

The Epistle of Paul to the Galatians

The Doctrine of Justification by Faith

Galatians 2:15-16

1. **A Contrast of Natures: Jews and Gentiles** (v.15)

The Jews divided the world into two categories, Jews and gentiles. Jews had the great privilege of knowing about the one true God and knowing how He had commanded them to live. The gentiles had no such specific knowledge (cf. Rom. 3:1-2) and, therefore, were more saturated with immorality and idolatry.

2. **The Statement of the Doctrine of Justification by Faith** (v.16a)

To be justified before God means that the individual is presently in a right and faithful relationship with God and is no longer His enemy (cf. Rom. 5:1; Col. 1:21). This reconciled relationship is accomplished only through faith in Jesus alone and not through any other means.

3. **An Intensified Application of the Doctrine** (v.16b)

The Judaizers emphasized the doing of the works of the law in order to be justified. This has never been true for anyone at anytime. The doctrine of justification by faith had been by the apostles (Acts 13:39) and experienced by the faithful from all ages.

A. Examples from the Circumcision

Paul could have mentioned any number of prominent Jews who had been justified by faith and not by their obedience to the Law, but he points to himself and to Peter as examples of justification by faith from the lawfully obedient among the circumcision.

B. Examples from the UnCircumcision

The chief example used by Paul in the New Testament is Abraham and how he was righteous before God before the institution of the covenant of circumcision or in the giving of the Law (Gen. 15:6; Rom. 4:3, 20-22; Gal. 3:6; Ja. 2:23). In the same way, Noah and Job could not have had righteousness that was based on their ability to keep the Law of God (Gen. 6:9; Job. 1:1).

C. Other Examples from the UnCircumcision

Rahab (Josh. 2:8ff; Heb. 11:31), Namaan the Syrian (2 Kings 5:1-19), the inhabitants of Nineveh (Jonah 3:5-4:3), and the Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8:26ff) are a few examples of uncircumcised gentiles who were justified by faith and not by keeping the Law.

4. **A Definitive Restatement of the Doctrine** (v.16c)

After Paul's brief explanation of the universality of justification by faith, he then clearly declares the exclusivity of justification before God by faith.