

Justification by Faith through Grace

Acts 15:1-35 – The focus of the church council at Jerusalem was regarding whether the Gentiles needed to be circumcised according to the Law of Moses in that they had already accepted the Lordship of Christ in becoming Christians. Since Paul, Barnabas, and especially Peter could attest that Gentiles had previously been accepted by God into the family, for they heard them speak in tongues, it was decided there was no need for circumcision. However, under the leadership of James, nothing was decided regarding the Jews continuing on in the Mosaic Law as had been the case up till then. The revelation about the Old Covenant being fulfilled and replaced by the New Covenant was given to Paul and not embraced by the other apostles, save perhaps Peter.

Galatians 2:1-16 – Later, after the council, Paul went to Antioch with Barnabas. Then Peter joined them, but both Barnabas and Peter rejected the Gentiles when word came from James. A large part of Paul's writings deals with the misunderstanding that keeping the Law was still necessary in order to be Justified.

Galatians 3:15-29 – The Law was never designed for the purpose of salvation or justification. If the Law could do these things, Jesus needed not to have suffered and died. The purpose of the Law was to be a teacher until Justification came to man through the sacrifice of Jesus. The Law was a school teacher.

3:25 – "Tutor" is from the Greek word *paidagogos* translated into the English pedagogue. In both in Greek and Roman culture, it was common for a slave escort or hired tutor to serve as the guardian of a person legally incapable of managing his own affairs, especially a child under age of puberty. They taught, disciplined, guided, and protected the child until he was old enough to care for himself. This is exactly what the Law did until Christ. Once Christ came, the time of maturity was reached, and the pedagogue (the Law) was no longer needed.

Galatians 4:1-8 – God's plan for man's redemption that includes justification came to maturity when Christ died on the cross. With his blood, the Old Covenant was fulfilled, and the New Covenant began. The full maturity of the plan happens when Christ returns.

Colossians 2:16-18 – The phrase "by what you eat or drink" refers to the kosher laws, festival, new moon; "Sabbath days" refers to the annual feasts, monthly celebrations, and weekly Sabbaths. These things were and are a shadow.

The temple, animal sacrifices, high priest, etc. came to an end; however, much of the moral aspects of the Law are still very much intact. Jesus gave clarity and, in some things, more requirements than the Law has.

Romans 7:7 – What shall we say then? Is the Law sin? May it never be! On the contrary, I would not have come to know sin except through the Law; for I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, "YOU SHALL NOT COVET."

Romans 7:12 – The Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.

Romans 7:14 – For we know that the Law is spiritual

Hebrews 8:13 – When He said, "A new *covenant*," He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear.

Much of what Paul teaches in Romans, Galatians, Ephesians, and Hebrews deals with the wrong understanding of the Old Covenant plus ignorance of the New Covenant. He forcefully and often proves no one is saved by the Law. Many today misunderstand this teaching thinking Paul is condemning faith works. The wrong teaching has evoked the idea that "we are saved by grace and not by works, so all works are wrong."

Ephesians 2:1-10 – Indeed no one can be saved by adherence to the Law or any works. However, we must have faith, and if we have genuine faith, then we also have the corresponding works of obedience.

James 2:14-25 – Faith without works is dead – it is not really faith.

Romans 3:21-31

25 – This verse illustrates how the Law was a shadowy type for Christ. The word "propitiation" is from the Greek word "*hilasterion*" translated mercy-seat in Hebrews 9:5. The root of this Greek word is also found translated in Luke 18:13 merciful and in Hebrew 2:17 as propitiation.

Passover brings us back to Exodus with the original Passover.

Romans 4:1ff – makes clear that righteousness and justification are a gift from God through Christ received by faith. Abraham and David are held forth as examples.

Romans 5:1ff

Salvation

Past Tense¹

In Paul's letters we find several different ways of talking about what God has done in Christ. The most common is that we are "saved." Here is (perhaps) the most famous Scripture about how God has saved us.

Ephesians 2:8-9 – God's salvation is a gift that we accept by faith. His grace reaches down, and we reach up through faith. Then He pulls us up and out. Because salvation doesn't depend on works, no one can say, "I've earned it; I'm so great." Instead, we say God did it. Isn't He glorious?

In addition to describing gracious act as "salvation," we also see these other ways of talking about, each emphasizing a different aspect of what He has done for us through Christ:

justified	Rom 2:13; 3:4, 20, 24, 28; 4:2; 5:1, 9; 8:30; 10:10; 1 Cor 6:11; Gal 2:16-17, 3:11; 3:24; 5:4; Tit 3:7
reconciled	Rom 5:10-11; 1 Cor 7:11; 2 Cor 5:18-20; Eph 2:16; Col 1:20-22
adopted	Rom 8:15, 23; Gal 4:5; Eph 1:5
sanctified	1 Cor 1:2; 6:11; Eph 5:26
redeemed	Gal 3:13; 4:5; Tit 2:14
regenerated	Tit 3:5

When considering salvation (in the past tense), we may ask the question, "What are we saved from?" This question is extremely helpful in clarifying our understanding. Fortunately, we need only go back up to the beginning of the chapter to get the answer we seek.

Ephesians 2:1-10 – According to verses 1-3, we're saved from being dead in sin, going along with evil spiritual forces, living in the passions of our flesh, and being a child of wrath. Verse 7 tells us we have a future to look forward to as well. But, if we're saved, what does that mean about how our lives should look? Verse 10 tells us the purpose of our salvation is for good works that we should walk in.

¹ Also see Rom 8:24; 2 Tim 1:9; Tit 3:5

Present Tense²

1 Corinthians 15:1-2 – The Corinthians had already received the gospel some time ago; they believed it when they heard it. Now they are “being saved.”³ Salvation is not just a one-time event, though there is an entry point. We become saved, and then we continue in that reality. Is it possible to lose your salvation?

Southern Baptist Convention

Article Nine: The Security of the Believer⁴

We affirm that when a person responds in faith to the Gospel, God promises to complete the process of salvation in the believer into eternity. This process begins with justification, whereby the sinner is immediately acquitted of all sin and granted peace with God; continues in sanctification, whereby the saved are progressively conformed to the image of Christ by the indwelling Holy Spirit; and concludes in glorification, whereby the saint enjoys life with Christ in heaven forever.

We deny that this Holy Spirit-sealed relationship can ever be broken. We deny even the possibility of apostasy.

Lutheran Churches

Formula of Concord: XI Election

Therefore we should judge concerning this our election to eternal life neither from reason nor from the Law of God, which lead us either into a reckless, dissolute, Epicurean life or into despair, and excite pernicious thoughts in the hearts of men, for they cannot, as long as they follow their reason, successfully refrain from thinking: **If God has elected me to salvation, I cannot be condemned, no matter what I do**; and again: If I am not elected to eternal life, it is of no avail what good I do; it is all in vain anyway.

Westminster Confession of Faith

Chapter XVII: Of the Perseverance of the Saints

I. They, whom God has accepted in His Beloved, effectually called, and sanctified by His Spirit, can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace, but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved.

Nevertheless, what does the Scripture say?

² Also see 1 Cor 1:18; 2 Cor 2:15

³ NASB “you are saved”; ESV, NET, NAB, NRSV “you are being saved”; However, the NASB translates both 1 Cor 1:18 and 2 Cor 2:15 as “being saved”

⁴ “A Statement of the Traditional Southern Baptist Understanding of God’s Plan of Salvation”

<http://chalcedon.org/resources/counsel-of-chalcedon-magazine/2012-issue-3-4/a-statement-of-the-traditional-southern-baptist-understanding-of-gods-plan-of-salvation>

1 Corinthians 15:1-2 – This verse clearly teaches that you must “hold fast” to the preached word or else you believe in vain. Only by persevering in faith do you remain saved. Of course, this is not the only verse in Paul’s letters about this.⁵

Colossians 1:21-23

21 And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, 22 he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, 23 **if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel** that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.

Bob Mathieson explains this well:

“Many people are concerned about this, and I understand their concern initially, because they have made themselves feel good about the fact they could never lose it—it scares them. Someone says, “Are you telling me I can lose my salvation?” My response to that is, “That’s the wrong way to put it. You lose your car keys; you don’t lose your salvation. You forfeit your salvation; you walk away from your salvation. You don’t lose it. It not something where you are going to be surprised. This is a deliberate saying, ‘I’m going to do what I want to do with my life, I’m not going to continue to make Jesus Lord, and I’m going to continue on in some kind of sinful way.’ The only thing left then, is a fiery judgment that God will judge.”⁶

Also in Romans 11:13-24, Paul uses the illustration of an olive tree to show that the we remain connected by faith. If we cease to believe, then like a withered branch, the gardener will cut us off. Still, we can get back into the tree if we return to faith.

Romans 8:35-39 – As long as we continue in genuine faith, God protects us from anything coming between us.

Future Tense⁷

Romans 13:11-14 Our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. What are we saved from in the future? According to Romans 5:9, “we will be saved by him from the wrath of God.” Through resurrection God will save us from sickness, pain, suffering, and death. By establishing the Kingdom, God will deliver us from the anxieties, fears, and sufferings of living in a world in rebellion to Him.

Romans 13:11-14 – We don’t wait passively for our ultimate salvation. Instead, we walk properly, living for God day by day.

⁵ Rom 11:13-24; 1 Cor 6:9-10; 9:27; Gal 5:19-21; 6:8-9; Eph 5:3-12; Phil 3:11-14; 1 Tim 4:16; 5:8; 2 Tim 2:11-13;

⁶ “Conditional Salvation with Bob Mathieson,” Truth Matters Podcast, episode 10, March 15, 2009, broadcast on WHAZ, <https://truthmattersradio.wordpress.com/2009/03/15/conditional-salvation-with-bob-mathieson/>

⁷ Also see 1 Cor 3:15; 5:5; 1 Tim 2:15; 2 Tim 2:10

2 Timothy 2:11-13

The saying is trustworthy, for:

If we have died with him,
We will also live with him;
If we endure,
We will also reign with him;
If we deny him,
He also will deny us;
If we are faithless,
He remains faithful--
For he cannot deny himself.