

Central Study Hour – Sabbath School Lesson Notes

“The Gospel in Galatians”: Lesson 4, “Justification by Faith Alone”

SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read the title. *What does the illustration say to you?* Jesus’ sacrifice breaks the chains and bonds of sin. This is an important theme in Paul’s view of salvation.

Read/share highlights of the first paragraph.

Comment: This also implied that Jewish Christians were already saved, but Gentiles had to prove themselves in order to be saved.

Paul will go on to explain how righteousness really comes to a person-what this lesson is about.

Share highlights from the second and third paragraph.

SUNDAY: THE QUESTION OF “JUSTIFICATION”

Read Gal. 2:15 and the question (at the top). Being born a Jew had privileges and advantages of which the Gentiles clearly missed out. *Why is Paul pointing this out?* Read the first paragraph of the narrative down to Eph. 2:12. **Read Eph. 2:12.** Share Paul’s point in the rest of this first paragraph.

Paul uses the word *justified* four times in Gal. 2:16-17. **Read Gal. 2:16-17.** *What does Paul mean by “justification”?* **Read Duet. 25:1.** The point here is that justification was originally used in the Old Testament as “a legal term. It deals with the verdict a judge pronounces when a person is declared innocent of the charges brought against him or her. It is the opposite of condemnation....Thus, justification involves more than simply pardon or forgiveness; it is the positive declaration that a person is righteous.”

MONDAY: WORKS OF THE LAW

Paul says three times in Gal. 2:16 that a person is not justified by “**the works of the law.**” *What does Paul mean by the expression “the works of the law”?* We can for sure see that works of the law are used by Paul in contrast with faith; they seem to be in opposition. But first, *what does Paul mean by “law”?* The Hebrew word is “**Torah**” meaning the books of Moses, the Pentateuch. “The primary way Paul uses it is to refer to the entire collection of God’s commandments given to His people through Moses.” So, the law includes all the sanctuary ceremonies and feast days, circumcision, moral and heath standards, cleansing and purification practices, and the Ten Commandments, as well as the covenant promises. “The phrase ‘**the works of the law**’ likely involves, therefore, all the requirements found in commandments [instructions] given by God through Moses, whether moral or ceremonial.”

So, the big question is; *which aspect of the law was at the center of conflict in the New Testament church?* Circumcision was the main point of contention (not keeping the Sabbath or obedience to the Ten Commandments).

Important background regarding circumcision (from the past lesson for July 10):

Circumcision was originally given as a sign that one accepted the covenant with God. However, Moses, Jeremiah, and Paul taught that “outward circumcision was to be a symbol of

circumcision of the heart (Deut. 10:16, 30:6, Jer. 4:4, Rom. 2:29).” It was meant to indicate the new heart of a deeply spiritual (converted) person. “During Paul’s time, however, circumcision had become a prized sign of national and religious identity – not what it originally was intended to signify.” Therefore, Jewish legalism was actually thinking one was already saved because one had the badge of distinction. Note: This is different from what people call legalism today. They weren’t trying to earn salvation by obeying the law, but felt already entitled to it since birth. However, the Gentile was expected to earn it by compliance with the law of circumcision. The type of legalism being imposed on the Gentiles is still different, but closer to what various Christian people understand legalism to be today. (Today they focus on Sabbath-keeping and the Ten Commandments which we are actually supposed to follow, unlike circumcision which they didn’t have to do at all. What could make them the same is if one is trying to deserve salvation. However, Sabbath-keeping and obedience to the Ten Commandments can have a love motive rather than a legalistic motive.)

Made Righteous in Christ (Teacher’s Comments, p. 52):

1.) Paul said, “**By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified**” (Gal. 2:16 last part). *Why is it impossible to become righteous through the works of the law? Read Romans 2:23.* Paul says that even those who boasted about the law (Jews) dishonored God by breaking it. *Why did Paul think that? Read Romans 3:9.* *Why does Paul think that the Jews are just as condemned under the law as the Gentiles? Share* key points from **Romans 3:10-18**. Paul quotes from various Psalms to show that not a single human being is naturally righteous, even seeks God, or does any good. Paul describes all of mankind as naturally prone to twist the truth and murder. He says no one naturally seeks peace or has any fear of God. Because of mankind’s condition the law can only do one thing. **Read Romans 3:19.** The law can only condemn us by showing us our guilt! The phrase “**under the law**” obviously means condemned and guilty as a law-breaker. **Read Romans 3:20.** Therefore, it isn’t possible to be justified by the law because the law actually exposes our sins.

2.) In Gal 2:16 Paul said we are justified by faith. *What does that mean? Read Romans 3:21, 23-24.* Righteousness comes “**without the law**” or “**apart from the law**” (vs. 21) because “**all have sinned and come short of the glory of God**” (vs. 23), thus are condemned by the law (vs. 19). Therefore, righteousness must come as a free gift “**through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus**” (vs. 24). **Read Romans 3:27-30.** Read from Friday’s lesson the third paragraph quotation from **1 SM 367**. Then ask, *how can God be just in assigning Christ’s record of righteousness in place of our own unrighteousness? What does our faith have to do with this transaction?* If God’s righteousness were forced upon us, that would not be just. Obviously, we have to believe in and accept this amazing free gift.

Paul shares one more thought in Romans 3. **Read Romans 3:31.** *What misunderstanding does Paul wish to avoid?* He’s not against the law or trying to do away with it. He says that when faith is really understood correctly, the law is solidly established. He’ll explain that in Romans 6.

TUESDAY: THE BASIS OF OUR JUSTIFICATION

Read Phil. 3:9 and the opening sentence of the narrative. The Jewish Christians had trouble letting go of their superiority and trust in the law (particularly circumcision) as their badge of

salvation. In effect, they were making salvation to be by both faith and works.

Share key points of the second paragraph on the faithful works of Jesus in contrast to our works. “Christ did what every individual has failed to do: He alone was faithful to God in everything He did. Our hope is in Christ’s faithfulness, not our own.”

WEDNESDAY: THE OBEDIENCE OF FAITH

Read the opening paragraph. *Where does faith come from? Can we generate it from ourselves? What do the following texts teach us about the origin of faith?* (Gen. 15:5-6, John 3:14-16, 2 Cor. 5:14-15). God always acts first in reaching out to man. Then man must believe and trust in God to receive the blessings of God. Share highlights from the following paragraph in the lesson.

If faith is a response to God, what should that response include? **Acts 10:43** – receiving forgiveness of sin, **Hebrews 11:6** – faith, **James 2:19** – belief, yet more than belief because devils believe what they know is true and they will not be saved, **Read Romans 1:5** – obedience. *What does Paul mean by the obedience of faith?* Share highlights from the last seven lines of Wednesday’s page starting with “True faith affects the way a person lives.”

THURSDAY: DOES FAITH PROMOTE SIN?

Read the title. “One of the main accusations against Paul was that his gospel of justification by faith alone encouraged people to sin.” *How does Paul respond to the accusation that the doctrine of justification by faith alone encourages sinful behavior?* **Read Gal. 2:17**. Paul is basically saying that if we revert back to sin while claiming to be justified by Christ, we are making Christ the minister of sin. God forbid that! If we fall into sin, the responsibility for that cannot fall on Christ. **Read Gal. 2:18**. “If we break the law, we ourselves are the lawbreakers.” **Read Romans 6:1-2**. Paul clearly states that grace does not give an excuse for sin. God forbid. He asks “**How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein [in sin]?**” *What does Paul mean by “dead to sin”?* He explains it in other words in Gal. 2:20-21 where he describes union with Christ in a most unexpected way. **Read Gal. 2:20-21**. “To accept Christ by faith is extremely radical. It involves a complete union with Christ—a union in both His death and his resurrection. Spiritually speaking, Paul says we are crucified with Christ, and our old sinful ways rooted in selfishness are finished [executed, nada, crucified].” **Read Romans 6:6-7**. The old man, the old ways of sin are crucified, breaking the power of sin in the life. “**For he that is dead is freed from sin.**” *Can a dead person be tempted to gossip? Can a dead person be tempted to look at porn? Can a dead person become impatient? Have we experienced the life crucified with Christ?* If we have, “we have made a radical break with the past. Everything is new (2 Cor. 5:17). We have been raised to a new life in Christ, and the resurrected Christ lives within us, making us more and more like Himself every day.” It’s not I, but Christ that lives in me!

Conclusion: **Read Rom. 6:15**. *What does it mean to be under the grace of God?* **Read Romans 6:14**. When we are “**under grace,**” sin has no dominion over us! Sin doesn’t control one who is under grace. The chains and bonds of sin are broken and the sinner is set free. “**For he that is dead is freed from sin.**” **Rom. 6:7**. Optional: **Reread Gal. 2:20**.