

Galatians 2:15-3:14

in v15-17 the word justified is used 4x
a big idea in this section is justification; and the way to get it.

what is justification ?

Right standing before God

the validating record that opens doors. - Mark Smith from City Church Dublin
like a CV shows all of your qualifications to get you a job. Your credentials.

What are two different routes to justification?

law/works -2:16, 3:1, 5, 10, 11, 12,

faith / grace - 2:20, 21, 3:1, 5, 6, 8, 9, 11, 14

this is consistent with the rest of the Bible's teaching about justification , Paul does not think that he has stumbled upon something new. He is not an intellectual entrepreneur nor is he a religious inventor. He is accurately explaining what God has always required from His people. Faith.

Abraham is given as an example of someone whose faith is credited as righteousness.

If righteousness is given as a gift to those who put their faith in Christ, then it cannot be earned

it truly is a zero sum game, there is no mixture allowed.

if you make a cake with the finest ingredients, free range eggs, single origin chocolate, organic milk, and then add just a little bit of dog poop, is the cake acceptable? would you serve it to your guests, would you eat it yourself?

In a similar fashion, Paul is saying to the Galatians, you started off so well, embracing the gospel of free grace, received through faith and faith alone - but now you are adding something to it.

They wanted to do something in order to *stay justified*.

Yes, faith is what gets you in, but you need to move past faith to something else if you want to stay in. (as if God was pulling the old bait-n-switch)

The Galatian Christians had come under some false teaching; some specific men who came from Jerusalem who were troubling them and unsettling them with a deliberate set of teachings and instructions.... but, even in our situation, where as far as I know, we are not under deliberate infiltration that is intentionally trying to contradict biblical doctrine. But the default mode of the human heart is to embrace the idea that we must work, earn, deserve blessing from God, and right standing before Him.

We don't need a pharisee to show up at the door, because we have a pharisee that lives in our heart.

"Then they said to him, "What must we do, to be doing the works of God?" Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent." (John 6:28-29, ESV)

We don't like getting things for free, we are far more comfortable with earning things, deserving things,

And even when someone receives something for free, linguistically we call it something else, we call it an “entitlement” rather than a handout.

The Bible says that we are saved by faith.

John 3:16 etc

but we should clarify what that means -

Lots of people are quick to say that they are men or women of faith.

Faith isn't important persay, it is what our faith is in.

Galatians says “faith in Jesus Christ”

it is based not on the strength of your faith, but the object of your faith - Jesus.

[DA Carson illustration]

the night of passover, two fathers (bill and ted, podge and rodge) are talking about what they just did, spreading the blood of the lamb on the doorpost. They are wondering what the story is - why they did it, one of them has a strong confidence the other has a lot of questions. things have been crazy lately. river turned to blood, frogs, etc I hear the angel of death is coming and that he is going to take the firstborn of every family, i am nervous about that. I'm obeying God, and i put the blood on the doorpost and all, but i'm just nervous... which one of them lost their son that night? neither of them because it was not dependant on the strength of their faith, but on the blood of the lamb.

sometimes we worry that our faith isn't strong enough, we come in here wondering if we are strong enough. We are not saved by the strength of our faith, but we are saved by the object of our faith.

A reformation era defintion of faith said that it has 3 ingredients:

knowledge, assent, and trust.

knowing about Jesus, affirming that it is true, agreeing intellectually to the gospel, (this is the workless faith that James writes about in ch 2 of his epistle)

but the third and **essential** ingredient is trust.

Niagra Falls story : do you believe that I can carry a man across on this tightrope? then get in the barrel.

Since righteousness is a gift to the faithful, we can rest from our strivings

What a burden to always be wondering if we've done enough.

If we look to ourselves and our abilities and our performance it will inevitably lead to two results: pride or despair.

the man or woman who looks to their own works / performance and is satisfied with what they see will be elevated in their opinion.

(in danger of damaging their shoulder from patting themselves too hard on the back)

“He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt: “Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: ‘God, I thank you that **I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.**’ But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’ I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”” (Luke 18:9–14, ESV)

The first man had much to boast about, *and boast he did*. He looked around the city, and he looked around the Temple, and all he saw were inferior people. If only they tried harder, if only they were more religious, if only they had his morality, then they would be his equal... but all he could do is point out to God that he is better than them.

The irony is twofold,

1) he isn't nearly as good as he thinks he is

2) the person he compares himself with is actually the one that God is pleased with, the one who admits he is a sinner and he only counts on the mercy of God

bonus irony- Galatians is written by a former proud pharisee, who came to see himself with the humble honesty of the tax collector.

“I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless. But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,” (Philippians 3:3–10, ESV)

The other option is despair:

being aware of our failure, realising we aren't good enough.

not living up to others expectations is hard,

not living up to our own expectations is hardest.

walk away discouraged.

As we rest from our striving, we are free to serve God and our neighbour

After Paul spends 4 chapters making the point to the Galatians that it is by faith and faith alone that they are justified in God's sight, he then instructs them on some things to do! he tells them to love their neighbour 5:14

Walk by the Spirit and not give into temptation 5:16-22

Bear each other's burdens 6:2
Do good to everyone 6:9

We certainly should not get the impression that they are to rest from striving AND to rest from activity. there is a kind of activity that comes from a rooted confidence that says "Because God has graciously accepted me on the basis of my faith in Jesus alone - I want to fight for personal holiness, so that my life can honour Him
I want to serve the weak, because He has served me at my weakest
I want to bear other's burdens, because Christ Jesus is the great burden bearer
I want to do good to all, especially of the household of faith, because that is what Jesus has done.

there's not a *nervousness* about it, i hope this is enough, i hope this counts, i hope God is noticing.

More than that, for those that are labouring under a performance oriented, works based spirituality - their acts of love to others always have an undercurrent of selfishness. I'm doing you good, but deep down, this is so that God will do good to me.

Because works are not required for salvation; it frees us to be able to love and serve our neighbour for their own sake, not as a selfish way of promoting ourselves in God's eyes. "notice me God!"

"not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." (Ephesians 2:9–10, ESV)

Good works are the fruit (2nd) not the root (1st) of our salvation.

Paul and James are not enemies - fighting face to face, they are teammates, fighting back to back. Paul is dealing with one group of false teachers, and refuting them, James is dealing with another group of false teachers, and he is going hard after them

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