



# STUDY GUIDE & DAILY READINGS

Sunday, March 7, 2010

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## MythBusters

*Myth: Christians are Judgmental (Week 2 of 3)*

**Galatians 3:23-29** — *The Word from the Bible (The Message)*

*Until the time when we were mature enough to respond freely in faith to the living God, we were carefully surrounded and protected by the Mosaic law. The law was like those Greek tutors, with which you are familiar, who escort children to school and protect them from danger or distraction, making sure the children will really get to the place they set out for.*

*But now you have arrived at your destination: By faith in Christ you are in direct relationship with God. Your baptism in Christ was not just washing you up for a fresh start. It also involved dressing you in an adult faith wardrobe — Christ's life, the fulfillment of God's original promise.*

*In Christ's family there can be no division into Jew and non-Jew, slave and free, male and female. Among us you are all equal. That is, we are all in a common relationship with Jesus Christ. Also, since you are Christ's family, then you are Abraham's famous "descendant," heirs according to the covenant promises.*

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### **Justification by Faith**

Verse 24 is most commonly translated: ***So the law was put in charge of us until Christ came that we might be justified by faith.***

At the very center of Paul's thought is that our relationship with God is based not on what we do, but what Christ has done for us. We are justified by faith for eternal life with God. In chapters 3 and 4 of Galatians, Paul ties the importance of faith in our relationship to God back through the Old Testament to Abraham, patriarch of the faith. For Paul, the absolute need for faith was God's intent from the very beginning. The "law" was put in place until humanity was ready for the gift of God's full forgiveness and new life in Christ.

Paul makes the points that no one is justified by the law. Because of our human nature, it is impossible to completely follow the law so as to please God. Not only does Paul use the experience of Abraham but also quotes the prophet Habakkuk, ***"The just shall live by his faith"*** (Hab. 2:4). (He references this verse not only here in Galatians, but also in his letter to the Romans 1:17.)

Paul's primary goal was to make it absolutely clear that we are justified only by our faith; not by merit, nor by good works or moral excellence. This does not discount or exclude, as we will see in chapter 5, the demand for righteous living. A righteous person is both just and justified. We live on the basis of faith, which has meaning for life in the present as well as the future.

The letter warns of the trap of the law, calling the Galatians "foolish" in their efforts to "justify" themselves. His words are so strong; it seems as if the letter is discounting the place of the law. But Paul is not separating faith from faithfulness, or divorcing justification from righteousness. Augustine's admonition ***"love God and do as you please"*** does not give us any excuse for immorality or injustice. This is no license for undisciplined, irresponsible living. Rather, this admonition underscores the inseparable relationships between righteousness imputed by God and the righteousness (right-living) of the person who is justified and who lives by faith.

### **Life in Christ**

Life in Christ begins at the very moment when one becomes a Christian. Faith-life that begins now cannot be separated from the fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5), nor can it be separated from the future blessedness of eternal life with God.

Life, the sum and substance of God's blessing to the righteous person, is promised to those who are justified by faith.

Two things must be observed here. First, Paul was not saying that faith and the observance of law are wholly in-

compatible. Paul knew many devout Jews who were reliant on the divine promises of God, trusted in His divine mercy, yet made the Law of God their delight. The combination of faith and legal observance was characteristic of the Jewish Christians in Galatia. What Paul is saying is that faith and observance of law are incompatible as grounds of justification. So, live as rightly as you can, observe the law to the best of your ability, but know that faith is what justifies.

Second, Paul is saying that the law takes no account of faith or any other religious attitude of those who are under its authority. Performance or nonperformance is the issue. If you make law the basis of justification, you will have to live by the condemnation that comes when any slightest detail of the law is not observed. Living by the law for justification means that nonperformance entails loss of blessing. Failure to keep the law, if you have made this your hope, brings one under the “curse” which is death.

### **Real Maturity in Christ**

Paul’s great definition of a Christian was a person in Christ. He used that picture over and over again.

- **If any one is in Christ, he is a new creation** (2 Cor. 5:17, RSV)
- **And the secret is simply this: Christ in you! Yes, Christ in you bringing with him the hope of all the glorious things to come** (Col. 1:27, Phillips)
- **For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain** (Phil. 1:21, KJV)
- **There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.** (Rom. 8:1, KJV).

Paul’s most vivid description of his Christian experience was expressed in Gal. 2:20: **“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me.”**

It is crucial that we see the justifying and sanctifying work of Christ together. In justification, we are given a new status — the status of family. We are reconciled to God. Our acceptance by God has its source not in our achievement, but in God’s love. Our righteousness is not that which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith (Phil. 3:9). We are made right with God by the justifying death of Jesus.

This takes care of our estrangement from God, our relationship with God. But sin has not only severed our relationship with God, it has distorted the image of God within us, perverted God’s divine intention — God’s very life within us. Sanctification is the restoration of the image of God, the recovery of our identify as children of God. Christ being formed in us is the reformation of our lives in God’s great design for us, and that great design is the stature of the fullness of Christ.

So, along with justification, God in Christ gives us a new birth. We become new creatures in Christ Jesus; the old has passed away; the new has come. The new that has come is Christ indwelling us by the power of the Holy Spirit, shaping our lives after the image of Christ.

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## **Prayer Focus**

Trietsch is a praying church. This morning, as you worship, one of our prayer volunteers is praying for everyone in each section of our worship center. We believe that prayer changes lives and hearts for good and for God.

We invite you to join these volunteers by praying for those persons around you. We believe these prayers will have an immediate impact on those for whom you are praying.

**Remember... someone is praying for you. Have a great week!**

As we consider the extravagant forgiveness of God’s love in Jesus Christ. Below Psalm 130 and 131 are recommended as prayers for your worship this morning. These Psalms both admit our great need for God’s forgiveness and the gracious forgiveness that has already been given in Christ.

### ***Psalm 130***

Out of the depths I cry to you, LORD;  
Lord, hear my voice.

Let your ears be attentive  
to my cry for mercy.

If you, LORD, kept a record of sins,  
Lord, who could stand?

But with you there is forgiveness,  
so that we can, with reverence, serve you.

I wait for the LORD, my whole being waits,  
and in his word I put my hope.

I wait for the Lord  
more than watchmen wait for the morning,  
more than watchmen wait for the morning.

Israel, put your hope in the LORD,  
for with the LORD is unfailing love  
and with him is full redemption.

He himself will redeem Israel  
from all their sins.

### ***Psalm 131***

God, I'm not trying to rule the roost,  
I don't want to be king of the mountain.  
I haven't meddled where I have no business  
or fantasized grandiose plans.

I've kept my feet on the ground,  
I've cultivated a quiet heart.  
Like a baby content in its mother's arms,  
my soul is a baby content.

Wait, Israel, for God. Wait with hope.  
Hope now; hope always!

***Next week we continue the sermon series on the book of Galatians, called "MythBusters."  
Come learn Paul's lessons on what Christianity is really all about.***

***Invite someone to worship this week. You will be glad you did.  
God is doing great things through the ministry of Trietsch.***

# Daily Readings

Each of these passages focus on the words of Jesus from the gospels concerning forgiveness and judgment. Read these passages carefully each day. Examine your relationships, the manner in which you treat others, and your opinions about those different from yourself. Hopefully these readings and reflective questions will prepare you for the sermons. The study guide readings allow us to dig deeper.

**Monday, March 8 – Read Matthew 7:1-6** — These words come from the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus is dealing with our human tendency to judge each other. It is easy for us to find fault in others while our own character flaws seem invisible. Jesus challenges us to look inside first before we begin to judge and place labels on others. These words of Jesus are especially difficult, **“Do not judge, so that you may not be judged, for with the judgment you make you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get.”** In what ways do we tend to judge others? What are the differences between judgments and opinions; actions and thoughts?

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**Tuesday, March 9 – Read John 13:1-11** — John is the only gospel writer that includes the story of Jesus washing the disciple’s feet. Washing someone’s feet is a menial dirty job. For John this is a clear example of the servant attitude of Jesus. As followers of Christ, we should never put ourselves above another person. Are we willing to wash another’s feet? Whose feet do you need to wash today to show them how much you love them? Whose feet would you be most reluctant to wash?

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**Wednesday, March 10 – Read Mark 10:35-45** — Three times Jesus has told his disciples that he will suffering and die. Three times he has told them that he will triumph over death. Many times he has spoken of being servant and serving others. Here James and John are report asking for a high position when Jesus comes into his glory. They don’t get it. Jesus response to the disciples as they argue about position is this: **“whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all.”** As you meditate over this scripture, do you think Christians today “get it?” Are you willing to be counted last? Do any of us really get the meaning of Jesus’ radical call to serve?

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**Thursday, March 11 – Read Luke 6:37-45** — As Luke quotes Jesus teaching, it is very similar to the words that we read from Matthew on Monday. But Luke adds the analogy of bearing fruit. From verse 44, **“...for each tree is known by its own fruit. Figs are not gathered from thorns, nor grapes picked from bramble bush.”** By what tree are you known? We all want to produce good fruit. What attitudes, opinions, broken relationships, and judgments are affecting your harvest?

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**Friday, March 12 – Read Galatians 5 and 6** — Next week we will be looking at the final chapters of Galatians. Read these chapters in preparation of next week’s worship. After making his case for justification by faith, Paul now outlines the sanctified life in Christ. In particular read Galatians 5:22 and 6:2. How are you fulfilling the law of Christ?

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