

Exclusive Particles

Psalm 32:1-11 John 8:31-36
Catena on “Exclusive Particles”

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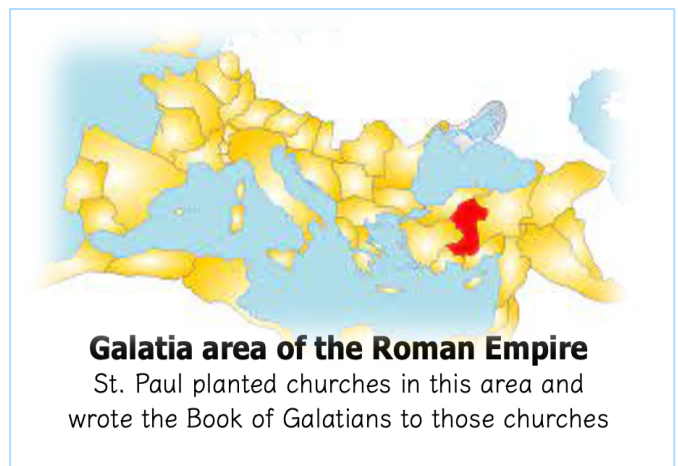


As you study and grow in the faith, there is a term in Lutheran Theology that is extremely helpful and useful to know: it's called *Exclusive Particles*¹. An *exclusive particle* is a phrase the Bible uses for **emphasis**; it's a crucial **clarification** that we are saved by Christ and His work, and **never by our own work or effort**. One of the most well-known uses of *exclusive particles* is Ephesians 2:8-9:

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is **not from yourselves**, it is the gift of God— **not by works**, so that no one can boast. Eph 2:8-9

Those clarifications “**not from yourselves**” and “**not by works**” are called *exclusive particles*. The Bible emphasizes --- in the strongest possible way --- that we are saved by Christ and His work alone and **NEVER** by anything that we ourselves do.

The New Testament book of Galatians is full of *exclusive particles*! In the Galatia area of the Roman Empire, false teachers were teaching that faith in Jesus is a good start, but in order to be truly saved you must obey the Old Testament laws, including



Galatia area of the Roman Empire

St. Paul planted churches in this area and wrote the Book of Galatians to those churches

¹ We believe, teach, and confess that for the preservation of the pure doctrine concerning the righteousness of faith before God it is necessary to urge with special diligence the *particulæ exclusivæ*, that is, the *exclusive particles*, i.e., the following words of the holy Apostle Paul, by which the merit of Christ is entirely separated from our works, and the honor given to Christ alone, when the holy Apostle Paul writes: Of grace, without merit, without Law, without works, not of works. All these words together mean as much as that we are justified and saved alone by faith in Christ. See Ephesians 2:8; Romans 1:17; 3:24; 4:3ff.; Galatians 3:11; Hebrews 11.

The Book of Concord, Formula of Concord, Epitome, III.7

circumcision. This was causing confusion to the Galatian churches, and many people were being led astray and losing their faith. Saint Paul writes the book of Galatians in order to stop that false teaching, and to reteach the truth of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Here is a verse that summarizes the entire book of Galatians:

"We 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. Galatians 2:16

Three times it is emphasized that we are not justified by our works.

Even though the Bible clearly condemns salvation by works², there are still *so many groups* that teach it in one form or another. For many churches,

- ➡ Christianity has been reduced to simply be nice and do good.
- ➡ For others, Christianity has become simply away to be involved in the community, and to help do social work.
- ➡ For others, Christianity is simply about moral living, being a good person and living a decent life.
- ➡ For others, Christianity is all about you and your emotions, that you "feel" God's presence in your life. Those feelings are your assurance that you are saved.
- ➡ For others, Christianity is all about loving other people, and by love they mean tolerance, acceptance, and diversity. There are no rights or wrongs, simply love other people as they are.

In one way or another, people are being taught that salvation is by their own good works. They don't come out and deny Jesus, they simply ignore Him and minimize His work of salvation. The emphasis is on themselves, their work, their goodness, and their feelings.

² The Biblical phrase for salvation by your own work is "works of the Law". The false teachers in Biblical times that were teaching that you had to obey the Old Testament laws in order to be saved (= "works of the Law", see Acts 15:5) became **the prototype example** for all who would teach some form of works righteousness: that is, earning your own salvation by something you do. THIS IS CONDEMNED THROUGHOUT THE NEW TESTAMENT!

St Paul clearly condemns that in the book of Galatians.

For all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse Galatians 3:10

You who are trying to be justified by the law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace. Galatians 5:4

The *exclusive particles* are meant to teach us to never rely on ourselves and are so for our salvation. We are to rely on Christ alone. The opposite of working for your salvation is receiving it by faith. **Works and faith are mutually exclusive, they are exactly opposite.** Faith is a work of God in you, it is a gift that God gives to you, it is the Holy Spirit opening your heart and your eyes to see who Jesus is and what He has done for you. *Faith comes by hearing and hearing of the word of God.*

"We 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. Galatians 2:16

Faith is *complete dependence* on the Lord Jesus Christ for your salvation. Faith knows and understands that Jesus is the One that God sent to do the work of salvation for you. God sent His Son to live a perfect life so that you are considered righteous in God's eyes. God sent His Son to gather up your sins and your guilt and to take it to a cross, where He suffered and died for you and in your place. That is a promise that God makes to you. He promises that Jesus has saved you from your sins your guilt and from death itself. The Holy Spirit creates faith within you, so that you believe that promise that God has made to you. **That faith saves you.** That trust in God's promises brings everything Jesus has done for you into your life.

- ➡ Jesus is your savior
- ➡ your sins are forgiven
- ➡ you have peace with God
- ➡ you are given eternal life
- ➡ God is your Father in heaven
- ➡ the Holy Spirit lives within you

- ➡ you are a new creation in Christ the old is gone
- ➡ you are empowered to live a holy and godly life

Faith in Christ is your connection with God. You can never earn that connection with God through anything that you can do yourself. You were saved by Christ; you could never save yourself by anything that you do yourself.

You were given eternal life because of Jesus and His death and resurrection from the dead. You could never achieve eternal life by anything that you do yourself.

The book of Galatians is God shouting from the mountaintop that salvation is found in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and not in yourself. If you think that God will accept anything from you in exchange for salvation → **you are under a curse; and you are lost.**

This makes us all stop and evaluate what's going on in our heart. Ask yourself, **why is God going to let you into heaven?** If your answer is anything other than Jesus, then you have a problem. If you are trusting in something that you have done --- then repent! Turn away from it! Whatever it is will never save you! Trust only in Christ! Put your faith in the Son of God and His life, death, and resurrection for you! The Book of Galatians teaches us to turn away from ourselves, and to look only to the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation.

“We 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.

Galatians 2:16

Amen!

God the Father, we thank you for sending Jesus to be our Savior.

We thank you for the strong words of the book of Galatians that clearly teaches that we are saved by faith, and never by our own good works.

Help us to have a deep conviction of this truth, and deliver us from every form of works righteousness.

Allow our church to boldly proclaim this at every point, and empower us as individuals to clearly confess this to our neighbors.

We pray this in the name of Jesus our only Savior, Amen.

Psalm 32:1-11

Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. **2** Blessed is the man against whom the LORD counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit. **3** For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. **4** For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. Selah **5** I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD," and you forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah **6** Therefore let everyone who is godly offer prayer to you at a time when you may be found; surely in the rush of great waters, they shall not reach him. **7** You are a hiding place for me; you preserve me from trouble; you surround me with shouts of deliverance. Selah **8** I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you. **9** Be not like a horse or a mule, without understanding, which must be curbed with bit and bridle, or it will not stay near you. **10** Many are the sorrows of the wicked, but steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the LORD. **11** Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, O righteous, and shout for joy, all you upright in heart!

Catena on “Exclusive Particles”

We 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. *Galatians 2:16*

Clearly no one who relies on the law is justified before God, because “the righteous will live by faith.” *Galatians 3:11*

For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith.” *Romans 1:17*

But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. *Romans 3:21-22*

There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. *Romans 3:23-24*

For we maintain that a person is justified by faith apart from the works of the law. *Romans 3:28*

It was not through the law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith. *Romans 4:13*

And if by grace, then it cannot be based on works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace. *Romans 11:6*

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast. Ephesians 2:8-9

I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. Philippians 3:8-9

He has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. 2 Timothy 1:9

John 8:31-36

So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, **32** and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." **33** They answered him, "We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say, 'You will become free'?" **34** Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin. **35** The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever. **36** So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.