

“Justified”  
Pastor Sam Richards  
Sermon for 17 October 2021  
Texts: Galatians 3:1-6

In another display of divine graciousness, I arrived at the place in Galatians just as the doctrine of justification appeared in my Great Doctrines of the Bible lecture series, Lecture 49. This blessing, or mercy provided me with a fairly extensive study of the topic which meant it could serve double duty. Not only that, but last week’s sermon came to me as a breakthrough moment. I have been praying about the balance between current events and scriptural exposition—indeed, the sermon “Look Unto Jesus” on October 3rd contained some material I had considered leaving out. The message would have stood alone but I was counseled to include information on CRT, Social Darwinism and the siren song of “Social Justice” because they constitute some of the “wild imaginations” competing for our allegiance as **another gospel**—which Paul explicitly warns us against in Galatians as well as in Colossians 2:6-10: See v.8 **See to it that there is no one who takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception in accordance with human tradition, in accordance with the elementary principles of the world, [e]rather than in accordance with Christ.** Anyway, I was gratified to receive feedback on how helpful that message had been. Then, as I began prepping for the next message, I was drawn to Mark 8 and 9—the lead in to the transfiguration account. And that culminated in a sharing at Men’s discipleship on how to handle the word accurately—in its scriptural setting! That means, taking the instruction on Jesus’ imminent death and resurrection (Mark 8:31ff), Peter’s rebuffing and **the call to take up his cross and follow me** (v.34) seriously. Then, six days later Jesus leads Peter, James and John up Mount Hermon (probably) for prayer. (Now the prayer bit is not present in Mark 9, but it appears in the Lucan parallel: Luke 9:28) SO we reviewed the benefit of comparing the parallel passages so as to flesh out what went down on that occasion. The threesome needed prayer to digest what Jesus was teaching. Mark 9: 10 records a discussion amongst the disciples as to what rising from the dead might mean! But, there is a spirit reason for this prayer meeting that unfolds after the foursome comes down from the mountain, prayed up as it were, and that reason consisted of their ability to deliver the demon-possessed youngster whom the crowds had brought to test, to taunt the disciples (the nine who didn’t attend the prayer meeting!). The nine were too caught up in the commotion and controversy, possibly, and were **unable to drive out the demon**—due to their prayerlessness! (**This kind only comes out by fasting and prayer.** Mark 9:29) Here is a wonderful endorsement of our need to be praying diligently! This failure, despite some prior success at deliverance ministry (witness the mission report of the twelve and the seventy: Matt. 10:1-15, Mark 6:7-13 and Luke 9:1-6) is significant. And I was able to point out that the incident with this boy could have been demonstration of what being raised from the dead looked like in practice. The original Greek in Mark 9:2 7 is most striking: Jesus 1. **takes the boy**, whom **most presumed to be dead**,(κρατήσας 2902e) **by the hand**; 2. (ἤγειρεν 1453e) **lifted him up** and 3. (ἀνέστη) **he arose** (the verb 450e for “resurrected”)—the interpretation that Jesus raised the boy from the dead is, by far, the most difficult rendering and, in Mark, that is an indication of textual authenticity. It may

be difficult (strange, or alien) to our sensibilities whether scientific, or simply modern skeptical in tone, but *the language sustains the rendering of this incident as one of resurrection.*

Therefore we may conclude that the theme of resurrection introduced by Jesus in his difficult lesson: **the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes** (the whole span of religious authorities) **and be killed, and on the third day rise again.** The three days is important two ways: first this was a prophetic word; and second, three days was the religious statutory limit: after three days, you were deemed absolutely dead. Sunday's sermon went well, sermon preparation went well, discipleship went well and things were all lined up for Lecture 49 on "Justification." That was the moment when I hit the wall of spiritual oppression, as the enemy sought to defeat me and bring me to discouragement despite having a "banner week" of effectual ministry! *It was only when I realized that spiritual opposition was an indication of success that I was able to bring the nose of the aircraft up and level out!*

If we transpose the lessons learned from Mark 8 & 9, we will point out that justification by faith begins in Galatians 2:16: **we know that a person is not justified by works of the law.** So the scope of Paul use of **the law exceeds** the matters of ceremonial law, and circumcision of Gentile believers. And, because Paul proceeds to say, **but through faith in Jesus Christ** (one is justified), this much is apparent: works and faith are in opposition. They represent two distinct paths. But they are not equal options because one doesn't work (**works**) and the other one does: **believe in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith.** In this manner, we come to a conclusion: the prelude to justification by faith argument is Paul's confrontation of Peter over *hypocrisy, over conduct not in step with the truth of the gospel.* (Gal. 2:14) And that behavior, I hate to admit it, was racist. It perpetuated the separation (**the wall of hostility**) between Jew and Gentile that Jesus abolished on the cross **as celebrated in table fellowship!** Peter was acting "racist" in a post-racist context; namely, the body of Christ. This matter dates the incident in Antioch; it has to have occurred prior to the Jerusalem Council.

This new custom (table fellowship between Jewish and Gentile Christians) is fused with **faith in Jesus Christ**—it is an outward expression of Christ's Kingdom come with power. Christian liberty was embodied in table fellowship. They would eat together because the ground is level at the cross. And breach of that custom was an indication of the mischief caused by false religion (i.e. justification by works). Gal. 2:18-19 marks how irreversible the change wrought by our Redemption is. *These is no going back:* **For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God.** Yes, **crucified with Christ** expresses how Paul died to the law with the result that **it is no longer I who live, but Christ liveth in me. And the life I now live in the flesh, I live by (through 1722e) faith in (from 3588e) the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.** V. 21 **If righteousness were through the law, Christ died for no purpose.**

The purpose for which Christ died, our justification, is thoroughly introduced at this point and because that justification is what the Galatians are throwing away, Paul indicts them for **foolishness**. Who would knowingly throw away such a plain benefit? A benefit that came from **hearing with faith! Further, this hearing with faith was accompanied by the impartation of the Holy Spirit**. The life of Christ implanted in them, the disposition of Christ inserted into their very being, and his holiness, too. They were turning their backs on all that?!

Did they honestly think that having made such spiritual progress by faith, and by the gift of the Holy Spirit, that they should regress to their former life in bondage to sin, and ruled by their flesh? **They had been declared justified by Almighty God**. Their status, or standing with God had been altered, and establish by the act of God, and they now seemed fine with walking away from that. Had they simply forgotten, or had their first love so waned that they sought solace in the newest and latest, the trendy and innovative (this being despite it recycled nature!). It didn't seem to occur to them that becoming like Jesus did not mean becoming Jewish—that day was over.

It was, perhaps, as if they thought they could improve on the perfect work of Christ by adding “religion” to their Redemption. If we keep to the ceremonial law, the Judaizers taught, if we impose all the freight of our religious past on these newcomers, these ignorant Gentiles, that would surely please God. Right? No, it would not. It would dishonor the sacrifice of Christ. It would nullify grace in a resurgence of self-saving behavior, howsoever meritorious it might appear, which would re-establish merit as the basis of salvation. That is the **in vain**, or the pointlessness of Christ's redeeming work that Paul sees hidden in this spiritual seduction. Do you believe God for your justification, or not?! That's the question. Abraham was saved by faith, he believed God **and it was counted to him as righteousness**.

I do want to point out that Abraham beloved God at several points in his life—and we know that he disbelieved God, or doubted at other times. And the record shows how much trouble he got into by doubting. We should take a page from his book. **The just shall live by faith** as it is written.

Amen.