

The Gospel in Galatians Lesson 14 4Q 2011

Boasting in the Cross

FRIDAY

Read top section, “The cross of Calvary...” thoughts?

Let’s take it sentence by sentence,

“The cross of Calvary challenges, and will finally vanquish every earthly and hellish power.”

Do you typically think of the cross vanquishing earthly and hellish powers? Isn’t it generally presented that God’s might, and power, and fire from heaven will one day put down rebellion and vanquish the enemy?

But, this Christian writer claims it will be the cross which puts down “every” earthly and hellish power. How many is “every?”

What are earthly and hellish powers?

- Lies
- Selfishness

Can these be put down by might and power?

Can we defeat a lie by threatening people with punishment if they don’t change their belief? What would happen if we threatened to kill people who believe differently than us? What happened in the Dark Ages? Did such tactics bring light or more lies, confusion, and selfishness?

Can you get someone to love you by the use of force, coercion and threats?

Do you see why Satan rejoices when Christians teach God, in order to be just, must use His power to punish and kill? Satan

knows that such methods cannot eliminate his power, but in fact, when Christians present such concepts the enhance Satan's power.

Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the LORD Almighty. Zech 4:6

The Spirit is the Spirit of truth and love, it is only by presenting truth in love that lies can be destroyed and selfishness vanquished!

What Biblical support do we have that the cross will vanquish these powers?

Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that **by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil**—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. Heb 2:14,15

Satan's has the power of death? What is that power? And how did Christ's death destroy him and his power?

Life eternal is knowing God, John 17:3, therefore, eternal death is not knowing God, so Satan's power is the lies he tells about God that we believe that prevent us from knowing Him.

Here is an interesting comment, what do you think it means in light of Christ's death destroying Satan and his power?

Satan saw that his disguise was torn away. His administration was laid open before the unfallen angels and before the heavenly universe. He had revealed himself as a murderer. By shedding the blood of the Son of God, **he had uprooted himself from the sympathies of the heavenly beings. Henceforth his work was restricted.** Whatever attitude he might assume, **he could no longer await the angels as they came from the heavenly courts, and before them accuse Christ's**

brethren of being clothed with the garments of blackness and the defilement of sin. The last link of sympathy between Satan and the heavenly world was broken. {DA 761.2}

What does this mean? Why was Satan's activities restricted? Did God, after the death of Christ, put a force field in place and by use of divine might and power restrict Satan?

Or, having revealed the truth to unfallen angels, having exposed Satan for what he is, all intelligent beings in heaven, saw Satan clearly as a liar and a fraud, and they freely chose never to listen to anything he has to say again? Thus his power to deceive and spread lies was restricted by the truth closing minds to his deceit?

The Bible also tells us Christ's death vanquished death:

This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, **who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.** 2Tim 1:9,10

How did Christ destroy death? What is the cause of death? Being out of harmony with the law of love, the law upon which life was built – "sin when full grown brings forth death." James 1:15.

Christ destroyed the infection of selfishness in humanity by overcoming, in His human brain, every temptation to act in self interest and perfectly loving even to the laying down of His own life.

Whoever tries to keep his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it. Luke 17:33 NIV.

The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul. Ps 19:7

Jesus restored into mankind the law of love, and in so doing rose again in a perfected humanity.

Notice the quote above states, “This sacrifice was offered for the **purpose** of restoring man to his original perfection.”

Here is a fascinating quote from one of the founders of our church:

Sin had become a science, and vice was consecrated as a part of religion. Rebellion had struck its roots deep into the heart, and the hostility of man was most violent against heaven. **It was demonstrated before the universe that, apart from God, humanity could not be uplifted. A new element of life and power must be imparted by Him who made the world.** {DA 37.1}

With intense interest the unfallen worlds had watched to see Jehovah arise, and sweep away the inhabitants of the earth. And if God should do this, Satan was ready to carry out his plan for securing to himself the allegiance of heavenly beings. **He had declared that the principles of God's government make forgiveness impossible.** Had the world been destroyed, he would have claimed that his accusations were proved true. **He was ready to cast blame upon God,** and to spread his rebellion to the worlds above. **But instead of destroying the world, God sent His Son to save it.** DA 37.2

Christ did not die to pay some legal penalty to appease the wrath and anger of an offended god. He died to destroy the devil, destroy death, and restore man by destroying the devil's work:

The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work. 1John 3:8

One of the founders of our church describes it this way:

Man was the crowning act of the creation of God, made in the image of God, and designed to be a counterpart of God; but **Satan has labored to obliterate the image of God in man, and to imprint upon him his own image.** {LHU 48.2}

Satan was exulting that he had succeeded in debasing the image of God in humanity. Then Jesus came to restore in man the image of his Maker. None but Christ can **fashion anew the character** that has been ruined by sin. He came to expel the demons that had controlled the will. He came to lift us up from the dust, **to reshape the marred character after the pattern of His divine character**, and to make it beautiful with His own glory. {DA 37.3}

How did Christ destroy Satan's work? By restoring God's image in mankind in His own victorious life on earth!

Next sentence from the lesson, "Yea, more, it was offered to give him an entire transformation of character, making him more than a conqueror."

What does this mean?

What does God's law require? Does it require a death penalty? No! It requires perfect harmony with its principles? Why? Because that is how life is constructed to exist.

So Christ,

once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him. Heb 5:9

Could it mean exactly what we read, that Christ came to perfect humanity and after so doing, he became the source of a new humanity to which we can, by trusting Him, experience reproduced in us by the Holy Spirit?

What do you think about the next sentence, “Those who in the strength of Christ overcome the great enemy of God and man, will occupy a position in the heavenly courts above angels who have never fallen.”?

Why? Could these mean we will have greater appreciation, from experience of God’s love, greater appreciation of the devastation caused by violations of God’s law of love, and eagerly join Christ in His ministry to the universe? Could we find ourselves eternal ministers, priests of God, sharing our experience, and the truth of God’s character with intelligent beings throughout the universe? Could our story, which glorifies God, elevate us to a position in God’s kingdom, because the truth about God transforms, develops and enhances the individual and we will have the privilege of sharing such truth with others?

What do you think of, “Christ on the cross was the medium whereby mercy and truth met together, and righteousness and peace kissed each other. This is the means that is to move the world.”?

Ps 85:10 states:

Love and faithfulness meet together; righteousness and
peace kiss each other.

What does it mean – mercy and truth met together? What is mercy? What is the truth?

The truth is that our condition is terminal, sinfulness - being out of harmony with God’s design is incompatible with life. But, in Christ our sinful state was mercifully healed. God is righteous and always does what is right, and the right thing the thing the law of God requires, is perfect harmony with it, as life was built to operate only upon this design protocol. Therefore, God’s rightness, God’s perfect law of love, was in Christ and brought peace, harmony, reconciliation of sinful man with God, by healing mankind back to God’s design!

Now that we have been put right with God through faith,
we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.
Romans 5:1

WEDNESDAY

Read first paragraph, “Having emphasized...” thoughts

What is justification? What does it mean to be justified?

Does the lesson give a clue in the next paragraph when it states, “True religion is not rooted in external behavior but in the condition of the human heart.”?

Would justification require a change in the heart?

What does justification mean? To set right, to put right, to make right – when you justify the margins on your word document, what are you doing?

Since Adam sinned, what is wrong that needs to be set right?

- Is it God?
- Is it God’s law?
- Is it man’s legal record book in heaven than needs adjusting?
- Or is it the actual condition of mankind?

Then, would justification not simply be, doing whatever is necessary to put mankind back in a right standing, condition, with God and His universe?

So, what did sin do to mankind? It changed the heart from love, to fear and selfishness, survival of the fittest and what would need to happen to set man right?

The nature of mankind would need to be restored back to God’s original design, just like the passage above says, or the Bible say:

He condemned sin **in human nature** by sending his own Son, **who came with a nature like sinful human nature, to do away with sin.** Romans 8:3 GNT.

God made him who had no sin **to be sin** for us, **so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.** 2Cor 5:21 NIV.

Read third paragraph, “*Ktisis* is the Greek...” thoughts?

This is well said, and exactly what justification is, and the next paragraph states correctly, “Paul explains that becoming a new creation means far more than just a change in our status in the books of heaven; it brings about a change in our lives today.”

Read the last paragraph, “Becoming a new creature...” thoughts?

What do you think they mean? Was this confusing for you?

But because many people still struggle with distortions of God’s law and inappropriately infer or insert human legal constructs into their theology, they describe things in ways that can often sound confusing.

It all goes back to how one understands God’s law.

If we understand God’s law as an expression of his character, the natural law of love life is built upon, then we understand justification is the actual change in man’s nature, first achieved by Christ thus “justifying the species” or putting humanity right with God again and procuring the remedy to sin. And secondarily, on an individual level, justification is when the heart changes from enmity with God to trust in God, as Paul describes of Abraham.

So, rightly understood, what the last sentence means is this-being healthy is not what makes us healthy, this radical change from a terminal condition to health, is the unmistakable result of taking the remedy procured by Christ.

But, when you accept Imperial Rome's version of God's law, as an imposed law put upon God's creatures to control their behavior, then justification takes on a legal aspect of paying penalties, obtaining legal pardon and appeasing God, all of which stem from paganism.

MONDAY

First paragraph describes Paul's description of those who opposed him as being superficial, wearing a mask, acting righteous in order to get approval and win adherents to their side.

Read second paragraph, "Paul makes an important..." thoughts?

Paul is saying that people can be harassed, excluded, expelled, shunned, labeled, isolated, blackballed by the church and in order to avoid this his opponents would put on an act in order to get approval from the religious authorities.

Consider this dynamic for a minute, do we ever struggle today, with organizations that use such methods as condemnation, exclusion, and harassment?

What does it reveal when such methods are used? Why would the Jews in Paul's day need to resort to such methods in dealing with Paul and others who disagreed with them?

Because they didn't possess the truth and when a position or construct is built on falsehood, misunderstanding, or error, then truth will destroy it. So if you want to hold to the false construct, and someone else presents the truth, then in order

to keep the false construct, one must devalue and expel the ones bringing truth.

What would it say if we find these methods happening today? If you belong to an organization which is using such methods, then let it be a red flag that whoever is practicing such methods is afraid and insecure and doesn't know how to counter a message being brought by another.

One of the founders of our church stated,

There is no excuse for anyone in taking the position that there is no more truth to be revealed, and that **all our expositions of Scripture are without an error**. The fact that certain doctrines have been held as truth for many years by our people, **is not a proof that our ideas are infallible**. Age will not make error into truth, and **truth can afford to be fair. No true doctrine will lose anything by close investigation.** {CW 35.2}

I love this quote, consider the implications. This is not a position in which one is afraid to change an opinion or idea. EGW did not believe our church had a corner on truth and allowed for the possibility that things taught during her life were not yet fully developed, understood or even correct. How many in the church today can take such a position? How many are afraid to acknowledge a certain doctrine was incorrect? Why?

The last paragraph describes how certain religious practices provided political advantage. How much of religion is used for political means?

Has the Christian church been derailed from its mission of taking the gospel to the world and instead is wasting its energy on human politics, getting the right politicians, judges and laws passed?

Did Christ or the apostles spend any time trying to influence the politics of their world? Was their earthly government a better government that respected human rights more than ours? Why didn't they focus on this?

Are we as Christians misguided to focus the churches' energy on politics?

What would Paul say?

See memory verse top of TUESDAY

“But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.” (Gal 6:14)

What do you understand this to mean?

Would it mean:

- We our in the world but not of it?
- Our citizenship is in heaven?
- Our priorities and loyalties are not earthly, but heavenly?

In practical terms what does this mean?

Are these just platitudes or do we live like its true?

One of my office staff, Francesca, has taken a job in Japan to teach English. While she is in Japan she will, no doubt, observe all the laws of Japan, be courteous and polite regarding their customs and culture, yet do you think she we feel, act, and think like she is Japanese? Or will her heart still be American?

While we are in the world, where is our heart? Are we loyal to America or to God? Are the goals of America and God always aligned?

We are entering another presidential campaign, do you think politicians will attempt to use religion? What should our attitude be?

Read last paragraph, “The cross of Christ...” thoughts?

Do you think Paul’s day was more evil than ours? Does our world stand in opposition to God? Can you give examples of common practices in the world which are in opposition to God and/or His design for His universe?

- War
- Capitalism
- Communism
- Evolutionism
- Terrorism
- Crime of all kinds
- Governmental attempts to control beliefs/conscience
- Non-marriage based family lifestyles
- Normalization and even promotion of tobacco, alcohol, drugs

Can you think of common practices in the church which are in opposition to God and/or His design for His universe?

- Authoritarian hierarchy
- Actions which punish free thinking
- Teaching God imposes law and punishes disobedience
- Teaching God kills, (i.e. God took your father to be with Him)

How can we free ourselves from the influence of everything that is opposed to God and His design for life?

When the Bible talks about dying to the world, or dying with Christ, what does this mean in practical terms?

Might it mean that our hearts disconnect from worldly attachments, we let go of our longing, and hold to practices, organizations, items (money, cars, houses, collections), and people, that are undermining our fitness for God's cause?