

Galatians 2:16 - “Justified by Our Faith?”

Written by K B Napier

Wednesday, 13 April 2016 15:44

The text is very clear: we are NOT justified by works. In other texts we find we are not justified by works *alone*. Both mean the same thing. Galatians 2:16 says this:

“Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.”

Note that we are justified NOT by our own faith, but by the “faith of Jesus Christ”; hence this stark truth is repeated in the same verse. We are NOT justified by anything we do (the law). The stages are thus: we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and THEN He gives us HIS faith. It is this which justifies us – makes us acceptable as just before God. Let it be said again – it is the faith of Christ that justifies us, not our own decision, choice, or faith. NOBODY is justified by works.

It is true that a believer must do works that are consistent with His calling, but those works do not save or justify. They are merely adjuncts to salvation and not vital components of it. That is, good works are signs we have been justified, and do not contribute to justification. The strict translation from Greek is this:

“Having-perceived that not is being justified human out of act/of works of law if ever no thru belief of Jesus anointed/Christ and/also we into anointed/Christ Jesus believe that we may-be-being-justified out of belief/or faith of anointed/of Christ and not out of acts/of works of law through that/because that not shall-being-justified out of acts/of works of law every flesh.”

Thus, no works will justify us before God, only our ‘belief of Christ’. Note that not only are we justified but we are *continually* justified (‘be-being’), again, not by what we humanly do, but by the righteousness of Christ leading us to do good works.

This is not to be viewed in isolation. Justification is part of a God-given process set in motion before the world was made. It must be seen in this way: God elects us in eternity – we are born again – we are saved by faith – we show our salvation by believing in Christ Who alone gives us that faith – this gift from Christ is our justification – we show we are justified continuously throughout life – we die and are given our place in Heaven, which is already ours because we

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are elect. Perhaps you can see that we are 'in a loop' we cannot escape or alter.

Therefore, we are justified (made acceptable to God) by what God Himself has given us – faith. This is the "faith of Christ". It is His own trust in the Father, Who gave into His hand those who are elected to be saved. Christ passes on this vital gift when we are saved in our time on earth. It is a gift we cannot ever lose.

To be justified, *dikaioō*, is to be recognised as righteous by God by our faith, a faith given to us as a gift by Christ. This gift brings us back to what our human condition s
hould

be – we are thus freed of the penalty for sin and are 'right' before Him. We are now viewed as 'innocent' before God. We still sin, because of the 'old man' within, but our core of being is now of God, so we cannot be cast away as an unbeliever... the 'old man' has the status of a nasty pest who must be 'put down'.

The faith we have, *pistis*, is our total conviction in the Gospel giving us a new relationship with God through salvation. Because of this we trust completely in Him. To be true, this includes belief in every aspect of God and Christ, such as their very existence as Creator and Ruler (King of kings), and that Christ alone can give salvation. One who is thus justified also believes that ONLY Christ is the Messiah Who alone gives us the ONLY path to Heaven and to God the Father. In these ways we show faith or trust in the Lord, and this is a gift of Christ, so that we may live on this earth with confidence and assurance.

The Jews in Jesus' time thought they had to 'do' something to be justified (a feeling enjoined today by Roman Catholics and charismatics, amongst others). Galatians 2:16 was written to dispel this myth, and why God told the Jews He was not interested in their many rites and rituals (because they were not done out of faith). Really, it was farcical – the Jews demanded that new Christians followed their example, but Galatians says WHY do this, when even the Jews got it wrong!

Verse 21 reiterates that if a man is made righteous by what he does (including a 'free will' choice to be saved) then Christ died for no reason whatsoever!

"I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in

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vain."

Do not contradict God's grace! He has made a way to Himself, through the faith of His Son. If we insist that we must offer our own works to be justified, then we reject God's salvation, for we make Christ's death irrelevant by our human philosophy. (If we offer our own belief/faith, then that, too, is 'works').

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