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The Bible Project



[Free Commentary](#)



[Read](#)

In your group, read the passage out loud, with each person reading a verse.

[Recall](#)

Sermon Big Idea: We are not accepted by God because of what we do for Him, but because of what Christ has done for us.

[Head: Grasping the Text](#)

Goal: To grasp the theological concepts and historical context of the text.

1. **The Legal Verdict:** Paul uses the word **justified** (2:16), which as a "forensic" or legal sense. It means to be declared righteous. If justification is a legal verdict, why do we still feel guilty after we have confessed a sin to God? How do we counteract those feelings with the truth of our justification?
2. Justification occurs instantaneously and precedes the process of sanctification. It accomplishes something **for us** by changing our standing before God—transforming us from enemies into children. When born again, this initiates the process of sanctification, which accomplishes something **in us** by transforming our innermost nature and allowing us to continue on the path of spiritual maturity.

Explain why you think it is important as disciples to be able to distinguish between justification and sanctification? How can knowing the differences help in times when we experience doubts and worries, and we feel like we've lost favor with God or have disappointed him?

3. Explain what Paul means when he writes about the "works of the law" (2:16). How were his opponents teaching that obedience was the way to be acceptable before God? What does Paul mean in 2:19 by saying, "through the law I died to the law"?

[Heart: Grasping the Internal Transformation](#)

Goal: To examine how the Gospel reshapes our identity, affections, and motivations.

4. **Crucified Self:** Paul says, "I no longer live, but Christ lives in me" (2:20). If your old self is dead, why do you still struggle with the same old insecurities, struggles, and sins? How does this change our motivation and affections so that we desire to walk in this reality of our new identity?
5. **Anxiety and Acceptance:** As a believer, how does knowing you are already fully accepted by God remove the pressure from trying to strive through effort and religious performance?
6. **The Personal Love of God:** Paul shifts from profound theology to a deeply personal confession: "...the Son of God, who **loved me** and **gave himself for me**" (v. 20). Personalize this; internalize it as if this is the Lord speaking to you. How does it refresh and renew your heart to consider the love of God in Christ for you?

Hands: Grasping Your Next Step

Goal: To move from hearing the Word to living it out. How can I take a step of action in the next week to walk more faithfully as a disciple?

7. **Rebuilding the Old System:** This month, identify one area where you may be tempted to "rebuild the system of merit" (trying to prove your worth and acceptability). How can you seek to consciously "deny self" in that area and trust Christ's righteousness instead?
8. **Cross-Shaped Relationships:** Our lives take the pattern of Christ's life. Disciples should exemplify a cross-shaped life (2:20). What do you want this to look like in your life? What's a practical way you can live out sacrifice and surrender before God and others?
9. **Help Someone Know the Essentials:** Many people in our lives are exhausted by the "law of self-approval." Can you identify someone God is prompting you to move toward to help explain how God accepts us and how it is different from the world's way or religion?