

Read 2:15-16

My Daughter Daisy recently finished her last round of chemotherapy and then had some scans this week that came back clean—no signs of cancer at this time

One of our main goals in helping her recover from both cancer and chemo is to really fuel and rebuild her system nutritionally

- So my wife has been juicing for her a lot—gnarly greens
- Daisy has this cheesy popcorn from Trader Joes that she is just wild about—would eat it all day long
 - She knows that it is not the most healthy thing, so we limit her on it
- What she tries to do is **negotiate** with her mom
 - "If I drink some juice can I have some popcorn?"
 - Mom works out a deal with her because mom is a **negotiator** (demands something first)
- Dad, on the other hand...
 - She'll usually try to catch me because she knows I am more like **Santa Claus** than I am a negotiator—I **don't demand** as much on the front end
 - We don't have to negotiate with Santa Claus—he **just gives**

Most people view God either like Daisy sees her mom or her dad

- As either a **negotiator** or a **Santa Claus** type figure

For those who sense that God **demand something** of us and that we perhaps have not always met those demands, we hope God to be a **negotiator**

- We know we are **not quite deserving** but are confident that we can make up any deficit
- We promise better behavior or commitment if God will _____ (fill in the blank)
- God has demands, but we can **negotiate** a deal that will cause us to be **right with God**, because God is a negotiator

Others of us **do not** sense that God demands anything from us and we expect God to be more like Santa Claus

- A kind grandfather figure who, though he knows the kids are sometimes naughty, doesn't really care (our parents only wanted us to think that), and is happy to give to us **generously—just because**
- We feel that we are **deserving**—at least as much so as anyone else—so it is not too hard to **be right with God**
 - After all, he is like Santa Claus

The Bible paints a different picture

- God does have demands of us and He is **horribly just**—so He is **not like Santa Claus**
 - And we are not at all deserving—And God does not grade on a curve
- God is **not a negotiator**—He is without lack and created all things
 - There is nothing we can do or stop doing that is going to be able to ultimately please God, provide God with something, or undo all the wrong we have already done, or cause God to just simply forgive it

A bleak picture... but there is Good News

- **Being right with God** does not come from keeping the rules—trying harder and doing better—it comes from **faith in Jesus Christ** and what He has done for us...

Now we pick it up right in the middle of the confrontation

Verse 15 (Paul speaking to Peter)

Don't misunderstand the contrast here—it is not between good and bad (necessarily)

- In this context Paul is using the term '**Jew**' to identify those who had been given, and were concerned about keeping the rules—God's law (as revealed in the OT)
- He is using the term '**sinner**' to refer to people (**Gentiles**) who did not know about and were not intending on trying to keep God's law (not necessarily the same way we use it today, but close)

The Jews saw God as a negotiator

- If they did the right things they could get God to do certain things

The Gentiles saw God like Santa Claus

- Not being totally sure what he expected they just expected God to be okay with them

Now look what he says in **verse 16**—this is huge!

... a person is **made right with God** by faith in Jesus Christ, not by obeying the law.

That is one of the most important verses in the entire Bible

- It declares the most important truth of Christianity = **The doctrine of justification**
 - =The good news that men and women can be made right with, and **accepted by**, God, not because of anything they do or don't do, but through the simple act of trusting in Jesus and what He did for us on the Cross
 - ... a person is **made right with God [justified]** by faith in Jesus Christ, not by obeying the law.
- **The word justification is a legal term**
 - It means the exact **opposite of condemned**—to condemn is to be declared guilty
 - To be justified is to be declared **innocent (even though we are guilty!)**
 - In the Bible it refers to the act by which God makes people right with himself
 - Not only in forgiving us and declaring us innocent, but in treating us as though we were excellent

"No one will ever be made right with God [justified] by obeying the law... a person is made right with God by faith in Jesus Christ"

Because God **does** have demands (unlike Santa Claus) and since we continually fail to meet them

- God meets them **for us** in Jesus
 - **Perfect life and substitutionary death**
 - When we put our **faith in Him** and what He has done for us, both are **credited to our account**
 - **We are pardoned and treated well**
 - **God treated Christ on the Cross as if he had lived our sinful lives so that He could treat us for eternity as if we had lived his perfect life!**
 - We are **free** from the **demand** of obeying the Law, and the **penalty** from having failed to obey
 - And we are brought into a place of favor (**grace**) before God—we are **made right with God**

"No one will ever be made right with God by obeying the law"

- For the simple reason that no one could ever keep the law perfectly
 - God weighs even our thoughts and motives

So the only hope is putting our faith in Jesus Christ

- It is not a mere intellectual agreement...
- Literally = "believing into Jesus Christ"
 - It is running to Him for refuge and calling on Him for mercy

Verse 17

Someone might say, "Okay, you have faith in Christ, but you are not keeping the rules, Christ has led you into sin!"

- Paul says, **no way!**
- Instead, **I am the one who is sinning if** I go back to trying to earn God's favor and approval through obeying the rules again!
- **= Verse 18**
 - I am in error if I try to relate to God and gain his approval through performance again
- Then he explains why in **verse 19**

"For when I tried to keep the law it condemned me"

- In other words: It **never** gained me any favor or acceptance with God
- On the contrary it **proved** how sinful and wrong I am
- I was never **justified** (made innocent and right) by the law—I was only condemned
- So, here is what happened for Paul (v. 19b)
 - **So, I died to the law—I stopped trying to meet it's requirements—so that I might live for God**
 - If you are **dead** to something, it no longer has any claim of effect on you
 - "To die to the law is to renounce it and be freed from its dominion, so that we have no confidence in it and it does not hold us captive under the yoke of slavery." -Calvin¹
 - **It does not hold us captive because Jesus met its requirements for us!**

All of our previous efforts to connect with God fail

- If you are trying to somehow live for God by careful rule keeping—you're not
 - You are actually **trying to win** the favor of God—so you are **serving yourself**, not God
- When we stop making it about what we can do well, or have failed to do well and make it about what Jesus has done for us on the Cross—then we can begin to **live for God**
 - **The gospel frees us from the pressure of trying to do something we can never do and be someone we can never be**
 - **Living for God** then inspires obedience from a different place—from a heart of gratitude and love—not servitude and need
 - Just like we want to please anyone we truly love
 - We can start to do what we were made to do: "To know God and enjoy Him forever!!"

¹ As quoted in Philip Ryken, *Reformed Expository Commentary: Galatians* (New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 2005), 72.

Verse 20

A matter of identity

- Paul's former identity was drawn from his ability to perform well and keep the rules
- The Gospel challenges those sort of identities
 - For those who feel **defeated and undeserving** the Gospel says: _____
 - For those who feel they have **performed well** and feel **deserving** the Gospel says: _____
 - All of the ways we may draw identity (and the identity of others) according to performance are crushed by the Gospel

We are offered a new identity

- **My old self has been crucified with Christ**
 - If that is true then our old identities are irrelevant!
 - "If we continue to view ourselves as moral lepers and spiritual failures, if our lives are shadowed by low self-esteem, shame, remorse, unhealthy guilt, and self-hatred, we reject the teaching of Jesus and cling to our own negative self-image."²
- **It is no longer I who live** (identity issue) **but Christ who lives in me**
 - We are now **identified with Christ** and His life
- **= What is true of Him is true of us!!!**
 - **The life He lived—the death He died—His position before the Father**
 - **God loves you as much as He loves His son!!**
- His life is **at work** in us (**Christ... lives in me**)
- Transforming us!

This deals with a common objection to the gospel and the idea of being justified apart from works

- The objection would be: **If God justifies and accepts [through faith in Christ] anybody with any sort of behavior then why wouldn't we just go on doing whatever we want?**
 - **Don't the gospel and the doctrine of justification by faith encourage sin??**

No. And here is why:

- Justification is not a legal fiction, in which a person's status is changed, while his or her character is untouched!
- Justification happens when we are **united with Christ**—and someone who is united to Christ is **never the same person** again!
 - They are changed!
- It is **not only** that our standing before God changes; but we ourselves are radically and permanently changed!
 - New creations with new natures
 - To talk about just going on sinning or sinning even more is unthinkable
 - Because we actually think, and feel and desire differently now
 - We no longer want to sin—even when we do, we don't!
 - **Christ now lives in us**
 - And living in us he now gives us new desires for God and living like God

² Brennan Manning, *The Furious Longing of God* (Colorado Springs, Co: David C. Cook, 2009), 77.

Even when we do sin—we are still accepted, right with, and loved by God because of Jesus

- That is the good news (the Gospel)
- And that very fact, that we are still loved and accepted changes us even more and causes us to want to respond in loving obedience!
 - The demand to keep the rules can never create lasting obedience
 - Only the truth that we are so deeply loved and wholly accepted even though we have not kept the rules creates a lasting desire and ability to obey
 - Christians who sin too much are not those that believe the Gospel of God's free grace too much—rather, they believe it too little!
 - God's law shows us what an obedient life looks like but ONLY the gospel can produce spontaneous obedience from a heart full of gratitude.

Our new identity and approach to life are driven by this: (Verse 20^c)

So, I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God [as opposed to myself], who loved me and gave Himself for me.

Everything we do now in life is done with this thought in mind:

- **The Son of God... loved me and gave Himself for me.**
- This becomes our live and identity!

Verse 21

Did Jesus die needlessly and in vain?

- If in any way you think that you have made yourself more acceptable to God by what you have done or not done—then you consider His death worthless!
- It is all by grace!
- It means Christ will do everything for you or nothing. You cannot combine merit and grace.
- The good news is: He has done everything for you!
 - You do not need to negotiate—He is better than Santa Claus

WHO LOVED ME AND GAVE HIMSELF FOR ME!!!