

The Gospel in Galatians Lesson 7 4Q 2011

The Road to Faith

What do you think about the title?

What does “faith” mean to you?

- Christianity, a religion, - are you of the faith?
- Conviction, certainty “I have faith”
- Trust in a relationship
- Believing without evidence?

When you hear the word faith what do you hear?

What is the lesson referring to when it speaks of the road to faith?

Would it be referring to the steps or path in our life journey that leads us to a trust relationship with God?

What has led you to your faith, confidence or trust in God?

- Studying the evidence in God’s Word and Science, with application of those principles in life and seeing the results – God’s testable laws in action
- The accuracy of Bible prophecy in knowing the future
- The life of Jesus revealing perfect love
- God’s actions dealing with humanity, revealing one altogether trustworthy
- Change in lives of people who have come to know Jesus
- Answered prayers in my own life
 - Undergraduate school, taking physics – working full time, full load, big brother, giving Bible study to another student...
 - Seminar in Portland Oregon 2009

SABBATH

Read memory text Gal 3:22:

But the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. ESV

This is the ESV translation – what do you think of this verse?

Here is from the NIV, NKJV and GNT:

But the Scripture declares that the whole world is a prisoner of sin, so that what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe. NIV

But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. NKJV

But the scripture says that the whole world is under the power of sin; and so the gift which is promised on the basis of faith in Jesus Christ is given to those who believe. GNT

Thoughts? Are these the same? Do you hear the message the same? It seems the meaning is shifted slightly in these translations – and this is a good example of the problem with translation. The Greek allows for either translation to be equally accurate if one uses only the words, and doesn't think through the larger meaning of Scripture.

This means that one's biases toward the Bible influence how one translates the texts.

Which do you think is the more accurate translation of this text?

Is the world imprisoned by the Scripture? If God never provided the Scripture would humans be less imprisoned?

Or is humanity, all nature for that matter, imprisoned by sin and the Scripture describes accurately this condition?

So here is my paraphrase of this verse:

But Scripture is clear, all humanity is infected with selfishness and is imprisoned by this terminal condition. It is by trust that we experience the only cure, the one promised – Jesus Christ, who was given to mankind as the remedy to this terminal condition.

Thoughts?

The lesson for the day describes how homing pigeons can sometimes become disoriented and get lost. Then states in paragraph three:

“The same is true in the spiritual realm. Even after we accept Christ, we can get lost, or disoriented, even to the point of never returning to the Lord.”

Thoughts?

How can one tell if one is gotten lost? Any methods?

Read last paragraph, “The good news...”

What about the law? Is it helpful as a compass to keep us on track? How might the law be used beneficially? How might the law be used to keep us off track with the Lord?

- When the written law is used to diagnose selfishness in the heart, to point out failure to love God and others, and convict us of our condition and need for healing it is used properly.

- When the law is used as a list of behaviors to which we must adhere, and a measuring stick to compare our behavior to others in order for us to feel good about ourselves and our righteous condition – then it leads us away from Christ.

What could lead someone who has come to know and trust God to get disoriented and off track?

- Trauma to tragedy they struggle to understand
- Having come to know God through a belief system infected with distortion and error – having faith in the system, accepting the errors as truth and then the realities of life shatter their system, thus causing a loss of belief in God.
 - Believe that if you keep all the rules, eat the right foods, go to church on the right day, exercise, pay tithe, avoid premarital sex, don't curse, honor your parents, don't steal etc. that life will turn out okay – and then a death occurs, a divorce, a trauma – shatters the belief – Doesn't God care? I was supposed to be protected?
 - In scripture do miracles happen most often *for* (not through) the strong in faith or for the weak?
 - 10 plagues of Egypt
 - Gideon
 - Elijah
 - Daniel and the three worthies
 - Jesus and the Apostles
 - Who were the miracles for?
- Lies –
- Relationships –

SUNDAY

Read second paragraph, “The people believed...”

What does it mean to be “spiritually” alive or dead?

Have you ever heard that Adam and Eve, when they ate the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, “died spiritually”?

What does that mean?

- Does it mean their “spirit” died?
 - What is the “spirit”?
 - Intelligent apparition that lives outside the body (ghost)?
 - The breath of life received from God?
 - Wind?
 - The intelligent aspect of the human being?
 - Something else?
- Does it mean they were “sentenced to death” in the heavenly courtroom?
- Here’s what Wikipedia says about spiritual death:
 - Spiritual death is related to but distinct from physical death and the second (eternal) death. According to the doctrine of original sin, all people are born with a sinful nature and thereby spiritually dead, being separated from God. Christians believe that because Christ defeated sin and death, those who have faith in him are made spiritually alive. Physical death is the separation of the soul from the body. For the Christian, physical death means the beginning of eternal life in the presence of God but for the unbeliever, eternal death and suffering. Saint Gregory Palamas wrote very eloquently on the subject of spiritual death.

Thoughts?

- Does spiritual death mean the law of love is no longer written in the heart, therefore, we are out of harmony with God’s design for life and are in a terminal state, slowly dying?

Does this quotation have any bearing on the question?

God is the fountain of life, and we can have life only as we are in communion with Him. **Separated from God, existence may be ours for a little time, but we do not possess life.** "She that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth." 1 Timothy 5:6. Only through the surrender of our will to God is it possible for Him to impart life to us. Only by receiving His life through self-surrender is it possible, said Jesus, for these hidden sins, which I have pointed out, to be overcome. It is possible that you may bury them in your hearts and conceal them from human eyes, but how will you stand in God's presence? {MB 61.2}

If you cling to self, refusing to yield your will to God, you are choosing death. To sin, wherever found, God is a consuming fire. If you choose sin, and refuse to separate from it, the presence of God, which consumes sin, must consume you. {MB 62.1}

Thoughts?

Read last paragraph, "His point?..." thoughts

What does this mean? Faithfulness of Christ in our behalf to do what?

MONDAY

The lesson cites Galatians 3:23 "kept under the law" and then gives various possible meanings to this idea or phrase, kept under the law – what do you think this means?

The lesson suggests:

- The law as a means of salvation
- Being under the condemnation of the law

Under number two the lesson points out that the Greek in verse 23 means to guard, to protect.

How does the law guard and protect? It sets a hedge of behavioral guidelines that guards of from self-destruction, acting on the impulses of the selfish nature, while we are on our way to experience Christ and have a new heart created within.

Here is my paraphrase of Galatians 3:21-25:

Gal 3:21 Is the written law, then, somehow in opposition to the promises of God? Of course not! The written law was simply a tool to diagnose our sickness and lead us to God for healing. If the written law could somehow cure the infection of selfishness and promote life, then healing would certainly have followed the giving of the law. 22 But Scripture is clear, all humanity is infected with selfishness and is imprisoned by this terminal condition. It is by trust that we experience the only cure, the one promised – Jesus Christ who was given to mankind as the remedy to this terminal condition.

Gal 3:23 Before Christ came we were quarantined by the written law, restrained from continual self-destruction until Christ procured the only true cure. 24 So then, the written law was provided as a safeguard to protect us and lead us to Christ – the Great Physician so that we might be restored to unity with God by, trust in and partaking of, Christ. 25 Now that trust in God has been restored and we are set right in heart, mind, character and again practice God’s methods, we no longer need the law to diagnose our condition or lead us back to God.

Thoughts?

TUESDAY

Read first paragraph, “Paul gives two...”

Why are these points needed? Why do Christians struggle with the relationship of the law to salvation?

Because Christianity by and large has accepted a change in the way it conceives of God's law, when Imperial Rome influenced the idea of law away from the natural laws God built His universe to run upon, to Imperial law imposed upon subjects to enforce behavioral conformity and measure out punishment.

With this change in the concept of law, God's character and universe became misunderstood, and then the Cross and what Christ accomplished came to mean appeasement of wrath and paying of legal penalty rather than the accomplishment of victory over the infection of selfishness in humanity and the destruction of Satan and sin.

When we understand God's law as the natural law and God's character as love, as Jesus revealed, then we understand the written law was added to provide a diagnostic and protective tool we needed until Christ could come and remedy the situation.

WEDNESDAY

Read third paragraph, "Paul's description..." thoughts?

Does the law have a negative aspect? Or does sin have a negative aspect?

When the MRI points out a tumor does the MRI have a negative aspect?

Does the law condemn or does the law diagnose? Where does the condemnation come from, the law, or the condition of the person being outside the law?

And how you answer this question reveals how much you see God's law as natural or imposed?

If the law is imposed then the condemnation comes from the law. If the law is natural the condemnation comes from the very condition of being out of harmony with the law.

If someone jumps off a tall building, does the law of gravity condemn, or is it their choice to jump that condemns? If they suddenly open a parachute does the law of gravity suddenly pardon? The law of gravity never changes, it is a constant, a principle upon which the universe operates. We either live in harmony or out of harmony with these principles and it is the condition of being out of harmony that condemns.

Now the written law is like writing down in a physics book the law of gravity – writing the equations that describe and define gravity on paper, or stone, do not establish gravity. Neither does writing the 10 commandments on stone establish God's law. God's law is established in the character of God and the very fabric of the universe as God constructed it.

- **The law of God, from its very nature, is unchangeable. It is a revelation of the will and the character of its Author. God is love, and His law is love. Its two great principles are love to God and love to man.** "Love is the fulfilling of the law" (Rom. 13:10). The character of God is righteousness and truth; such is the nature of His law. Says the psalmist: "Thy law is the truth"; "all thy commandments are righteousness" (Ps. 119:142, 172). And the apostle Paul declares: "The law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good" (Rom. 7:12). **Such a law, being an expression of the mind and will of God, must be as enduring as its Author.** {Reflecting Christ 46.5}
- But turning from all lesser representations, we behold God in Jesus. Looking unto Jesus we see that it is the glory of our God to give. "I do nothing of Myself," said Christ; "the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the

Father." "I seek not Mine own glory," but the glory of Him that sent Me. John 8:28; 6:57; 8:50; 7:18. In these words is set forth **the great principle which is the law of life for the universe**. All things Christ received from God, but He took to give. So in the heavenly courts, in His ministry for all created beings: through the beloved Son, the Father's life flows out to all; through the Son it returns, in praise and joyous service, a tide of love, to the great Source of all. **And thus through Christ the circuit of beneficence is complete, representing the character of the great Giver, the law of life.** DA 21

- As the Supreme Ruler of the universe, God has ordained laws for the government not only of all living beings, but of all the operations of nature. Everything, whether great or small, animate or inanimate, is under fixed laws which cannot be disregarded. **There are no exceptions to this rule; for nothing that the divine hand has made has been forgotten by the divine mind.** But while everything in nature is governed by natural law, man alone, as an intelligent being, capable of understanding its requirements, is amenable to moral law. To man alone, the crowning work of his creation, God has given a conscience to realize the sacred claims of the divine law, and **a heart capable of loving it as holy, just, and good**; and of man prompt and perfect obedience is required. Yet God does not compel him to obey; he is left a free moral agent. {ST, April 15, 1886 par. 2}

Thoughts?

THURSDAY

Read second paragraph, "First, we are..." thoughts?

Why are we no longer under the condemnation of the law?

The lesson suggests we read Romans 8:1-3, but lets read through verse 4:

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, ² because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. ³ For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man, ⁴ in order that the **righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us**, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit.

Thoughts? What does it mean? Why are we not condemned?

Because we are now in harmony with it, it is in our hearts and characters! Heb 8:10 the law is written in the heart!

What is do you think of the description in the paragraph “That gives us the liberty of serving Christ wholeheartedly, without fear of being condemned for mistakes we might make in the process”?

Does it tend to sound like our behavior is the problem? Is it? Which is the problem, the behavior or the heart motive? Where does sin occur, in the behavior or the motive of the heart?

If the heart is purified what happens to the behavior? If the heart is impure, can the behavior still appear pure?

Do we ever focus too much on mistakes? Where do mistakes fit in?

When we get a new heart do we immediately get a changed brain? Do all our old habits, reflexes, conditioned responses immediately get over written?

So, with conversion and a new motive of love for God and man in the heart, can we still find ourselves making mistakes?

What is the difference then? Now we grieve the mistakes and long to be changed and actively choose to work toward overcoming because we don't want to be like this.

Read third paragraph, "As a result..." thoughts?

How do you understand this idea of being forgiven changing our relationship to the law?

If Jeffery Dalmer gets pardoned, forgiven, by the president, his relationship to the law is changed, it can no longer hold him. But do you want him as your neighbor – no!

This analogy points out again the problem with how Imperial Rome changed Christianity's concept of law.

The president, the government, can forgive a person, and the penalty of the law can be waived – but that can only happen when we think imposed law.

A person who smokes and gets lung cancer, can have the doctor forgive them, but that doesn't change the laws of health or their relationship to the laws of health.

When we realize God's law is the law upon which life is built, and sin is a problem of our hearts and minds being out of harmony with that law, then we recognize legal pardon is not what is needed. What is needed is what God has provided, a remedy, thus we can receive a new heart and right spirit!

FRIDAY

Read and discuss questions 1 & 2