

A New Community of Jesus Centrality Active in Grace 2:15-21

Significant aspects of a persons relationship with Jesus
Righteousness, Justification, Faith, Works

Looking through the lens of Antioch

- Who are the people of God?
- Are they to be defined ethnically or Messianically?
- What are the every day activities and attitudes of those who have experienced the salvation of a resurrected Jesus?

vs. 15-16, Simply the process of becoming a Jesus follower.

vs. 17-21, How does this play out in everyday life?

vs. 17,

- If you don't follow the law you are a sinner (Leviticus 20:22-26)
- But if you stop following the law because of Jesus, isn't he causing us to be sinners?
- Absolutely not! Jesus is the new covenant. We are not approved by God because we follow Torah, we are approved by God because of faith in Jesus.

Salvation is acceptance by God through faith in Jesus.
Acceptance by God is not through the works of the Law.

Why would we rebuild what the Spirit has asked us to tear down (remove)? The Spirit establishes the "we". It is not longer us and them.

Our faith impacts our community and how these two intersect relates to justice.

- Paul's emphasis is not guilt removal - primarily focusing on getting the stamp that labels me righteous and ok (not guilty) before God.
- Paul's emphasis is on the formation of a new community, new social relationships, a new landscape marked by the ethics (justice) of the kingdom.

vs. 19-21, Jewish Christians find spiritual life through death to the law. They have been crucified with Christ. It is the resurrected Jesus that gives new life to the believer.

In salvation, what is our identity?
Are we Jewish Christians?
Are we the first reformers of Judaism?

Are we Jews?
Are we Christians?
Are we starting the church?

How does the church reflect the justice of God because it has experienced salvation?

Becoming part of God's family puts your social identity at stake.

The life of the church (body of Christ) will be guided by God's Spirit and the teachings of Jesus.
It will not be guided by cultural and social expectations (even if they are deeply religious).

**Huge implications for the DNA of the church

*In this case the Jewish expectation of the law.
To return to the law would be to set aside the grace and generous love of Jesus.
Trusting Jesus is itself a journey through the law (3:19-25).

Law only = self-righteousness / inflated ego / look at how _____ I am.

We have died to the law through Jesus

- Jesus is my righteousness.
- Freedom to live absent of self and in the fullness of the Spirit.

- Through the power of the Spirit I grow in character and righteousness.
- The Spirit gives God's children the capacity to do what pleases God -> the Spirit guides.

This is key to understanding the rest of Galatians.

What is our identity? How do we function in unity undeterred by our varied differences (Jew / Gentile, Slave / Free, Male / Female)?

To be guided by Jesus the Spirit is our compass, rudder, and hull (the watertight enclosure of the ship).

The grace of God is Jesus.

Ephesians 2:13-14 But now in Christ Jesus, you who were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ. **14** For he is our peace, who made both groups one and tore down the dividing wall of hostility.

What should we expect in our relationship to God through Christ?

- God at work in our lives to form Christ in us.
- To deepen our capacities for love and others-centered service.
- To change our hearts from self-focus toward a focus on the needs of others.
- To break out of our self-centered interests (often shaped by this world) and be free to serve and love God as our creator.

Grace

We view grace as a one way transaction (a transfer of a commodity - salvation / justification). This grace is free with no cost to the recipient.

Is this the meaning of grace that Paul's listeners understood?

Grace was understood as relationship and reciprocity.

Grace pursues relationship.

Its aim is to deepen bonds and celebrate partnership.

A key sign that grace is at work is the fruit of thankfulness and generosity.

χάρις (Charis) - show favor, gift given, response of gratitude

Grace given = Responding in Thanksgiving
A relationship is forming.

Faith (πίστις) - loyalty / depending on the load bearing wall

Grace -> receiving and returning

Expressing thanks and telling others of the generosity of the giver (showing honor).

2 Corinthians 8:7-9 Now as you excel in everything—in faith, speech, knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love for us—excel also in this act of grace. **8** I am not saying this as a command. Rather, by means of the diligence of others, I am testing the genuineness of your love. **9** For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ: Though he was rich, for your sake he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich.

Question: What is your view of the family of God? Does religion shape your actions more than Jesus? If so, how and why is this true?

How has grace shaped your relationship with God? How has it shaped your relationship with others? Does your life demonstrate a heart of gratitude? Is your life bearing the fruit of grace (thankfulness and generosity)?