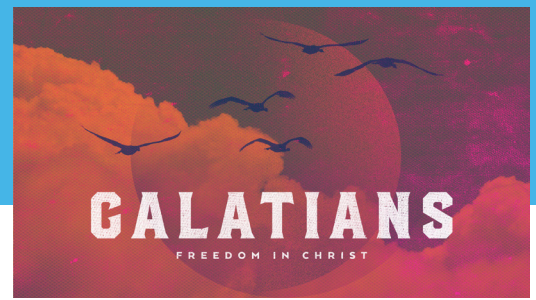


Discussion Questions

March 29, 2026



Galatians 2:15-18 - Justified at the Table

We often carry an invisible scorecard in our spiritual lives, a low-grade hum that says God's posture toward us depends on our performance today. In Galatians 2:15–18, what scholars call the thesis statement of the entire letter, Paul demolishes that assumption. Even Jewish believers who had every spiritual advantage had to come to God by faith in Christ, not by performance or pedigree. Paul hammers the word “justified” four times in two verses: God declares guilty people righteous not because they cleaned up, but because Christ's perfect record is credited to them. But this courtroom verdict doesn't happen in a vacuum, it happens at a dinner table in Antioch, where the question isn't just “How does a guilty person get right with God?” but “Who belongs at this table?” Paul warns that anyone who rebuilds the old barriers after Christ tore them down becomes the real lawbreaker. When we add requirements to the gospel, spoken or unspoken, we aren't being faithful. We're picking up bricks and rebuilding the wall Christ demolished.

1. The sermon opened with the idea of an “invisible scorecard.” What are the 2 or 3 things that usually end up on yours, the things that make you feel spiritually “on track” or “behind”?
2. (Read Galatians 2:15–18 together as a group)
Paul's heavy theological argument about justification grows directly out of a conflict over a meal (Galatians 2:11–14). Why is it significant that he roots this doctrine in a story about who eats with whom, rather than presenting it as an abstract theological principle?
3. Read Galatians 2:16 again closely. Paul repeats the concept of justification three times in a single verse. What does “justified” mean, and why do you think Paul is hammering it this forcefully, in front of an integrated group of Jews and Gentiles who just watched Peter divide the table?
4. In verse 18, Paul says that rebuilding what was torn down makes him the lawbreaker, flipping his opponents' accusation entirely. What is the “wall” Paul is refusing to rebuild, and who are the real transgressors in his argument?
5. The sermon argued that justification is both a courtroom verdict and a table reality, and that separating them distorts the gospel. What happens in a church that emphasizes the legal verdict but neglects the shared table? What about the reverse, a church that emphasizes belonging but downplays the verdict?
6. The sermon described justification as a “double transaction,” not just guilt removed, but Christ's perfect record credited to us, and then illustrated it with the Prodigal Son. The son came home rehearsing a speech about becoming a servant; the father interrupted him with a robe and a ring. How does that image reshape the way you approach God after a bad week, in prayer, in opening your Bible, in showing up on Sunday?

7. Paul warns against adding requirements to the gospel. What are some of the spoken or unspoken requirements, how someone parents, votes, dresses, or presents themselves, that Christian communities are tempted to add before someone “truly belongs” at the table? And turning the lens inward: when you picture God looking at you right now, with everything you’re carrying from this week, what expression do you see on his face? Is that shaped by the scorecard or by the cross?

Galatians 2:15–18 (CSB)

We are Jews by birth and not "Gentile sinners," and yet because we know that a person is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we ourselves have believed in Christ Jesus. This was so that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no human being will be justified. But if we ourselves are also found to be "sinners" while seeking to be justified by Christ, is Christ then a promoter, of sin? Absolutely not! If I rebuild those things that I tore down, I show myself to be a lawbreaker.

Galatians 2:16 (CSB)

..yet because we know that a person is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ,

Paul is saying The playing field is not leveled by pulling the outsiders up to the insiders' level. It is leveled by bringing the insiders down to the foot of the cross.

Galatians 2:16 (CSB)

*We know that a person is not **justified** by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we ourselves have believed in Christ Jesus. This was so that we might be **justified** by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no human being will be **justified**.*

Justified = God declares you righteous [in right relationship with Him]

Righteousness is the status, Justification is the moment God declares it so

The question Paul is answering is not just "how does a guilty person get right with God?" It is also "Who belongs at this table?"

Think of justified as a double transaction. It is "just as if I had never sinned." But it goes further, we are adopted into the Messiah. His standing with the Father becomes our standing.

The gospel says you do not get what you deserve, you get what Christ deserves, and He gives it to you freely

Galatians 2:17 (NIV)

But if, in seeking to be justified in Christ, we Jews find ourselves also among the sinners, doesn't that mean that Christ promotes sin? Absolutely not!

The order matters.

We do not obey in order to be accepted, but because we already are.

Obedience that flows from acceptance looks like love, generosity, sacrifice

Obedience that is grasping for acceptance looks like anxiety, comparison and quiet resentment

Galatians 2:17 (NASB)

..is Christ then a servant of sin?

Grace is not primarily offensive because it is too easy.

Grace is offensive because it is too equal.

Justification is made visible at the table

Galatians 2:18 (NIV)

If I rebuild what I destroyed, then I really would be a lawbreaker.

Martin Luther

When the new guest Christ Jesus comes in, Moses must give way and go somewhere else. Where Christ lives, there is grace, righteousness, joy, life, and trust in the Father.

Todd Wilson - Galatians: Gospel-Rooted Living

The Galatians got off to an excellent start but wound up changing their whole strategy after just a couple of laps. They started running on grace and shifted to running on effort. They did not stop believing, they just started supplementing faith with performance"

When you picture God looking at you right now, what expression do you see on his face?