

Saved by faith in Christ, or by the Faith of Christ
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(Galatians 2:15-21 NRSV) We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; {16} yet we know that a person is justified not by the works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ. And we have come to believe in Christ Jesus, so that we might be justified by faith in Christ, and not by doing the works of the law, because no one will be justified by the works of the law. {17} But if, in our effort to be justified in Christ, we ourselves have been found to be sinners, is Christ then a servant of sin? Certainly not! {18} But if I build up again the very things that I once tore down, then I demonstrate that I am a transgressor. {19} For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; {20} 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. {21} I do not nullify the grace of God; for if justification comes through the law, then Christ died for nothing.

It's all in how you look at it.
Trash to one person is treasure to someone else!

Have any of you ever heard of "Dr. Doo: The Emperor of Excrement."
 Seriously: Dr. Doo!
His real name is Dan Corum.

Dan Corum is the Compost and Recycling Coordinator at Seattle's Woodland Park Zoo.

A big part of his task is to oversee the award-winning "Zoo Doo" program that each year takes the waste from the park's elephants, hippos, zebras, giraffes, gazelles, and other animals and transforms it into nearly 1 million pounds of compost to enhance gardens and lawns throughout the Seattle area.

The transformed waste is so highly prized that supply can't keep up with demand. Each year gardeners bid for a chance to purchase it and the zoo holds a twice-annual "Fecal Fest" to select lucky purchasers.

Not only does the repurposed animal waste — once sent to landfills — now provide a completely organic alternative to chemical fertilizers, but the zoo no longer has to pay more than \$60,000 a year in disposal costs.

Instead, its unlikely product contributes upward of \$20,000 to the annual budget and has garnered the organization recognition for environmental conservation.

It is funny how we tend to look at things one way and have a hard time ever seeing it in another light.

The same is true with Jesus

Most of us have a picture of Jesus in our head and an expectation of what that means.

How do we understand Jesus?

What do we believe about him?

That was the question that Paul was asking in his letter to the church at Galatia.

In the NRSV it goes like this:

(Galatians 2:15-21 NRSV)

We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; {16} yet we know that a person is justified not by the works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ. And we have come to believe in Christ Jesus, so that we might be justified by faith in Christ, and not by doing the works of the law, because no one will be justified by the works of the law. {17} But if, in our effort to be justified in Christ, we ourselves have been found to be sinners, is Christ then a servant of sin? Certainly not! {18} But if I build up again the very things that I once tore down, then I demonstrate that I am a transgressor. {19} For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; {20} 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. {21} I do not nullify the grace of God; for if justification comes through the law, then Christ died for nothing.

That's a mouthful isn't it.

But, in my mind, the key verse here is verse 16.

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

We have our relationship, Paul tells us, not by following certain rules, but rather by having faith in Jesus.

Pretty simple really.

The only problem is that there is a textual issue here.

Not all the text suggest that we are to have faith in Jesus.

Some of the text suggest that we are to have the faith of Jesus.

The King James version says in verse 16

(Galatians 2:16 KJV) 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.

Wow, that seems to suggest something very different.

Do we believe in Jesus, or do we believe in what Jesus believed?

Does it make any difference?

Two months ago, on April 20th, there was a disaster that took place about 41 miles off the coast of Louisiana.

The Deepwater Horizon drilling rig, exploded, causing the death of eleven workers.

And as tragic as that is, when the platform sank on April 22nd, oil began to flow from the damaged well.

Ever since then, oil has continued to flow unabated, despite numerous attempts by BP, the owners of the well, to curb the flow.

Ever since then we have seen numerous commercials by BP's CEO Tony Hayward asking us to have faith **IN** BP.

One of the questions that comes to mind is what are we to have faith in?

1. That BP took every precaution prior to this accident, to prevent an accident like this from ever happening?
2. That BP is telling us the truth about what is going on?
3. That BP has some realistic plan in how they are going to stop this leak?
4. That BP will really follow through and clean up the mess?

I, imagine that the questions could go on and on?

When we ask if we have faith in Jesus, what is it we are proclaiming?

1. That we believe certain things about Jesus
 - Jesus was born of a virgin
 - Line of king David
 - Could perform miracles
 - Could raise people from the dead
 - That Jesus was tortured, crucified and died
 - That Jesus was bodily raised from the dead
 - That Jesus sits at the right hand of God, the father in heaven
2. That Jesus is the Messiah, the one who will usher in the kingdom of God
3. That Jesus, through his death and resurrection, paid the eternal price for our sins, so that we might be in a relationship with God and eventually dwell in heaven with God.

The problem with faith in Jesus – like faith in BP is we can sit around all afternoon discussing and arguing → are these things true.

Has BP been honest with us?
Was Jesus born to a virgin?

And is that the lesson that Paul is wanting to teach us → that if we believe in the right things → then we are saved?

As long as we don't doubt
As long as we don't question

Then everything will turn out fine

Or have we as Christians missed the whole point

We are not supposed to have faith IN Jesus → we are called to have the faith OF Jesus!

And I think that there is a huge difference.

What did Jesus believe in?

If the Gospels tell us anything, they tell us that Jesus believed that

- God is love
- God is full of compassion
- God is one who is concerned about the least, last and lost

We need to stop looking at Jesus as an object to believe in → which can often become an idol

But rather as someone that we are too pattern our lives after.

Jesus offers to each of us a way – a way not of believing certain things, but rather a way of living a certain way.

A way of love, hope and compassion for all of his children.

We can debate about faith forever.

But in the mean time,

the hungry remain – hungry

the oppressed remain – oppressed

We have been invited by God not to have faith in something, but to have the faith of the one who opened the world to see the possibility of God's kingdom.