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A1004 – January 24, 2010 – Galatians 2:15-16 – The Law Of Moses

Remember in Galatians we're dealing with basics. Basic doctrine is covered in Paul's earliest epistles and as he advances the doctrine advances.

Galatians is Paul's very first epistle. He wrote it in AD49 and it covers two very basic doctrines; justification by grace through faith, not by works of the Law and sanctification by the Spirit, not by the flesh. Now, these are basic, baby, little toddler truths. And still we have people that simply cannot or do not want to understand them. But the Scriptures are very clear. The way we categorize these two doctrines is in two phases of sanctification. Phase one is your position; you are justified by grace through faith, and what this means is that at the moment of faith in Christ you are set free from the penalty of sin which is eternal condemnation in the lake of fire and you are imputed or credited with the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ. Phase two is your experience, once you've been justified you move into the process of sanctification or spiritual growth, and during this period you are set free from the power of sin by reliance upon the Spirit of God, a walk by the Spirit and not by the flesh.

Last week we covered the confrontation of Paul and Peter. There was a very clear attack on the doctrine of justification by faith through Peter's separation from Gentiles. That attack that could have spelled disaster for the early Church. It could have led to a division of the church into two churches; a Jewish church and a Gentile church. And so to keep the unity of the Church, which is the body of Christ, this confrontation had to take place and Paul was the man of the hour. Paul went head to head with Peter, the main pillar of the Church, and thereby demonstrated his apostolic authority as equal to the apostolic authority of Peter. But another thing Paul demonstrated in this confrontation which we didn't mention last week is the superiority of the word of God to any apostle. Paul's approach was not to

come on his own authority but on the authority of Scripture. Once the Scriptures come into history the Scriptures stand above apostles and princes and popes and therefore the ultimate authority is the Scriptures and not apostles, princes and popes. And another thing this shows is that just because a person was an apostle didn't keep them from error. The only time they were without error was when they were writing Scripture.

Now, we said there was confusion over circumcision among Jews in the early church. There were two confusions. One confusion is Acts 15:1. And the issue here is that there are some Judaizers that are saying that for a Gentile to be saved, to be justified, he has to be circumcised. Now is that true? Think back to Abraham in the OT. Was Abraham justified before or after he was circumcised? Before. Abraham was justified in Gen 12 -years before he was circumcised in Gen 17. So is circumcision necessary to be justified? Of course not. So even from the OT we know this argument is out to lunch. When we come to the NT the argument is still out to lunch. Two things happened in the Book of Acts up to this point that said it was out to lunch. The first thing that happened is Acts 10, Peter at Cornelius' house. Cornelius and his household were Gentiles, they were not circumcised. And when Peter preached the death and resurrection of Christ to these Gentiles and they believed the Holy Spirit fell upon them. They didn't have to get circumcised before the Holy Spirit fell upon them. They didn't have to get circumcised after the Holy Spirit fell upon them. The fact is that God the Holy Spirit is bypassing circumcision. That's the first thing that indicates no circumcision is necessary for Gentile justification. The second thing is Paul's ministry. Paul had been out preaching the gospel to Gentiles and uncircumcised Gentiles were believing and receiving the Holy Spirit. So that obviously is showing Paul the same thing shown to Peter. Circumcision is not necessary.

The second confusion is Acts 15:5 and this issue is not out to lunch. The issue here is that there are some believing Judaizers that are saying that for a Gentile to be sanctified, to grow spiritually, he needs to be circumcised and follow the Law of Moses. And that's an issue that's harder to meet. You can't meet that argument on the basis of the OT. But you can meet it on the basis of what happened in Gal 2. In Gal 2, Paul and Barnabas had a private meeting with Peter, James and John and they all agreed on the gospel they were preaching - that circumcision was not necessary for justification or

sanctification. If it was necessary then Titus would have been compelled to be circumcised.

Today we have another issue to face. Circumcision we've handled; the Law of Moses we haven't handled. Now, remember, we're still talking about phase two experiential sanctification or spiritual growth and spiritual growth requires both law and grace. Law is the standard; grace is the means to live according to the standard. Are the believers in Acts held to the standard of the Law of Moses or the Law of Christ? Well, the problem was that the Law of Christ wasn't written yet; only the Law of Moses was actually physically there. The NT canon was open, it was being written; the OT canon was closed, it had already been written. So anyone could pull out a copy of the OT and say, here's the Law of Moses. But you couldn't do that with the Law of Christ. The Law of Christ was in the process of being written by the apostles during this time. And the only thing you have actually written down at this time was the Gospel of Matthew. Matthew was written in the 40's; and James. James was written in the early 40's, and Galatians, the epistle we're studying was written in 49. So at best all you have are a few copies of these texts floating around. That's all the NT you have. You have in addition to this the word of mouth - what happened in the life of Christ, that kind of thing. But as far as the inspired word of God, Matthew and James are it. Now you say that puts the NT in jeopardy. Now you've got this delay in when these things were written down and therefore subject to memory failure. They're going to make mistakes. Assumption? The Scriptures are a human book. The Scriptures are not merely a human book. If the Scriptures were merely a human book then you would have error. But to guard against error Jesus said in John 14:26, "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you." That's a promise to the apostles so they can write Scripture. Why do they need the Holy Spirit? Because they have fallible memory. And they're not going to write Scripture on the basis of fallible human memory; they're going to write Scripture on the basis of the infallible memory of the Holy Spirit. That's why you have the passage in 1 Cor 13:8-10 where it talks about gifts of prophecy and knowledge will be done away and tongues will cease; those are all temporary gifts of the Spirit. The first two, prophecy and knowledge, are revelatory gifts, and were necessary to write down the Law of Christ. When the Law of Christ was completed in AD96 with John's Book of Revelation those gifts were done away with. If you lived

in AD96 that would be great because you could get most of the Law of Christ together. But the Christian in the Book of Acts was living 50 years before the Law of Christ was completed. So he didn't have all the Law of Christ. He had all the Law of Moses. And so the question was, what law am I under? Am I under the Law of Moses or a new Law of Christ that's currently being written? What's the handbook for the Christian life? What's God's will for the Christian?

Let's look at the Law of Moses. Has it come to an end or does it continue as God's will for the Christian? Are we to be directed to follow the Law of Moses? Is it required for either justification or sanctification? Is our justification somehow deficient until we meet requirements of the Law? Is our sanctification somehow deficient unless we meet requirements of the Law? How do we meet these issues?

Our first point is that **The Law of Moses Is a Unit**. The Law of Moses in the OT is called *torah*. And the Hebrew word *torah* means "instruction." If you take the numerical value of the Hebrew word *torah* and add it up you get 611. And if you add the first words of the Ten Commandments, which were the words of God Himself then you get two more commandments for a total of 613 commandments. Now this is what we mean by the Law of Moses, these 613 laws. And it is popular in Christian circles to divide the Law of Moses into three sections; first, laws of morality, which are primarily the ten commandments, second, laws of judicial matters, which relate to issues between your fellow man and third laws of worship or ceremony. Now the important point is that the Jews never made that division. They did make divisions, they divided the Law of Moses into twelve families and they divided those families into twelve sub-families. But they still said the Law was a unit, that the diversity of commands did not destroy the unity of the Law of Moses. It was their Constitution and the Ten Commandments were like the Bill of Rights, but the whole thing was their Constitution. So the point was that if you violated one of the laws, whether it is moral, judicial or ceremonial you violated the Constitution, you were a lawbreaker. So it is very important to not accept the three divisions because when you come to the NT there are Christians who always want to try to do away with the judicial and ceremonial parts of the Law of Moses but keep the moral parts, keep the Ten Commandments. And that is not going to square with Scripture. The struggle, just to state what people are struggling with, is this question: if the

Law of Moses is ended then why do I read in the NT some of the Laws of Moses repeated? They say that doesn't make sense to me, it must be that some of the laws didn't end, others did end and they try to make this argument. The first problem with that is that you're making arbitrary divisions in the Law that the NT authors don't make. For example, turn to Gal 5:3. Last week we showed what about circumcision? Was circumcision required? Cornelius and his household were Gentiles and they believed and received the Holy Spirit without circumcision. Titus was a Gentile and he believed and received the Holy Spirit without circumcision. He was never compelled to have the surgery. Now what does Paul say, starting in Gal 5:1? "It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery." How does Paul characterize the Law of Moses? As a yoke of slavery. He's not saying the Law is bad, by the way, that's not what he says. The Law is good and holy, but he is saying that the Law of Moses enslaves, it's Christ who sets us free. Verse 2, "Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you. ³And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law." Now what link did he just make in verse 3? He's linking circumcision in with the whole Law. He doesn't say circumcision is a ceremonial rite and it's no longer obligatory but the rest of the Law is. He says if you receive circumcision you are not obligated to keep the whole Law, lock, stock and barrel. So he clearly says that the Law is a unit. And if you put yourself under one command of the Law then you come under the whole Law. You can't take part of the Law and say you're under this part but the other part your not under. Boloney, you're either under all of it or none of it. The law is a unit.

Turn to James 2:10. James had already been written. It had been in circulation for five or ten years. And what does he say in verse 10? "For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one *point*, he has become guilty of all." What's he saying? He's saying the same thing Paul is saying, the Law of Moses is a unit. If you even break one law you, in effect, have broken the whole law and you're condemned. So you can't split the Law up and say, well, we're under the morality of the Ten Commandments but we're not under all the ceremonial and judicial things. That's not what James said.

Now people will bring up things like Matt 5:17 so let's turn to it and deal with it. This is the Sermon on the Mount. Now the thing about the Sermon on

the Mount, which is so dear to so many Christians, is simply that this is not a Christian document. Pentecost is several years away; the Church doesn't even exist until Acts 2. So this is addressed to Israel. And Jesus is about to say some very startling things to the house of Israel. And so before He says them He's going to preface it with a few remarks so they don't misunderstand Him. Jesus is about to attack the oral law. Now don't get confused here. After the Temple was destroyed in 586BC and the southern kingdom of Judah went into Exile they didn't have a Temple anymore. A portion of the nation was restored and then they went into the intertestamental period, the 400 years between your Old and New Testament. During that period oral law became very important. What's oral law? Oral law is additional laws that were written down and eventually included in the Mishnah and the Talmud. Why did they all of a sudden get law conscious? They'd been sent into Exile for violations of the Law. So if you're a next generation Jew you're going to make sure you don't make that mistake again. So they got hyper-Law conscious. And the emphasis became obeying the Law, obeying the Law, obeying the Law. And they became so intent on not breaking Moses' Law that they said just to make sure we don't break Moses' Law we're going to write another Law that will protect us from Moses' Law. So they erected this fence of laws around the Mosaic Law. But what it did by the time of the NT, and this ticked Jesus off, what it did was it nullified Moses' Law. Now this is our sin nature, this is not unique to Jews, you do this, and I do this. It is much easier to be externally obedient than internally obedient. So we put on a good show, we look holy and pious. Jesus says you totally missed the point. You're not going to establish righteousness that way. God is not interested in externals, God is interested in internals. Christians fail here, too. We're all sinners. And you can see Jesus going after this oral law six times in the Sermon on the Mount. In 5:21 "You have heard that the ancients were told..." and He's quoting the oral law, verse 22 "But I say to you..." and He gives the true intent of the Mosaic Law. If you study these very closely you'll see that the oral law misses the intent of Moses' Law. Verse 27, "You have heard that it was said..." verse 28, "but I say to you..." Verse 33, "Again, you have heard that the ancients were told..." verse 34, "But I say to you..." and what He's doing is He's cutting away this oral law, this fence that they had erected around the true Law of Moses so they can see what they had done. Now when you come back up to verse 17 you understand why He prefaces it with this because people are going to wonder, what is this guy doing, is he trying to destroy the whole OT? We've been taught all this stuff in synagogue? Where

does this guy get the gall to chop it all down? So He prefaces His teaching with verse 17. "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish..." now He did come to abolish the oral law. Jesus is ticked about the oral law. The oral law was the problem. The Jewish people thought if they obeyed the oral law they could establish righteousness with God. So Jesus is interested in totally ripping the oral law to shreds. But what Jesus is not interested in doing is abolishing the true intent of the Law and Prophets. What He's interested in doing there is fulfilling it. Jesus came to fulfill the true intent of the Law and the Prophets. It was the teachers of Israel who had abolished the true intent of the Law and the Prophets by inventing this oral law that Jesus is now going to chop down. So He prefaces it all by saying, I do not come to abolish but to fulfill. To fulfill means to bring to a completion, to establish. He's actually interested in establishing the what? The Law and the Prophets. Notice verse 17 isn't just concerned with the Law of Moses, it's also concerned with the Prophets. And when you see the Law and the Prophets that's an expression for the whole OT, not just the first five books. But yes, all of the Law and all of the Prophets. He came to fulfill the whole OT. He's not kicking it to the curb. He's establishing the true intent. Verse 18. "For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished." And there He's talking about the minutest little details of the Law and He's stressing very seriously the point that what God meant on Mt Sinai in the Law I'm here to fulfill to the nth detail.

Another question, why is Jesus going to do this? We know Jesus lived under the Law. We know He's going to fulfill the Law. Why? To generate a righteousness that can be available for justification. Righteousness has got to be generated in space-time history to satisfy God. This is why Jesus coming down into history is so significant. You've got to generate righteousness in history. So God comes down, takes to Himself true humanity in the Lord Jesus Christ. You don't have that in Islam. Allah doesn't come down into true humanity and generate righteousness. Allah is up in heaven. So Islam doesn't have a concept of perfect righteousness in history. It's all good vs bad works. How many good things can you do and impress Allah. Not Christianity, not the Scriptures. In Scriptures there's got to be a righteousness generated by a genuine member of the human race. So Christ says I came to fulfill the Law and by doing that He's going to generate that righteousness. Now He fulfilled the Law perfectly. Is any Christian going to

dispute that He did that? If He didn't do it then you have no righteousness. So He did do that and that means that if you have trusted in Christ then you have fulfilled the Law in Christ. You're not under the Law. You're in Christ.

Now turn to Rom 10:4. This is our second big point. First big point is the Law of Moses is a unit. Christ fulfilled the Law. Our second big point is that **The Law Of Moses Was Fulfilled with Christ**. And I'm not just going to use Rom 10:4. Some people just use this verse; I'm going to use a series of passages. In verse 1, Paul is concerned for the salvation of his fellow Jews. He says verse 2, "For I testify about them that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge. ³For not knowing about God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own..." notice the Jews were seeking to establish their own righteousness. How were they doing that? By trying to keep the Law of Moses. But by doing so he goes on to say, "they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God. ⁴For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes." See, Christ is our righteousness. There's no reason to try to do the Law of Moses to earn righteousness. Christ already earned it. He made it available to all who believe. I want to quote from Louis Sperry Chafer on this verse. Dr Chafer was the founder and president of Dallas Theological Seminary, way back in the 1920's, and he concludes, "Some see only that He, by His suffering and death, paid the penalty the law imposed and thus discharged the indictment against the sinner, which is comprehended in forgiveness. Others see that Christ fulfills the law by supplying the merit which the holy Creator demands, which is comprehended in justification. Doubtless both of these conceptions inhere in this passage; but it will be observed that whatever is done is done for those who believe—with no other requirement added—and that belief results in the bestowment of the righteousness of God."ⁱ

Turn to 2 Cor 3:5. Here's another passage that shows the Law of Moses ended with Christ. "Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as *coming* from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God," notice how Paul starts off right away - we're not adequate in ourselves, our righteousness isn't adequate, our adequacy is from God, our righteousness comes from Him. And then in verse 6 he launches into a contrast between the Law and the Spirit. Here's the story behind the contrast. In the OT when Moses went up on Mt Sinai and got the Ten Commandments direct from the finger of God he came down with the stone tablets and when he came down his face was all lit up;

Moses sort of looked like he had a flashlight shining out of his face and what had happened was an energy transfer from the brightness of being in the presence of the Shekinah Glory of God. This was reflecting off his face and everyone thought he looked strange and they didn't want to stand in his presence so he put a veil over his face, but over time the glow faded, and the point Paul is making is that just as that glory faded out so the Law of Moses faded out. Paul says Moses was a minister of Moses' covenant, but we, verse 6, of "a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life." And there he says quite frankly the Law of Moses kills you, it doesn't give life, the Spirit gives life. Verse 7, "But if the ministry of death, in letters engraved on stones, came with glory, so that the sons of Israel could not look intently at the face of Moses because of the glory of his face, fading *as* it was, ⁸how will the ministry of the Spirit fail to be even more with glory?" The point being it won't fail, the old Mosaic Covenant failed, the new Covenant of the Spirit won't fail. So what's the argument there? Look in verse 7 and tell me, what letters were engraved on stones?" Charlton Heston has a great rendition of it. The Ten Commandments. Only the Ten Commandments of the Law were written on stone. That's what some theologians call the moral law and they insist the church is under the moral law, we've got to obey the Ten Commandments. What does Paul say? It's finished. It's a ministration of death. The Ten Commandments kill you, they don't give life. And in verse 11 he says very clearly, just as the glory of Moses' face faded away so the Law of Moses faded away. "For if that which fades away *was* with glory, much more that which remains *is* in glory." So obviously the Ten Commandments faded away and now something new has come and that something Paul says, "remains."

Finally Heb 7:11-12. We're trying to show that the Law of Moses was a unit and the Law of Moses passed from the scene with Christ so it is not the handbook of Christian growth. Verse 11, "Now if perfection was through the Levitical priesthood (for on the basis of it the people received the Law), what further need *was there* for another priest to arise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be designated according to the order of Aaron?" What he's saying there is that Christ is not a Levitical priest, Christ is a Melchizedekian priest. And the OT Mosaic Law came on the basis of the Levitical priesthood. But Christ was a different kind of priest. With Christ there has been a change of priesthood. So in verse 12, what's the logical conclusion? If you change priesthood what else has to change? "For when the

priesthood is changed, of necessity there takes place a change of law also.” So we have a change of Law. The old Law of Moses is out; the new Law of Christ is in. Here’s Charles Ryrie on the passage, long time professor at Dallas Theological Seminary, “If Christ is our high priest today, then there has to be a change in the law, since He could not qualify as a priest under the Levitical arrangement (being of the tribe of Judah). If the law has not been done away today, then neither has the Levitical priesthood; but if Christ is our high priest, we cannot be under the law.”ⁱⁱ Now it’s one or the other. Either we are under the Law of Moses and the Levitical priesthood or we are under the Law of Christ and the Melchizedekian priesthood, but it can’t be both.

So concluding we’ve seen two things, the Law of Moses is a unit and that unit has been fulfilled in the death of Christ. That does not mean the Law of Moses is abolished, it is not destroyed, it remains with us and it is holy and good as Paul says elsewhere, but it is not God’s handbook or will for the Christian. The Law of Christ is the handbook for the Christian.

Now the new handbook was being written during the Book of Acts. But one thing they become very clear on, at least by the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15, is that Gentile believers don’t need to be circumcised and they don’t need to follow the Law of Moses. If they had wanted to state that Gentile believers had to do these things Acts 15 was the perfect opportunity, it’s just absolutely perfect, but they didn’t say that.

Now come to today’s text, Gal 2:15-16. All that was background. Now the rest of this chapter is difficult because Paul is answering various charges that were circulating against him. To understand his points fully we’d have to identify exactly what the charges were, but we don’t have the charges. We can only infer from his defense what the charges were. So it might help you to think of Paul sitting there at his desk writing this letter and on his left he has another letter and he’s writing his defense in response to the charges in the other letter. So there’s another document sort of in the shadows and it’s hard to know what’s in the other document, we can only pick up bits and pieces of it by looking at Paul’s defense.

And remember, Paul’s recounting this lunchroom confrontation between him and Peter. And Paul is raking him over the coals for attacking the doctrine of

justification by faith. Peter, who is supposed to be the rock, right, the chief pillar of the early church, has just orchestrated the first attack on the doctrine of justification by faith. So don't tell me godly men, godly leadership can't be demonically influenced. Not demon indwelt but demon influenced. At the end of verse 14 Paul has watched this go on for about a week and every day more and more Jews are led aside and they're separating from the Gentiles so now we have two churches growing, we've got a church split and Paul's been monitoring all this. He's the lunchroom monitor and he watches day after day as more Jews are separating off. What's the implication of this action? Actions speak louder than words and if you're a Gentile sitting over there getting ostracized what are you going to think Peter is saying to you? Your justification is deficient. You haven't done enough to get justified before God. You're unclean. And Paul says that is so hypocritical, Peter. You know better, you were at Cornelius' house; you were there when we discussed Titus and you didn't question whether their justification was deficient, but now you're going to act like these Gentiles are deficient? So Paul confronts; verse 14, "If you, being a Jew, live like the Gentiles and not like the Jews, how is it that you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?" And his point there when he says "you, being a Jew," is to say Peter, you were born a Jew, that's your heritage, and you broke with your Jewish heritage and now you're going back. You're not being clear anymore on the gospel. So that's the setting of verse 15.

We are Jews by nature, now the Greek word for **nature** is *phusis* and *phusis* means in the context **birth**. **We are Jews by birth and not sinners from among the Gentiles**; now that could confuse you if you don't have the background. To some of you it sounds like Paul is saying Jews are not sinners but Gentiles are sinners. And so Jews automatically go to heaven and Gentiles automatically go to hell. That would be a terrible misrepresentation of the text. Paul knew both Jews and Gentiles were sinners in the sense we normally think about. In Rom 3:9 Paul taught that "both Jews and Gentiles are all under sin." In Rom 3:23 Paul taught that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." So Paul's not saying Jews are not sinners in the sense we usually think. Then what is he saying? Look carefully at what he says, **We are Jews by birth**. What happened to a Jew at birth? Little baby, taken down to the Temple, eight days old, he's circumcised, he's brought into the bond of the Mosaic Covenant. That's what he means by birth. **We are Jews by birth**. And being in the bond of the Mosaic Covenant you were

working to establish your “righteousness according to the Mosaic Law.” And 1st century Jews would call you “righteous.” If you were not a Jew by birth, not in the bond of the Mosaic Covenant then you were a “sinner.” Like it or not that’s how they spoke. To show you that’s how they spoke turn to Jesus’ words in Luke 24:7. Actually this is two angels quoting what Jesus spoke. But in any case this is what Jesus spoke. This is after the resurrection and the women are at the tomb. They’ve arrived, He’s not there, they’re shocked and these two angels are there and they’re like, what’s wrong with you people, verse 6, “Remember how He spoke to you while He was still in Galilee, ⁷saying that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.” See the term “sinful men” in verse 7. Now who handed Jesus over into the hands of sinful men? The Jews did. Who were the “sinful men”? The Romans. Was Jesus saying the Jews weren’t sinful men? No, He just meant he would be delivered over to people outside the bond of the Mosaic Covenant, those who were not Jews by birth. Were the Romans outside the bond of the Mosaic Covenant. You bet they were. So this is just the vocabulary of the day, a sinner was someone outside the Mosaic Covenant, a non-Jew. To see that this usage continued into the Book of Acts turn to Acts 2:23. All it is is an expression used of Gentiles outside the Mosaic Covenant. And here it is again, verse 23, “this *Man*, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put *Him* to death.” Now Peter is preaching to Jews and he says, you Jews had Jesus nailed to a cross by the hands of “godless men.” And you ask why didn’t he call the Jews godless? They handed him over; it’s hardly a fair characterization Peter. It’s because this expression “godless men” is the same kind of thing, it just meant people who were outside the covenant of Moses, Gentiles, non-Jews. That’s all in the world it means.

So come back to Galatians and see if verse 15 doesn’t make more sense to you. **We are Jews by birth**, in other words, when we were eight days old Peter, we were taken down and circumcised and brought into the bond of the Mosaic Covenant, we were considered “righteous,” **and not sinners from among the Gentiles**. In other words, not outside the Mosaic Covenant. So the contrast here is look, Peter, you were under the Mosaic Covenant from birth but these Gentiles on the other side of the lunch room weren’t, so why are you trying to get them to live like Jews now?

Now verse 16 is very important because now Paul is going to tell Peter, hey, we've come to know something since then and what we've come to know is that righteousness is not based on being in the bond of the Mosaic Covenant. It has nothing to do with being circumcised or being a Jew, it has to do with faith in Christ.

So now he's going to go into a short discourse on justification by faith and not by works of the Mosaic Law. **Nevertheless, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus,** so he's saying there, even we who were born in the bond of the Mosaic Covenant, we believed in Christ Jesus for our justification, **so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified.** And **flesh** there just refers to a "man," no man will be justified by the works of the Law. But the reason he uses *flesh*, *sarx* is to emphasize that the flesh, the foreskin of a man doesn't make a difference, circumcision of the flesh is nothing, circumcision of the heart is everything.

Now, we're about out of time so all I want to do with verse 16 this time is point out that three times Paul says we are not justified by the works of the Law. The works of the Law being Moses' Law. What did we say earlier about Moses' Law was two things: one it was a unit and two it was fulfilled by Christ to generate the righteousness necessary to be justified with God through faith. So let's just look at the three fold emphasis. There's a contrast here between how we are not justified and how we are justified. So underline these, every time Paul mentions "works of the Law" underline it and every time Paul says "no" or "not," circle it. Let's read through the verse.

nevertheless knowing that a man is not (circle the "not"), **not justified by the works of the Law** and underline "the works of the Law. You have to slow down if you want to catch what's being emphasized and obviously the works of the Law are being emphasized. So let's keep going, **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** (circle "not") **by the works of the Law,** (underline works of the Law again.) Continuing, **since by the works of the Law,** there it is a third time, underline it, **no flesh,** (circle "no,") **no flesh will be justified.** Now I don't know how you could be any clearer. Justification is not by the works of the Law. Paul just stated it three times in one verse just so we don't ever get that idea. The other idea

that would necessarily come with that is the idea that justification is a process. If justification is by works of the Law then by definition justification is an ongoing process. But Paul says it's not, it's by faith. He says, even we, we Jews by birth, who thought we were such hot stuff just because we were circumcised, even we have believed, aorist tense, the aorist tense means point action, it doesn't mean ongoing action, it simply means we did it, we believed in Christ. **So that we may be justified**, also aorist tense, justification is not a process, it is a once for all declaration. Now if Peter needed Paul to say that three times in one verse then we Gentiles need to hear it about 330 times.

So keep this section straight. To keep it straight you have to understand what he means in verse 15. The Jew thought of himself as being by birth in the bond of the Mosaic Covenant and that by doing the works of the Law he would establish his own righteousness with God. Gentiles, they were outside the Law of Moses, they were considered sinners. But in their quest to establish their own righteousness with God they realized they could never do it so they took the Law and they distorted it, they changed it, they made it all externals. So what they really did was they destroyed the true intention of the Law and rebuilt an alternate law they could keep and by keeping it they thought they were establishing righteousness with God. But what Paul and Peter had discovered was that really what we did was reveal that we too are sinners. And therefore we have no righteousness with God and so we have to resort to faith in Christ. Righteousness can't come from us; it must come from God through Jesus Christ, whether you're a Jew or Gentile.

ⁱ Dallas Theological Seminary, *Bibliotheca Sacra Volume 124* (Dallas Theological Seminary, 1967; 2002), 124:243.

ⁱⁱ Dallas Theological Seminary, *Bibliotheca Sacra Volume 124* (Dallas Theological Seminary, 1967; 2002), 124:244.

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