

## Galatians 2:16-21 “Christ Living in Us”

**For the Children:** I expect your mum and dad do a lot for you. Perhaps they make your bed when you forget to do it. Or clean up some of the messes you make. Your clothes are washed for you. Dinner is put on the table for you. And no doubt many other things. Imagine if you got home from school and said, “Mum, I’m going to re-make my bed. Please don’t clean up my room for me, I can do a good job of that myself. And please just put my dinner in the freezer, because I’d rather cook for myself. Apart from suffering shock, I think your parents might be a little offended. It’s like their work for you isn’t that great; you think you can do a better job; all their hard work has been wasted. Well, the Lord Jesus has done a lot more work for us: He obeyed all God’s laws for us; died for us; and rose from the dead for us. If we act as if we can earn our salvation without Him, just by our own good deeds, that is an offence to Him. It suggests that you can do a better job and it implies that His work is wasted – if that were possible. **Questions:** What is “justification”? What is the basis of it? How can we be sure that it does not give us an excuse to sin?

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### Introduction:

#### First Point: The Basis of Justification

- 1) Not by Works of the Law: Against the Judaizers and those influenced by them (2:11-24), Paul asserts that no one can be justified (made right with God) by his own works of Law-keeping. This is a popular view today as well – in false, works-based religions and philosophies. Even we tend to think too highly of our own works – and, what follows from that, see ourselves as better than others.
- 2) But by Faith in Christ: The apostle also stresses the correct view of justification – that it is on the basis of Christ’s work and merits, graciously imputed (credited) to us when we are joined to Him by faith. Because this is God’s work, not ours, the verbs about justification are passive. See Gen.15:6. This view is expressed in our Lord’s Supper Form.

#### Second Point: The Defense of Justification

- 1) Works-Righteousness Is Impossible: V.16 alludes to Ps.143:2 – “In Your sight no man living is righteous.” Justification by works is impossible because of man’s “total depravity.”
- 2) Christ Is Not a Minister of Sin: If teaching justification by faith caused spiritual laziness, then Christ would be a “minister of sin,” because He taught it (v.17). The apostle is horrified by the suggestion: “May it never be!” Actually, the transgressors are those who have turned from the true doctrine to rebuild the false way of justification by works (v.18). They transgress because they ignore the doctrines of sin, of the Law and of the work of Christ. The Law does have a role to play: it teaches us about our failure to keep the Law, and our need of Christ. It is used by God to cause us to “die” to the use of the Law as a would-be way of gaining salvation in our own strength (v.19).
- 3) Union Makes a Difference: In any case, the faith-union with Christ prevents us from giving ourselves over to sin. We are united with a Head and Representative who perfectly obeyed the Law for us, died to pay our penalty for law-breaking, and rose again in resurrection power and life. This work is imputed to us. We share in it. In this union, Christ is in us and we in Him. This changes us, so that we desire to live holy lives and to resist sin. Our Lord’s Supper Form also uses this kind of language – of union with Christ and its effects.
- 4) Grace and the Cross Are Not Nullified: If we were capable of earning salvation by our works of law-keeping, we would need neither God’s grace nor the work of Christ on the cross. They would be “nullified” (v.21). That would involve serious errors and a slight to the One who loves us and has given Himself up for us.

### Conclusion:

