

Justification by Faith Alone -- Lesson 4 of The Gospel in Galatians

Sabbath Afternoon:

Memory Text: "I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but 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" (Galatians 2:20, ESV).

This week we will be looking at what it is that happens to bring broken, selfish, fearful people to the place where they can be described by the memory text for this week. What has to happen to lead an individual to "die" -- to have Christ be the one "who lives in" them -- to "live by faith in the Son of God"?

2nd paragraph : "What did Paul actually . . ."

Key words that are foundational to understanding the gospel and the rest of Paul's letter to the Galatians: justification, righteousness, works of the law, belief, faith -- faith of Jesus.

"What does Paul mean by these terms, and what do they teach us about the plan of salvation?"

Let's take a look at Friday's lesson to understand the importance of our journey today.

"The danger has been presented to me again and again of entertaining, as a people, false ideas of justification by faith. I have been shown for years that Satan would work in a special manner to confuse the mind on this point. The law of God has been largely dwelt upon and has been presented to congregations, almost as destitute of the knowledge of Jesus Christ and His relation to the law as was the offering of Cain. I have been shown that many have been kept from the faith because of the mixed, confused ideas of salvation, because the ministers have worked in a wrong manner to reach hearts. The point that has been urged upon my mind for years is the imputed righteousness of Christ. . . ."

"There is not a point that needs to be dwelt upon more earnestly, repeated more frequently, or established more firmly in the minds of all than the impossibility of fallen man meriting anything by his own best good works. Salvation is through faith in Jesus Christ alone."—Ellen G. White, Faith and Works, pp. 18, 19.

We will be studying what it means to be justified by faith or to be righteous by faith -- righteousness by faith. As we study be reflecting on why it is that Satan would "work in a special manner to confuse the mind on this point"?

Sunday: The Question of "Justification" (Gal. 2:15-16)

When you think of the word justification what do you think of?

15 We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, 16 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. Gal.2:15, 16 NKJV

The Jews felt that circumcision was necessary to be part of God's family--to be acceptable to God. Would circumcision be one of the "works of the law"? What do we mean when we speak of "works of the law"?

What went wrong in God's universe that resulted in things being so out of place here on our earth -- so out of place in you and in me? There was war in heaven (*Rev. 12:7*). What was this war about? When the war took place in heaven the dragon--the serpent of old--the one called the Devil and Satan is said to have been cast out of heaven. He was cast to the earth--he is described as one "who deceives the whole world." Is this deception about God? Are the questions similar to the ones raised with Adam and Eve in the Garden? Is God a liar? Is He withholding things from us that would lead to our advancement, growth, elevation? Is He selfish?

This war seems to be over the character and government of God. We are born in the middle of the conflict in a world darkened by Satan's lies about God -- a world filled with misapprehension about God. What would God do to solve this problem?

Christ came to represent the Father. We behold in him the image of the invisible God. He clothed his divinity with humanity, and came to the world that the erroneous ideas Satan had been the means of creating in the minds of men, in regard to the character of God, might be removed. We could not behold the glory of God unveiled in Christ and live; but as he came in the garb of humanity, we may draw nigh to our Redeemer. We are called upon to behold the Lord our Father in the person of his Son. Christ came in the robe of the flesh, with his glory subdued in humanity, that lost man might communicate with him and live. Through Christ we may comprehend something of him who is glorious in holiness. Jesus is the mystic ladder by which we may mount to behold the glory of the infinite God. By faith we behold Christ standing between humanity and divinity, connecting God and man, and earth and heaven. {ST January 20, 1890, par. 5}

Christ came to save fallen man, and Satan with fiercest wrath met him on the field of conflict; for the enemy knew that when divine strength was added to human weakness, man was armed with power and intelligence, and could break away from the captivity in which he had bound him. Satan sought to intercept every ray of light from the throne of God. He sought to cast his shadow across the earth, that men might lose the true views of God's character, and that the knowledge of God might become extinct in the earth. He had caused truth of vital importance to be so mingled with error that it had lost its significance. The law of Jehovah was burdened with needless exactions and traditions, and God was represented as severe, exacting, revengeful, and arbitrary. He was pictured as

one who could take pleasure in the sufferings of his creatures. The very attributes that belonged to the character of Satan, the evil one represented as belonging to the character of God. Jesus came to teach men of the Father, to correctly represent him before the fallen children of earth. Angels could not fully portray the character of God, but Christ, who was a living impersonation of God, could not fail to accomplish the work. The only way in which he could set and keep men right was to make himself visible and familiar to their eyes. That men might have salvation he came directly to man, and became a partaker of his nature. {ST January 20, 1890, par. 6} God Made Manifest in Christ

Read the paragraph beginning, "The verb to justify . . . "

Does this legal system describe God's government? If so, how would this fix what has gone wrong in God's universe? Would we be safe in a universe filled with people ""declared innocent", "counted as righteous"? Are we or are we not "faithful members" of God's community / family?

Monday: Works of the Law

Do we perform certain acts or behaviors to get the Holy Spirit, to see miracles, to be in God's favor?

Read:

Gal. 3:1-12

1 O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified? 2 This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? 3 Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh? 4 Have you suffered so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain?

5 Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, does He do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?— 6 just as Abraham "believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." 7 Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham. 8 And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, "In you all the nations shall be blessed." 9 So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham.

10 For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them."

11 But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for "the just shall live by faith. 12 Yet the law is not of faith, but "the man who does them shall live by them."

Rom. 3:9-31

9 What then? Are we better than they? Not at all. For we have previously

charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin.

10 As it is written:

“ There is none righteous, no, not one;

11 There is none who understands;

There is none who seeks after God.

12 They have all turned aside;

They have together become unprofitable;

There is none who does good, no, not one.”

13 “ Their throat is an open tomb;

With their tongues they have practiced deceit”;

“ The poison of asps is under their lips”;

14 “ Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness.”

15 “ Their feet are swift to shed blood;

16 Destruction and misery are in their ways;

17 And the way of peace they have not known.”

18 “ There is no fear of God before their eyes.”

19 Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. 20 Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

21 But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, 22 even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, 26 to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

27 Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith. 28 Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law. 29 Or is He the God of the Jews only? Is He not also the God of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also, 30 since there is one God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith. 31 Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law.

Rom. 3:9-20 We are sick -- the law makes us conscious of our sin -- shows us our sickness.

vs. 21 -- Apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known . . .

vs. 22 -- This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.

What is God looking for? Does He want certain acts of behaviors?

Deut. 10:12 "And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, 13 and to keep the commandments of the LORD and His statutes which I command you today for your good?"

Micah 6:8 He has shown you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD require of you But to do justly, To love mercy, And to walk humbly with your God?

How does God get these things from broken / sick people? Can He command it -- LAW? Can He send us tablets of stone with the rules or conditions listed and solve the problem? Can He force it? How does God get LOVE, DEVOTION, RELATIONSHIP from children who are fearful and selfish?

Tuesday: The Basis of Our Justification

"And be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith" (Phil. 3:9, NKJV).

Read 1st paragraph. "We should not . . ."

Were the Jewish Christians "believers in Jesus"? Did they "all have faith in Him?" What was the real problem with these Jewish Christians? What kind of god did they serve -- what was their god looking for? Love, faithfulness, a mind restored to truth, a healed relationship between them and their God? Or did their god require them to have long lists of behaviors and to be preoccupied with being sure that everything on that list was checked off? If this is the case did they serve an arbitrary, exacting God?

Maybe this is the god they believed in -- but is it the God revealed in the life and death of Jesus?

2nd paragraph "For Paul . . ." What work did Christ accomplish in our behalf? What work did He do through His faithfulness -- the "faithfulness of Jesus"? Was it something accomplished in a legal system -- bookwork, declarations? Or did the faithfulness of Jesus reveal to us the truth about God -- truth that actually brings healing and restoration to our broken relationship with Him -- to our broken condition of selfishness and fear? Does the faithfulness of Jesus SET US RIGHT -- justify us?

What is the relationship of faith to our justification? How would you explain to someone the part faith has to play?

Works of the law verses faithfulness of Jesus? Reflect on the controversy over the character and government of God. Will any effort on our part to keep a list of

rules repair our broken relationship with God? Could the faithfulness of Jesus -- the revelation of Jesus -- God made manifest -- repair our broken relationship? Could God come to us and make Himself known clear up any misunderstandings we have -- reveal that Satan's representation of God is actually a LIE? Could God's love towards us actually beget love in us?

Question in the pink : How is "Christ's faithfulness for us, His perfect obedience to God" the only basis of our salvation? How does that work?

Wednesday: The Obedience of Faith

What is faith? What does it involve?

Read Gen. 15:5,6, John 3:14-16, 2 Cor. 5:14,15, Gal. 5:6

Jesus was lifted up that all who believe in him can have life! The love of Christ compels us! Faith works through love!

Why did Abraham believe God?

Jn. 3:14-16 shows us some concrete reasons to have faith / believe in God.

faith / belief are the same Greek word -- *pisteus*

Rom. 1:16,17 *For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith."*

The gospel -- the good news revealed by Christ, is the power of God to salvation -- because the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith -- "The just shall live by faith."

James 2:19 *You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble!*

What do the demons believe about God -- why are they trembling? Is it important to know who God is --evidence -- so that faith / belief / trust / confidence can be safely placed in our God? If we don't KNOW the true God could we end up believing like the demons do -- could we too tremble? Would that kind of belief rescue our minds from darkness, heal our characters of fear and selfishness?

Read paragraph "A careful examination . . . "

"Distorted ideas about the character of God actually can make it more difficult to have faith."

Is this true? Any words you would choose to replace in this sentence? Would it be more accurate to say that distorted ideas about the character of God make it impossible to have faith -- to trust God?

Will a restored relationship with God, a mind rescued from the lies about God

affect our behavior? Will our faith / trust / belief in God lead us to love Him, to be willing to listen to His counsel, to be will to live our lives for the one who lives for us? Reflect on any love relationship you have experienced on this earth -- did that love affect the way you moved about?

Read James 2:14-24

14 What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? 15 If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, 16 and one of you says to them, "Depart in peace, be warmed and filled," but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? 17 Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. 18 But someone will say, "You have faith, and I have works." Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. 19 You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble! 20 But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead? 21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? 22 Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect? 23 And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." And he was called the friend of God. 24 You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only.

Faith / belief / trust / confidence in the true God, as revealed in Christ will lead to a life spurred on by LOVE -- a desire to follow, listen, cooperate, walk along side of! As we respond to the love of God by our "works" of love our trust in God will be made perfect -- it will grow as we walk together!

Thursday: Does Faith Promote Sin?

Does knowing that the truth about God alone can save your mind lead you to live a lawless life? When you understand the goodness of God and how free you are and that He is not arbitrary, exacting, severe, and vengeful -- does that lead you to be careless about how you live your life? Many believe that the trust / healing model leads those who believe it to be careless about how they live -- is this what you have experienced in you own life?

Why be concerned with how we live?

Does careless / lazy behavior affect our human relationships? Would it affect our relationship with God? Are we free to be careless / lazy / thoughtless / and selfish? Indeed we are that free -- we can walk away without fear that God will "punish" us or do something to hurt us or cause us to suffer. If we choose to be careless in our relationship with God, is it God's fault or are we making ourselves lawless (loveless)?

Gal. 2:17-18 *"But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is Christ therefore a minister of sin? Certainly not! 18 For if I build again those things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor.*

Paul's description of his union with Christ :

Gal. 2:19-21 *For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God. 20 I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which 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 set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain."*

Carla's paraphrase : A day came when I realized through the law just how sick I was. That realization caused me to give up the idea that there was anything that I could do to fix what was wrong with me. When that realization came to me I turned my mind to God. Seeing the life and the death of Christ has led me to understand the goodness and love and wisdom of my God. Everything is now changed -- its a new life! The old me is gone -- now I have an entire new mindset towards my God! Now the life I live day by day I live because of the trust / confidence / faith I have in God, as revealed by His Son -- the one who loved me and gave Himself for me! I'll never again live a life centered in keeping a list of rules and regulations. If my mind could be set right through rules and regulations there would be no need for Christ to have died -- in fact He wouldn't have even needed to live! None of that law - centered life for me. I love because I was first loved! :)

Read question in the pink box.

A list of rules can never set my mind right -- only God made manifest can enlighten my darkened mind and rescue me from fear / selfishness. When I see Him I trust Him because of His trustworthiness -- revealed though an abundance of evidence. I therefore rejoice -- I'm new -- my mind is rescued and the healing begins!

Friday:

Why is it dangerous to entertain false ideas of justification by faith? Why would Satan want to confuse the mind on this point?

Under the summary it says that "it is only by accepting what God has done for us in Christ that the sinner can be justified in His sight."

What are we accepting that leads us to be justified in His sight?

Good Works the Fruit of Faith

Genuine faith will be manifested in good works; for good works are the fruits of faith. As God works in the heart, and man surrenders his will to God, and cooperates with God, he works out in the life what God works in by the Holy Spirit, and there is harmony between the purpose of the heart and the practice of the life. Every sin must be renounced as the hateful thing that crucified the Lord of life and glory, and the believer must have a progressive experience by continually doing the works of Christ. It is by continual surrender of the will, by continual obedience, that the blessing of justification is retained. {1SM 397.1}

Those who are justified by faith must have a heart to keep the way of the Lord. It is an evidence that a man is not justified by faith when his works do not correspond to his profession. James says, "Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was his faith made perfect?" (James 2:22). {1SM 397.2}

The faith that does not produce good works does not justify the soul. "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only" (James 2:24). "Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness" (Romans 4:3). {1SM 397.3}

Imputation of the righteousness of Christ comes through justifying faith, and is the justification for which Paul so earnestly contends. He says: "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God: being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God.... Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law" (Romans 3:20-31). {1SM 397.4}

Grace is unmerited favor, and the believer is justified without any merit of his own, without any claim to offer to God. He is justified through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, who stands in the courts of heaven as the sinner's substitute and surety. But while he is justified because of the merit of Christ, he is not free to work unrighteousness. Faith works by love and purifies the soul. Faith buds and blossoms and bears a harvest of precious fruit. Where faith is, good works appear. The sick are visited, the poor are cared for, the fatherless and the widows are not neglected, the naked are clothed, the destitute are fed. Christ went about doing good, and when men are united with Him, they love the children of God, and meekness and truth guide their footsteps. The expression of the countenance reveals their experience, and men take knowledge of them that they have been with Jesus and learned of Him. Christ and the believer become one, and His beauty of character is revealed in those who are vitally connected with the Source of power and love. Christ is the great depository of justifying righteousness and sanctifying grace. {1SM 398.1}

All may come to Him, and receive of His fullness. He says, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). Then why not cast aside all unbelief and heed the words of Jesus? You want rest; you long for peace. Then say from the heart, "Lord Jesus, I come, because Thou hast given me this invitation." Believe in Him with steadfast faith, and He will save you. Have you been looking unto Jesus, who is the author and finisher of your faith? Have you been beholding Him who is full of truth and grace? Have you accepted the peace which Christ alone can give? If you have not, then yield to Him, and through His grace seek for a character that will be noble and elevated. Seek for a constant, resolute, cheerful spirit. Feed on Christ, who is the bread of life, and you will manifest His loveliness of character and spirit. {1SM 398.2}