



MESSAGE

STUDY GUIDE

GROUP MATERIAL

SONGS

Examining the text & our hearts:

Bible Reading: Gal.2:15-18

1. Context of Justification in Galatians

- a. Influence of circumcision party in Galatia
- b. Antioch episode
- c. Paul and Peter's strong background

"Growing up in similar contexts, both [Peter & Paul] found it extremely difficult to abandon the law when they converted to Christ. It was the turning to Christ that created a rift with their past & that caused Peter problems. But Jews had to learn, if they wanted to be consistently Christian, what it meant to be a part of the God's new people: the church of Jesus Christ. We are unfair to both of these men, especially to Peter, if we don't appreciate the difficulty of applying the gospel & letting it have full control of all of life, especially in those areas where one's social identity was at stake."— Scot McKnight

2. Justification—Legal & Relational Aspects (2 Cor. 5:21)

a. The Legal (forensic) Aspect

- a. "For our sake he [God] made him [Christ] to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." (2 Corinthians 5:21 ESV)
- b. "This verse [2 Cor. 5:21] is one of the most important in all of Scripture for understanding...justification. Here we see that the one who 'knew no sin' is Jesus Christ (5:20) & that 'he (God) made him (Christ) to be sin' (Gk. hamartia, "sin"). This means that God the Father made Christ to be regarded & treated as "sin" even though Christ himself never sinned (Heb. 4:15). Further, we see that God did this for our sake—i.e., God regarded & treated "our" sin...as if our sin belonged not to us but to Christ himself. Thus Christ 'died for all' (2 Cor. 5:14)...Christ became "sin" for those who believe in him, 'so that in him we might become the righteousness of God' [5:21b]. This means that just as God imputed our sin & guilt to Christ ("he made him to be sin") so God also imputes the righteousness of Christ—a righteousness that's not our own [hence, 'alien']— to all who believe in Christ. Because Christ bore the sins of those who believe, God regards & treats believers as having the legal status of "righteousness" [or 'justified'] (Gk. dikaiosyn?). This righteousness belongs to believers because they are "in him," i.e., "in Christ." Therefore "the righteousness of God" (which is imputed to believers) is also the righteousness of Christ—i.e., the righteousness & the legal status that belongs to Christ as a result of Christ having lived as one who "knew no sin." This then is the heart of the doctrine of justification: God regards (or counts) believers as forgiven & God declares & treats them as forgiven, because God the Father has imputed the believer's sin to Christ & because God the Father likewise imputes Christ's righteousness to the believer.' [ESV Study Bible, p. 2230] Note 'impute(d)' (5x) 'legal status' (2x)

b. Justification in Gal. 2: not 'alien righteousness transferred,' but union with the righteous One

a. "In the Reformation ['Lutheran,' etc.] tradition righteousness by faith involves the receiving by the believer of the alien righteousness of Christ. It is this receiving of...righteousness from outside that places the individual in a right relationship with God [i.e., justifies]...In speaking of an alien righteousness of Christ interpreters in the Reformation tradition necessarily think of that righteousness as something transferred from Christ to those who believe, thus separating justification from Paul's reference to participation in Christ...However...this trap [isn't] characteristic of Luther & Calvin in their comments on Galatians 2:15-21. Both intimately connect justification with participation in Christ, following the contours of Paul's argument as he moves from righteousness language in Gal. 2:16 to participatory language ['with Christ/'Christ in me'] in Gal 2:19-20...In these accounts the righteousness of Christ is not an object or substance transferred from him to the believer, but part of who Christ is. Faith unites those who believe with Christ...and since he is righteous then in him they too are righteous." [Stephen Chester, Paul & the Galatian Believers, in S. Westerholm (ed.) Blackwell Companion to Paul, pp. 68-9]

c. Justification in Gal. 2—Relational, participation

a. "Galatians 2:15-21 [is] Paul's interpretation of Justification: Gal. 2:15-21 is a self-contained rhetorical unit; the ['sole,' 'persistent'] subject of this [whole] unit is 'justification' & Paul is offering his own interpretation of justification...Paul has said that human faith is a response to...Jesus...Then he develops this idea by depicting 'justification by faith'...in terms of participating in Jesus' faithful death or co-crucifixion (Gal. 2:19)." [Michael Gorman, Participating in Christ p]

b. "Although the term 'justification' has a legal context—it speaks of being put in the right or being acquitted—the heart of the matter is relational. It is about being restored to a right relationship to God, simply because of the gratuitous goodness of God, not because we've earned it." [C. Mostert, "Salvation's Setting," in I. Davidson, M. Rae (eds.) God of Salvation, p 129]

3. Justification in Galatians 2

a. What is justification?

a. Approval/ acceptance by God
'Justify'...[i]n a social context, this means 'consider someone to be in good standing' (socially acceptable), & in the legal context, 'consider someone to be in the right' (vindicated in a lawsuit)...[i]t is best to respect its normal meaning in Greek, which expresses a judgment about someone's legal & social standing (not a change in their. condition)." [John M. G. Barclay, Paul & the Power of Grace, p. 48]

b. Not based on works of law (Torah)

c. Based on faith in Christ

b. Paul and Peter's experience – "we" – 2:16

a. "We know that a person is not justified by the works of the law [Torah]
The fact that Paul, Peter, [etc.] & every other Jewish Christ-follower became a Christ-follower in the first place is evidence that they did not consider aligning themselves with the Torah to be a sufficient path to acquittal before God's judgment seat. The fact that they relied on Jesus & what Jesus provided in order to attain that end further suggests... that aligning oneself with the Torah is also not prerequisite to attaining that end." [David DeSilva, Galatians, p. 213]

b. The works of law

a. Works of law does not refer to general good works

b. Refers to practicing Mosaic Law

"Works of the Law'...refer to the observance of the Mosaic Law. Paul is not talking about 'good works' in general but about practicing what the Torah demands,...'living in a Jewish fashion' (2:14)." [John M. G. Barclay, Paul & the Power of Grace, p. 48]

c. "We know a person is justified by faith in Jesus Christ" v. 16a

"...Paul points out that he & Peter, along with all other Jewish Christians, by placing their faith in Jesus Christ, had acknowledged that the Jewish law was unable to make them right with God (2:15-16)" [G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson, Commentary on the NT use of the OT, p. 789]

"[The Mosaic Law] does not & cannot establish a person's worth or standing before God. The only thing that does, and thus the only thing of ultimate and noncontingent value, is trust in Christ – not because of the human act of trust but because of what is trusted, [i.e.,] Christ. The one thing that counts – counts for everyone, Jew & non-Jew, & counts... in all circumstances – is 'being considered righteous in Christ' (2:17), that is, being accounted of worth before God on the basis of the death & resurrection of Christ." [John M. G. Barclay, Paul & the Power of Grace, p. 49]

d. We believed in Christ Jesus

a. So we are justified by faith in Christ

b. Not by works of the law

c. No one is justified by works of law

d. Implies that the law did not justify

"Implicit in conversion to Christ was a confession that a proper standing before God could not be had through a commitment to the law...To do the law after Christ was to deny his sufficient work; it was to step back in salvation- history to a period

before Christ. For Paul this...denied the very purpose of Christ's coming...in Paul's letters faith is the necessary response required for the person who wants to live at peace with God. (Rom. 5:1)" – Scot McKnight

- c. Jewish believers have had a change of status
 - a. From under Law [Torah] to "in Christ" – accepted in Christ
 - b. Gentile believers also accepted in Christ
 - c. Now both Jewish & Gentile believers have a new & equal status.
 - d. Both are righteous (justified, accepted, approved) by believing in Christ
- d. Based on this new status we can & must have common table fellowship with all believers
 "The dikaios [righteous] are God's people....We are talking here about covenantal standing: Who is to be seen as part of God's people? Who, therefore, can you & must you regard as your proper table companions?" [NT. Wright, Gal., p. 133]

4. What is Faith in Jesus Christ?

- a. Not merely mental assent
- b. A relationship of trust
 "Faith in Christ'...'Trust' is a better word than 'faith' since it evokes a relationship, & what Paul is talking about is not belief in a set of impersonal truths but personal dependence on what God has effected in the death & resurrection of Jesus." [John M. G. Barclay, Paul & the Power of Grace, p. 48]
- c. A response to the faithfulness of Christ
 "Luther writes [1535] 'Faith is a divine. Not a human work.' Faith is not something we exercise, it is something elicited in us by the Word...When we hear who the true God is, that good news...evokes faith & love in us. As R. Kolb puts it: 'God creates the trust [faith]...by promising life in Christ, a promise unshakeable & therefore trust-creating.'...[Faith] for Luther is not a one-off mental act of saying a sinner's prayer at an evangelistic rally...It is the ongoing disposition towards God...that believes...He is what the Bible says He is...& what He has done & given in Christ." [Graham Tomlin, "Luther & the Deliverance of God," in Chris Tilling (ed.) Beyond Old & New Perspectives on Paul, p. 32]
- a. God's gift 'By grace you've been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God' (Eph. 2:8)
- d. It is based on the faithfulness of Jesus to the Father's will.
 - a. Eph. 2:16 can be rendered: yet...no one is justified by the works of the law but by the faithfulness of Jesus Christ
 - b. Our faith is based on what Christ did in his faithfulness
 "It is not the case...that reading... "pistis [faithfulness] in terms of Jesus's own faithfulness rules out, or renders redundant, the human response, the answering belief & trust [our faith]. The two go together, & indeed it is because the Messiah's own pistis has created the new context that the answering human pistis [faith] can rightly...serve as the appropriate badge of covenant membership." [N. T. Wright, Galatians, p. 137]

5. Initial Justification and Ongoing Justification

- a. Initial justification v. 16
 "...We also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ & not by works of the law..." (Gal. 2:16)
- b. Ongoing justification v. 17
 "If in our endeavor to be justified in Christ..." (Gal. 2:17)
 "Justification is not a once-for-all act of God. It is rather the initial acceptance by God into restored relationship. But thereafter the relationship could not be maintained without God continuing to exercise his justifying righteousness with a view to the final act of judgment & acquittal." [James Dunn, Theology of the Apostle Paul, p. 386]
- c. Justification—Yesterday, Today, & Forever
 - a. "Jesus the Messiah, the crucified & risen Lord...is the same yesterday, today, & forever... That is a quotation from Heb 13:8, it could stand as a summary of Paul's view of Jesus, too. And the point about justification is that what God says of Jesus the Messiah, he says of all those who belong to the Messiah [Christ]. He said it yesterday, when Jesus died & rose again. He says it today, in & through Jesus who ever lives to make intercession for us. And he will say it tomorrow, when Jesus returns to judge & save, to complete his kingdom work on earth as in heaven. So the first point is that justification is anchored & rooted firmly in Jesus himself. The second point to which my title refers is the triple tense of justification. Justification has...three tenses in Paul's writing. He can speak of past justification; he can speak of it as a present reality; & he can speak of it as still in some sense future. He can do all three in close proximity. This is not carelessness. He thinks eschatologically: God has acted in Jesus the Messiah, he is at work presently affirming

that all who believe are justified & so giving them assurance, & he will act through Jesus when he comes again in glory." [N. T. Wright, "JUSTIFICATION: YESTERDAY, TODAY, & FOREVER," JETS, Vol. 54.1 (March 2011) pp. 49-50]

6. Application:

- a. This section is mainly referring to those who are already believers.
 - a. We began our Christian life/walk by faith.
 - b. That faith is a God-produced response to what we heard about Jesus, the Christ.
 - a. His faithfulness to the Father
 - b. His self-giving and righteousness.
 - c. God's acceptance of him and his death
 - d. His death and resurrection and giving of the Spirit
- b. How do we continue in our walk?
 - a. We still seek, endeavor to be justified, approved, accepted
 - b. Not by what we do
 - c. Not by maintaining cultural standards
 - d. But by faith – which means
 - a. [a.] Trust
 - b. [b.] Relationship
 - c. [c.] a personal dependence on what God has effected in the death & resurrection of Jesus.
 - e.