

**The Faithfulness of Christ
in Galatians 2:15-16**

TCF Sunday School
Paul Levang
June 12, 2011

Dialogue Through v.21

- 1) v. 15 explains the answer of v.14
- 2) In v. 15 Paul says “we are *naturally Jews*”... this must refer only to Jews;
- NASB continues quotation through v.21

Gentile Sinners

- *Gentile sinners*; the Greek literally reads *sinners from among the gentiles*.
- *From* is the Greek word ἐκ = source or origin of something.
- **Already used in v. 12.**
 - *The circumcision party.* = lit. “Those *from* circumcision,” (τους ἐκ περιτομῆς)
 - Refers to the Jews.
- Also 4 times in v.16; often translated *by*. (More later)

A Man from the Works of the Law

- In the Greek “*by the works of the law*”, modifies *man*, rather than *justified*.
 - *anthropos ek ergon nomou* (ανθρωπος εξ ερων νομου)
 - Defines *what kind of man* is in view.
- The word translated “*by*”, is the same Greek word *ek* from vv. 12 & 15
 - v. 12 τους εκ περιτομη (*those from circumcision*)
 - v. 15 εξ εθνων αματωλοι (*sinners from the gentiles*).
 - These clearly spoke of a persons *background*, this one probably does too.
 - Better translated; *a man from works of the law is not justified*. = One whose life is dictated by the requirements of the Old Covenant: A Jew
- The Point: Jews are not justified because they're Jewish.

The Faith(fullness) of Jesus Christ

- Ambiguity in the Greek
- It literally reads: *through faith*(or *faithfulness*) of *Jesus Christ*.
- Depending on context, πιστις (pistis) can mean either *faith* (belief/trust) or *faithfulness* (unwavering commitment to a promise), depending on context.
 - Example: In Gal 5:22, (Fruit of the Spirit) = *faithfulness*.
- Two possible ways to understand:
 1. Faith *into* Jesus Christ.
 - (Objective Genitive: Jesus is the *Object of our Faith*)
 2. Jesus Christ's faithfulness.
 - (Subjective Genitive: Jesus is the *Subject* who exercises faithfulness)
- We must decide from context

Problem with “Faith In” “But” is not But

- Two words in Greek; *if* (εαν), and *not* (μη).
- Often paired together, meaning *unless* or *except*. That is, they make an *exception to a rule*.
- In all of the 35 other times the NT uses “*if not*” as a combination, it makes an *exception*; not a *contrast*.
- What if we substitute “*unless*” for “*but*”?
 - It would read: *a man is not justified by works of the law unless he believes in Jesus Christ*.
 - What would this be saying? That a man is justified by works so long as he believes in Jesus while doing them.
 - This is exactly what the false teachers in Galatia were teaching; You must identify with the Mosaic Law to be right with God in addition to trusting Christ.
 - Opposite of a Salvation by grace alone!
- Better Option?

Through the Faithfulness of Jesus Christ?

- . Litmus Test
 - . A. It should hold up to the normal use of Language – It should follow normal patterns of word usage, barring any obvious reasons to do otherwise.
 - . B. It should work with other uses of the same language in context.
 - . C. It should fit the broader context of the book – adding to the argument.

A. Normal Usage

- . In addition to “*from*” and “*unless*”, is “*Faithfulness of Jesus Christ*” a normal use of language?
- . When we find a *faith + of & personal noun* in the NT, it almost always is that person’s faith/faithfulness that is spoken about.
- . Romans 3:3 “*The faithfulness of God.*”

B. Coalesces with other Contextual Uses

- . **Chapter 3:23-25**, we find that certain properties are assigned to this “faith” that we might not expect, were Paul simply speaking of *believing*.
- . **What then does Jesus Christ’s Faithfulness mean?**
 - . Best understood as an abbreviated way of talking about the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ to save us from our sins.
 - . vv.20,21New English Translation (NET) *I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So the life I now live in the body, I live because of the faithfulness of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not set aside God’s grace, because if righteousness could come through the law, then Christ died for nothing!*
 - . Jesus Christ was faithful to come to earth and complete the work which he had promised to do: he died on our behalf!

C. Broader Context

- Ch 2:4. Faction of "false brothers" were trying to get Gentile Christians to be circumcised.
- Circumcision was the *sign* that signified entrance into the Old Covenant.
- vv. 11-14: Peter's action of withdrawing from the Gentile Christians, *compelled* the Gentiles to live like Jews.
- Peter's actions implied that for Gentiles to be good Christians, they must be Jewish Christians.
- In continuing his response to Peter (began in v. 14), Paul contrasted their natural Jewish birth with that of sinners *from the gentiles* (v. 15)
 - he then said: *but we have come to know that a man from works of the law is not justified unless it is through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ.*
- **The point:** *Being a Jew gives no one a greater standing before God; a man is only justified because of what Christ has done.*

My Translation

- Galatians 2:15,16 *We are by nature Jews and not sinners from the gentiles; but we have come to know that a man from works of the law is not justified unless it is through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ and we believed into Christ Jesus, that we may be justified from the faithfulness of Christ and not from works of the law, because from works of the law all flesh will not be justified.*
- **To summarize:** A man is not Justified because he is one who keeps the law; he is justified because Christ faithfully finished the work he was sent to do; that is, the just died in place of the unjust. Christ took the punishment for our sins upon himself when he suffered on the Cross. In response to hearing this great news proclaimed, we must believe/trust in Christ.

Implications of "The Faithfulness of Jesus Christ"

- 1) This places the focus on the **source** of our salvation rather than, primarily, the **means** of our salvation.
 - Thus, the Gentile believers must stand fast knowing that their Salvation is based solely on what Christ accomplished on the Cross; not upon their inclusion into the Mosaic covenant.
- 2) *This lends to a radical **Christ-centeredness** in Galatians.*
 - The focus is not *how do you do*, but *what did he do?*
 - *"It's all about Jesus!"*
- 3) *This calls for increased faith.*
 - *We respond in faith toward Christ because he has proven himself faithful.*
