

“Begin Again”

January 1, 2023

Theme(s): Gospel, Justification, Faith

Text: Galatians 2

Main Idea: *“Only through faith in Christ are we accepted before God and alive to Him.”¹*

1. Freed By Grace

“So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please Him.” - 2 Corinthians 5:9

“But just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not to please man, but to please God who tests our hearts.” - 1 Thessalonians 2:4

“Finally, then, brothers we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God, just as you are doing, that you do so more and more.”
- 1 Thessalonians 4:1

2. Three Pictures

a. Legalism (2:1-10)

Legalism: ***right behavior with wrong belief***

b. Hypocrisy (2:11-14)

“Hypocrisy is nothing better than skin-deep holiness”
- John Blanchard

Hypocrisy: ***right belief with wrong behavior***

Discussion Questions

1. If someone is a good employee, an unselfish friend, and an advocate for the poor, should we consider that person a Christian? Explain.
2. Briefly explain the doctrine of justification by faith in terms that an unbeliever with no Bible knowledge could understand.
3. Why does it rob God of glory when we add to faith other requirements for justification? How do people attempt to justify themselves today?
4. Why is it so significant that we view justification as a once-for-all declaration and not a process?
5. How is the justification of a sinner different from having one’s sins ignored or swept under the rug?
6. Faith is clearly crucial for our justification, but what role does it play in our lives after that point?
7. What’s the potential danger in the following statement: *Jesus has done so much for me, so now I must work for Him?*
8. How should the reality of Christ’s indwelling presence affect your everyday life?
9. Luther and Calvin referred to justification by faith as the doctrine on which the Church stands or falls. Why does this doctrine affect everything about the Church’s life and witness?

¹ Platt, David and Tony Merida, *Exalting Jesus in Galatians*

c. Faith (2:15-21)

Faith: ***right belief with right behavior***

“Justification by faith is the hinge on which all true religion turns.” - John Calvin

3. Faith Alone

1. *Through faith in Christ, we are accepted before God.*

Justification: Justification is the gracious act of God by which God declares a sinner righteous solely through faith in Jesus Christ.

“Hear my prayer, O Lord;
Give ear to my pleas for mercy!
In your faithfulness answer me, in your righteousness!

Enter not into judgment with your servant,
For no one living is righteous before you.”
- Psalm 143:1-2

“Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” - Romans 5:1

“And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called, he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.” - Romans 8:30

“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.” - Philippians 3:5-6

“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.” - Philippians 3:8

“For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” - 2 Corinthians 5:21

Heidelberg Catechism, Question #60

How are you righteous before God?

Only by true faith in Jesus Christ. Even though my conscience accuses me of having previously sinned against all God's commandments, of never having kept any of them, and of still being inclined toward all evil, nevertheless, without any merit of my own, out of sheer grace, God grants and credits to me the perfect satisfaction, righteousness and holiness of Christ, as if I had never sinned nor been a sinner, and as if I had been as perfectly obedient as Christ was obedient for me — it only I receive this gift with a believing heart.

2. *Through faith in Christ, we are alive to God.*

4. Freed through Faith

God's pleasure in you is not based on your performance for Him; instead, God's pleasure in you is based on Christ's performance for you.

