

Sunday, January 15, 2023—Galatians 2:16 Faith of Christ or Faith in Christ?

Galatians 2:16

- **Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.**
- **Knowing**—this verb is in the perfect tense and active voice. It denotes an action that began in past time the results of which continue into the present. Put another way, Paul is stating that the Jews from verse 15 are already in a state of “knowing” what he is about to talk about.
- **A man**—is singular. Paul is talking to “those who are Jews by nature” (v. 15) in the churches of Galatia regarding what they know about a man i.e., individual people.
- **Is not justified by the works of the law**—this is a negative statement. It expresses what God is “not” doing. God is not justifying any man by the works of the law. The verb “is” is in third person and refers to “a man” singular. Those who are “Jews by nature” know this through the preaching of Paul’s gospel in the region of Galatia.
- In this verse, we have one of the clearest statements in the Word of God that justification does not come through works.
 - Romans 3:19-20—all the Law can do is manifest sin.
 - Romans 7:7
 - I Timothy 1:6-10—the purpose of the Law is to manifest sin. When we believe the gospel, the purpose of the Law is over. It has caused us to realize our own sin and reach out in faith to a Redeemer who paid the price for us.
 - Romans 3:28—the only way a man can be justified today is by faith in the finished work of Christ on the cross of Calvary.
- **but by the faith of Jesus Christ**—note the contrast provide by the word “but” to what Paul said in the previous clause. Instead of being justified by the law we are justified by “the faith of Christ.” This is not talking about our faith in Christ. Rather, it is talking about the faithfulness of Christ. It is speaking about Christ’s faithfulness to do what He said He would do.
- The *Oxford English Dictionary* establishes the fact that the word “faith” can be used as either a noun or a verb. See the image below.

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1. [faith, n. and int.](#) [View full entry](#) c1300
 ...The duty of fulfilling one's trust; allegiance owed to a superior, fealty; the obligation of a promise or engagement. Also in **to make faith**: to swear fealty. See also ...
2. [faith, v.](#) [View full entry](#) c1438
 ...transitive. To give credence to, believe in, trust....

- Furthermore, the *OED* establishes that verb “believed” is a synonym for verb form of the word “faith.”

believe, v.

Text size: [A](#) [A](#)

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Pronunciation: [?] Brit. [/biˈli:v/](#), U.S. [/bəˈliv/](#), [/biˈliv/](#)

Forms: ... [\(Show More\)](#)

Frequency (in current use): ●●●●●●●●

Origin: Probably a variant or alteration of another lexical item. **Etymon:** YLEVE *v.*

Etymology: Probably an alteration (with prefix substitution: see *BE- prefix*) of YLEVE *v.*... [\(Show More\)](#)

1. To have confidence or **faith** in, and consequently to rely on or trust to, a person or (*Theology*) a god or the name of a god.

- Now consider the structure of Gal. 2:16. The noun form of “faith” occurs twice in the verse with the verb “believed” occurring between them.
 - Noun—but by the **faith** of Jesus Christ,
 - Verb—even we have **believed** in Jesus Christ
 - Noun—that we might be justified by the **faith** of Christ
- As the following screenshot for the *OED* demonstrates, in its noun form, “faith” is referring to faithfulness, fidelity, loyalty, and trustworthiness.

faith, *n.* and *int.* Text size: [A](#) [A](#)

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Pronunciation: [?] Brit. [/ˈfeɪθ/](#), U.S. [/ˈfeɪθ/](#)

Forms: ... [\(Show More\)](#)

Frequency (in current use): ●●●●●●●●

Origin: A borrowing from French. **Etymon:** French *feit*.

Etymology: < Anglo-Norman and Old French *feid, feit, fait* (also Anglo-Norman and Middle French ... [\(Show More\)](#)

A. *n.*

I. The fulfilment of a trust or promise, and related senses.

1.

a. The quality of fulfilling one's trust or promise; faithfulness, fidelity, loyalty; trustworthiness. Also in **to bear faith:** to be loyal (*to* someone). Now *rare*.

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- In addition, there is an entry in the *OED* for the noun form of faith, “on the faith of.” The phrase means, “in reliance on the security of.”

b. *on the faith of:* in reliance on the security of. [Thesaurus »](#)

[After French *sur la foi de* in reliance on the security of (a treaty, etc.) (1637 in the passage translated in quot. *o1645*; compare Middle French *sur la foi de* (of an oath) in reliance on the word of (a person)).]

- This is exactly what the “faith of Christ” means in this Gal. 2:16, rather than resting on our ability to keep the law, justification is secured by the work of Christ. Our justification is not based upon our faith/belief but upon the “faith of Christ” i.e, Christ’s faithfulness, fidelity, trustworthiness, and security.
 - Matthew 26:36-39—Jesus Christ was faithful in his execution of the eternal purpose. He and He alone secured our justification for us via his activity on our behalf.
- Noah Webster’s *American Dictionary of the English Language* defines the preposition “of” “means:
 - “From or out of; proceeding from, as the cause, source, means, author or agent bestowing.”
- The “faith of Christ” is the faith that belongs to Christ. It is references to His faithfulness.
- Modern versions obscure this great truth by altering the text of Galatians 2:16. Moreover, they engage in circular reasoning by stating that we are justified by faith in Christ because we placed faith in Christ. Modern versions leave one’s justification without a sufficient grounding in anything beyond their own faith.
 - NIV— “know that a person is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith **in** Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith **in** Christ and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no one will be justified.”
 - NASV—“nevertheless, 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.”

- ESV—“yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith **in** Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith **in** Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.”
- NKJV— “knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith **in** Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith **in** Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.”
- Galatians 2:16—twice in this verse Paul grounds justification in the “faith of Christ” i.e., the faithfulness and security provided by Christ. This is not the only time Paul does this.
 - Romans 3:22—“faith of Christ” NIV, NASV, ESV, NKJV read “faith in Christ”
 - Galatians 2:20—“faith of the Son of God” NIV, NASV, ESV, NKJV read “faith in the Son of God”
 - Galatians 3:22—“faith of Christ” NIV, NASV, ESV, NKJV read “faith in Christ”
 - Philippians 3:9—“faith of Christ” NIV, NASV, ESV, NKJV read “faith in Christ”
- The following is a quotation from C.R. Stam’s *Commentary on Galatians*, regarding the difference between objective and subjective faith.
 - “The Scriptures speak of faith in two ways: objectively and subjectively. Objectively, faith is simple trust in another, or in what another has said or done; it moves toward an object—it is the character which constitutes one worthy of trust. Objectively, faith is associated with what one does; he believes in another. Subjectively, it is a quality one possesses: fidelity, dependability, worthiness to be believed in. Thus, if I have faith in you, you had better keep faith with me or I can no longer trust you . . . Abraham is called faithful because he believed God implicitly (Galatians 3:6, 9). He was faith-full, abounding in faith toward God. But on the other hand, God is called faithful, not because He believes in others, but because He is true to His Word. Thus, we may believe what He says because, “He is faithful that promised” (Heb. 10:23) Abraham is called “faithful” in the objective sense; God is called faithful in the subjective sense.” (Stam, 126-127)
- **even we have believed in Jesus Christ**—in this portion of the verse, we see our faith in Christ. Both our faith rests in the “faith of Christ” for our justification. In the context, the “we” is a reference to those who are “jews by nature” in verse 15. All of them along with Paul “believed in Jesus Christ” so they could be justified by the “faith of Christ.”
- **that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.**
- A person gets justified on the basis of Christ’s faithfulness instead of on the basis of the works of the Law.

- Do you see what people are saying when they insist on including works for salvation? They are saying that Christ is not faithful, that Christ did not do enough and is not worthy to be believed.
- Just in case we missed the point, Paul summarizes it for us at the end of the verse; no flesh is going to be justified by performing the works of the Law.