

St Mary's 10am Thursday 7th July 2016

Galatians 1 v1-10; Galatians 1 v11-24 Galatians 2 v15-21
Galatians 2 v17-21

GALATIANS SS4

LAST WEEK I preached on just one word: JUSTIFICATION.

Which is how God, in his grace, in his unmerited favour towards the unjust, towards the un-righteous, towards the sinner, towards the guilty, DECLARES such a person JUSTIFIED, pardoned, acquitted AND TREATS THAT PERSON as righteous IF they put their faith in Jesus Christ.

THIS WEEK we continue our Sermon Series on St Paul's Letter to the Galatians **by looking at AN OBJECTION to justification which Paul answers.**

Paul's critics in Galatia said something like this,

Your doctrine of justification by faith, without works of the law, is a very dangerous doctrine because it will encourage law BREAKING! Why should anyone try to be moral, or need to be moral, if they are going to be freely forgiven anyway?

If God justifies bad people what is the point of being good?

And people still argue like this today: It doesn't matter how we live, or what we do, because we will be forgiven at the end anyway.

To which Paul responds, v17 'CERTAINLY NOT' or in the AV 'GOD FORBID' Meaning, 'You critics have got it all completely wrong' 'You have completely misunderstood what justification is'

Justification is NOT a paper transaction whereby a person's STATUS is changed but their CHARACTER remains UNCHANGED.

Justification is all about changing a person's status AND changing their character, too. It's about *being* right and *living* right.

Justification takes place when we are united to Christ by faith **and ANYONE who is united to Christ is NEVER the same person again. EVERYTHING is changed!**

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Paul in 2 Corinthians 5 v17 says,

"IF anyone is in Christ they are a NEW CREATION, the old is gone, the new is come"

A 'new creation' means a new person, a radically changed new person, with a new desire to live for God and please God. These new God-given desires mean that it is IMPOSSIBLE to want to live the old sinful life.

Justification does NOT promote or encourage loose living because the desire to live according to old ways has been **taken away and replaced with a new heart that only wants to follow God.**

It is not that we *cannot* sin again.

It is that we do not want to.

"Anyone who is in Christ is a new creation"

That is Paul's first argument. And his second, most briefly, in verse 21, is that IF justification *WERE BY* works of the law **then Christ died in vain.** BUT HE DIDN'T DIE IN VAIN. He died to justify us and put us right with God. His death was effective which is why God raised him from the dead on Easter Day.

Conclusion: Argument won! Critics defeated.

And this is all summed up in today's verse on the Bookmark which we should all learn and know by heart, if we don't already.

The verse is Galatians 2 v20

**"I have been crucified with Christ.
It is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me.
The life I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God,
who loved me and gave himself for me."**

