



The Book of Romans Lesson 5 4Q 2017 The Faith of Abraham -- Jennings

Last week I spoke at a conference on the Atonement. There were several other speakers there, none of whom advocated for penal substitution. Two of the speakers felt that penal substitution was a metaphor that held value and should be kept in our tent, but all felt it was not the most accurate or helpful understanding.

Jean Sheldon presented incredible historical evidence that the imposed law versus design law conflict goes all the way back to Babylon, and is at the root of the distortions about God.

One speaker presented ideas I had not heard before and which helped me understand new avenues of danger when one separates the three threads of evidence. Science alone risks leading to godlessness, Scripture alone risks confusion (34,000 different Christian groups) and Experience alone not only leads to mysticism, but also risks social justice gospels in which people's experiences are put central and the Cross of Christ is removed. In fact in some of these social justice gospels it is argued that the death of Christ was an interruption to God's plan of salvation and was not necessary for our salvation. Very interesting and important that we are aware of this, because they use the righteous truth of equality in all humans as the avenue to remove the cross... be aware.

SABBATH

Read memory text: "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law." Rom 3:31 KJV

What law? Do you hear rules or design law?

What is faith? Trust, confidence, belief? When you understand how God's design laws function does your trust and confidence, belief, faith in God increase or decrease?

How do we establish the law by faith?

The newer translations say we "uphold" the law—how do we uphold the law by faith?

When we understand design law, and we are won to trust then we, in our beliefs, our testimony, our comprehension, our choices and our longings hold to, value, identify with, align ourselves with, side with God's law, thus our lives become living vehicles through which God's law is lived out. We demonstrate, sustain, uphold or reveal that only in harmony with God's design law is their life, health and happiness.

Read third paragraph, "In Romans 4 Paul..." Is this an accurate description of what Paul is teaching?



This is the view one gets when one replaces the truth of God's design law with the lie that God's law functions like imposed human law. So let's clarify it.

1. Does God promise grace? Yes
2. Does there need to be a human response to God's grace by having faith—which is what? Trust? Do we need to have this response? Yes
3. When we trust God does that result in a legal action in which God declares us to be righteous when we are not? No! This is the lie—this belief is based on the lie that God's law is like ours and thus needs a legal pronouncement, which God declares us righteous when in reality we are not. So it teaches God promotes a legal fraud, or fiction, or a lie. So, now we have a god who lies. Further, it teaches Christians that there is no transformation, there is legal declaration—so Christians have a form of godliness with no power.
4. The lesson states this is how it worked with Abraham—is it? No!

What is the problem sin caused the plan of salvation is designed to fix?

- When Adam sinned did God get changed?
- Did God's law get changed?
- Did the condition of humankind get changed?
- What changed in humankind? Love and trust were replaced with distrust, fear and selfishness.

So, in order to restore humankind to unity with God, i.e. save the species, does something need to happen to God? To God's law? No! Something needs to change in the condition of human beings. So notice what the Bible actually says about Abraham:

What shall we say, then, of Abraham, the father of our race? What was his experience? ²If he was put right [**which is what? Justified**] with God by the things he did, he would have something to boast about—but not in God's sight. The scripture says, "Abraham believed God, and because of his faith God accepted him as righteous." Romans 4:1-2, GNB

What is the natural state of the human heart? Enmity (Rom 8:7), which is distrust of God!

But Abraham now trusted God, or was no longer hostile or distrustful of God; he was no longer against God in his heart—thus Abraham experienced a change in his heart attitude toward God and AFTER this heart change then God recognized him as being right with God, AKA righteous—i.e. justified, i.e. set right, because his heart had changed from distrust to trust. This is true righteousness or justification—there is nothing legal involved.

Read fourth paragraph, "It is crucial to remember..." When you hear the word "salvation," what do you hear? Do you instantly hear "healing"? Or do you hear saving from punishment? And if you have the salvation from punishment idea, from where does the punishment come? Then, in that model from who are you being saved? This is the problem with the penal view it has us setting up beliefs in which



we need to be saved from God. It causes a double bind that incites fear and ultimately keeps people separated from God.

What do you make of the undeserving language, if we deserved it we would be owed it and it would be a debt owed us and not a gift.

What law lens do you see this through? This is imposed law language, rights, ownership, indebtedness, earning.

What about design law lens? Does this Romans 13:8 have any bearing on the question?

Let no debt remain outstanding, except the **continuing debt to love one another**, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law. Rom 13:8

When Adam sinned, did God love Adam less? Did God's love long for Adam, wanting to save Adam and all humans? Do we deserve this love? Did God love Adam in Eden before sin—did Adam deserve God's love then? Does sinless Gabriel deserve God's love? Do sinless beings "earn" God's love?

This description of undeserving instills a false idea—that we are undeserving because we are sinners, but if we were not sinners then we would deserve it. Hmm... think that through in your love for your children...

So, with this in mind, do we earn the Remedy to our sin condition or is it a complete gift from God and we can never procure it? It is a free gift, that we do not earn, it is totally from God's love for us. And that love flows from God because God is love, not because we are good.

SUNDAY

Read first paragraph, "In this passage, [Rom 3:31]..." What does it mean faith does not make void the law of God?

What law lens are we thinking through?

If you have faith or trust in your doctor, who has a remedy for your otherwise terminal condition, does your faith in your doctor and his remedy make void the laws of health?

If a person was born HIV positive does their obeying the laws of health remedy their condition? No, obeying God's law does not remedy our condition, accepting the Remedy that Jesus procured doesn't do away with the laws upon which life is built.

When we come back to design law all this tension fades away, because the tension between faith and law only exists when we believe in the false imposed law.



Second paragraph asks, “What, for instance, was the entire sanctuary ritual if not a representation of how sinners are saved—not by their own works but by the death of a substitute in their stead?”

Do we believe that Jesus is our substitute and that His life and death and resurrection were a REQUIREMENT for the salvation of humankind? ABSOLUTELY YES!

We believe in Substationary Atonement—but we deny PENAL substitution. IN other words, Christ’s substitution was not for penal, legal, appeasement, payment to God purposes! It was for fixing what sin did to God’s creation!

“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

The last paragraph states, “Paul sets forth David’s restoration to divine favor as an example of justification by faith.”

Read Romans 4:6-8:

This is what David meant when he spoke of the happiness of the person whom God accepts as righteous, apart from anything that person does:

“Happy are those whose wrongs are forgiven,
whose sins are pardoned!

Happy is the person whose sins the Lord
will not keep account of!” GNB

So, what do you hear? Those who come to Scripture with the belief that God’s law functions like human law read in legal language, however, is that what is truly being described.

From *The Remedy*:

David says the exact same thing when he describes the blessedness of the person to whom God bestows his perfect cure without them working to earn it:

⁷“Happy are they whose wicked minds are restored to perfect purity, whose selfishness is eradicated.

⁸“Happy is the person whose infected heart the Lord transforms to perfection.”

Think about it—which brings more happiness—to have an historical or legal record of evil and sin erased, or to have evil and sin removed from the character, mind and heart?

I explore the 51st Psalm in *The God-Shaped Heart*:



¹Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions.

From where do you think David wants his sin blotted out—recorded history or his heart, mind, and character?

²Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.

He realizes something is wrong within his heart that needs purifying.

³For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me.

⁴Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are proved right when you speak and justified when you judge.

He acknowledges his condition is terminal and that he cannot run from it; no matter where he goes he carries his sinful self there. God's diagnosis of his terminal condition is perfectly accurate.

⁵Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.

He realizes this problem has been within him his entire life. He was born this way, infected with fear and selfishness.

⁶Surely you desire truth in the inner parts; you teach me wisdom in the inmost place.

He understands that what God wants is to heal what is broken in his heart and mind.

⁷Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.

He acknowledges that only God has the healing solution. Only the Creator can re-create him back to God's original intent.

Notice, that this justification of David is all about healing the inner workings of David's heart.

MONDAY

Read first two paragraphs, "The issue..."

"If one believes that he or she must earn acceptance—that he or she must earn a certain standard of holiness..."

Do you mean like, after I accept Jesus I must quit smoking, overcome my addiction, quit my Sabbath job, stop wearing jewelry etc. before I can be baptized? I must reach a certain standard of holiness before I can become a Christian?



Do we say on the one hand that it is all by grace through faith and we must merely accept the free gift from Jesus, but on the other hand, does the church in practice require sinners to reach a certain standard before they accept them into baptism and membership?

This entire concern evaporates when we come back to understand God's law correctly. If you had HIV infection, or metastatic cancer, would you think: "well if I keep the Sabbath, or eat right, or exercise regularly," or any other work, that by working hard you could cure yourself?

You would immediately accept you have a condition for which you cannot remedy.

The problem occurs when we accept the lie that God's law is like ours and sin is breaking rules that require payment, then sometimes people try to be good so they won't be in trouble with the one in charge.

The lesson states justification is a gift from God—what do you understand justification to be?

Some have been confused about what we teach in here, because I am teaching about setting our hearts and minds right, winning us back to trust and restoring us to Christlikeness, thus some accuse me of making our trust the justifying element. NOT SO!

This is my understanding, point-by-point, see if you agree and if not, where to we diverge?

- Adam & Eve were created perfect and sinless
- They were free moral agents who had the ability in themselves to develop a perfect character by exercising their sinless abilities to choose to be loyal and live in harmony with God and His design
- They instead chose to believe lies, and formed defective characters infecting humanity with fear and selfishness
- Sin did not change God or God's law, but changed the condition of humankind
- Only God could fix what Adam did to humankind—no person born of natural human ability could fix what Adam did to the human species
- Jesus partook of our humanity in order to fix what sin did to His creation
- The species human was set right, fixed, put right, made righteous, also known as justified in the singular person of Jesus Christ
- Christ in His victory becomes the new head of humanity, the second Adam who eradicated the infection of fear and selfishness and restored God's law of love perfectly, developing a perfect human character
- Christ's victory procured the Remedy which is freely available to all individual humans who will accept it
- We as individuals are set right, or justified, when we in heart are won from distrust to trust and fully open our heart to God.



- Then, like Abraham, when we trust God, God recognizes that we are now in a right relationship with Him and pours His Spirit into our hearts and minds taking the perfect character of Christ and reproducing it in us.

Where do we diverge?

Read fourth paragraph, “The sinner must come...” What does this mean?

When I was in California, one theologian asked about the imputed righteousness of Christ, suggesting that the imputed righteousness a legal application to our accounts whereas imparted is what happens in us. He was suggesting my approach denies the legal, elements, which are called imputed righteousness, whereas the healing transformational within us is the imparted righteousness.

Have you heard this before? Let me state this plainly, this so-called difference in imputed and imparted is a difference created by theologians, who see the world through the false imposed law lens. This difference is not real, the reality is that imputed and imparted have the same function, outcome. Two different ways to describe the same process, but perhaps from two different vantage points. Imparted focusing on the recipient, imputed focusing on the attitude of the giver, but both describing something happening in the heart, mind, character of the sinner. Listen to how EGW used imputed:

"But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. 3:18). Beholding Christ means studying His life as given in His Word. We are to dig for truth as for hidden treasure. We are to fix our eyes upon Christ. When we take Him as our personal Saviour, this gives us boldness to approach the throne of grace. **By beholding we become changed, morally assimilated to the One who is perfect in character. By receiving His imputed righteousness, through the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, we become like Him.** The image of Christ is cherished, and it captivates the whole being. {AG 96.4}

Abundant grace has been provided that the believing soul may be kept free from sin; for all heaven, with its limitless resources, has been placed at our command. We are to draw from the well of salvation. . . . In ourselves we are sinners; but in Christ we are righteous. **Having made us righteous through the imputed righteousness of Christ, God pronounces us just, and treats us as just.** He looks upon us as His dear children. Christ works against the power of sin, and where sin abounded, grace much more abounds. {AG 181.4}

We aim too low. The mark is much higher. Our minds need expansion, that we may comprehend the significance of the provision of God. We are to reflect the highest attributes of the character of God. . . . **The law of God is the exalted standard to which we are to attain through the imputed righteousness of Christ.** {OHC 364.2}



He would have us comprehend something of His love in giving His Son to die that He might counteract evil, **remove the defiling stains of sin from the workmanship of God, and reinstate the lost, elevating and ennobling the soul to its original purity through Christ's imputed righteousness.** TMK 206

So what is being affected by the imputed righteousness of Christ? The sinner is being affected. What about the records in heaven? Are they being affected by the imputed righteousness of Christ?

What is recorded in the records?

Remember, **your character is being daguerreotyped [photographed] by the great Master Artist in the record books of heaven, as minutely as the face is reproduced upon the polished plate of the artist.** What do the books of heaven say in your case? Are you conforming your character to the Pattern, Jesus Christ? Are you washing your robes of character and making them white in the blood of the Lamb? "Behold, I come quickly; and My reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be" [Revelation 22:12]... {TSB 62.1}

So, when we open the heart in trust, the Holy Spirit takes what Christ achieved, His perfect character and reproduces it in us. This is imputing the righteousness of Christ to us, which transforms our character which is recorded in the record books of heaven!

TUESDAY

The lesson focuses on Romans 4:14-17:

⁴ For if those who live by law are heirs, faith has no value and the promise is worthless, ¹⁵ because law brings wrath. And where there is no law there is no transgression.

¹⁶ Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring—not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all. ¹⁷ As it is written: "I have made you a father of many nations." He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed—the God who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were. NIV

What does this mean?

What is Paul saying about law keeping? What cannot come by law keeping? Righteousness, which is being set right, which is healing or recreation into Christlikeness.

Why not?



From *The Remedy*:

For if it were possible to develop perfect motives, methods and principles by performing rituals or following a certain code, then there would be no need to trust God for his healing power in our lives, and his promised inheritance would be meaningless.¹⁵ The written law or code simply exposes the extent of our sickness of mind and heart which, if not cured, results in death. If it weren't for the written law, we wouldn't even know how sick we are, for without some standard of health to measure by, no defect could be diagnosed.

¹⁶Therefore the restoration to a perfect state of being and the inheritance of eternal life on a renewed earth come by trusting the One who made the promise to do it. This transformation is accomplished by God's graciousness and is guaranteed to all the children of Abraham—not only his genetic descendants who were given the written diagnostic code, but also to his spiritual descendants, who—just like him—trust God. Abraham is the father of all who trust God.¹⁷ As it is written: "I have made you the father of many different ethnic groups." The God in whom Abraham trusted—the Creator God who is the source of all life and who calls things into existence from nothingness—considers all of us who trust him to be descendants of Abraham.

What are the implications for us today? What about the genetic descendants of Abraham today—do they have some other avenue to salvation than Jesus?

What about the promises made to Abraham and his descendants—are those promises to the genetic descendants or to all those who become like Abraham in character—which is only experienced through accepting Jesus?

WEDNESDAY

Read first paragraph, "As we saw yesterday..." What was the promise?

Jesus is the promise! But what did the promise of Jesus accomplish? How would you describe it?

Simon asked of the panel in California last week, if a person who doesn't believe in Christ asks you "What did Jesus' death do for me? What would you say?"

How about this for a simple answer: Jesus came so that we might be freed from fear and selfishness and live in love being at peace with God and each other.

THURSDAY

Read first paragraph, "We often hear..." Why do people say this? Because they think the law of God functions like human law, and they think the old covenant was a covenant of the people keeping rules—which they failed to keep perfectly. So they are told that the new covenant is Christ, as our substitute, kept the rules perfectly for us, received our legal punishment for all sins ever committed,



we are legally accounted as perfectly keeping the rules. Therefore, we don't have to worry about the law or rules any more—because we could never keep them anyway.

But design law resolves all this. We are dead in trespass and sin (terminal) and Christ came and cured this terminal condition and offers us His remedy for free. This free remedy heals us but doesn't change the laws of health, including the moral laws of spiritual health.

Read fourth paragraph, “In the New Testament...” What is true in this paragraph and what is not true?

- Does both the law and gospel appear in the New Testament? Yes
- Does the law show what sin is? Yes
- Does the gospel point to the remedy for sin? Yes
- Is the death and resurrection the remedy for sin? Yes, but I would include Jesus' life before the death also.
- If there is no law there is no sin—true? Yes, but what does it mean? If there are no legal rules there are no legal violations, i.e. crimes, and thus no legal way to warrant punishment? Or, if there are no laws of health then one cannot violate the laws of health? If there is no gravity one cannot jump off a building and be hurt. If there is no law of respiration what cannot drown.
- Only the context of law does the gospel make sense. Does the type of law determine if the it makes sense or if our teachings become nonsense? If we are talking design law things make sense, but the moment we substitute God's design law for human imposed law then all kinds of nonsense emerge.
 - For instance, if we accept the imposed law view, then sin is breaking a rule for which we are in legal trouble. We are on death row, and are in debt to God and His law. Now, notice the non-sense this leads to:
 - The Bible says God forgives us our debts as we forgive our debtors
 - If you owed someone a debt of \$10,000 and couldn't pay it, but your brother comes along and pays off the debt for your. Does the person who you owed the money to then turn to you and say: “Now that I have been paid in full, I forgive you your debt”? Can you forgive a debt that has been paid?
 - Or, God is just and therefore God uses His power to kill the innocent so that the guilty can go free.

The false law model causes all kinds of nonsense.

However, design law brings beautiful clarity.

Read last paragraph, “We often...” What is the problem with this paragraph? Again they are arguing from a false law model, and suggest the problem is inflicted punishment.

But design law makes it clear—God could not get rid of His design laws and have the universe still exist. As Jesus said in Matthew 5:18



Here is the simple truth: Heaven and earth would disappear if even the slightest change were made to God's design protocol for life—what you call his Law. I am not here to destroy the Law, but to accomplish everything it requires. *The Remedy*

Many Christians, who have the imposed law construct believe the law was done away with at the Cross because of texts like Col 2:13,14:

When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, ¹⁴ having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross. NIV

But here is from *The Remedy*:

When your condition was terminal, when selfishness reigned unchecked in your minds, and when your hearts were tied to the destructive cravings and practices of the world, God intervened and brought you the life-giving Remedy—Jesus Christ. He reclaimed you from your terminal condition, ¹⁴ nullifying the pathology report that certified you as dead in sin; he made it clear that the written code, with its regulations, was only a diagnostic instrument designed to expose our terminal state and teach us the need for a true cure, and he nailed it to the cross. *The Remedy*

FRIDAY

Read question 3

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

October 27, 28, 2017: Dr. Jennings will speaking at the Arlington SDA church in Arlington, TX. For more information contact: <http://www.arlingtonadventist.com/>

November 17,18, 2017: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the Vallejo Dr. SDA church in California.

January 19,20, 2018: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the Tacoma Central SDA Church, Tacoma, Washington.