



*December 15, 2024*

*“Justification”*

*Joy, the Third Sunday of Advent.  
Sunday school at 9:30, Service at 10:30.*

News:

Wednesday Night Christmas Skit  
Christmas Eve Candlelight Service 4:30 December 24th

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To “rejoice” is, χαίρω (xī-rō), and “joy” is its cognate noun, χαρά (xä-rä) (Matthew 2:10).

Galatians 2:15 through 2:21 is the thesis. It is what the Letter is about.

In the first 5 verses of chapter 3, Paul gives the proof that his argument is valid.

### **GALATIANS 3:1–5 ~**

When God is this dramatic, we need to pay attention. We need to take Him seriously and see what is right before our eyes.

Neither the doing of things, nor the not doing of things matters – what matters is being Born Again. That comes as the result of being justified.

Paul’s question is essentially, are people filled with the Holy Spirit because they are, in some way, good... or... is it because they have accepted the God’s free gift of Grace?

*Fill out the other side, detach this part of the page, and place it in the offering plate or the prayer/suggestion box in the lobby or with an Elder or Deacon of the church.*

*God Bless You!*

In verse 1, Paul blasts his audience by calling them “foolish.” Then he asks if they have been “bewitched.” It is βασκαίνω (bäs-kī-nō) ...

He was saying that you all clearly saw the Jesus I proclaimed, who has used their black magic evil eye to blind you to what you once saw clearly?

Crist Crucified is a concept that doesn't resonate.

What is justification? Technically, justification means a judicial acceptance by the Judge of the accused's innocence.

It is justice already done.

We have a problem that we cannot solve (II Thessalonians 1:7b–9).

Now, God has a problem of His own making that He does solve (II Corinthians 5:21).

You are justified as righteous, all because Jesus took your place in court.

How does a person take hold of the justification provided? By placing all of their trust in Jesus Christ. Now, that takes faith. But not irrational faith...

- 1) Not ours
- 2) Indwelling
- 3) Tested

Every person whom God has transferred into His Kingdom is given a deposit (II Corinthians 1:21&22, Ephesians 1:13&14, Romans 8:16).

This is not at all isolated, it is the norm (Romans 5:1&5).

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Write a brief note – detach and place in the offering, or the prayer box, or give it to a Deacon or Elder.

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Name \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

The Third Week of Advent (Arrival), The Candle of Rejoicing, or Joy for short: It is the same root word, to “rejoice” is a verb, χαίρω (χῑ-ῖ-ῖ-ῖ), and “joy” is its cognate noun, χαρά (χᾱ-ῖ-ῖ).

The Bible often talks about our joy being made complete, or full, or perfected. Arguably, the most joyous verse in the Bible has both the verb and the noun together with enthusiastic superlatives attached.

Matthew 2:10, speaking of the Magi, or Wise Men, who were seeking out the recently born priest, king, and prophet, the Messiah, “God with us,” Jesus... “When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy.”

What is joy? In the Bible it is the mindset, perspective, belief, that everything is perfect. Everything is as it should be. All is right with the world. It is the feeling of satisfaction, contentment, harmony, and dare I say, happiness, because you have a good attitude.

My brother was an excellent racquetball player. For a number of years he played in the state championship and each time things would go wrong for him. A wide variety of setbacks, unfortunate events, unplanned

problems plagued him, and he was repeatedly unable to win it all.

Then one year, he decided that he would take every unexpected glitch as just another thing to be taken in stride as nothing more than an additional challenge to be overcome. No matter what unfolded, he would repeat his one-word mantra in response... Through every difficulty he would say to himself, "perfect."

He won the first of his state championships that year. It wasn't because things went any better for him than they had in previous years. It wasn't that he was a significantly better player. It was all because he was relaxed and at peace due to his attitude of not allowing negativity a foothold. My friends, Rob played with joy, and he won. In fact, even if he had lost again, he would have been undefeated.

For us joy is based on our positive response to actual reality. It is when you recognize that everything is perfect because the One Who speaks you into existence and Who knows your innermost thoughts loves you unconditionally.

He gets you and He has got you. You are His and nothing, for all eternity, can change that... You are forever loved, with a love more powerful than we can possibly fathom.

From that realization, that acceptance, that embracing, of His eternal love for you, you are filled with unspeakable joy... Everything is okay because God sits on His throne, and He sees you. That supernatural joy causes us to rejoice at the thought of Him.

Jesus is coming... Rejoice in His arrival. His arrival roughly 2028 years ago that we celebrate in 10 days and His arrival once again, sometime soon and very soon.

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Without going back over everything that we've learned in the first two chapters, let me just say that the entire point of this Bible Book was laid out at the end of chapter 2, and now, in the first few verses of chapter 3, Paul gives the proof that his point is true.

Everything up to verse 15 in chapter 2 has been setting the stage. Chapter 2:15 through 21 was the whole

issue laid out through the sharing of Paul's confrontation with Peter.

Technically, it is called the *propositio* or proposition. Interestingly, at least to me, is that one of the English words we get from it is, *proponent*. A *proponent* is one who holds a certain proposition. It is claim or thesis statement. It is what the Letter is about. In a word, it is justification.

We won't spend much more time on chapter 2, but I want to reread that thesis section so we can all be reminded of the main point and better see the flow of the argument as we transition into the proof part in chapter 3... I'm going to try to help the Passage along... Paul is talking to Peter...

Galatians 2:15–21, 15“We are Jews by nature and not sinners from the Gentiles...

In other words, Peter, you and I were born into the Covenant. We were both circumcised on the 8th day. We are native children of God... 16nevertheless, knowing that a person is not justified by works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by

faith in Christ and not by works of the Law; since by works of the Law no flesh will be justified.

17But if, while seeking to be justified in Christ, we ourselves have also been found sinners...

Because we realized that we were not made righteous by the Law, because we, like King David and like every other Jew, failed to keep the Law, so then... is Christ then a servant of sin?

Did Jesus make us sinners under the Law?

Far from it! In Greek, μὴ γένοιτο (mā yě-noi-tō), may it never be – Lord forbid! Of course, Jesus didn't make us sinners – He merely revealed the Truth that we were sinners! And that we, like all other sinners, desperately needed Him!

18Now if I rebuild what I have once destroyed...

Namely, if I go back to trying to justify myself by keeping the Law... I prove myself to be a wrongdoer... A sinner, a transgressor, a lawbreaker, a fool...

19For through the Law I died to the Law, so that I might live for God. 20I have been crucified with Christ; and 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 up for me... This is the Theology of Christ Jesus. This is Christianity itself. This is the way human beings are justified before a Holy and Perfect God. Human righteousness comes by the gift of Grace from the Father through Christ to us in the power of the Holy Spirit, so Paul declared...

21I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly.” To think that your worthiness, either by who you are, or who you’ll become, by what you think, what you do, or what you refrain from doing, will justify you, or make you righteous before God is to nullify the Grace of God. If you can be righteous through your own worthiness, Christ died needlessly. That’s what God’s Holy Word says here. Well, what’s the proof that it is True?

In the first 5 verses of chapter 3, Paul gives the proof that his argument is valid, that it is True, and that it is absolute, meaning there isn’t any other way to see it. He will give the proof by asking a few rhetorical questions...

A proper rhetorical question is asked in such a way that the other person answers in their own mind exactly the



way the questioner wants them to answer, thus reinforcing the answer and so, the point.

This is Alêtheia, which means Truth. Specifically, the Truth of God's Glorious Word made available to us in the form of Holy Scripture. "In sharing that Truth this morning, wouldn't it be appropriate to read a bit from the Bible?" Rhetorical question... Let's read.

Galatians 3:1–5, 1You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified? 2This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? 3Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? 4Did you suffer so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain? 5So then, does He who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you, do it by works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?

First of all, that's blunt. God writing through Paul, pulled no punches and we should recognize how important this is to Him that He would be so aggressive about it. I know so many people who will throw away 20 powerful

verses and emphasize 2 or 3 obscure ones in order to keep their man-made doctrine intact.

When God is this dramatic, we need to pay attention. We need to take it seriously when God speaks to us in such direct and uncompromising terms.

To understand what's going on we must not get distracted by our doctrinal bias, but instead see what is right before our eyes. That bit is important... See what is right before your eyes. This entire Bible Book is about justification.

The end of chapter 2 was the main point of the Letter and everything else in it serves to support that point. All you need do is go to the closing summary of the Letter to confirm what I'm saying... Galatians 6:13-16 tells us, "13For those who are circumcised do not even keep the Law themselves... Then Paul goes on to say that it's all about, the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. Paul then says that all who follow this principle will have God's peace and mercy upon them and upon they will be part of His eternal family." That's about justification.

Neither the doing of things, nor the not doing of things matters – what matters is being Born Again. Peace with God and forgiveness of all sins belong to all who live this belief – they are the True church.

The True “Israel of God” is the community of Saved Believers who have the indwelling Holy Spirit as a pledge from God. This isn’t about the Holy Spirit per se, it is about the status needed to be indwelt by the Holy Spirit. This isn’t about living as a Christian per se, it is about what is necessary to be eternally Saved.

Again, this is entirely about justification, and this initial passage in the third chapter is the proof that Paul’s understanding of justification is absolutely True.

His question is essentially, are people filled with God’s Breath because they are, in some way, good... or... is it because they have accepted the gift of Grace that God freely gave to them? Clearly, from the Galatians’ own experience, it was the latter.

They had accepted the Jesus Whom Paul preached placing their faith in Him and as a consequence they

had been justified before God as evidenced by them receiving His Holy Spirit.

In verse 1, Paul blasts his audience by calling them “foolish.” The underlying word literally means mindless – without a mind, without a brain, and the context tells us that it is their morals he questions, not their intelligence. He wasn’t saying that they were intellectually deficient, he was saying that they were morally deficient believing that they could replace Jesus, with their own performance.

He then asks if they have been “bewitched.” It is βασκαίνω (bäs-kī-nō), meaning to give someone the “evil eye.” The evil eye was a curse placed upon people with the eye that clouded the victim’s ability to see reality. It kind of blinded a person, preventing them from seeing what was really going on. Paul wrote, “who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified?”

He was saying that you all clearly saw the Jesus I proclaimed – the Crucified Christ Who took your sins past, present and future with Him to the Cross and Who paid it all. The question was, who has used their

black magic evil eye to blind you to what you once saw clearly?

Crist Crucified is a concept that doesn't resonate all that well nowadays. Christ born, Christ Resurrected, Christ seated at the Right Hand, Christ Returning, sure. Paul talks about Christ Crucified because that is the Love of God poured out and the only thing that allows us entrance into God's Kingdom. It's about being justified before Him.

Here's a rhetorical question for you, "What did the Crucifixion buy?" I want to spend a moment on this all-important concept of justification. What is justification? Technically, justification means a judicial acceptance by the Judge of the accused's innocence.

It is justice already done. Please get that, it is justice already accomplished. I really want us to get this bit, because it is important. According to God, all human beings, from the moment of conception, are guilty of sin. Since God knows all, there is no possibility of escaping His Court. Since God is perfectly perfect, good, just, honest, etc., He cannot be swayed in His judgment.

All guilty people will be correctly judged guilty and sentenced to the correct sentence for their crimes. The problem for mankind is that the penalty for the most insignificant sin of all is eternal separation from God, which is in Jesus' Own Words, the "outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth."

It isn't that all sins are equal in their magnitude, it's just that the least sin warrants the same penalty as the worst sin because there is no greater punishment possible. It's like a man is convicted of premeditated murder and is sentenced to death. Just because a genocidal mass murdering lunatic gets the same sentence, it does not make their crimes equal.

Why does the least little sin warrant such an extreme sentence? Because all sin is, at its core, a rejection of God as God. God simply gives people in their afterlife what they desperately wanted in their physical life. Which is to have God leave them alone. You want God to leave you alone now, why in the world would you want to be in His presence for all eternity? That's a rhetorical question.

Maybe you're not buying what Billy, and I are selling...  
II Thessalonians 1:7b-9, "the Lord Jesus will be

revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God, and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. These people will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power.” As I have said many times, I don’t make this stuff up. This is not my teaching, this is simply what God’s Word says and so, if you don’t like it, may I humbly suggest that you take it up with the Author.

So, all justice with entire integrity, no mitigating or extenuating circumstances, no bribes, no time off for good behavior, no pardon or parole. In short, no mercy because showing mercy is a corruption of justice. God will Judge right. Okay, “Houston we have a problem.”

God came to earth and lived among us as one of us. Fully human with all of our attendant neuroses and propensity to self-destruction, but simultaneously fully God and therefore able to overcome the temptations of our self-indulgence that comes at the expense of God, or others, or ourselves, which is sin.

II Corinthians 5:21 plainly tells us that God the Father made Christ Jesus, who knew no sin at all, to be sin

itself in our place and on our behalf, so that we might become the very righteousness of Almighty God through, and in, Jesus.

What that means is God sits in Judgment. You are guilty and about to be convicted and condemned. Jesus then steps in and says I will take the place of the accused – Judge Me instead. The Father accepts the proxy accused and judges, convicts and condemns your sin carried by Jesus as though it were His sin and He then pays the penalty.

God the Father looks at you and says I declare you righteous, right before Me, because you are without any sin. You are innocent of all charges; you are pronounced justified in all your ways and actions. In fact, both justification and righteousness come from the same underlying root word. One is a verb, and the other is a noun, but it's the same basic thing.

You are justified as righteous, all because Jesus took your place in court. He took your sin, took your guilt, took your inevitable conviction and punishment. Now, since He was Himself personally sinless and willingly did precisely what the Father desired, which is the extreme opposite of a sin, by giving Himself up for



you... He conquered sin, death, and the grave, and remains forever in perfect communion with the Godhead as before.

That's justification. You are legally declared just and therefore righteous by God. God's plan has enabled Him to maintain His perfect justice with absolute integrity and also remain true to His Love nature by orchestrating Salvation for you and for me in this way.

How does a person take hold of the justification provided? By placing all of their trust in the completed work of the Lord Jesus Christ on their behalf. Him crucified, dead, and buried. And then, of course, Him Resurrected, Ascended and Returning once again.

Now, that takes faith. Paul said to Peter, "even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the Law; since by works of the Law no flesh will be justified." Is it a blind faith? Praise be to God, the answer is no, it is not. It is a rational faith with myriad confirmations coming from science, history, geography, archeology, bibliology, logic, and so many others. Our faith is also a supernatural faith. It is 1) first of all a faith, not of our own fleshly

manufacture, but given to us miraculously by God the Holy Spirit.

2) Second, it is a faith verified by the personal indwelling of the Holy Spirit. And 3) thirdly, it is a spiritual faith that is stretched and tested by God over time. The first two seem good, but we're not generally too hip on that third one.

Please God, don't test my faith. But imagine a football player that never practices and never plays in a game, or a tennis player who never picks up a racket, or a golfer who only goes to the golf course to eat lunch. You might say that you are a football player, or a tennis player, or a golfer, but who, including you, would ever know.

One of the greatest kindnesses that God shows to us, His children, is the testing of our faith. Only tested faith is proven real. Only a faith that is tested can produce a stronger faith. Don't just allow God to test your faith, rejoice that He is willing to do so.

Here's the key... Let Him test Himself within you. You do that by staying focused on Christ and His purposes... Rely upon the Lord, pray without ceasing,

meditate upon His Truth, engage with your siblings in Christ, and you will see the faithfulness of God and as a consequence, your faith in Him will grow and mature.

By hearing, understanding, and accepting the Gospel of Christ we believe in Jesus as our Savior. Clearly, our hearing is flawed, our understanding is incomplete, and our acceptance is partial. No matter who you are that was true on the day that God chose to accept you and your imperfect belief as Salvific.

Please get that. You were transferred from death into Life by being born from above, born again from Spirit, reborn into the Light, recreated as a True Child of the Living God by faith and that faith was not your own, and as it manifested within you it was woefully imperfect.

So, did you become a Heaven-bound Christian because of you, or because of Him? Your faith in Christ was perfect because it was not your own. God accepted you on the basis of that faith, not on the faith that you have corrupted with your doubts and your ignorance.

That corrupted faith of yours and mine is refined by God through testing, but if we are honest with ourselves at all we will recognize that while objectively our faith matures, we become even more beholding to God for it and so, in a sense, our faith becomes even more dependent upon Him... That complete surrender to the Salvation that He provides is Christian maturity.

Please trust me when I tell you that while we advance compared to our previous selves, our advancement comes as the result of ever greater Grace given to us... It is all God.

I am objectively, measurably, far more conformed to the image of Christ Jesus than I was 33 years ago. When I consider all the Grace I have been given, all that I have been taught, that I know and understand, all that I have experienced as the faithfulness of God, all the many blessings that I have received over that span, I am a greater sinner than I was before... Comparatively.

What do I do with that? I fall on my knees before my God and gratefully surrender even more to the simple fact that He has Saved me based upon His character, not mine.

So, if you're paying attention, I have explained the faith given and the faith tested, what about the faith that comes because God has made His abode within?

Every person whom God has transferred into His Kingdom is given a deposit, a pledge, a promise, a guarantee, that He has made us to be in Him and that He is in us. It is the very Breath of Almighty God residing within each and every one of His children equally. No one has more of the Holy Spirit, some just allow Him greater access.

II Corinthians 1:21&22, 21Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us is God, 22who also sealed us and gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge." In Ephesians chapter 1, the Bible declares that, In Christ Jesus both Jew and Gentile believes after hearing the Truth, which is the Gospel of our Salvation, and that we are "sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of the promise, who is a first installment of our inheritance, in regard to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory" (Ephesians 1:13&14).

Romans 8:16, "The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God." Throughout the

Bible we see that the proof of Christianity, is not agreement, not repentance, not confession, not faith, not performance, not love, not worship, but always the infilling of the Holy Spirit.

When a person, is infused with the Spirit of God, that is the proof that they are now an accepted Child of God and are therefore members of His Family. We confirm that by Baptizing such people into the Body of Christ in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Both Paul and the Galatians themselves, were well aware of the fact that God had given them His Holy Spirit. They had already been accepted by God as His very own, because they did what? Because they got circumcised? Because they obeyed the Law? Because they cleaned up their act? Because they started reading their Bible, attending church, and faithfully giving their tithes, offerings, and alms?

It was because they believed, they put their trust in the Crucified Jesus. The proof that they were accepted by God as His family was the Spirit, and that proof was instantaneous and apparent. It was obvious to the people present that the new Believers were filled with

the Holy Spirit just like the Jewish Christians had been on the Day of Pentecost and just like the Gentile Centurion and his whole household had been after believing the Gospel shared by Peter.

This is not at all isolated, it is the norm. Romans 5:1&5, “1Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ...” we have eternal hope... “5and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.”