

Sermon Discussion

8 May 2022

Read Galatians 2:1-21

Dig Deeper

Paul probably calculated the **14 years** from his conversion rather than from his first visit to Jerusalem (1:18). Paul visited Jerusalem at least five times, and the visit described here seems to have been his second (*Acts 11:27-30*). It was also not his third visit to participate in the Jerusalem Council (*Acts 15:1-29*). This seems clear from Paul's statement that it was a private meeting.

Paul's fear in v. 2 was not that he had been preaching an erroneous gospel. It was that the false teachers who were saying Gentile converts had to become Jews before they could experience justification might undercut his work. James, Peter, and John agreed with Paul, the proof of which was their willingness to let Titus remain uncircumcised. Circumcision was a rite by which Gentile males became Jewish proselytes.

In regard to v. 16 James Boise says, *"This is one of the most important verses in the Epistle....The threefold repetition of the doctrine of justification by faith in this one verse is important, because it shows the importance the apostle gives to the doctrine. Besides, the three phrases increase in emphasis."*

To be **justified** means to be declared righteous before God, or to enjoy a status/standing of being in a right relationship with God and being accepted by him.

Paul's use of **crucified** instead of "put to death" or "died" stresses our sinfulness. Only the worst criminals suffered crucifixion in Paul's day. His reference to "*the flesh*" here is literal. It means our physical bodies. We can see Paul's great appreciation of God's love for him. He said Christ loved "me" and gave Himself for "me."

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. How would you counsel someone who claimed to believe in justification by faith but showed no signs of love for Christ?
3. Briefly explain the doctrine of justification by faith in terms that an unbeliever with no Bible knowledge could understand.
4. How is the justification of a sinner different from having one's sins ignored or swept under the rug?

5. Faith is clearly crucial for our justification, but what role does it play in our lives after that point?

Application & Prayer

- Whilst each of us have different backgrounds and experiences, we all struggle with partiality, favouritism, and prejudice. Regardless of how long we have been walking with Jesus, these issues can still live within our hearts and get in the way of the mission. Prejudice hinders the community Jesus is building and prevents us from being the ambassadors we have been called to be.

Take time to pray for those in your life you find difficult to relate to, communicate with, and connect to. Pray that God would bless them and give you a heart of service towards them.

- The Heidelberg Catechism, written in 1563, speaks beautifully to what lies at the heart of justification by faith. It answers the question “How are you right before God?” with the following:

Only by true faith in Jesus Christ...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. All I need to do is accept this gift with a believing heart.

As we conclude this week’s study, take time to praise God in prayer for this wonderful gift of salvation. If this is a principle you struggle to apply or integrate into your everyday living, meditate on and memorise Galatians 2:20.