

Luther, in his commentary on Galatians, gives us these nuggets:

Paul is so eager to come to the subject matter of his epistle, the righteousness of faith in opposition to the righteousness of works, that already in the title he must speak his mind.

Christ, whom God the Father has raised from the dead is our righteousness and our victory.

The article of justification must be sounded in our ears incessantly because the frailty of our flesh will not permit us to take hold of it perfectly and to believe it with all our heart.

Grace remits sin, and peace quiets the conscience. Sin and conscience torment us, but Christ has overcome these fiends now and forever. ... These two terms, grace and peace, constitute Christianity. Grace involves the remission of sins, peace, and a happy conscience.

Sin is not canceled by lawful living, for no person is able to live up to the Law. The Law reveals guilt, fills the conscience with terror, and drives men to despair. Much less is sin taken away by man-invented endeavors. The fact is, the more a person seeks credit for himself by his own efforts, the deeper he goes into debt. Nothing can take away sin except the grace of God. In actual living, however, it is not so easy to persuade oneself that by grace alone, in opposition to every other means, we obtain the forgiveness of our sins and peace with God.

## Galatians 2

<sup>15</sup> We *who are* Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, <sup>16</sup> 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. <sup>17</sup> “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! <sup>18</sup> For if I build again those things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. <sup>19</sup> For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God. <sup>20</sup> 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. <sup>21</sup> I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness *comes* through the law, then Christ died in vain.”

### Notes on Justification

Colin Brown gives a wonderfully concise summary of St. Paul’s teaching on justification. He writes:

1. By the works of the law, i.e., on the basis of perfect obedience, no man can be justified (Romans 3:20, 28; Galatians 2:16; 3:11). Indeed, there would have been no need for Christ to die if *dikaiosyne* [righteousness] were by the law (Galatians 2:21; cf. 3:21). Henceforth, he who would be justified by the works of the law shows that he has fallen from grace (Gal. 5:4)... It was precisely in the matter of doing the law that Israel had failed (Romans 9:31), for a man can only do the will of God when he is grasped by the righteousness of God and completely taken up by it. Otherwise sin usurps the law (Romans 7), and man is powerless against it because sin is not primarily [or merely] evil deeds or evil inclinations, but man’s striving for his own righteousness and justification (Romans 10:3). Hence, only the man who has died to sin and so is justified (Romans 6:7) can do God’s will (Romans 6:10).
2. From this Paul concludes that man can be justified only by faith in Christ (Romans 3:26, 28; 5:1; Gal. 2:16), i.e., by trusting utterly and only in God’s grace, which by definition must be a free gift (Romans 3:24).
3. Since the believer has died with Christ to sin and is now justified (Romans 6:7), he lives only for God (Romans 6:11).
4. Righteousness at the present time (Romans 3:26) anticipates the final revelation of God’s righteousness at the second coming of Christ.