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What Paul Preached at Thessalonica and Why It Matters

David Lertis Matson

Did Paul preach his gospel of justification by faith at the outset of his calling by Christ or did his gospel develop over time, particularly in the throes of his debates with the Judaizers? This question is more than of academic interest: the issue is undeniably relevant for a church today confused and conflicted about the gospel that it preaches. No one can really be quite sure what a professing Christian might mean when he or she speaks of the “gospel” of Jesus Christ—which certainly affects the question of the nature of the church’s unity that we seek.

If justification by faith belonged to the core of Paul and the church’s earliest witness, at least that witness reflected in the New Testament, then his gospel can stake a historical claim to being a normative message in every age; on the other hand, if justification came later in Paul’s career, perhaps at Antioch or Galatia, then at least conceivably we can dispense with this relic of a bygone era and opt for other more fashionable “gospels” more in line with the spirit of our times. The doctrine of justification, the declaration of acquittal in God’s courtroom, after all, presupposes the universal guilt of all humanity and salvation from the judicial sentence of God’s wrath—hardly a popular message in any era but especially in our own.

So, just how old is Paul’s message of justification? As arguably Paul’s earliest correspondence, 1 Thessalonians contains the oldest historical reference to the death of Jesus in all of literature (2.13–15) as well as the oldest theological interpretation of what that death meant for Paul and his converts (5.9–10). But did that interpretation involve the announcement of a sinner’s justification before God? Did the gospel (*euangélion*) that Paul brought to Thessalonica (1.5), that he had preached previously in Philippi (2.2), with which he had been entrusted (2.4), that he imparted so personally while plying his trade (2.8–9), that he faithfully passed on to his associate Timothy (3.2), include the message of justification by faith so characteristic of Paul’s later letters to Galatia and Rome? If, as many scholars contend, 1 Thessalonians knows nothing of any doctrine of justification,¹ then it must have developed later and not been part of the revelation that he received on the Damascus road.

As one who used to argue that way, I have now come to the opposite conclusion. I believe that a close reading of the evidence suggests that the gospel that Paul preached to the Thessalonians was the same gospel that he preached in Galatia and hoped to preach in Rome—the gospel of God’s justification of sinners.

1. They point to the lack of explicit justification terminology: the verb *dikaiōō* (justify), the nouns *dikaiosúnē* and *dikaïōsis* (righteousness/justification), and the adjective *dikaios* (righteous/just). The adverb *dikaïos* does appear in 1 Thess 2.10 but not in a forensic sense. Observing that the theme of justification is “notoriously absent” in 1 Thessalonians, Raymond E. Brown writes, “Perhaps ‘justification’ was not Paul’s first formulation of what happened through Christ; it may represent language honed in battles with Jewish Christian missionaries in Galatia” (*An Introduction to the New Testament* [New York: Doubleday, 1997], 441). Indeed, it was the perceived absence of justification doctrine in 1 Thessalonians that led F. C. Baur and his school first to question the authenticity of the letter. Today no scholar doubts that Paul wrote 1 Thessalonians.

Was Justification Already in Place When Paul Wrote 1 Thessalonians?

Paul ended up writing his first letter to the Thessalonians when he was forced to leave the city prematurely during his second missionary journey (1 Thess 2.17–18; Acts 17.1–9). According to Paul’s own recollection, he then moved south to Athens from which he sent his coworker Timothy back to Thessalonica to find out about the faith of the young community facing severe persecution (1 Thess 3.1–2). While Paul says nothing more about where he went afterwards, according to Acts, Paul made his way farther south to Corinth (Acts 18.1), where Silas and Timothy eventually joined him (Acts 18.5) and from where Paul presumably penned his letter to Thessalonica after receiving the good news that the believers there had continued strong in their faith (see 1 Thess 3.6, where Timothy is said to have rejoined Paul, again presumably in Corinth).²

The recognition that Paul wrote 1 Thessalonians from Corinth has a number of important implications. First, the location establishes an important chronological framework. The Gallio inscription, dating Gallio’s proconsulship in Corinth to the year AD 51–52, yields one of the sure dates in New Testament scholarship and establishes the founding of the Corinthian church to the year AD 50 or so (for the reference to the proconsul Gallio, see Acts 18.12). Since Paul founded the Thessalonian community just prior to coming to Corinth in AD 50, one can estimate, based on certain chronological data, that Paul wrote 1 Thessalonians some seventeen years after his conversion when he was already a seasoned missionary and mature theologian.³ Despite the impression sometimes given by scholars that 1 Thessalonians represents an early or young Paul, whose theology will take on important developments as he gets older, nothing could be further from the truth.⁴

A second important implication is the time separation between Paul’s founding of the church at Thessalonica and his initial writing to that church from Corinth. This interval is the briefest in the entire Pauline correspondence, a period of just some weeks or months, hardly enough time for a rival gospel to develop. Whatever gospel Paul preached to the Thessalonians, it was not a response to some polemical situation⁵ and certainly not a response to Jew-Gentile conflict since the composition of the church was largely, if not exclusively, Gentile (1 Thess 1.9; 4.5, 13; but cf. Acts 17.1–4).

Third, we do not need to guess what the content of Paul’s gospel was at that time, for we fortunately have Paul’s own testimony. Immediately upon coming to Corinth from Thessalonica, he says that he was determining “to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified” (1 Cor 2.2). Paul’s encounter with Greek philosophy at Athens notwithstanding (Acts 17.16–34),⁶ Paul’s message in Corinth centered on nothing else than the death of Jesus on the cross, a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to Greeks (1 Cor 1.23). This gospel constituted the “first things” delivered by Paul to the Corinthians (1 Cor 15.3), which Paul himself had “received” (1 Cor 15.3a), and which was fully in line with the apostolic tradition before him (1 Cor 15.11).

Interpreters, of course, would not deny Paul’s strong theology of the cross in 1 Corinthians, particularly as a corrective to the Corinthians’ fascination with human wisdom, yet many would deny that this theology included a

2. While information from Acts is helpful and necessary to fill in some of the gaps in 1 Thessalonians, the two accounts do not always agree. For an analysis of some of the problems, see Ernest Best, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1986), 4–7. While some in the early church believed that Paul wrote his letter from Athens, the predominant view today is that Paul penned 1 Thessalonians from Corinth (see Best, 7–8).

3. This figure assumes that the three years of Gal 1.18 and the fourteen years of Gal 2.1 are consecutive and that the Jerusalem Council took place at AD 49, prior to the founding of the Thessalonian church. I date Paul’s conversion to approximately AD 32–33.

4. An important recognition by M. Eugene Boring, *An Introduction to the New Testament: History, Literature, Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2012), 209.

5. Stephen Westerholm, *Perspectives Old and New on Paul: The “Lutheran” Paul and His Critics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 353, 361.

6. The idea that Paul somehow changed his message to a *theological crucis* after his disappointing encounter with Greek philosophy in Athens (Acts 17.16–34) has no evidence to support it (C. K. Barrett, *The First Epistles to the Corinthians* [New York: Harper and Row, 1968], 63). For one thing, Acts does not present Paul’s encounter in entirely negative terms (Acts 17.34). For another, Acts shows Paul preaching the cross in Thessalonica prior to his going to Athens (Acts 17.3). At best one could say that Paul refocused his message on the cross after his Athens experience.

message of justification at this stage in Paul's missionary career. A close inspection of the Corinthian correspondence, however, indicates just what kind of impact Paul believed that his preaching of the cross had upon the Corinthians. "But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified [*dikaióō*] in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor 6.11).⁷ Pointing back to their baptism, Paul links the Corinthians' reception of his message to their powerful experience of justification. This connection was no subsequent theological reflection by Paul, as the contrast between the present and aorist tenses in 1 Corinthians 15.11 makes clear: the gospel that Paul was preaching at the time of the writing of 1 Corinthians ("so we proclaim") was the same gospel that the Corinthians had heard when Paul first announced the gospel in Corinth ("so you believed").

In response to Paul's preaching of the cross the Corinthians had experienced the non-imputation of sin (2 Cor 5.19), the "sweet exchange" of their sin for Christ's righteousness (1 Cor 1.30; 2 Cor 5.21). That the message of justification was part and parcel of Paul's *theologia crucis* is clear from the way that Paul theologizes his administration of the new covenant, whose glory far surpassed that of Moses: "For if there was glory in the ministry of condemnation, much more does the ministry of justification [*dikaíosúnē*] abound in glory" (2 Cor 3.9). Now, if this ministry of justification was present at Corinth, it was surely present at Thessalonica and Philippi just a short time before that. The trip from Macedonia to Achaia had not seen any alteration in Paul's message.⁸

Other lines of inquiry help to establish that Paul's message of justification was already in place by the time that Paul wrote 1 Thessalonians. Paul's letter to the Galatians certainly adds to the evidence. That justification constitutes a dominant theme in this letter no one can possibly doubt; indeed, both Galatians and Romans set the gold standard for Paul's doctrine of justification in the New Testament. In Galatians, Paul appeals precisely to his doctrine of justification to counter the argument of certain Judaizing opponents who are insisting that Paul's Gentile converts submit to circumcision and take on the works of the law.

How much does the witness of Galatians help establish our thesis? Much, it would seem, depends on when Paul penned the letter. The dating of Galatians, along with the related question of the location of the churches to which Paul writes (North or South Galatia), continues to be a matter of some debate. Some scholars (e.g., F. F. Bruce) believe that the letter is early, perhaps the earliest letter that Paul wrote; others (e.g., John Knox) believe that the letter is late, perhaps the last letter that Paul wrote. Most scholars favor a date somewhere in the middle, perhaps in the mid to late fifties, right before Romans. What is at stake here is more than an academic exercise. In the observation of M. Eugene Boring,

if Galatians is early, this means that the explicit doctrine of justification was an integral element of Paul's theology from early in his career, that it lay dormant as he wrote to the Thessalonians, Corinthians, and Philippians, and then reemerged in Romans. In this view, the central elements of Pauline theology were always explicitly present in his theology, with various components making their way into particular letters as the occasion called for it.⁹

While Boring underestimates the evidence in the Thessalonian, Corinthian, and Philippian correspondence, he is correct about the decisive role played by Galatians; if Galatians is early, the debate about justification and 1 Thessalonians is over.

7. Paul certainly had a developed understanding of justification by the time that he wrote 1 Corinthians. A passage like 1 Cor 15.56, whose mention of the law comes like a bolt from sky, already assumes the unholy triumvirate of death-sin-law in Rom 5.12–13, a construct that must already have been in place at the time that he wrote 1 Corinthians. That Paul would later write Romans from Corinth only confirms that assumption. As Seyoon Kim puts it so well: "It is scarcely imaginable that, having had no well-thought-out doctrine of justification during the period of the Corinthian correspondence, Paul suddenly and miraculously developed it instantly when writing Romans in Corinth at the conclusion of the Corinthian conflicts" (*Paul and the New Perspective: Second Thoughts on the Origin of Paul's Gospel* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002], 99–100). Unless otherwise noted, all translations come from the New Revised Standard Version.

8. Westerholm, *Perspectives Old and New on Paul*, 361.

9. Boring, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 279.

But even if Galatians is mid or late career for Paul, the evidence from Galatians remains compelling. As Martin Hengel and Anna Maria Schwemer point out, the gospel that Paul is defending in Galatians is a *recollected* gospel.¹⁰ At the end of the day, it matters not so much if Galatians is early or late; what matters is the gospel that Paul preached *upon his initial visit to Galatia*. As Paul states it twice for emphasis: “But even if we or an angel from heaven should proclaim to you a gospel contrary to what we proclaimed to you, let that one be accursed! As we have said before, so now I repeat, if anyone proclaims to you a gospel contrary to what you received, let that one be accursed!” (Gal 1.8–9). The contrast once again between the present (*proclaim, proclaims*) and aorist (*proclaimed, received*) tenses is illuminating; what Paul is defending in this letter is not some newly derived insight that suddenly dawned on him as he battled the arguments of the rival missionaries but the gospel that he preached when he was first among the Galatians.¹¹

The question is when did Paul first preach to the Galatians? This question depends, of course, on whether one holds to the South or North Galatian theory. It is difficult to verify that Paul ever spent time in the North, the location of the old Celtic tribes. However, the book of Acts contains two references that may well refer to Paul passing through the North Galatian region (16.6; 18.23). If North Galatia is in fact in view in these passages as many scholars hold, Paul must have done some evangelizing during his initial visit in Acts 16.6 since the subsequent reference in Acts 18.23 assumes that Paul had made disciples there.¹² Paul’s initial evangelization of North Galatia would then have taken place around AD 50 and *prior* to his evangelization of Thessalonica (Acts 17.1–9). Luke even has Paul preaching his gospel of justification during his first missionary journey when Paul evangelized the region of South Galatia (Acts 13.38–39). Clearly, then, Paul’s gospel of justification was firmly in place by the time that he reached Thessalonica in the course of his second missionary journey.

An additional line of evidence in Galatians should be drawn as well. In Galatians 2.11–14, Paul reports on his confrontation at Antioch with Peter, who had stopped eating with his Gentile brothers and sisters when certain messengers from James arrived from Jerusalem. Paul’s principal theological defense against Peter, and what he hopes that Peter will see, is the fact that both of them share the same message of justification: “We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners, yet we know that a person is justified not by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ” (Gal 2.15–16). Here is the first use of *dikaiōō* in the Galatian letter, coming as it does as part of Paul’s speech to Peter before the entire Antioch congregation.¹³ In this speech Paul appeals to a common basis in understanding (“we know that”) with which he expects Peter and the Antioch church readily to concur and thus apply the appropriate lesson. As Hengel and Schwemer observe, “Here Paul includes Peter in this knowledge grounded in the saving action of Christ, and in so doing takes it for granted that Peter shares it with him.”¹⁴

So it is clear that Paul’s (and Peter’s!) gospel of justification is sufficiently intact by the time of the Antioch incident that Paul can appeal to it as the theological basis for the uniting of Jews and Gentiles in the communal bonds of table fellowship. When then did the Antioch incident occur? The natural reading of Paul’s time indicators in Galatians suggests that the Antioch incident took place after the Jerusalem Council (Gal 2.1–10) in AD 49 and prior to Paul’s evangelization work in Thessalonica.

10. Martin Hengel and Anna Maria Schwemer: “Galatians is above all a precise *recollection* of the gospel which the apostle preached at a much earlier time” (*Paul between Damascus and Antioch: The Unknown Years* [Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997], 303, emphasis theirs). Also Seyoon Kim, *The Origin of Paul’s Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 271.

11. As Hengel and Schwemer perceptively note, the polemical context in Galatia was such that if Paul was defending some more recent formulation of his message (justification by faith), he surely would have been playing right into his opponents’ hands.

12. An important point noted Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 466.

13. It is not easy to determine whether Paul’s direct speech to Peter ends at verse 14 or extends down through verse 21. I incline toward the latter.

14. Hengel and Schwemer, *Paul between Damascus and Antioch*, 148. The authors make a similar point about Romans, where Paul expounds his gospel of justification in its most systematic form: “Paul wanted not only to be understood in Rome but also to be approved of, so he had to refer to an undisputed shared basis in faith” (287).

Evidence of Justification in 1 Thessalonians

If Paul already had his gospel of justification prior to coming to Thessalonica, what then are we to make of the absence of justification language in 1 Thessalonians? At the outset we should recognize that an argument from silence is always tenuous. Nowhere in 1 Thessalonians does Paul cite the Old Testament scriptures, mention baptism, or say anything about the Lord's Supper, just to cite a few examples. Are we to assume that Paul did not know about any of these things at this stage in his missionary career?

When Paul writes his letter to the Thessalonians, he assumes much on the part of his audience. The presence of "you know" language is ubiquitous (1.5; 2.1,2,5,11; 3.3,4; 4.2; 5.2), intimating that Paul had bequeathed to the church the same kind of creedal, catechetical, and liturgical traditions as he did in his other churches (cf. 2 Thess. 2.15).¹⁵ Paul had been "entrusted" with the gospel (1 Thess 2.4) and thus the gospel that Paul preached was "something invariable, something one entrusts to others to be passed on further."¹⁶ At this supposed early stage of Paul's career, then, Paul's gospel does not seem to be undergoing development and conceptual modification but is clearly traditional. One of the things that the Thessalonians certainly "know" is the gospel that Paul had preached to them but which the circumstances of the letter did not occasion that Paul spell out.

In contrast to certain eschatological teachings about which the Thessalonians were ignorant (1 Thess 4.13–18), they were not similarly uninformed as to the meaning of Jesus's death. The grammar and vocabulary in the formulation of Jesus's death and resurrection in 1 Thessalonians 4.14 bear the marks of a creedal formulation, for example.¹⁷ More significant is the way Paul exhorts the Thessalonians to eschatological vigilance by invoking the memory and meaning of Jesus's death: "For God has destined us not for wrath but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep we may live with him" (5.9–10). The casual manner in which Paul can allude to the meaning of Jesus's death suggests that the Thessalonians were quite familiar with Paul's teaching on the matter, "otherwise it would have had to be demonstrated for them."¹⁸

Here in this oldest interpretation of Jesus's death in all of Christian literature Paul inextricably weds Jesus's death to deliverance from God's eschatological wrath. As I. Howard Marshall puts it: "The implication is inescapable that through the death of Jesus something happened which transformed the destiny of believers. Had Jesus not died, they would have been destined for wrath."¹⁹ This emphasis on deliverance from wrath points back to what Paul indicated earlier was the twofold reason for the Thessalonians' conversion: *to serve* a living and true God and *to wait* for his Son from heaven, who would rescue them from the coming wrath (1.9–10).

Paul does not indicate in this initial passage exactly how it is that Jesus rescues the Thessalonian believers from God's eschatological wrath. But it becomes clear later in 5.9–10 that Paul attributes the Thessalonians' salvation to Jesus's vicarious atonement, that is, to Jesus's dying *for* (*hupér*) them, that is, in their place and on their behalf.²⁰ Via the substitutionary representative death of Jesus on the cross, Jesus shared the death of the Thessalonian believers so that they might share his risen life.²¹

15. For specific traditions, see, for example, 1 Cor 11.2, 23–25; 15.3–5; noted by Boring, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 211.

16. Rainer Riesner, *Paul's Early Period: Chronology, Mission Strategy, Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 399.

17. See Kim, *Paul and the New Perspective*, 87–88.

18. Leon Morris, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition and Notes* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959), 161. So also Gene L. Green: "The absence of a fuller elaboration of the theology of the cross at this point implies that the first readers already understood the teaching about the death of Christ. This was part of the initial instruction the church had received (Acts 17.3), and it became the foundation of the church's confession (1 Thess 4.14)" (*The Letters to the Thessalonians* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002], 243).

19. I. Howard Marshall, *1 and 2 Thessalonians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 140.

20. The preposition is capable of both meanings, with the latter particularly in view in such passages as Gal 3.13 (and so probably 2.20), Rom 5.6, 8, and 1 Pet 3.18. On this latter meaning in 1 Thess 5.10 see Jon A. Weatherly, *1 and 2 Thessalonians* (Joplin: College Press, 1996), 174.

21. See Marshall, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 140–41, alluding to the "interchange" thesis of Morna Hooker.

This understanding of Jesus's death is close to, if not completely identical with, Paul's understanding of the gospel later in Romans. In fact, Romans 5.9 offers the clearest commentary on what was perhaps in Paul's mind by making clear to the Roman audience what the Thessalonians surely knew: "Much more surely then, now that we have been justified by his blood, we will be saved through him from the wrath of God." Here many of the key elements of 1 Thessalonians 5.9–10 appear in more condensed form—wrath, salvation, death, Christological agency—but now with the important additional element of justification. Is it then legitimate to assume that a justification message in fact lies behind 1 Thessalonians 5.9–10? I believe that the answer is yes; as Seyoon Kim perceptively asks: "how else would he [Paul] have explained the link between Jesus's death of vicarious atonement and our deliverance from God's wrath at the last judgment, which is after all an act of 'justification'?"²² Explicit justification language admittedly does not occur in 1 Thessalonians but the salvific *effect* of this doctrine certainly does.²³

Rather than something that developed some years after Paul's founding of the Thessalonian church, justification by faith on the basis of the shed blood of Jesus on the cross was surely one of the things that the Thessalonians *knew*. The doctrine not only was well enough in place by the time that Paul wrote 1 Thessalonians but also, despite the absence of explicit justification language, enough traces of the doctrine exist in the letter to suggest that a justification message established the very beginning of their Christian existence.²⁴ The Thessalonians' election and calling by God (1 Thess 1.4; 2.12; 4.7; 5.24), their predestination to eternal life (1 Thess 3.3; 5.9), their identity "in Christ" (1 Thess 2.14; 4.1,16; 5.18), their reception of the gospel by faith (1 Thess 1.8; 2.10,13), their gift of and sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit (1 Thess 1.5–6; 4.8), their rescue from divine wrath (1 Thess 1.10; 5.10), and their future resurrection and glorification (1 Thess 2.12; 4.13–18) comprise many, if not most, of the constituent elements of a full-blown exposition of justification. To expect such an exposition in a highly occasional document like 1 Thessalonians, however, is to expect too much.²⁵

The Gospel of Justification and the Gospel Today

The fact is many "gospels" exist today, some in creative combination with others. Popular in various quarters is a *political* gospel in which Jesus is primarily a socio-political revolutionary going up against the imperial powers of Rome, a view attractive to some modern-day interpreters of 1 Thessalonians; a *peace* gospel whose central tenet is Jesus's stance against violence and militarism (usually in connection with the foreign policy of the United States); a *progressive* gospel that focuses on the life and teachings of Jesus, with his death and resurrection receding into the background, if not disappearing altogether; a *pluralist* gospel that celebrates everyone's status as a child of God on the basis of creation rather than new creation; and a *prosperity* gospel promising health and material blessing to those who believe. Yet one rarely hears today the gospel of God's justification, which pronounces guilty sinners righteous and delivers them from the just sentence of wrath.²⁶

And so suddenly a very ancient question becomes strangely contemporary: what is the gospel that we preach, and what if Christians today do not all share it? What if the heart and soul of what we believe about

22. Kim, *Paul and the New Perspective*, 93.

23. Westerholm, *Perspectives Old and New on Paul*, 360.

24. Curiously, Boring admits that "preliminary traces" of justification appear in Paul's earlier letters but still argues that "later developments in Paul's thought" (referring to justification) cannot be read into the theology of 1 Thessalonians (*An Introduction to the New Testament*, 210, 279).

25. Riesner, *Paul's Early Period*, 402. Hengel and Schwemer remark that a good preacher does not attempt to get all his or her theology into every sermon! *Paul between Damascus and Antioch*, 304.

26. Richard Mouw, former president of Fuller Theological Seminary, recalls overhearing a pastor at a conference telling some of his colleagues that he "rarely preaches Christ's substitutionary atonement anymore," preferring instead to focus on Christ's encounter with the "powers" of militarism, consumerism, racism, militarism, and the like (*Christianity Today*, September 24, 2012). In Pauline thought, a *Christus Victor* model is not separate from substitution but is in fact grounded upon it (see Col 2.13–15).

God's action in Christ is in some cases fundamentally different, perhaps irreconcilably so? What then is the common knowledge that we share? Perhaps our unity will simply be one of cultural tolerance or multicultural sensitivity—admirable traits in secular society certainly but falling well short of what the New Testament envisions as the basis of Christian unity.

Loisy may have had a point when he declared in his debate with Harnack, “Why settle for the seed when you can have the tree?”—but what if the challenge of postmodern hermeneutics leaves us with an interpretive landscape of multiple trees stemming from multiple seeds? What then is the common root of our faith? That root, I contend, can only be the ancient kerygma, which Paul planted, Apollos watered, and God caused and causes to grow, even today. As Hengel and Schwemer remind us, “‘Justification of the godless by grace alone’ is not an insight from the apostle’s late period, but shaped his proclamation from his earliest period as the cause of his theology of the cross.”²⁷

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27. Hengel and Schwemer, *Paul between Damascus and Antioch*, 313.