

# Justification by Faith

## What is justification?

Justification is God's declaration, affirming that we are righteous because we have asked Christ to be our Lord and Savior. It is the only way we can receive God's declaration of righteousness.

*(2 Corinthians 5:21 NKJV) "For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."*

*(Romans 4:6-8 NKJV) "just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works: {7} "Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, And whose sins are covered; {8} Blessed is the man to whom the LORD shall not impute sin.""*

God justifies us by declaring He will not blame us for what we did because Jesus took the blame. His declaration opens the doors for us to the advantages and rewards of obedience to His righteous requirements. There is no more condemnation.

*(Romans 8:1-2 NKJV) "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. {2} For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death."*

God's declaration of justification is an act toward a single individual. When you confess the lordship of Christ, it is a personal decision you make, and a corresponding personal act Jesus makes. You become a new creation. Christ comes to live in you. It is a new way of life for all eternity.

## Twelve Statements by the Apostle Paul

**1.**

***"A man is **not** justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ."***

(The doctrine of Justification by Faith)

*(Galatians 1:16 NKJV) "knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified."*

The New Testament clearly teaches justification by works of the Law is an invalid doctrine for today, and that justification is by faith in Christ alone! It is doctrinal error to say that any kind of human effort justifies a person. The Apostle Paul said, *“and not by works of the Law, for by works of the law no flesh shall be justified.”* To declare that justification is by any human effort is to say that Jesus’ death on the cross was a useless, meaningless waste. God help us never to suggest such a thing!

**2.**

***“For if I build again those things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor.”***

(Speaking of returning to living under the Law)

*(Galatians 2:16-18 NKJV) “knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified. {17} But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is Christ therefore a minister of sin? Certainly not! {18} For if I build again those things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor.”*

Any retreat to the ways of the Law is sin! Why would we want to go back to what God so mercifully took out of our lives? Why would we go back into sin, knowing the blessings of living a forgiven life?

- Paul said, *“For if I build again those things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor.”*
- Christ and His Word is never the cause of sin. Again, Paul said, *“But if we ourselves also are found sinners, is Christ therefore a minister of sin? Certainly not!”*

**3.**

***“for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain.”***

(Establishes the full substitutionary atonement of Christ)

*(Galatians 2:20 NKJV) “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. {21} I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain.”*

If we retreat to legalism, we make the Lord’s crucifixion a waste! Justification is solely the product of the substitutionary death of

Jesus (as we accept Him as **our propitiation** – the One whose actions exclusively provided for our forgiveness).

**4.** ***“Cursed is everyone who does not continue in **all** things which are written in the book of the law, **to do them.**”***

(Regarding the Curse of the Law)

*(Galatians 3:10 NKJV) “For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.””*

Paul says, (paraphrasing) *“If you try to live under the law, **keep every bit of it, or else you will be cursed**, joining all those who have tried to live under it before you.”*

The Law is good and useful to point the way to Christ. It has **no saving value**. It cannot be kept. If you break any of it, you break all of it. Here is the truth that sets you free. You cannot earn your way into heaven. **Grace is the only answer**. Grace comes through the work of the cross and it is a gift from God.

**The Law: If you break any of it, you break it all.**

**5.** ***“The just shall live by faith”***

*(Galatians 3:11 NKJV) “But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for **“the just shall live by faith.”** {12} Yet the law is not of faith, but **“the man who does them shall live by them.”**”*

It is clearly stated, undeniable doctrine. Faith in Christ alone brings a right relationship with God and sustains us through life.

Paul says, we *“shall”* live by faith. This seems to be more than an observation. It appears to have the weight of a biblical imperative. The word *“shall”* brings with it the implication of a command! The statement is a reflection of God’s design for His relationship with us. He says we are to live by faith in Him. Our faith will be sufficient for every moment of life. He is faithful. He will not fail us.

*(Proverbs 3:5) “Trust in the LORD with all your heart...”*

**6.**

**“Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law.”**

(Concerning the process of salvation)

**The Promise of the Spirit    ...through Faith!**

↓  
**The Product**

↓  
**The Process**

*(Galatians 3:13-14 NKJV) “Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, **having become a curse for us** (for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”) {14} that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.”*

*(Genesis 12:2-3 NKJV) “I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing. {3} I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.””*

*(Genesis 22:17-18 NKJV) “blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. {18} “In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.””*

Paul clearly presents both sides of the coin. On the first side, he says we are sons and daughters of Abraham because we have faith in Christ. On the flip side, should we choose to try to be justified by the works of the Law, we will be cursed! (Refer again to Galatians 3:10, above).

The promise of the Spirit to us is the same promise Abraham received. The blessing is that by faith we are saved, just as Abraham was when he believed God and God counted it as righteousness. Regardless of who we are, or what we have been, we become spiritual sons and daughters of Abraham!

*(Galatians 3:6 NKJV) “just as Abraham “believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.””*

**7.** **“the law, which was four hundred and thirty years later, cannot annul the covenant...”**

(The Law cannot cancel the promise of Justification by Faith.)

**Both have the same theological implications.**

Read Romans, Chapter 4. In it, Paul adds great weight to his statements in Galatians, Chapter 3. Study these passages and they will strengthen your understanding.

*(Galatians 3:17 NKJV) “And this I say, that the law, which was four hundred and thirty years later, cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ, that it should make the promise of no effect.”*

The Law came 430 years after God promised Abraham that all the nations of the world would have the opportunity to become his spiritual children. Jesus fulfilled that promise. The promise to Abraham (Abrahamic Covenant) was confirmed in Christ, through His substitutionary atonement. Christ’s propitiating death enabled our redemption.

Can you define these terms?

- Covenant
- Substitutionary Atonement
- Propitiation
- Redemption

**8.** *“...the law... was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come...”*

(The Law: a temporary provision until Christ fulfilled His promise)

*(Galatians 3:19 NKJV) “What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator.”*

*(Galatians 22:18b) “In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed,”*

The Law was always intended to be a temporary tool to keep the Jewish people from the wrath of God (judgment for sin), and to provide a pathway to daily blessings... until Jesus would come. He then became the way... the only way!

*(John 14:6 NKJV) “Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”*

**9.** *“But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law”*

(The Law kept God’s people until Christ was revealed.  
This affirms the preceding statement)

*(Galatians 3:23 NKJV) “But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed.”*

God never expected the Jewish people to have a full revelation of Christ until He would reveal Himself to them. His love for these people demanded that He guard or keep them from His wrath until Christ could die for their sin.

**10.** ***“The law was our tutor to bring us to Christ”***

*(Galatians 3:24 NKJV) “Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.”*

*(KJV) “the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ,”  
(New Living translation) “...our guardian and teacher to lead us until Christ”*

There is a redemptive thread woven through every one of the thirty-nine books of the Hebrew Scriptures. When the truth about Christ was fully and finally revealed in the New Testament, the Law was no longer needed. We are no longer under the Law.

**11.** ***“For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this:  
“You shall love your neighbor as yourself.””***

*(Galatians 5:14 NKJV) “For **all** the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.””*

*(Galatians 5:14 International Children’s Bible) “ The whole law is made complete in this one command: “Love your neighbor as you love yourself.””*

We have forgiveness of sin through the blood of Jesus. Before Christ went to the cross, God provided His Hebrew children a way of covering their sins until Jesus could propitiate them. **He protected them from themselves with the Law!** This principle of love works today and forever. We are, with God’s Old Testament example, obliged to cover each other with loving forgiveness, along with patient acceptance of each other.

**Love is the character of God.**

*(1 Corinthians 13:4-7 NKJV) “Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; {5} does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; {6} does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; {7} bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.”*

*(1 Peter 4:8 NKJV) “And above all things have fervent love for one another, for “love will cover a multitude of sins.””*

*(1 Corinthians 13:8 NKJV) "Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away."*

Love is the purest, most powerful expression of the character of God. It will fill the dark places in the darkened hearts we will encounter in our journey through life.

**12.** ***"if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law."***

Spirit and flesh are contrary to one another. Walk in the Spirit. You will give no place to your flesh, the devil or any other distraction or temptation.

*(Galatians 5:16-18 NKJV) "I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. {17} For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. {18} But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law."*

There is a constant battle between the flesh and the spirit, but we have the ability as born-again Christians to be led by the Spirit and not fulfill the lusts of the flesh! We are not under the Law.

## Two Pathways

### 1. The Pathway to Hell

*(Galatians 5:19-21 NKJV) "Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, {20} idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, {21} envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God."*

Paul presents his readers with a list – those things that, if habitually practiced, will keep a person from heaven. There are, of course, other works of the flesh mentioned elsewhere in the Bible. We can take this list in Galatians to be comprehensive, but not all-inclusive. The Law cannot save us from the desire to do these things, nor can it actually stop us.

King Solomon gave us the vital clue to preventative action. His instructions are clear. How are we to maintain our distance from

the works of the flesh? The answer requires constant diligence. We are to avoid whatever exposes us to any of these works of the flesh. Distance is our great safety mechanism. We cannot fall over the edge unless we are close enough to do so. Keep your distance!

*(Proverbs 4:14, 15, 25-27 NKJV) “Do not enter the path of the wicked, And do not walk in the way of evil. {15} Avoid it, do not travel on it; Turn away from it and pass on...”*

*{25} Let your eyes look straight ahead, And your eyelids look right before you. {26} Ponder the path of your feet, And let all your ways be established. {27} Do not turn to the right or the left; Remove your foot from evil.”*

## 2. The Pathway to Blessings

*(Galatians 5:22-25 NKJV) “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, {23} gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. {24} And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. {25} If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.”*

*(Galatians 5:22-25 New Living Translation) “But when the Holy Spirit controls our lives, he will produce this kind of fruit in us: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, {23} gentleness, and self-control. Here there is no conflict with the law. {24} Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to his cross and crucified them there. {25} If we are living now by the Holy Spirit, let us follow the Holy Spirit's leading in every part of our lives.”*

The Law is no longer God's controlling agent in the lives of His people. The Law teaches us the character of God. therefore, it is not in conflict with the New Testament list of character qualities we know as “fruit of the Spirit.”

- A crucified life denies the works of the flesh any entrance. We have nailed the works of the flesh to the cross. They are crucified. They are killed and are not to be resurrected. Notice that we are the ones who do the nailing. This action is exactly what Solomon was talking about when he instructed us to stay off the path of the wicked (Proverbs 4, above).
- A crucified life is a Spirit-led life. The Holy Spirit is to have the lead in every part of our lives.
- The Holy Spirit is to be the control Agent of our lives.

How do we know when to follow what the Hebrew Scriptures teach, and when are these elements of the Law no longer normative (the required way for us)? How can we be sure? Use the following points to affirm or deny the normative nature of any Scripture that takes the form of a command or prohibition:

1. See if the issue is clearly reaffirmed in the New Testament.
2. Be sure that the intent of the reaffirming New Testament Scriptures you choose are put there for the purpose of instruction, and not incidental. In other words, do the New Testament Scriptures reaffirm and teach the Old Testament principle in a clearly directive way?
3. Are there New Testament Scriptures that inform us the principles in question are universal and timeless?
4. Can we relate the particular Scripture supra-culturally (to a principle that works in any and every culture around the world)?
5. Finally, and most importantly, do the Scriptures in question fall comfortably in line with the Royal Law of Love, which the Holy Spirit has written on our hearts? Here it is...

***(Matthew 22:37-40 NKJV) “‘You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with your entire mind.’ {38} This is the first and great commandment. {39} <sup>And</sup> the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ {40} On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.””***

On God’s New Testament love standard, hangs all the Law and the prophets. Love never fails. When you have given your life to Christ, you are fully justified by faith alone. You are no longer under the Law.