to the brazen serpent, Christ crucified, and believe with all our heart that He is our righteousness and our life. For Christ, on whom our eyes are fixed, in whom we live, who lives in us, is Lord over Law, sin, death, and all evil. [Luther]

Union with Christ: Those who belong to Christ are in Christ. What is true of Him is true of them. Wright claims that “The roots of this idea are in the Jewish beliefs about the king. The king represents his people (think of David fighting Goliath, representing Israel against the Philistines); what is true of him is true of them.” [Wright1, 25–26]

but Christ lives in me. (ζῆν δὲ ἐν ἐμοὶ Χριστός·)

“I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.” Paul set forth in this expression his doctrine of the indwelling Christ. Probably no verse in the Letter of Galatians is quoted more frequently by evangelical Christians than this one. Much harm has been done to the body of Christ by well-meaning persons who have perpetuated erroneous interpretations of these words. Properly understood, Paul’s words give sanction neither to perfectionism nor to mysticism. [George, 200]

"in me" ἐν ἐμοὶ (1/3 of these uses are a referential dative). "Christ lives with respect to me" (same construction as in 1:24). Christ lives with reference to me. He died with reference to me and lives with reference to me. Not animation, but substitution.

When we look at ourselves we find plenty of sin. But when we look at Christ, we have no sin. Whenever we separate the person of Christ from our own person, we live under the Law and not in Christ; we are condemned by the Law, dead before God. Faith connects you so intimately with Christ, that He and you become as it were one person. As such you may boldly say: “I am now one with Christ. Therefore Christ’s righteousness, victory, and life are mine.” [Luther]

And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, (ὁ δὲ νῦν ζῶ ἐν σαρκί, ἐν πίστει ζῶ τῇ τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ)

The language here fits with Paul’s claim that the “our old self was crucified with him” (ὁ παλαιὸς ἡμῶν ἄνθρωπος συνεσταυρώθη, Rom 6:6). The phrase “old self” points to who believers were in Adam (cf. also Eph 4:22; Col 3:9). Believers are now a “new self” (καινὸς ἄνθρωπος) in Christ (Eph 4:24; Col 3:10; cf. Eph 2:15).⁸⁴ This new reality has dawned precisely because they have died with Christ. The eschaton has dawned at the cross of Christ, and insisting on food laws plunges people back into this “present evil age” (1:4). [Schreiner, 172]

Our new life is not about law observance (or works for that matter), but faith in Jesus as the Son of God.

“Son of God” / “the Son” is not a phrase often used by Paul (Rom 1:4; 2 Cor 1:19; Eph 4:13 + Rom 1:3, 9; 5:10; 8:3, 29, 32; 1 Cor 1:9; 15:28; Gal 1:16; 4:4; Col 1:13; 1 Thess 1:10). Son of God = unique, special, 2d person of the Trinity.

Paul does not deny the fact that he is living in the flesh. He performs the natural functions of the flesh. But he says that this is not his real life. His life in the flesh is not a life after the flesh.

“I live by the faith of the Son of God,” he says. “My speech is no longer directed by the flesh, but by the Holy Ghost. My sight is no longer governed by the flesh, but by the Holy Ghost. My hearing is no longer determined by the flesh, but by the Holy Ghost. I cannot teach, write, pray, or give thanks without the instrumentality of the flesh; yet these activities do not proceed from the flesh, but from God.”

A Christian uses earthly means like any unbeliever. Outwardly they look alike. Nevertheless there is a great difference between them. I may live in the flesh, but I do not live after the flesh. I do my living now “by the faith of the Son of God.” Paul had the same voice, the same tongue, before and after his conversion. Before his conversion his tongue uttered blasphemies. But after his conversion his tongue spoke a spiritual, heavenly language.

We may now understand how spiritual life originates. It enters the heart by faith. Christ reigns in the heart with His Holy Spirit, who sees, hears, speaks, works, suffers, and does all things in and through us over the protest and the resistance of the flesh. [Luther]

who loved me and gave Himself up for me. (τοῦ ἀγαπήσαντός με καὶ παραδόντος ἑαυτὸν ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ.)

The words, “The Son of God who loved me, and gave Himself for me,” are so many thunderclaps and lightning bolts of protest from heaven against the righteousness of the Law. The wickedness, error, darkness, ignorance in my mind and my will were so great, that it was quite impossible for me to be saved by any other means than by the inestimable price of Christ’s death.

Let us count the price. When you hear that such an enormous price was paid for you, will you still come along with your cowl, your shaven pate, your chastity, your obedience, your poverty, your works, your merits? What do you want with all these trappings? What good are the works of all men, and all the pains of the martyrs, in comparison with the pains of the Son of God dying on the Cross, so that there was not a drop of His precious blood, but it was all shed for your sins. If you could properly evaluate this incomparable price, you would throw all your ceremonies, vows, works, and merits into the ash can. What awful presumption to imagine that there is any work good enough to pacify God, when to pacify God required the invaluable price of the death and blood of His own and only Son? [Luther]

Paul’s faith has a specific referent, for he trusts in Christ, who displayed his love by giving his life for Paul’s sake (who is paradigmatic of all believers) on the cross.⁹⁵ The language used here is similar to the formulation in Eph 5:2 and 5:25 where Christ’s self-giving love is featured. The words here are intensely personal and individualistic. Christ loved “me” and gave himself “for me.”⁹⁶ Paul sees this love as extending to all Christians, but the individualistic emphasis must not be neglected. Faith in Christ can be sustained only where one is confident in God’s love. Love, in this sense, is the fuel of faith.⁹⁷ This love finds its roots in the cross,

where Christ gave his life “for” Paul. Indeed, the expression “for me” (ὕπὲρ ἐμοῦ) suggests substitution, that Christ died in Paul’s place. [Schreiner, 173]

This is the “normal Christian life” - for everyone.

With faith in the resurrected Christ comes death through which comes new life (Rom. 6:2–8; 7:6; Col. 2:20; 3:3).

2:21 EXEGESIS

GREEK TEXT:

Οὐκ ἀθετῶ τὴν χάριν τοῦ θεοῦ· εἰ γὰρ διὰ νόμου δικαιοσύνη, ἄρα Χριστὸς δωρεὰν ἀπέθανεν.

Οὐκ ἀθετῶ (ἀθετεω = to nullify, declare as invalid || Verb: Present Active Indicative, 1S).

τὴν χάριν (χάρις || Noun: Feminine Accusative Singular).

τοῦ θεοῦ (Noun: Masculine Genitive Singular).

εἰ γὰρ διὰ νόμου (Noun: Masculine Genitive Singular).

δικαιοσύνη, (δικαιοσύνη || Noun: Feminine Nominative Singular).

ἄρα (ἄρα = then || Conjunction, logical/inferential).

Χριστὸς (Noun: Masculine Nominative Singular).

δωρεὰν (δωρεάν = to no purpose || Adverb).

ἀπέθανεν. (ἀποθνήσκω = to die || Verb: Aorist Active Indicative, 3S).

ENGLISH TRANSLATION:

I do not nullify the grace of God: for if righteousness [comes] through the Law, then Christ died for no purpose.

CONTEXTUAL, GRAMMATICAL, THEOLOGICAL, APPLICATIONAL ANALYSIS:

I do not nullify the grace of God: (Οὐκ ἀθετῶ τὴν χάριν τοῦ θεοῦ·)

In vs. 21 Paul makes a simple assertion. He is not going to say or do anything to ‘nullify’ the grace of God. The language here is legal (cf. 1 Macc. 11:36; 2 Macc. 13:25; Gal. 3:15; 1 Cor. 1:19; 1 Tim 5:12), coming from the realm of wills, testaments, and covenants. Paul’s view is that a new covenantal situation has been set up by the death of Christ (cf. 2 Cor. 3), and this covenant is based on God’s gracious work in Christ. Anything which compromises or constricts the efficacy or character of that work is seen by Paul as an attempt to invalidate or annul this new gracious covenant. Paul’s implication is that there are those who are annulling the grace of God, by insisting on Christians, in particular Gentiles in this case, keeping the Mosaic Law. This is why the propositio ends with a bang in the form of a conditional statement. Here again we have a first class condition—‘for if righteousness/justification [comes] through the Law, then Christ died for nothing!’ It is, however, in view of vs. 16, surely not a real condition.⁷⁸ It must be said on this score that by Paul’s day, contrary to fact conditions in the indicative with εἰ did not require an ἂν in the apodosis to signal this fact. We see examples of this sort of phenomenon for example in Gal. 4:15 and also in Jn. 15:24, and I would suggest that Gal. 5:11 is simply another example of the unreal or contrary to fact condition with εἰ and without ἂν.⁷⁹ The grammarians agree that though it is rare, there are occasions where the indicative can be used in a protasis without ἂν in the apodosis to refer to an unreal condition.⁸⁰ It is clear from vs. 16 that Paul does not think Christ died for nothing and consequently he does not think righteousness or justification comes through the Law. Christ’s action (not our faith) is here set over against the Law as that which puts the believer in right relationship with God, and in fact

one has this ongoing relationship with God because of what Christ did.⁸¹ [Witherington, 192–193]

Atheteō, “To Nullify.” In Galatians 2:19–21, Paul argues that a return to life under the law would effectively “nullify” (atheteō) the grace of God since believers have already “died to the law” by being crucified with Christ. The Greek verb atheteō means “to nullify,” “to reject,” or “to set aside” something or someone.

In Luke 10:16, the word occurs four times in Jesus’ speech to the 72 whom He sent out as an extension of His ministry. In 1 Thessalonians 4:8, Paul writes that whoever rejects (ho athetōn) his instructions regarding sexual immorality rejects (athetei) God Himself. Paul’s use of atheteō in Gal 2:21, which according to Longenecker (1998, 94) has legal overtones, is probably similar to its meaning in Gal 3:15, where Paul says that no one can “annul” (athetei) or add to a will once it has been ratified (Gal 3:15). [Douglas Mangum and Derek R. Brown, Galatians, Lexham Bible Guide (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012), Ga 2:1–21.]

for if righteousness [comes] through the Law, then Christ died for no purpose. (εἰ γὰρ διὰ νόμου δικαιοσύνη, ἄρα Χριστὸς δωρεὰν ἀπέθανεν.)

A reductio ad absurdum.

It is likely that Paul’s concluding words to Peter are found here, and hence 2:21 functions as a summary of the argument. Paul as a Jewish Christian does not reject God’s grace, which has been manifested in the self-giving love of Christ on the cross. This grace demonstrates that right standing with God comes through faith in Jesus Christ and not by works of law (see 2:16). Indeed, the summary character of the verse indicates that the noun “righteousness” (δικαιοσύνη) cannot be understood differently from the verb “justify” (δικαιόω). When Paul refers to righteousness by law, he refers to a declaration of righteousness based on keeping the law.⁹⁸

The term “righteousness” here does not refer to ethical renewal but the pronouncement of the judge based on whether the standards of the law were observed. Paul argues here that righteousness cannot come via the law. If it did, then Christ’s death on the cross is superfluous. Christ’s self-giving on the cross would be completely unnecessary, for right standing with God would be attained through observing the law rather than by trusting in what God has done in Christ to grant salvation.

Peter’s actions relative to the Gentiles sent them the message, whether Peter acknowledged it or not, that the Gentiles must keep the law to be right with God. In so doing, Christ’s cross becomes unnecessary for righteousness. If the law suffices, Christ is superfluous. And if the law suffices, grace is nullified. Righteousness is no longer given as a gift; it is attained by human effort. So, either Peter renounces the need to observe the food laws, or he renounces the cross. There is no middle way.

It is almost certain that Peter heeded Paul’s advice. Otherwise, Paul would have considered him to be a false brother, and that does not fit what Paul says about Peter in 1 Corinthians (1 Cor 1:12; 3:22; 9:5; 15:5), nor does it fit with Peter’s later commendation of Paul (2 Pet 3:15).

Further, Paul's appeal to the agreement of the apostles in Gal 2:1–10 would be useless if Peter ultimately disagreed with him. [Schreiner, 173–174]

In effect he was saying to Peter, “By withdrawing from fellowship with your Gentile brothers you take your stand with the Judaizers and against Christ. You nullify the grace of God by denying the need for Christ's death, just as you did when you rebuked the Lord for declaring it was necessary for Him to suffer, be killed, and raised on the third day (see Matt. 16:21–22). [MacArthur, 60]

At the Jerusalem Council Peter declared that same truth in response to the Judaizers. “Why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they [the Gentiles] also are” (Acts 15:10–11).