

Justification By Faith Not Works

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Preacher: Wayne Schuller

[0 : 00] Good evening, friends. Please keep your Bible open to page 946 and you'll be able to follow along the message tonight and you'll need it in a minute because I'm going to expose the PEA.

I've been reading reports about the PEA and their growing numbers of membership. There are rumours that other countries of the world, the PEA, are persecuting the church but in Western countries the PEA are infiltrating the church and manipulating vulnerable Christians.

The PEA have members in every country of the world. They work in splinter cells in schools and in workplaces to disseminate their propaganda. They control all the media and much of the internet.

When you're tired and you think, I don't really need to go to church, that's PEA propaganda. When you feel vulnerable and the PEA are the people who help you justify watching indecent forms of entertainment, that's the PEA.

When you are tempted to lie and cheat, it's the PEA who provide the excuses of, well, everyone's doing it, so I'll lie and cheat as well. And even as we speak, the PEA are manipulating us with their great motto, if it feels good, do it.

[1 : 24] And that characterises the PEA, that whenever people just, they do what they feel like doing, when they don't feel like doing something, they don't do it. They make you a slave to feelings, a slave to emotions.

Some days you feel good about yourself, you feel like God loves you, other days you feel like God hates you. That's the PEA controlling you. The card-carrying member of the PEA lives their life as a slave.

So who are the PEA? Well, you need your Bible and we're in a series in Galatians and we'll just turn back to chapter 1, verse 4.

This is page 945 and you'll see them. I'll start at verse 3. The Christian is somebody who's set free from the present evil age because of the death of Jesus.

And so they are no longer a person who is a slave to emotion, a slave to feelings, who's knocked around and tossed around. They live by the declarations God makes about them in the Bible.

[2 : 47] They're not a member of the PEA anymore. Now, last week we saw that even the Apostle Peter, the great Apostle, the Rock, got caught up in the present evil age.

He got swept up in it because he was influenced by a group in the Galatian church in the first century that were called the Judaizers.

And they were Jewish Christians, Jews who'd come to have faith in Christ, who were then going back to obeying the law. And they were even saying that non-Jewish Christians had to obey all of God's law.

And so they were telling Gentile, non-Jewish Christians they had to act like Jews in order to be a Christian. Well, that's just, at that point in the story of God's salvation, that was going into the spirit of the age, of the present evil age.

Because when you become a Christian, Jesus tears up your PEA membership card. You're no longer a member of the present evil age. And when Peter wasn't clear that Jesus was the complete saviour, when he equivocated on that, he was acting like a PEA member.

[4 : 08] He was controlled by his feelings, by what others thought of him. He was manipulated and he refused to eat with the Gentile Christians. And he would only eat with the Judaizers and other Jewish Christians.

Well, friends, the critical concept for this message today is one word. And this concept just clears everything up. And it's one of the most important concepts within Christianity.

And it's the concept of justification. Justification. The word justify occurs four times as a verb and once as a noun in today's reading, which is only about seven verses.

It's a critical concept. And what it means is this. It's the opposite of condemnation. Okay? Justification is the opposite of condemnation. A person who is justified is right with God.

They are right with God. To be justified literally means, it's from the word righteous. It means to be made righteous, to be righteous-ified. You are declared righteous.

[5 : 13] It's God's acquittal and God's acceptance of someone and God's own declaration that you are now going to be treated as righteous. You see, that's pretty important.

That's a very important thing. The two most basic truths within the whole kind of belief system that is Christianity, is the Bible.

The two most basic truths are that our creator God is righteous and that we are not. God is righteous. Our maker is righteous and we are not righteous.

And so you can see justification becomes very important. How will you get accepted by God? How will you get declared righteous? That is why there's this sort of universal nagging feeling amongst anyone you meet of condemnation, of this sense of wanting to innately knowing that God is not happy with you because God is righteous and you are not.

And everyone carries within the kind of angst that that causes. And everyone wants to be justified. Everyone wants to be justified. The question is, how do you get justified? How do we get there?

[6 : 21] And here the answer from the Bible, from Galatians, is the unique answer, the answer that no one else is giving in any philosophy or any human religion.

Here is Paul's answer. How do we be justified in chapter 2, verse 15? We ourselves, that is Paul and his friends, are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners.

Yet we know that a person is justified, listen for it, not by the works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ. That's the answer to how we are justified.

And Paul's really poking, he's teasing the Judaizers, these false teachers, because he's saying, well, we're Jews and you're Jews. You ought to know that it's by faith in Christ and not by the law.

Because if you're a Jewish Christian, you are someone who's left the law to put your faith in Jesus. So why should you be telling Gentiles, you've got to start doing the law? It just doesn't make sense.

[7 : 23] You ought to know that, Paul is saying. So we're justified. And Paul repeats himself a lot here. So we get the lesson, not by the works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ.

And here's classically what Christians would call the great kind of faith versus works distinction. You know, we're saved by faith and not by works.

And that's a good distinction, though it needs to be tweaked a bit, I think, in this passage. And Paul has in mind here, when he says works of the law, he has in mind the Judaizers who are Christians who are saying, you must obey what was historically the law of the old covenant, which has now been fulfilled in Christ.

And they want to go back to the time before Christ, to the old covenant law. And they are bullying Peter into coming into line with that. Now, I would also broaden this out there, this category of works, because anyone in the present evil age with this angst, that knowing that, guessing that God is righteous and they're not, everyone is trying to do some kind of works to make up the difference.

Everyone is trying to do some kind of meritorious effort to justify themselves, to make themselves righteous enough for the righteous creator.

[8 : 46] And so whether you're trying to do the old covenant law, it's probably not many of us, it could just be you're trying to do the eastern suburbs of Melbourne, I'm a good person kind of dance.

That's how you're trying to justify yourself, by works. And Paul is saying those works can't save you, they won't save you. What justifies you is not works of the law, but this phrase, faith in Jesus Christ.

Now, I want to do a risky thing here and just slightly retranslate that for you. Because by saying faith in Jesus Christ, the in could also be translated of.

Okay? So you could just as validly translate that as someone is justified not by the works of the law, but through the faith of Jesus Christ.

Now, I think that's a better translation, because it clarifies everything that Paul is trying to argue in tonight's passage. It makes much better sense. That's how the King James Version, which was a well-used translation of the Bible, translated for many hundreds of years, that we are saved through the faith of Jesus Christ.

[9 : 58] Okay? So what is that saying, if we translate it like that? It's saying, Jesus was the only one, the only man in the world who was perfect. He's the only man in the world who fully obeyed the law of God.

The only man in the world who was fully obedient, fully righteous, fully faithful. And so we are saved by his faithfulness.

So that makes good sense, because Paul is saying, you're not saved by your own works of the law, but you're saved through his faithfulness, his works, the faithfulness of Jesus Christ.

That is what saves you, what Jesus has done. Not anything you have done, but what he has done. What it raises, I think, and you have to test your heart here, because I, you know, see how God's Spirit is challenging your conscience and your heart tonight.

What do you trust in when you think about meeting God one day in judgment? Do you think, I might have done enough? Or is your trust outside of yourself?

[11 : 02] Is your faith in the faithfulness of Jesus Christ? That is the million-dollar question. And, well, to me, it's a real no-brainer, because I'm a long way from perfect.

He was perfect. Jesus was perfect. I'm not faithful. Jesus was always faithful. Every day he was faithful to God. I base my justification, that is, Wayne Shuler, I base it on his effort, on his obedience, on his faithfulness.

That's where my Christian confidence comes from. I look at the life of Jesus, and there's really two categories to his life. The theologians split it up in this way. They say, there's the active obedience of Jesus, that is, the perfect life he lived, always obeying God's law, always loving God with all his heart, always loving his neighbour as himself.

It's just absolutely inspirational, just to pick up a gospel, and immerse, saturate yourself in Jesus. If you haven't done that for a while, do that. He's amazing. He's perfect. That's the active obedience.

And there's also what theologians call the passive obedience of Christ, and that is his submitting himself to the will of his Father and allowing himself to be arrested, even though he was innocent, allowing himself to be tortured, even though he was God's son, allowing himself to be killed, all the way, his life taken.

[12 : 28] That was the passive obedience of Christ, and together, that is the faithfulness of Christ, by which we are saved. So, how are you saved? How do you answer that question? You say, I'm not saved by my works of the law, I'm saved by the faith of Jesus, my King.

That's what we should say. I think verse 16, the next part of verse 16, clarifies this even more. He says, we have come to believe in Christ Jesus, so that we might be justified by faith, by the faith of Christ.

You see, it doesn't quite ring as well, if you keep it as it stands here. We come to believe in Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Jesus, because what happens is that the PEA twists that, and they say that your faith in Jesus is a kind of good work.

And they say, your choice of Jesus, your decision for Jesus was the good work that got you into heaven. But that just runs against the grain of this message of grace.

It's God's thing. So, it's better to have 16 as, we have come to believe in Christ Jesus, we have to believe in him, so that we might be justified by the faithfulness of Jesus, not by works of the law.

[13 : 41] And Paul is clear again, because no one, no one on earth will be justified by works of the law. No one will be. This is God's word. No one will be.

Don't try it. God has told you tonight, you will not be justified by works of the law, only by the faithfulness of Christ. It can only come from outside yourself.

It can only come, if you believe in him, and trust in his faithfulness. So, where is your identity today?

If you are listening to the PEA, to the message of our present evil age, to the world out there, you will want to kind of pick yourself up by your own bootstraps and want to start listing the things you've done for God by which he ought to open heaven to you.

Well, friends, Paul says no one will be justified by doing that. No one. In fact, the only way to ever have confidence that God is forgiving you and open the gates of heaven to you is by looking to the faith of Jesus Christ.

[14 : 48] Because if I look into my faith, well, it could be good today. You're at church today, but tomorrow could be bad. Or who knows what will happen tonight. And you'll be tossed around.

You'll never have assurance or certitude of salvation. But if your hope is in Christ alone, in the faithfulness of Christ alone, then you know, yeah, you can feel it.

God has forgiven me. I am justified. God has acquitted me and treats me as a son or daughter. As this great song says, Now, the danger of what I'm teaching tonight, and don't feel too bad if you've already thought of this, because Paul anticipates this objection.

If what I'm teaching is true, then we could just do whatever we want. If we are justified by something alien to ourselves, justified by the faithfulness of Christ, then you could argue that we can just, well, sin till the cows come home.

We could be the most extravagant, just selfish people on earth. It doesn't matter. That's what you might argue. Does the Christian life, therefore, promote sin?

[16 : 05] Does Christ promote sin? Well, here's the response. Verse 17. But if in our effort to be justified in Christ, we ourselves have been found to be sinners, is Christ then the servant of sin?

That's what the Judaizers would have argued. And Paul answers, Certainly not. No. No way. God forbid. It's a horror to Paul that some Christians might use the free gift of justification through Christ as an excuse to sin.

That's a horrible thing. And if you as a Christian do that, well, you know, may it never be. May it never be. And Paul will tell us why we shouldn't do that in a minute.

But first, he has a little comeback for the Judaizers, for the good workers in Galatia. He says, verse 18, Well, you guys, but if I build up again the very things that I once tore down, then I demonstrate that I'm a transgressor.

That is, he's saying to the Judaizers, in turning to Christ away from the law, you tore down the law. If you now want to build it up again, well, you're already demonstrating that you're a failure before you begin because you walked away from the law.

[17 : 26] Well, by the fact you have to walk into it again, you have to build it up again, you're already a failure. It's not going to work. What we actually need is to find the right reason for holy living.

What is the right reason for Christians to be good? That's the question. Where does our holiness come from if it's not to justify ourselves? You know, if it's not through obeying the law that we're justified, well, where will our holiness come from?

And the answer is, I think, in verse 17, there's a little kind of, it's very small, but it's so significant. It's a little word. Verse 17, in our effort or in seeking to be justified in Christ.

That is, there's something about justification that it's in Christ. There's something that happens to the person who's justified in Christ that they are united with him. They are, you are now in Christ.

And we'll see this more in verse 19 to 21. For through the law, I died to the law that I might, so I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ and it's no longer I who live, but it's Christ who lives in me.

[18 : 40] Something has happened when, to the person who's justified in Christ, they're united with Christ. It's like being married to Christ. They're joined with Christ in an incredible way by God.

And you are only justified in Christ, in this union with Christ. And therefore, he died through the law. He died to receive our punishment under the law.

But when he died, because we're united with him, we died. When he died, we died. And so, we have been crucified with Christ. Something profound has happened and this is going to inform the way we live.

We have died with Christ. And it's no longer us who live, but Christ who lives with us. So, we were there, in God's eyes, with him on the cross and he is in us now.

He is in us now. So, why do I, Wayne Shullo, want to live a good life, a holy life? Because Christ lives in me. Because Christ lives in me.

[19 : 46] Why do we want, why should we fight and kill sin? Why should we fight and kill sin? Because Christ lives in me and Christ hates sin.

So, if Christ lives in you, you will want to fight and kill sin. Christ lives in me, I will honour my body. Christ lives in me, I will live for him.

Christ loved me and gave himself for me, I will love him, I will give myself for him. It's all about our union with Christ, our joining to Christ.

You have been crucified with him and he now lives in you. And there's something profound about verses 19, 20, 21 because Paul changes the voice he speaks in.

He stops saying, you know, we and you and us and them. He says, I, I have been crucified with Christ. This is a profound, personal conviction that you must have if you call yourself a Christian.

[20 : 50] If you call yourself a Christian, you must be able to say with Paul, I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. I think it's the only place in the whole Bible that talks about Christ dying for an individual.

But it's an important thing to have. I'm glad we have this verse. If you are not sure, you need to, you need to come to Christ tonight and put your faith in him and claim it for yourself as God's promise to you.

Don't be knocked around like those around you in the present evil age. Don't be knocked around by your feelings. How you feel you stand with God, look to Christ and believe God's word that you were crucified with him and he lives in you.

And ends with a final warning to the good worksers, to the Judaizers, to those, some people call this goodianity, you know, not Christianity because that's justified by the faith of Christ.

But goodianity, I'm justified by my good goodness. Here's the message to the goodianity people and it's a warning. I do not nullify the grace of God for if justification comes through the law then Christ died for nothing.

[22 : 09] If you stop relying on Jesus, on the faithfulness of Jesus, on the past work of Jesus and start relying on your own goodianity, you nullify the work of Christ.

you trample the blood of Christ. You make a mockery of it. If you reduce Christianity to the Ten Commandments or to rule keeping, that's not Christianity, that's goodianity.

And Paul says when you fall back into goodianity to the way this world thinks, you declare that the death of Jesus was a waste of time, that he died for nothing because if there's another way to do it, if goodianity can do it, then he didn't have to die.

And so you say that that was a whole thing was a joke, it was a waste of time. There are so many people who actually do nullify the grace of God.

There are people who say, I'm not really into Jesus, but having him as my Lord and Saviour and worshipping him and prayer and stuff.

[23 : 20] I'm not really into that but I like the values, I like the values of Christianity, I like the teaching, I like the morals. Friends, that makes a mockery of the cross, that insults the grace of God, that nullifies the grace of God to talk like that.

It's tragically wrong because firstly, Paul's already said you're not going to be justified by doing that anyway. Secondly, you nullify the grace of God and that's a tragic thing, that's exactly what the present evil age would have you do.

You are saved by the faithfulness of Christ and nothing else, nothing else. Don't try and hedge your bets and have a bet each way, try and score points by goodianity and then coming and worshipping Jesus, it's all or nothing.

If you are truly a Christian, you will be living a holy life because of the revelation that you have died with Christ and Christ lives in you.

That is what will make you want to live a holy life. It's no longer you who live but your king who lives in you. Well friends, what we've just read is actually not, Paul's not actually where he wants to get to yet.

[24 : 35] He hasn't actually got stuck into the Galatians yet. He's going to do that in the coming weeks. It's going to be quite good I think. What he's doing today is just clarifying the theological concept of justification to explain why he had to confront Peter when Peter allowed himself to be bullied by the Judaizers, by the good workers, by the goodianity people.

Friends, please be clear in your own mind what you are leaning on, what you are leaning on. And it's very clear I think when someone is not leaning on Christ because they act the way the world acts, they act the way the present evil age acts.

The present evil age, people build their esteem on themselves, on what they do, on their works, on what they can list they've done, on how many years they've been a volunteer or whatever.

But the Christian bases his life on his union with Christ, on his justification by faith alone. The Christian looks in the mirror and says, I am in Christ, Christ lives in me.

I was crucified with Christ, now I will live for him alone. That is, by the way, friends, why, have you ever noticed this, why is the world, the PEA, why are they so obsessed with halls of fame and accolades and certificates of duty and community awards?

[26 : 02] I mean, that's just a totally foreign way of thinking to the gospel. That's a totally foreign way of thinking. Here in the church of God, the people who follow Christ, there is no hierarchy in that sense.

There is no inner ring. There is no kind of inner click of the true believers in this place. It's all on one level. It's all justified by the faith of Christ.

Do you see how good that is compared to the way the world thinks, keeping score all the time? That's why it mattered for Peter who he ate with. If you break fellowship with someone in this room because you think you're a better Christian or you think they're a worse Christian than you, then you've clearly lost justification by the faithfulness of Christ.

And that's why Peter had to be rebuked in public. Peter had to be rebuked by Paul. Friends, what I'd like to do to just close this message is invite you to actually declare your belief, your trust in the faithfulness of Christ.

And I'd just like us to say together the words of 19 to 21 and they're going to appear on the wall. So please only stand if you mean them and you're going to base your identity on them.

[27 : 20] Okay? So card carrying members of the PA, just stay seated. Okay? Or if you're not sure what you believe, don't stand. It's okay. Come and talk to me afterwards and give me your questions.

We'll work through it. We'll talk to Jono or anyone else. But I think, you know, if you're ready though to declare your faith in Christ, if you can see that you can't save yourself, you can only be saved by what Christ has done, then please stand with me and we'll say these words.

Let's say, for through the law I died to the law so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me.

And the life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not nullify the grace of God, for if justification comes through the law, then Christ died for nothing.

Amen.