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Sabbath School Lessons

Christ the Only Way



April, May, June 1990

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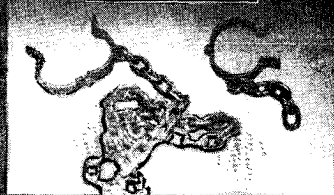
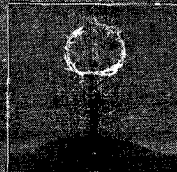
THE KING HAS COME



LEO R. VAN DOLSON

GALATIANS

THE BATTLE FOR FREEDOM



BY IRVING GALT

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1990 - YEAR OF ADVENTIST WORLD MISSION



- Goals:**
1. To increase mission giving by 25%
 2. To adopt a Sabbath School Investment Project
 3. To be on time every Sabbath for Sabbath School
 4. To help in establishing a new Sabbath School
 5. To bring someone to Sabbath School

Introduction to the Book of Galatians

Christ the Only Way

The geographical district of Galatia was located in the heart of Asia Minor. Originally populated by Phrygians, this district was taken over by Gauls (Galatians) at the end of the third century B.C. In 25 B.C. the Galatian kingdom was absorbed into the Roman province of Galatia.

Paul evangelized the southern part of the Roman province of Galatia on his first missionary journey. (See Acts 13:13 to 14:23.) On his second missionary journey the apostle revisited the churches in southern Galatia and extended his evangelistic efforts "throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia" (Acts 16:6). Some scholars suggest that, at that time, he preached to the north Galatians to whom his Epistle was later written. Paul visited them again on the third missionary journey (Acts 18:23), before spending three years in Ephesus (Acts 19:1-41; 20:31). After leaving Ephesus, he made his way to Corinth. There, during a three-month stay, he wrote the Epistles to the Romans and the Galatians in the winter of A.D. 57-58. (See *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 207, 208, 383, 384.)

Along with the book of Romans, Galatians provides a classic discussion of the doctrine of righteousness by faith in Christ.

The book may be divided into three parts:

- I. The Problem in Its Historical Setting (Gal. 1:1—2:14).
- II. The Solution: Salvation (Justification) by Faith in Christ (Gal. 2:15—4:31).
- III. The Results in the Life of the Christian (Galatians 5; 6).

Certain Jewish Christians had convinced the Galatians that it was imperative for them to practice circumcision and other features of the ceremonial law in order to be saved.

Paul's gospel. In answering their arguments, Paul moved from the specific problem to the general principle. Not only did he point out that circumcision was not essential to salvation, but also that law-keeping of any variety, whether moral, ceremonial, or civil, is not the means of salvation from sin or the blessing of eternal life. Sinners can only be saved as they accept by faith Christ's gift of grace, by which His righteousness is counted for them, and the Holy Spirit comes to dwell in their hearts. Only as Jesus abides in their hearts by the Holy Spirit can they live as God designs and enjoy the blessings of eternal life.

Functions of the law. To clarify his point, Paul discussed the divinely appointed functions of the law before the cross. Although Christ's life is now a greater revelation of God's character and will than the law, obedience to the moral law remains a divine requirement. Yet, it is vital to recognize that God's law is a *standard* of behavior, not a *means* of salvation. This truth, on which Paul expounded more fully in the Epistle to the Romans, resulted in the understanding that the Christian's freedom is conformity to the moral and ethical principles of righteousness spelled out in the Ten Commandments. Such conformity is the fruitage of the union with Christ established at justification.

Lesson 1

April 1-7

Jewish and Gentile Christianity in Conflict

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Passages from Acts chapters 1, 8—11, 13—15.



MEMORY TEXT: "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

RELATING TO DIFFERENCES OF UNDERSTANDING. Under divine guidance and the wise administration of its leaders, the church can remain true to the gospel of Christ. Unity among its members must be maintained in spite of their differing cultural and religious backgrounds.

OUTLINE:

- I. Into All the World (Acts 1:8).
- II. The Gospel Beyond Judea (Acts 8:4-40).
- III. The Gospel to the Gentiles (Acts 9—11).
- IV. Paul's First Missionary Journey (Acts 11:19-21; 13; 14).
- V. The Jerusalem Council (Acts 15).

THE GOSPEL TO THE WORLD THEN AND NOW. During a speech given by King George V of England that opened a disarmament conference some years ago, someone tripped over the generator wires of the Columbia Broadcasting System, tearing them loose and interrupting the radio program. The chief operator quickly grabbed the loose wires in his bare hands, bravely holding on while the current passed through his twitching body for twenty minutes. His hands were burned to some extent, but through his body the words of the king passed on to millions of listeners.

The King of heaven has chosen to send a far more important message to the world. In the first century of the Christian Era the disciples of Jesus allowed Him to work through them for the salvation of their contemporaries. You and I must now become human instruments through which the last great message of King Jesus can be broadcast to our world.

Christianity spread beyond Judea. The first 15 chapters of Acts record the dramatic shift of Christianity from an all-Jewish church to a church made up of both Jews and Gentiles. The gospel first was preached in Jerusalem, but following the stoning of Stephen it spread quickly to Samaria. Soon thereafter, Gentiles living in Palestine received salvation. Gradually the new Christian faith moved as far north as Syr-

ian Antioch. It was from this church, composed largely of Gentile believers who were the first to be given the name "Christians," that the Holy Spirit sent Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey to the Gentile world.

As you study the dramatic spread of Christianity to many different cultures, consider the role of the church today, and your role as a disciple of Jesus Christ.

SUN**I. INTO ALL THE WORLD (Acts 1:8).**

1. What was the background of the writer of the book of Acts? Luke 1:1; Acts 1:1; Col. 4:14; 2 Tim. 4:11.
-

There is a good reason why Luke stressed the spread of Christianity to the Gentile world. Probably a Gentile Christian himself, Luke apparently addressed the book of Acts to a Gentile. Theophilus, mentioned in Acts 1:1, is thought to have been a high official or nobleman of Greek culture whom Luke was keen to influence for Christ.

2. What do you think the disciples meant by their question, "Wilt thou at this time restore . . . the kingdom to Israel"? Acts 1:6-8.
-

A misunderstanding of Christ's ministry. Throughout Christ's ministry His disciples believed He had come to deliver the Jews from the Romans. They expected Him to lead a military campaign, conquer Rome, and establish an independent Jewish state with Himself as its king. (See *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 377, 378.) As a result of this misunderstanding, their rivalry was intense over which of them would be first in His kingdom. (See Matthew 20:20-24.) Each of them wanted to be the prime minister of the new kingdom.

Christ's death dealt a crushing blow to these fond hopes. (See Luke 24:21.) But His resurrection revived them. Now they wanted to know whether this was the time. Jesus replied that God had chosen not to reveal the answer to this question. (See Acts 1:7.) Instead, He directed their attention to the work He wanted them to do.

3. In the spaces below write the four places Jesus told His disciples to witness. Acts 1:8.

- a. _____ b. _____
c. _____ d. _____

A careful study of Acts 1—7 shows that Christian activity centered in Jerusalem, and no doubt in Judea, during the first years of the Christian church.

4. What similar thought do you find in each of the following verses?

Acts 1:8 _____

Matt. 28:19 _____

Rev. 14:6 _____

Reflecting on the lesson. Do you think the disciples understood the full extent of Christ's command to go "into all the world?" What views could limit our understanding of Christ's great commission?

MON

II. THE GOSPEL BEYOND JUDEA (Acts 8:4-40).

The first step in the expansion of Christianity. Acts 7 records the stoning of Stephen that marked the close of Daniel's seventy-week prophecy and the end of the period of test allotted to the chosen people. (See Dan. 9:24-27.) In response to Jesus' command, the Christian church began immediately to carry the gospel beyond Jerusalem and Judea.

5. Where did Philip preach Christ? How did God confirm his ministry? Acts 8:4-8, 14-17.

6. Why do you think God chose to have the gospel preached first to the Samaritans and to the Ethiopian eunuch? Acts 8:26-29.

Many are looking wistfully to heaven. "This Ethiopian represented a large class who need to be taught by such missionaries as Philip—men who will hear the voice of God and go where He sends them. There are many who are reading the Scriptures who cannot understand their true import. All over the world men and women are looking wistfully to heaven. Prayers and tears and inquiries go up from souls longing for light, for grace, for the Holy Spirit. Many are on the verge of the kingdom, waiting only to be gathered in.

"An angel guided Philip to the one who was seeking for light and who was ready to receive the gospel, and today angels will guide the footsteps of those workers who will allow the Holy Spirit to sanctify their tongues and refine and ennoble their hearts. The angel sent to Philip could himself have done the work for the Ethiopian, but this is not God's way of working. It is His plan that men are to work for their fellow men."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 109.

Applying today's lesson. In what ways does the Holy Spirit confirm the ministry of God's people today? Has the Holy Spirit confirmed your ministry to others? How?

What kind of people do you think God is looking for to send on missions today?

On what kind of mission do you think God would be most likely to send you? How would He let you know He wanted you to go?

III. THE GOSPEL TO THE GENTILES (Acts 9—11).

7. What do you consider to be most remarkable about the special selection of Paul to carry the gospel to the Gentiles? Acts 9:15.
-

God's mysterious ways. It probably did not take long for the news of Saul's conversion to spread throughout the Christian church. (See Gal. 1:21-24.) To many it must have seemed strange indeed for God to choose His bitterest opponent to be His foremost missionary. But from God's perspective, Saul's conversion was one of the most significant events in the shift from an all-Jewish church to a church composed of both Jews and Gentiles. "The Gentiles are placed first on the list [in God's words to Ananias], because Saul's field of labor was to be especially among them."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 233.

Yet God did not immediately send Saul on his missionary journeys through Asia Minor (Turkey) and Europe. A training period was needed first, and the church at large had to learn that they could trust him.

8. Who were the first Gentiles to hear the gospel, and how did God confirm Peter's ministry to them? Acts 10:1-8, 44-48.
-

Confirming evidence. Besides the great outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, the book of Acts records subsequent instances of others receiving the same Gift. Having received the Holy Spirit themselves at Pentecost, the apostles were able to recognize this Gift thereafter as a mark of divine approval.

9. On what grounds did certain believers criticize Peter's witness to Cornelius and his family? Acts 11:1-3.
-

10. In defense of his ministry to Cornelius, to what divine act did Peter appeal? How did the church respond? Acts 11:16-18.
-

Personal thought questions.

- What qualifications do you see in Saul that caused God to choose him to be His apostle to the Gentiles, in spite of the fact that he had been such a persecutor of Christians?
- Am I in danger of questioning, and perhaps hindering, the work of the Holy Spirit by doubting His leading in my life and in the affairs of the church?

IV. PAUL'S FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY (Acts 11:19-21; 13; 14).

11. Where was the first Gentile church established? Acts 11:19-21.

12. What does the fact that this church sponsored Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey indicate concerning the strength of their commitment? Acts 13:1-3.

13. What does Acts 13:45, 46 indicate concerning the evangelistic strategy used by Paul and Barnabas?

On entering a Gentile city, Paul generally sought out the Jewish synagogue first and waited for (or initiated) an invitation to preach. In each city he generally won his first converts from among the members of these synagogues. Some were Jews and many others were Gentiles who had been converted to Judaism. In most cities the Jewish community as a whole rejected the gospel. Paul then formed his few converts into a small church and thereafter concentrated his efforts on Gentile evangelism.

Ask yourself. In our work for souls today, at what point should we give up efforts for some and focus attention on others?

Are there people in your community to whom your church is not witnessing? What can you do to meet your responsibility to these people?

WED

V. THE JERUSALEM COUNCIL (Acts 15).

First missionary journey ends successfully. Paul and Barnabas concluded their first missionary journey by giving a full report of their activities to their sponsoring church. Acts 14:26, 27 says that they returned to Antioch, "gathered the church together and reported all that God had done through them and how he had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles" (NIV).

14. What error did certain Christians from Judea begin teaching among the Gentile Christians in Antioch, and how did Paul and Barnabas react? Acts 15:1, 2.

Opposition begins. Word of Paul's first missionary journey and his efforts on behalf of the Gentiles soon reached Jerusalem. Some of the Jewish Christians there responded by creating problems in the church at Antioch. From this time to the end of his ministry Paul was forced to defend his

Gentile churches against attacks by legalistic Jewish Christians.

- 15. How did the Antioch church respond to the false teaching of legalistic Jewish Christians? Acts 15:2, 3.**
-

Paul did not undertake a personal defense of his Gentile ministry to the leaders in Jerusalem.

The Antioch church sought counsel. “In the church at Antioch the consideration of the question of circumcision resulted in much discussion and contention. Finally, the members of the church, fearing that a division among them would be the outcome of continued discussion, decided to send Paul and Barnabas, with some responsible men from the church, to Jerusalem to lay the matter before the apostles and elders. There they were to meet delegates from the different churches and those who had come to Jerusalem to attend the approaching festivals. Meanwhile all controversy was to cease until a final decision should be given in a general council. This decision was then to be universally accepted by the different churches throughout the country.”—The Acts of the Apostles, p. 190.



- 16. What response did Paul and Barnabas receive as they preached in Christian churches on their way to Jerusalem? What reception did they receive in Jerusalem? Acts 15:3, 4.**
-

Luke emphasizes his point. Luke goes out of the way to note that the church as a whole, including the leadership in Jerusalem, welcomed Paul's efforts among the Gentiles and rejoiced at their success. Luke's purpose, apparently, was to show that those Jews who insisted on circumcision for Gentile Christians were a small minority who were quite out of step with the sentiments of the church as a whole.

- 17. When the Jerusalem Council met, who opposed Paul's ministry to the Gentiles, and on what grounds? Acts 15:5.**
-

- 18. To what incident did Peter refer in his defense of Paul's Gentile ministry? Acts 15:7-11.**
-

Peter did not mention Cornelius by name, but there can be no doubt that it was this incident to which he referred. He particularly called attention to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Cornelius and his family as evidence of God's acceptance of uncircumcised Gentiles. This obviously justified Paul's ministry to them.

19. What decision did James recommend? Acts 15:13-21.

20. How was this message received by the Gentile Christians at Antioch? Acts 15:22-31.

The Jerusalem Council's favorable decision by no means stopped the Jewish party from opposing Paul's ministry.

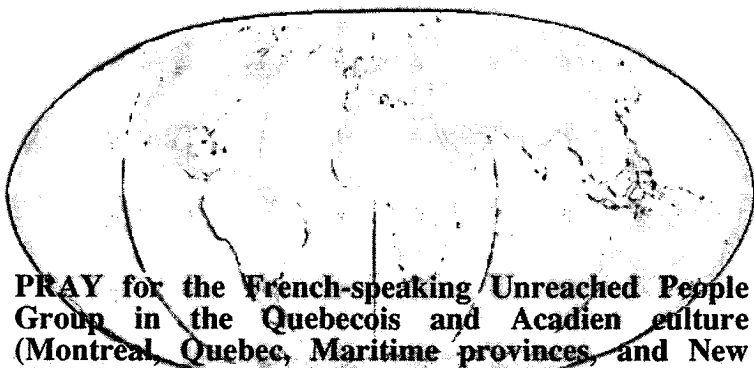
HOW DOES THIS LESSON APPLY TO ME?

- How would you relate to an issue that the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in session decided, but with which you personally disagreed? Do you think the Jerusalem Council provides a model for us today in this regard? Give a reason for your answer. (See *Testimonies*, vol. 9, pp. 257-261.)
- In light of the biblical precedent, what specific actions should local congregations, and the worldwide body of believers, take to settle differences that arise?



FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION: Read the account of Peter's vision and his interpretation given to Cornelius as recorded in Acts 10. Read also the chapter, "A Seeker for Truth" in *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 131-142.

SUMMARY. Gradually God prepared the early Christian leaders, who were Jews, to accept evangelistic efforts among the Gentiles.



PRAY for the French-speaking Unreached People Group in the Quebecois and Acadien culture (Montreal, Quebec, Maritime provinces, and New England) where there are only 500 Adventists among 7 million people.

Called by God

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Galatians 1.



MEMORY TEXT: "Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father" (Galatians 1:3, 4).

A MESSAGE FROM GOD. Paul's message of salvation by grace did not come from any human source. God gave him special revelations, that not only invested him with apostolic authority but also clarified, for the church in every age, the relationship between grace and works. To accept Paul's gospel is to accept the Lord Jesus Christ who gave it to him.

OUTLINE:

- I. Paul's Divine Call (Gal. 1:1-5).
- II. A False Gospel (Gal. 1:6-10).
- III. The True Gospel (Gal. 1:11, 12).
- IV. Paul's Life in Judaism (Gal. 1:13, 14).
- V. Paul's First Years as a Christian (Gal. 1:15-24).

MERCY UNDESERVED BUT FREELY GIVEN. An employee was caught embezzling funds from the company for which he worked. Summoned to the president's office, the man expected to be fired and brought to court. His employer asked him whether he had committed the crime of which he was accused. The man hung his head and admitted his guilt. The president then told him that he did not intend to press charges. Instead he asked, "If I let you keep your job can I trust you?" The guilty man pledged to be honest in the future. "You are the second man in this company who has fallen and been pardoned," the president said. "I was the first. I am showing you mercy because I received mercy."

As that company president had received undeserved mercy, he extended it to one of his employees. Unlike the company president, our God is without fault. But, in His great love and mercy, He recognizes what we might become if united to Him. God has called each of us, as He did Paul, to serve Him; not because we deserve such a position, but because He loves us. He wishes us to achieve our full potential in service for Him, and longs to bestow eternal life upon us.

Redeemed sinners used by God. This week's lesson calls our attention to Paul's conversion and the early years of his ministry. We know little about those early years, but a major part of what we do know comes from

Galatians 1. As we study Paul's divine call to service, we are reminded that no human being is so great a sinner as to be useless to God. God has a place in His work for everyone who accepts Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord.

SUN

I. PAUL'S DIVINE CALL (Gal. 1:1-5).

Paul began the letter to the Galatians by emphasizing his own apostolic authority. He claimed that his position and his message came from no earthly source.

1. Why do you think Paul claimed to have received his call to be an apostle from Jesus Christ Himself? Gal. 1:1, 2.

In defense of his call. Throughout his life, Paul was a forceful defender of his own apostleship. Very likely his opponents challenged the authenticity of his apostleship on the ground that the twelve apostles knew Christ personally and had been commissioned by Him. In answer, Paul insisted that he had met Christ on the Damascus road, and that Christ gave him his commission at that time. His divine appointment not only is the theme of the first verse of Galatians but also of the entire first chapter.

Apostolic authority. The Greek word translated "apostle" means a delegate, envoy, or messenger—one who is sent. In a sense every Christian believer is a messenger for Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, distinct apostolic authority was bestowed upon those whom Jesus called to lead the church and to whom He gave special revelations of Himself and the Father. Paul linked his apostolic authority to the inspired revelations that had been given him. (See 2 Cor. 12:1-12.)

"Why did Paul thus assert and defend his apostleship? . . . It was because the gospel that he preached was at stake. If Paul were not an apostle of Jesus Christ, then men could, and no doubt would, reject his gospel. This he could not bear. For what Paul spoke was Christ's message on Christ's authority. So he defended his apostolic authority in order to defend his message."—John R. W. Stott, *Only One Way* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1968), pp. 14, 15.

2. Why do you think Paul reminded the Galatians that grace and peace come from the Father and the Son? Gal. 1:3.

Grace. The word translated "grace" is used approximately 156 times in the New Testament. It refers to the infinite love of God and all that His love has led Him to do for our salvation. God's grace not only involves His unmerited favor extended to sinners, but it also includes His gift of power to enable His trusting children to fulfill His will. The gift of grace enriches and informs. (See 1 Cor. 1:4, 5.) Grace is the power by which believers perform good works. (See 2 Cor. 9:8, 14.) It involves an inner strength bestowed upon us by the Holy Spirit. (See Heb. 13:9; 1 Cor. 15:10; 2 Tim.

2:1.) God's people are to "grow in grace" (2 Peter 3:18).

Peace bestowed by Christ is that inner assurance of His forgiveness and acceptance. (See John 14:27.) It far transcends the intellectual, emotional, and material benefits of worldly advantages.

MON

3. Paul assured the Galatians that Jesus had a specific reason for dying for our sins. What was that reason, and what does this mean to us? Gal. 1:4.

Jesus died in order to pardon our sins of the past, but also "to rescue us from the present evil age" (NIV). (Compare Gal. 3:13.) This statement does not only look forward to the future coming of Jesus in glory, after which His people will enjoy the age to come. Through the power of Christ we are to be rescued *from* the world even while we are *in* the world. (See John 17:15, 16.) Eternal life begins while we are still on this earth. (See John 5:24; 1 John 5:12.) This does not mean that believers are not subject to death (see Eccl. 9:5), but that the Lord has reserved them for eternal life. Eternal life with Christ begins now for believers because, for them, death at the end of life is only a temporary sleep. Although immortality is not bestowed until the second advent of Jesus, heaven begins for those in Christ while we are in this world. (See *The Desire of Ages*, p. 331.)

A personal question. Paul was certain of his divine call. Can I be of mine? What evidence do I have that the work I am doing for God is the work He wants me to do?

II. A FALSE GOSPEL (Gal. 1:6-10).

Meeting heresy. One of the most difficult challenges that Paul had to meet was heresy. Paul's letter was written to answer a false teaching about the gospel that had entered the Galatian church shortly after he left.

4. In turning from Paul's gospel of salvation by faith in Christ, who were the Galatian Christians really deserting? Gal. 1:6.

The Greek of the text is stronger than the King James Version suggests. The word translated "removed" (KJV) means "to turn away," "desert," "turn apostate." The Galatians had deserted the gospel of grace that they had been taught even though God had provided spiritual gifts to establish them in the faith. (See Eph. 4:11-14.) Apparently they had neglected them.

5. Make a note of what you consider to be the strongest points Paul made in showing his utter rejection of this false teaching. Gal. 1:6-9.

How to recognize false teachers. The most dangerous errors are not those that come labeled as such. These false teachers were no doubt sincere and appeared to be deeply spiritual persons whose chief desire was to preserve the true faith and help the Galatian Christians to achieve a stronger religious experience. The ultimate test of a teacher is not the sincerity with which his teaching is advanced or the concern for the well-being of others that is expressed. The final test is conformity to the Word of God. "By their fruits ye shall know them" (Matt. 7:20).

TUE

III. THE TRUE GOSPEL (Gal. 1:11, 12).

6. In what ways did Paul affirm that he did *not* receive his gospel? Gal. 1:11, 12.

"The point at issue is Paul's authority as an apostle, and thus the validity of his 'gospel'—of salvation by faith instead of by the 'works of the law.' He devotes much space to a detailed account of certain incidents from the time of his conversion to the council at Jerusalem, at which time the apostles formally acknowledged his call to the gospel ministry. This was necessary because of the insistent claim of the Judaizing teachers that because Paul was not one of the Twelve, therefore his gospel was not apostolic and consequently not genuine. In vs. 12-24 he proves the divine origin of his gospel, and in ch. 2:1-10 he sets forth evidence to prove that the apostles acknowledged its validity."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 939.

7. What is the significance of Paul's statement that he received his gospel "by the revelation of Jesus Christ"? Gal. 1:12.

The meaning of "revelation." The Greek word here translated "revelation" is *apokalupsis*, from which we get our English word "apocalypse." Because of its association with the biblical book of Revelation, the word may be thought of as referring to the revealing of secrets regarding the last days. But this is only one way in which the word is used in the New Testament. The Bible uses the word *revelation* to mean God's revelation of His will to the prophets. Truths that were hidden from human knowledge are uncovered by the special inspired revelations given to prophets. (See 2 Peter 1:20, 21.)

Biblical revelation is an act of God, given to persons of His choosing, at times and in ways of His choosing. Paul was claiming to be an inspired prophet.

WED

IV. PAUL'S LIFE IN JUDAISM (Gal. 1:13, 14).

Paul's argument. Paul is establishing that he could not have received the gospel of salvation by faith alone from any human source. His first argument is that he surely did not receive it prior to his conversion, because at that time he was persecuting the church.

8. What can we learn from Paul's relationship to Christianity before his conversion that might help us today in our relationship to those who oppose our faith? Gal. 1:13, 14; Acts 7:59—8:3; cf. 26:5, 9-12.

When Stephen and Paul meet. How surprised Stephen will be to meet his former persecutor when he arrives in heaven after Christ's second coming! He will be thrilled at the story of Paul's conversion and rejoice to read some of the words he wrote. What a vast multitude of Christians he will find in heaven who accepted Jesus Christ as their Saviour as a result of Paul's New Testament writings. Surely Stephen will declare that his death, if it influenced Paul to accept Christ, was a cheap enough price to pay!

When faced with opposition, we must recognize that some of our most bitter persecutors may someday be among the staunchest supporters of the truth, especially if we can forgive them as Stephen forgave Paul.

9. What warning for Christians today do you see in Paul's experience as he tells it in Galatians 1:14?

What is meant by "traditions"? By "traditions," Paul probably does not mean only the rabbinical teachings (that were added to the scriptural revelation) for which Jesus so strongly condemned the Jews.. (See Mark 7:1-7.) The emphasis in his writings suggests that he means Judaism as a whole, including both the Old Testament revelation and the requirements that were added to it by religious leaders over the centuries. Prior to his conversion, Paul was zealous for both. Throughout Galatians, and especially in chapters 2 to 4, Paul sets forth the true role of Judaism during the Old Testament period. He shows its positive relationship to Christianity, as well as pointing out how the Christian faith is superior to it.

Applying the lesson to my life. Check below the attitudes and actions appropriate in dealing with opponents of Adventism:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Assume that they are sincere. | <input type="checkbox"/> Be gentle in debate. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Avoid them. | <input type="checkbox"/> Don't trust them. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Treat them as they treat us. | <input type="checkbox"/> Love them and pray for them. |

THU V. PAUL'S FIRST YEARS AS A CHRISTIAN (Gal. 1:15-24).

10. To what specific task did God call Paul? Gal. 1:15, 16; Acts 9:1-15; 26:12-18. As you reflect on Paul's life, what qualifications do you think Paul had for this task even before God turned his life around on the Damascus road?

A principle for Christian witnessing. Notice Paul's words: "It

pleased God . . . to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen [NIV: ‘Gentiles’]” (Gal. 1:15, 16). This is a key principle for Christian witnessing. First Jesus became real in Paul’s experience. Then God could reveal Christ to others through him. Unless we have a personal acquaintance with Christ ourselves—unless He has turned our lives around and given us the joyful experience of forgiveness and deliverance from sin—we cannot reveal Him to others. We may talk about Him, perhaps reason about Him, or even argue about Him, but the warmth of His love can be shared only by those who understand that love personally.

Paul’s post-conversion itinerary. From the account in Acts 9:19-31 one would conclude that immediately after fleeing Damascus Paul went to Jerusalem. However, from Galatians we learn that he fled to Arabia, where he remained in isolation for a period of time. Returning to Damascus, he carried on work for Christ until forced to leave. Then he went to Jerusalem.

Revelations received in Arabia. “A messenger from heaven bade him leave for a time, and he ‘went into Arabia’ (Galatians 1:17), where he found a safe retreat.

“Here, in the solitude of the desert, Paul had ample opportunity for quiet study and meditation. He calmly reviewed his past experience and made sure work of repentance. . . . He emptied his soul of the prejudices and traditions that had hitherto shaped his life, and received instruction from the Source of truth. Jesus communed with him and established him in the faith, bestowing upon him a rich measure of wisdom and grace.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 125, 126.

11. What significance do you see in Paul’s statement that he waited three years to meet the apostles in Jerusalem—and then he met only Peter and James? Gal. 1:18, 19.

This point was so important to Paul that he underscored it by saying, “I assure you before God that what I am writing you is no lie” (Gal. 1:20, NIV). His strong emphasis on this point suggests that the Jewish Christians who discredited his understanding of the gospel also discredited the story he told of his life after accepting Christ.

12. What significance do you see in Paul’s choice of a place to labor following his meeting with Peter and James in Jerusalem? Gal. 1:21; Acts 9:15; compare verses 28-30; 22:18-21.

“At this time Syria and Cilicia were united under one Roman provincial administration. . . . Tarsus, Paul’s home city, was in Cilicia. The NT record passes over the next five years or so in silence (see on Acts 9:30). Supposedly Paul engaged in active ministry in Tarsus and that vicinity. Some five years later Barnabas went to Tarsus and brought Paul with him to Antioch, where they both taught for a whole year (Acts

11:25, 26)"—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 942.

THIS WEEK'S LESSON APPLIED:

- God calls every Christian to a specific vocation or role in life. Agree_____ Disagree_____ (See 1 Cor. 7:17; *Messages to Young People*, p. 219.)
- How can I tell if a "call" is the will of God for my life? Number the following criteria in the order of their importance:

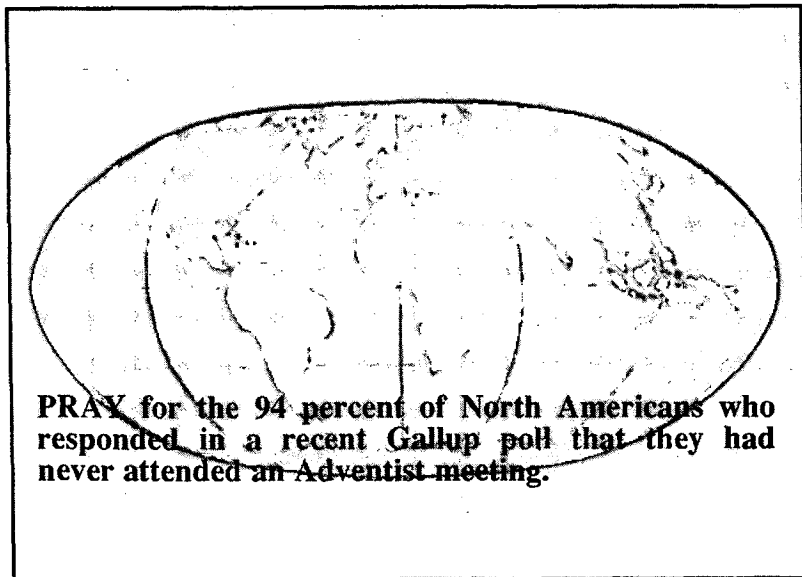
- _____ Dreams
- _____ Others recognize fitness
- _____ I feel an inward call

- There is a need.
- I have the spiritual gift and aptitude
- Circumstances indicate that it is God's will.



FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION: Read the chapter entitled "Days of Preparation" in *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 123-130.

SUMMARY: Paul was called to be an apostle by Jesus Christ Himself, who commissioned him to preach the gospel among the Gentiles. Nothing was more designed to meet their needs. After a period of training Paul pressed forward with this work under the direction of the Holy Spirit. God has also appointed each Christian a work to do for Him today, and we should be as zealous to carry it out as Paul was.



Lesson 3

April 15-21

Contending for the Faith

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Galatians 2:1-14; Acts 15:1, 2.



MEMORY TEXT: "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth" (John 16:13).

PROGRESS DESPITE CONFLICT. When disagreements arise in the church, God leads His people through these disagreements to an understanding of the truth. When the truth is accepted harmony is reestablished.

OUTLINE:

- I. Paul Goes to Jerusalem (Gal. 2:1, 2; Acts 15:1, 2).
- II. False Brethren (Gal. 2:3-5).
- III. Stamp of Approval (Gal. 2:6-10).
- IV. Peter's Error (Gal. 2:11-13).
- V. Paul's Rebuke (Gal. 2:14).

WHAT WOULD HAVE HAPPENED? What would have happened if Paul had not taken a strong stand for the truth that had been revealed to him? What would have happened if Martin Luther had vacillated at the Diet of Worms? "Had the Reformer yielded a single point, Satan and his hosts would have gained the victory. But his unwavering firmness was the means of emancipating the church, and beginning a new and better era."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 166.

"There, in a theological showdown, all would have gathered, Germans and Italians, with a desire to 'work things out.' With all sitting there, filled with potluck fare of the church supper they had just enjoyed, one can hear again the old inquisitor asking his question, 'Luther, did you or did you not write these books?'

"'Well,' says Martin, 'in a manner of speaking: I was working through some problems with my self-image at the time, and I really think, Your Grace, that when we're down on ourselves it is so easy to get down on other, really good people. Perhaps I have been a little negative.'

"'I'll tell you what, Martin. Let's just take your books off the stands, and we'll all work a little harder on getting along together.'

"'By the time they had all broken into prayer cells and regrouped in the basement for pie and coffee, the Reformation would have been lost.'—*Christianity Today*, Oct. 7, 1983.

A biblical model for resolving conflicts. How can Christians be sure which side of a deeply controversial issue is right when apparently good men on each side present such persuasive arguments? The Galatian controversy provides us with an excellent biblical model for resolving similar conflicts today. This week we will discover that the Holy Spirit used the

process of hard study, earnest deliberation, and church authority to lead the apostolic church into "all truth" (John 16:13). God's Spirit is just as willing to use these processes to help the church settle doctrinal issues today as He was in apostolic times. To believe the Scriptural message is to retain this confidence!

SUN I. PAUL GOES TO JERUSALEM (Gal. 2:1, 2; Acts 15:1, 2).

Fourteen years. Dating the conversion of Paul in A.D. 35, the Jerusalem Council occurred fourteen years later, in A.D. 49. "When dissension arose over Gentiles having been admitted to the church without circumcision, Paul, Barnabas, and others went to Jerusalem, where the problem was settled at a council with the apostles (ch. 15). This visit to Jerusalem appears most probably to be the same one that Paul mentions in Gal. 2:1 as having occurred 'fourteen years after,' inasmuch as the issue in each case was circumcision. . . . However, the context does not indicate clearly the event from which these fourteen years are to be reckoned. They may be understood as beginning either with Paul's conversion (Gal. 1:15, 16) or with his first visit to Jerusalem three years later (v. 18). Consequently, latitude must be allowed in dating the Jerusalem Council, but it may be placed tentatively about A.D. 49."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 100.

1. **Where did Paul spend his time during those fourteen years? What did he do during this time? Study the following scripture passages for clues. Gal. 1:21-23; Acts 11:25, 26; 13:1-3; 14:26-28.**

2. **Why was circumcision the focal point of a sharp dispute between Paul and certain Jewish Christians from Jerusalem? Acts 15:1, 2; 11:19-21; Gal. 5:2-6.**

Paul opposes circumcision for Gentiles. In Old Testament times circumcision was a sign of the covenant relationship between God and His people. (See Gen. 17:10-12.) Although circumcision was only for the male members of Israel, everyone was invited to enter into the covenant relationship with the Lord. Outward circumcision was a sign or symbol of circumcision of the heart. (See Deut. 10:16; 30:6; Jer. 4:4.) It represented the faith-grace relationship that was to exist between God and every individual who believed in Him and in the Messiah to come.

Paul taught that circumcision was a ceremonial sign of the covenant that was not needed once Christ had come and died. (See Rom. 2:28, 29; 1 Cor. 7:18, 19; Gal. 6:12; Col. 2:11, 12.) He continued to emphasize the importance of circumcision of the heart, but taught that physical circumcision as a ceremony that pointed forward to the cleansing work of the Messiah was no longer needed.

Ceremonial laws abolished at the cross. "There were those in Paul's

day who were constantly dwelling upon circumcision, and they could bring plenty of proof from the Bible to show its obligation on the Jews; but this teaching was of no consequence at this time; for Christ had died upon Calvary's cross, and circumcision in the flesh could not be of any further value.

"The typical service and the ceremonies connected with it were abolished at the cross. The great antitypical Lamb of God had become an offering for guilty man, and the shadow ceased in the substance."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1061.

The issue was not only circumcision. The deeper issue involved the question of how sinners are saved. Those who advocated circumcision rejected the free grace of Christ as the only means of salvation, urging that human obedience to the law earned salvation.

MON

Works do not save, but result from God's work in those who enjoy present salvation. "Our acceptance with God is sure only through His beloved Son, and good works are but the result of the working of His sin-pardoning love. They are no credit to us, and we have nothing accorded to us for our good works by which we may claim a part in the salvation of our souls. Salvation is God's free gift to the believer, given to him for Christ's sake alone."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1122.

"Never leave the impression on the mind that there is little or nothing to do on the part of man; but rather teach man to cooperate with God, that he may be successful in overcoming.

"Let no one say that your works have nothing to do with your rank and position before God. In the judgment the sentence pronounced is according to what has been done or to what has been left undone (Matt. 25:34-40)."—*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 381; see also p. 343.

3. What procedure did the church at Antioch adopt for solving the problem created by those who were urging that works are a means of salvation? Acts 15:2.

4. Why did Paul go to Jerusalem at this time? Compare the answers in Acts 15:2 with Galatians 2:2. How do they differ?

How God leads His church. Galatians 2:1, 2 and Acts 15:1, 2 provide an excellent example of two ways God leads His church. Sometimes He intervenes directly with instructions for an individual or for the entire church. This intervention may not always be in the form of a vision. It may be through the outworking of events in such an obvious manner that the church as a whole recognizes God's hand guiding it in the way it should go.

Local churches and conferences make decisions relating to organization, membership, and outreach. In the Seventh-day Adventist Church the world session of the General Conference resolves doctrinal issues. The

church seeks for and relies on the Holy Spirit for understanding of the Scriptures, the final authority on all doctrinal matters.

Questions for personal reflection. How might an Adventist congregation today apply the principles of Acts 15:1, 2 in solving a doctrinal dispute?



II. FALSE BRETHREN (Gal. 2:3-5).

5. Who does Paul say infiltrated the Antioch delegation for the purpose of spying? Gal. 2:4.

6. Is Paul's expression "false brethren" in Galatians 2:4 a contradiction? If a person is false, can he also be a brother in the faith?

Brethren in name only. "However, the victory was not won without a battle, for strong pressure was exerted on Paul to circumcise Titus. This came from 'false brethren', whom the New English Bible calls 'sham-Christians' and J. B. Phillips 'pseudo-Christians.' As John Brown judiciously comments, 'These persons were brethren, i.e. Christians in name; but they were "false brethren," Jews in reality.' They were almost certainly Judaizers, and Paul has some stern words to say about them. They were intruders, 'interlopers' (NEB)"—John R. W. Stott, *Only One Way*, p. 42.

7. In what sense were the teachings and the demands of the Judaizers an invasion of Christian liberty? In what sense would their recommended practice have brought the Christians into bondage? Gal. 2:4; compare John 8:32-36.

8. What do the words "We did not give in to them for a moment" (Gal. 2:5, NIV) suggest may have happened at the Jerusalem Council?

Unity gained through the compromise of principle is a loss, not only of true unity but also of Christian freedom.

"Christ calls for unity. But He does not call for us to unify on wrong practices. The God of heaven draws a sharp contrast between pure, elevating, ennobling truth and false, misleading doctrines. He calls sin and impenitence by the right name. He does not gloss over wrongdoing with a coat of untempered mortar. I urge our brethren to unify upon a true, scriptural basis."—*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 175.

Thought questions. Am I always ethical in the way I handle differences of opinion over questions of doctrine and manner of life?

At what point should the church condemn error in doctrine or lifestyle and discipline those who continue to teach and practice it?



III. STAMP OF APPROVAL (Gal. 2:6-10).

9. Compare Galatians 1:11, 12 with chapter 2:1, 2. What two revelations did God give to Paul? How did they differ?

Independence and subordination. In the first revelation God gave Paul “new light”—the gospel he was to carry to the Gentiles—and Paul insisted that this message was of divine, not human, origin. (See Gal. 1:11, 12.) Yet in the next revelation God said, in effect, “Now have this message that I revealed to you confirmed by the church” (Gal. 2:1, 2). Surely God expects no less of us today.

Discover truth individually; cooperate with the body. “We are to counsel together, and to be subject to one another; but at the same time we are to exercise the ability God has given us to learn what is truth. Each one of us must look to God for divine enlightenment. We must individually develop a character that will stand the test in the day of God. We must not become set in our ideas, and think that no one should interfere with our opinions. . . .

“There are a thousand temptations in disguise prepared for those who have the light of truth; and the only safety for any of us is in receiving no new doctrine, no new interpretation of the Scriptures, without first submitting it to brethren of experience. Lay it before them in a humble, teachable spirit, with earnest prayer; and if they see no light in it, yield to their judgment; for ‘in the multitude of counselors there is safety.’ ”—*Counsels to Writers and Editors*, pp. 45, 47.

10. What did Paul mean by saying that the other apostles “added nothing to me” (Gal. 2:6)?

11. What two things did the leading apostles recognize had been given to Paul? How are these two related? Galatians 2:7-9.

The phrase “right hands of fellowship” (verse 9) is the key thought in this section of Galatians 2. Peter, James, and John welcomed Paul as a fellow minister and apostle. They believed the gospel exactly as he explained it to them, recommending only that his field of labor be different from theirs. The difference was one of mission, not of message.

The message for us. What do we learn from the way New Testament

Christians solved doctrinal conflicts that can help the Adventist Church today as it comes to grips with questions of belief and practice?



IV. PETER'S ERROR (Gal. 2:11-13).

- 12. What was Peter's motive for changing his behavior when members of the Jewish party in Jerusalem arrived in Antioch? Gal. 2:12.**

When behavior fails to match belief. In every area of life our behavior should match our faith. Yet how much like Peter we tend to be. Are there not times when we yield to the pressure of a strong personality, to popular opinion, or to temptation that arises from within ourselves? We act inconsistently; and sometimes we sin. Through Christ there is forgiveness and restoration. (See *Steps to Christ*, p. 62.)

- 13. Why do you think Paul was shocked by Barnabas' duplicity (Gal. 2:13)? Study carefully Acts 11:19 and 13:1-3. What experiences had Paul and Barnabas enjoyed together?**

The history of Christianity from that time to the present has no doubt been influenced by Paul's refusal to yield ground at this critical time.

Application to life. Have I yielded my convictions recently as a result of peer pressure? If so, how can I correct the wrong?

Can I identify any unbiblical practice that takes on a moral dimension in the minds of some Adventist Christians today? How should we deal with such problems?

V. PAUL'S REBUKE (Gal. 2:14).

- 14. Paul cited "the gospel" as his reason for rebuking Peter publicly (Gal. 2:14). What is this gospel of which Paul spoke, and how did Peter's behavior contradict it?**

-
- 15. With what specific misconduct did Paul charge Peter? Gal. 2:14.**

Peter accepted Paul's position when Paul visited Jerusalem and laid his gospel before the church's top leadership. (See Gal. 2:1-10.) Then Peter acted contrary to that position when confronted with a choice in Antioch. "Peter saw the error into which he had fallen, and immediately set about repairing the evil that had been wrought, so far as was in his power."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 198.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS:

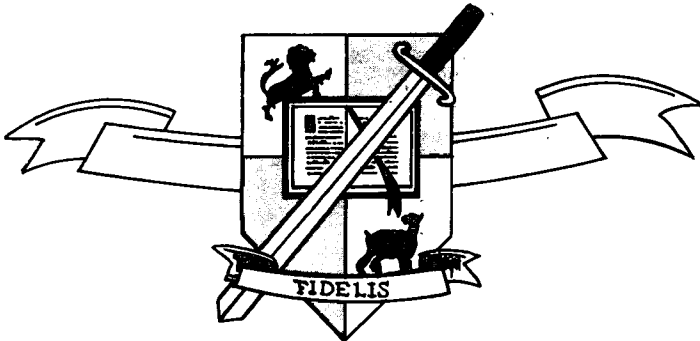
1. What can I learn about myself in times of interpersonal and church disagreements?
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-

2. Things that hinder unity in times of doctrinal disagreement are:
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FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION: Read "Attitude to New Light" and "Investigation of New Light" in *Counsels to Writers and Editors*, pp. 33-51.

SUMMARY: In Galatians 2:1-14 we find the Christian church maturing despite conflict between sincere Christians. The solution then was, and now is, for individual believers and the church as a whole to seek an understanding of God's Word and will.



COMMITMENT

THAT'S WHAT JESUS LOOKED FOR IN HIS DISCIPLES
 THAT'S WHAT HE IS LOOKING FOR IN HIS DISCIPLES TODAY
 THAT'S WHAT THE ADVENTIST YOUTH SERVICE
 IS LOOKING FOR IN YOU

We are committed to God, His word, and His mission . . .
 reaching a doomed world with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The ADVENTIST YOUTH SERVICE needs baptized SDA YOUTH
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to do the most important job on earth.

No tourists, vacationers, run-aways from problems need apply.

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Victory in Christ

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Galatians 2:15-21.



MEMORY TEXT: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20).

VICTORY THROUGH JUSTIFICATION. Victory over sin comes only to those who enjoy present salvation in Christ. The experience of justification, constantly renewed to the believer, is the power for holy living. Human attempts to earn salvation by obedience to law are fruitless. Conformity to God's law results from the experience of justification.

OUTLINE:

- I. What Is Justification by Faith? (Gal. 2:15, 16).
- II. Does Faith Promote Sin? (Gal. 2:17-19).
- III. Crucified With Christ (Gal. 2:20, 21).

THE WATER OF LIFE. The Bible uses a number of metaphors to explain salvation. At the feast of tabernacles Jesus used imagery that no one could misunderstand. He proclaimed: "If any one thirst, let him come to me and drink [justification]. He who believes in me, as the scripture has said, "Out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water [sanctification]" ' ' (John 7:37, 38, RSV). Only as we constantly drink the living water can our behavior be an outflow of love and blessing to others. Holiness received from Christ is the means of holiness displayed in the life. The never-ending flow of Christ's saving blessing to our hearts makes possible never-ending holiness of life. Justification is Christ bestowed; sanctification is Christ possessed and shared.



I. WHAT IS JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH? (Gal. 2:15, 16).

1. How does an understanding of forgiveness help us to understand justification? Compare Gal. 2:16; Acts 13:38, 39; Rom. 4:1-8.

According to Acts 13:38, 39 forgiveness of sins is justification. The same truth is emphasized in Romans 4:1-8. In that passage, God's act of justifying or imputing righteousness is the same thing as His forgiving act.

Pardon and justification. “As the penitent sinner, contrite before God, discerns Christ’s atonement in his behalf, and accepts this atonement as his only hope in this life and the future life, his sins are pardoned. This is justification by faith. . . .

“Pardon and justification are one and the same thing. Through faith, the believer passes from the position of a rebel, a child of sin and Satan, to the position of a loyal subject of Christ Jesus, not because of an inherent goodness, but because Christ receives him as His child by adoption. . . . Thus man, pardoned, and clothed with the beautiful garments of Christ’s righteousness, stands faultless before God.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1070.

2. What is involved in God’s forgiveness? Micah 7:19; Luke 4:18; Eph. 1:7, 8; compare Ps. 51:1, 2, 10.

In Scripture, forgiveness has two aspects. The first is acquittal for the guilt of past sins. The second is deliverance of the sinner from the dominion of Satan. The Greek word for forgiveness (*aphesis*) means not only “pardon, cancellation of an obligation, a punishment, or guilt,” but also “release from captivity.”—William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 124.

A definition of forgiveness. “God’s forgiveness is not merely a judicial act by which He sets us free from condemnation. It is not only forgiveness for sin, but reclaiming from sin. It is the outflow of redeeming love that transforms the heart.”—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 114.

“To be pardoned in the way that Christ pardons, is not only to be forgiven, but to be renewed in the spirit of our mind. The Lord says, ‘A new heart will I give unto thee.’ The image of Christ is to be stamped upon the very mind, heart, and soul. The apostle says, ‘And we have the mind of Christ.’ Without the transforming process which can come alone through divine power, the original propensities to sin are left in the heart in all their strength, to forge new chains, to impose a slavery that can never be broken by human power. But men can never enter heaven with their old tastes, inclinations, idols, ideas, and theories.”—Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, August 19, 1890.

Two aspects of justification. Because God’s forgiveness is identified as justification, the same two aspects that are found in forgiveness must be included in a biblical definition of justification. These are: (a) the legal act by which God declares the sinner’s guilt abolished (Rom. 8:1) and places Christ’s righteousness to his account; and (b) transformation of the sinner’s heart in the new birth experience.



3. Each of the following passages speaks about justification. In which can you find one or both aspects of justification?

Rom. 3:20-26 _____

Rom. 2:12, 13 _____

Rom. 4:1, 2, 11 _____

1 Cor. 6:11 _____

Titus 3:5-7 _____

Rom. 10:6-10 _____

The Bible definition of justification. We will consider briefly two of the above passages. Romans 3:20-26 is often cited as evidence that God declares the sinner legally acquitted. The believer is “justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (verse 24). Undoubtedly it means that the sins of the past are legally forgiven and Christ’s righteousness is counted for the sinner. (Compare Romans 4.) But notice that justification is said to be the gift of the righteousness of God (verse 22). How does God give us His righteousness? Romans 8:9, 10 teaches that when we receive the Holy Spirit we receive Christ and His righteousness. Only then are we not in the flesh but in the Spirit. Only then do we belong to Christ. Notice also that we “are justified by his grace as a gift” (Rom. 3:24, RSV). The gift of grace is not only a legal matter. It involves a heart experience. Paul speaks of “the surpassing grace of God in you” (2 Cor. 9:14, RSV; compare verse 8; 1 Cor. 1:4, 5; 2 Peter 3:18). Hence, justification is both God’s legal declaration of acquittal and a transforming experience for the believer who receives the gift of the Holy Spirit, the gift of divine grace.

Consider also Titus 3:5-7. Here is Paul’s concise definition of justification. “He saved us” (verse 5). How? Not because of our works, but “by the washing of regeneration.” The Greek word translated “regeneration” means “rebirth.” (See the New International Version.) He saved us by the new birth experience, through the “renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior” (verses 5, 6, NIV). This saving act was His justifying act. He saved us “so that, having been justified [saved] by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life” (verse 7, NIV). The saving was the justifying and the result is that we are heirs. Justification is salvation by the new birth experience. The same Jesus who said to Nicodemus, “Ye must be born again” (John 3:7) inspired the apostle Paul to explain salvation (justification) in the same terms.

Justification as a legal act of God. “The law demands righteousness, and this the sinner owes to the law; but he is incapable of rendering it. The only way in which he can attain to righteousness is through faith. By faith he can bring to God the merits of Christ, and the Lord places the obedience of His Son to the sinner’s account. Christ’s righteousness is accepted in place of man’s failure, and God receives, pardons, justifies, the repentant, believing soul, treats him as though he were righteous, and loves him as He loves His Son.”—*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 367.

Justification as transformation of the heart. “As the sinner, drawn

by the power of Christ, approaches the uplifted cross, and prostrates himself before it, there is a new creation. A new heart is given him. He becomes a new creature in Christ Jesus. Holiness finds that it has nothing more to require. God Himself is 'the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.' Rom. 3:26."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 163.

"But while God can be just, and yet justify the sinner through the merits of Christ, no man can cover his soul with the garments of Christ's righteousness while practicing known sins, or neglecting known duties. God requires the entire surrender of the heart, before justification can take place; and in order for man to retain justification, there must be continual obedience, *through active, living faith that works by love and purifies the soul.*"—*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 366 (italics supplied).

4. Why is it an unvarying truth that a person "is not justified by the works of the law" (Gal. 2:16)? Eph. 2:1-10.

A man was convicted of murder and sentenced to unconditional life imprisonment, never to be released. In prison he said to himself, "I have been a fool. I will be a model prisoner. I will work hard, behave myself well, and obey the commands of the wardens. Maybe I can have my sentence changed." Assuming that the law is applied, will his good behavior alter his situation?

"For the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23) means that one who has sinned is subject to unconditional eternal death. Our attempted good behavior in the future will in no way change the sentence. Only as we accept the Divine Substitute can we have forgiveness, involving acquittal and the power to live without committing sin.

A question to ponder. As you reflect on your own walk with J sus, do you believe that He has covered you with His righteousness—that you are a recipient of righteousness by faith? What specific reasons can you give for your answer?



II. DOES FAITH PROMOTE SIN? (Gal. 2:17-19).

5. What is Paul asking in the question recorded in Galatians 2:17?

No doubt the Judaizers, who were urging that salvation resulted from obedience to the law, reacted to the message of salvation by grace alone by pointing to the sins in the lives of those who taught it. By implication, they would argue, Christ is to blame for your sins, because you claim that your doctrine of justification came from Him. Sin in your lives discredits Christ and the message of justification by grace.

Paul answered emphatically that Christians who believe in salvation by grace do not blame Christ when they fail. They blame themselves.

6. Many Bible students have puzzled over Paul's meaning in

Galatians 2:18, and a variety of answers have been suggested. The note below offers one possibility. What do you think?

We must move forward, not backward. The key to understanding this passage is in the phrase, "If I build again the things which I destroyed." What did Christianity destroy that some people were trying to build up again? The answer is patently obvious from what Paul has said in Galatians so far. His gospel, which was revealed to him by Christ Himself, destroyed any notion of salvation through observing the rite of circumcision or any other laws or customs, Jewish or otherwise.

In trying to rebuild those elements of Judaism that Christianity either surpassed or destroyed, the Jewish party removed themselves from salvation by faith in Christ and placed themselves back where they were before they knew Him. They made themselves sinners all over again.



7. According to Galatians 2:19, who or what died? Compare Rom. 6:6, 7; 7:6.

Misunderstandings about the law. People who claim that the law has been done away in the Christian era often point to this verse and others like it in support of their view. However, notice that it is not the law that died, but Paul. Paul never speaks of the law dying, but always the sinner.

Romans 6:7 translates literally: "For he who died has been justified from sin." The death of the "old man" (verse 6) is justification.

Romans 7:6 translates: "But now we have been released from the law, having died to that by which we were held, so that we might serve in newness of the Spirit and not in the obsolescence of the letter." Because we have died to sin by accepting Christ, we are released from the condemnation of the law, and from the insistent demand of legalists that we use law-keeping as a means of earning salvation. The "letter" referred to in the text is not the Ten Commandments as such; it is the legalistic use of the Ten Commandments and other aspects of the Judaic system to achieve salvation.

Paul extolled the Ten Commandments as the standard of righteousness to which we can conform by faith in Christ. (See Rom. 3:31; 7:7, 12, 14; 8:3, 4.) His major concern was to expose the error of those who taught that the standard of righteousness is also a means of salvation.

Victory by grace. Romans 6:14 does not teach that the Ten Commandments have now been replaced by grace. It teaches that we can have victory over sin, not by using the law as a means of salvation, but by depending upon Christ's gift of grace. Praise God, there is a way of escape from the controlling power of sin! Through Christ's power within us, we are able to overcome anger, materialism, and lust. It is possible to stop doing those things that spring from these powerful sinful feelings. This is Paul's main point in Romans 6:14. We can escape the power of sin *because* we are not under law but under grace.

III. CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST (Gal. 2:20, 21).

Many Christians agree that Galatians 2:20 is one of the most spiritually inspiring passages of the New Testament. Like John 3:16 it expresses beautifully and clearly the heart of the gospel.

8. When Paul said, "I am crucified with Christ," what part of him did he specifically have in mind? Gal. 2:20; compare Rom. 6:4-10.

When we accept Christ as Saviour and Lord, the "old man" of sin "is crucified with him" (Rom. 6:6). The old life of habitual sinning is destroyed and our fallen humanity is brought under the control of the Holy Spirit. (See Eph. 4:22-24; Rom. 8:5-11.) We all know that born-again Christians sometimes lose their union with Christ and commit sin again. This is why Paul emphasized that there must be resurrender to Christ every day. "Though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day" (2 Cor. 4:16; 1 Cor. 9:27). Justification involves an on-going relationship with Jesus by which His power to keep us from falling (Jude 24) is constantly manifested in our lives.

9. What contrast does Paul draw with death in both Galatians and Romans? Gal. 2:20; Rom. 6:6-11.

Praise God that just as Jesus rose from death, so can we! Just as Christ's death is a powerful example of what must happen to the sin in us in order for us to conquer it, so His resurrection is a metaphor of what will happen to those who by His grace put to death the old sinful self. We experience a whole new way of life, one that is totally different from the past. The anger that seemed to possess us will be controlled by the Holy Spirit. The lust that seemed impossible to put out of the mind will be subdued. In Christ, victory *is possible* over every sin, and for every sinner. That is an absolute promise of God's Word. (See Rom. 6:17, 18.)

Cleansing from all sin. "We must realize that through belief in Him [Christ] it is our privilege to be partakers of the divine nature, and so escape the corruption that is in the world through lust. Then we are cleansed from *all sin, all defects of character. We need not retain one sinful propensity.*"—Ellen G. White comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 943 (italics supplied). (Compare Rom. 8:3, 4.)

10. What relationship do you see between Galatians 2:16 and verses 20 and 21?

Note that the entire passage discusses justification. To be justified is to

be crucified with Christ. To be crucified with Christ is to have Christ come into the life, so that now "it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me" (Gal. 2:20, RSV). Thus justification is Christ coming into the life. When Christ takes possession of the life the believer has "righteousness" (verse 21, Greek text) by faith, not by works of law. Justification is Christ bestowed upon the believer; sanctification (righteousness or holiness of life) is Christ dwelling in the heart. Justification causes sanctification. Justification by grace alone results in sanctification by grace alone, because the one causes the other. Growth in holiness results from the ongoing daily experience by which the believer partakes of Christ, allowing Him to bestow His righteous presence in the life.

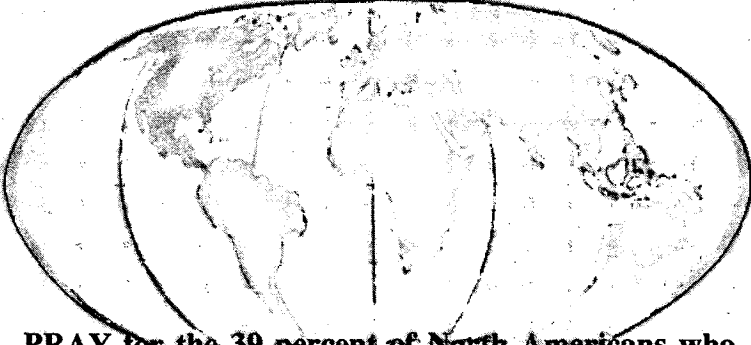
ALLOWING CHRIST TO LIVE WITHIN.

- Do I have a sin that seems impossible to overcome? How can I be crucified with Christ on that point?
- How can I cooperate with Christ's efforts to give me a daily saving relationship with Him?



FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION: If you have *Selected Messages*, book 1, read the chapter "The Perfect Law," pp. 211-215.

SUMMARY: Justification by faith is identified in the Bible with God's forgiveness. There are two elements in forgiveness (justification). When a sinner accepts Christ, (a) the guilt of past sins is abolished and Christ's righteousness is put to his or her account, and (b) the heart of the new believer is transformed by the Holy Spirit. These two experiences involved in justification provide the power for holy living.



PRAY for the 39 percent of North Americans who have no real affiliation with any religion and the 30 percent who are nominal Christians only.

Lesson 5

April 29—May 5

Heirs of the Promise

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Galatians 3:1-9.



MEMORY TEXT: "And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham" (Gal. 3:8, 9).

HOW TO BEGIN. The Christian life begins with the reception of the Holy Spirit. He brings righteousness and peace to the human heart. His blessings cannot be earned. They are bestowed upon those who accept Christ by faith.

OUTLINE:

- I. Foolish Galatians (Gal. 3:1).**
- II. Justification and Conversion (Gal. 3:2-5).**
- III. Faith Counted for Righteousness (Gal. 3:6-9).**

ONLY AS WE HAVE THE HOLY SPIRIT ARE WE CHRISTIANS.

"Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (Rom. 8:9). A missionary was preaching on Matthew 5:16: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." In front of the speaker was an oil lamp in which a cotton wick was burning. During the sermon the lamp ran out of oil and the burning wick gave off unpleasant smoke. It bothered the speaker's voice and he began to cough. But he immediately seized the opportunity to inject an appropriate illustration.

He pointed out that some Christians are like the burning wick in a lamp that has run out of oil. They are trying to shine for God's glory, but instead they are creating negative, unpleasant impressions. That is the inevitable result of substituting ourselves for the Holy Spirit as fuel for our witness. Wicks can last a long time, giving off much needed light without creating irritating smoke, but only if the oil supply is maintained. Christians can shine for Christ only as they constantly receive the presence of the Spirit in their hearts.

Our lesson this week relates the beginning and continuance of the Christian life to the transforming and empowering work of the Holy Spirit in the heart. We begin with Him, we walk with Him, we work with Him, we overcome with Him, and we triumph with Him.

SUN

I. FOOLISH GALATIANS (Gal. 3:1).

The background to Paul's rebuke. Two things seem evident: (a) that Paul established the Galatian church (or churches) himself, teaching the Gentile Christians his doctrine of righteousness by faith; and (b) that after he left, Jewish Christians from Jerusalem visited the church and taught the members their heresy. The Jerusalem Council (Acts 15) had already met, and the decision of the apostles had been given. Thus, the Jewish party was out of line in infiltrating the Galatian church with their variant teachings.

1. Why was it necessary for Paul to write such strong words to the Galatians? Gal. 3:1; compare 1 Tim. 5:20; 2 Tim. 4:2.

When necessary Paul was assertive. Paul never hesitated to speak his mind or to act on his convictions when matters of principle were involved. We saw this trait in his vigorous response to Peter's duplicity (Gal. 2:11-14). Although rebukes must always be spoken in love, there are times when firm and decisive words are necessary. (See also Luke 17:3, 4; Titus 1:13; 2:15; Rev. 3:19.)

2. Notice the last half of Galatians 3:1. Why do you think Paul said this as a follow-up to the first part of the verse? What seems to be the relationship between the two?

A standing solution to problems. Every problem we face has its solution in the cross. We often overlook that solution, even when we turn to God for help, expecting instead that He will work out something unusual to get us out of our difficulty. The cross teaches us humility when we are abused, patience when we feel exasperated, acceptance when we can't change things. The cross teaches us that, no matter how bad the circumstances, God has a higher purpose for our lives than seems evident from a human point of view. The cross teaches us the infinite love of God, even for those who despise Him and persecute Him. The cross shows us that in spite of our unworthiness as sinners, in spite of how worthless we may feel in our own eyes, we are of infinite value to God. He made the ultimate sacrifice in order to preserve our lives, restore our happiness, and make us holy. What problem can ever be greater than a solution like that?

The message of the cross should have kept the Galatians from an outdated, and now useless ceremonial rite, or any other human works as the means of salvation.

Reflecting on today's lesson

- What situations might arise today that would justify strong language such as Paul's in Galatians 3:1?
- Think of a serious problem you currently face or that you have dealt with in the past. Can you think of three solutions provided by Christ's crucifixion?



II. JUSTIFICATION AND CONVERSION (Gal. 3:2-5).

3. What experience marked the beginning of the Christian life for the Galatians? Gal. 3:2, 3.

The Holy Spirit justifies. Paul's point is that works do not save anyone from sin. Works do not justify. Works do not earn the presence of the Holy Spirit in the heart.

We discovered in an earlier lesson that the Christian life begins with justification by faith (Gal. 2:16). We also discovered that this experience of justification involves death to sin by virtue of Christ's infinite sacrifice and resurrection by virtue of Christ's indwelling (Gal. 2:20). Writing to the Romans of the death of the "old man," Paul asserted: "For he who died [or "has died"] has been justified from sin" (Rom. 6:7, Greek text). Christian life began for the Galatians with justification, the death of the "old man" of sin.

Paul clarifies further by asking: "Having begun with the Spirit, are you now ending with the flesh?" (Gal. 3:3, RSV). They began the Christian life with justification. (See Gal. 2:16.) They began by receiving the Holy Spirit. "Any one who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him" (see Rom. 8:9, RSV). In fact, the person who does not have the presence of the Holy Spirit in his life is still "in the flesh," or unjustified. No one begins the Christian life until he is justified—until he receives the Holy Spirit. The gift of the Holy Spirit is a vital part of justification.

Martin Luther, who "so clearly taught" the doctrine of justification by faith (*The Great Controversy*, p. 253) commented on Galatians 3:2: "Thus: 'You received the Spirit either from the Law or from the hearing of faith. . . . For whatever is not the Holy Spirit or hearing with faith is clearly the Law.' We are dealing here with the issue of justification. . . .

"Then what does justify? Hearing the voice of the Bridegroom, hearing the proclamation of faith—when this is heard, it justifies. Why? Because it brings the Holy Spirit who justifies."—*Luther's Works* (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia, 1963), vol. 26, pp. 203, 208.

4. What other evidences do we have in Scripture that Christian life begins with the transforming gift of the Holy Spirit to our hearts? Compare John 1:12, 13; 3:3-8; 1 John 2:29; 1 Peter 1:22, 23.

As we saw in our last lesson, Titus 3:5-7 identifies justification with the new birth experience. God's saving act is His justifying act that involves both a declaration of forgiveness for the sinner's past sin and the pouring out of the Holy Spirit in the new birth experience. Salvation means spiritual healing. This is why the gospel writers sometimes use the verb "to save" in the sense of "to heal." (See Luke 7:50; 18:42.) Jesus' healing ministry was designed to be a soul-saving ministry.

The beginning of eternal life. “Those who see Christ in His true character, and receive Him into the heart, have everlasting life. It is through the Spirit that Christ dwells in us; and the Spirit of God, received into the heart by faith, is the beginning of the life eternal.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 388. (See also pp. 175, 176.)



5. According to Romans 10:6-10 what happens in the heart of the person who experiences righteousness by faith?

In defining righteousness by faith, Paul quotes Deuteronomy 30:11-14, which speaks of the law of God being written upon the heart of the believer. Paul agreed with Moses. He adds, “that is, the word of faith we are proclaiming” (Rom. 10:8, NIV).

Then Paul emphasizes that if we truly believe in Jesus as Lord we will experience present salvation (verse 9). Verse 10 translates literally: “for with the heart one believes unto righteousness.” The Revised Standard Version translates the same sentence: “For man believes with his heart and so is justified.”

Paul’s point is that righteousness by faith (verse 6) involves the writing of the law on the heart (verses 8, 9). This is the experience by which the heart receives righteousness (verse 10). How does Christ bestow righteousness upon our hearts? “You are in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. . . . But if Christ is in you, although your bodies are dead because of sin, your spirits are alive because of *righteousness*” (Rom. 8:9, 10, RSV).

The new-birth experience (justification) involves the transforming presence of the righteous Christ coming to dwell in the heart of the believer. The result is that the life is brought into conformity to God’s law. Christ died “in order that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit” (Rom. 8:4, RSV).

The bestowal of the Holy Spirit upon us (justification) makes possible a Christian walk in which the Spirit reigns and lives out His life through us (sanctification). The Spirit within is Christ within (Rom. 8:9, 10). Hence, Christ is “our wisdom, our righteousness and sanctification and redemption” (1 Cor. 1:30, RSV).

Praise God for giving us Jesus as our indwelling righteousness!

Ellen G. White identified justification with the new-birth experience.

“Those who know not what it is to have an experience in the things of God, who know not what it is to be justified by faith, who have not the witness of the Spirit that they are accepted of Jesus Christ, are in need of being born again.”—*Signs of the Times*, March 8, 1910.

“The apostle [Paul] urged the Galatians to leave the false guides by whom they had been misled, and to return to the faith that had been accompanied by unmistakable evidences of divine approval. The men who had attempted to lead them from their belief in the gospel were hypocrites, unholy in heart and corrupt in life. . . . They had no desire for a gospel that called for

obedience to the word, 'Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.' John 3:3. They felt that a religion based on such a doctrine, required too great a sacrifice, and they clung to their errors, deceiving themselves and others."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 386, 387.

"The wedding garment, provided at infinite cost, is freely offered to every soul. By the messengers of God are presented to us the righteousness of Christ, *justification by faith*."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 317. (Italics supplied.)

"When we submit ourselves to Christ, the heart is united with His heart, the will is merged in His will, the mind becomes one with His mind, the thoughts are brought into captivity to Him; we live His life. *This is what it means to be clothed with the garment of His righteousness*."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 312. (Italics supplied.)

Points to ponder. Do I daily enter into the experience of justification? Do I invite Christ to come into my life every day? Is my effort to live a righteous life based on surrender to the power of Christ dwelling in my heart, or on my own unaided efforts to obey His law?

WED

III. FAITH COUNTED FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS (Gal. 3:6-9).

6. Galatians 3:6 quotes Genesis 15:6. What did Moses and Paul mean when they said that Abraham's faith was "accounted to him for righteousness"? Compare Rom. 4:3-11.

Righteousness credited and bestowed. The Greek verb translated "accounted" in Galatians 3:6 (KJV) is used eleven times in Romans 4 and translated three different ways in the King James Version: "counted" (Romans 4:3, 5); "reckoned" (Rom. 4:4, 9, 10); "imputed" (Rom. 4:6, 8, 11, 22, 23, 24).

It is clear from Romans 4 that imputation of Christ's righteousness to the believer is the same thing as justification. (See Rom. 4:5, 23-25.) "Imputation of the righteousness of Christ comes through justifying faith, and is the justification for which Paul so earnestly contends."—Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 397.

Because imputation of righteousness is justification, it involves all that justification involves, including the bestowal of the righteousness of Christ upon the believer by the Holy Spirit. (Compare Titus 3:5-7; Rom. 10:6-10; 8:9, 10; Gal. 3:1-6.)

When God justifies the ungodly by imputing righteousness to them, they do not remain ungodly. The apostle John dispelled any doubt on that subject. "Little children, let no one deceive you. He who does right [righteousness] is righteous, as he [Christ] is righteous" (1 John 3:7, RSV). John assures us that the one who does righteousness has been born again (1 John 2:29). John could assert that the born-again Christian is righteous only because John knew, as Paul did, that the righteous Christ dwells by the Holy Spirit in the heart of the converted person. (See 1 John 4:13-17.)

The verb *to impute* is used on occasions in the Old Testament to refer

to a tangible gift, or the specification of actual ownership. The tithe imputed to the priests was an actual gift of produce to them, one tenth of which they paid as tithe and nine-tenths of which they and their families consumed (Num. 18:27-30). Joshua 13:3 mentions land "reckoned as Canaanite" (RSV). The Lord had given it all to Israel, but because of their failure to drive out the Philistines it was still in Philistine hands. It was reckoned (imputed) to the people who were in actual possession of it. In 2 Samuel 4:2 the town Beeroth was "reckoned to Benjamin" (RSV). In fact, the tribe of Benjamin owned that town because in the distribution of property it had been given to them. (Compare Joshua 9:17; 18:21-25.) The imputation was a tangible bestowal of property.

Just so, when righteousness is counted (reckoned, or imputed) to us as it was to Abraham, not only is Christ's righteousness put to our account, but also it is bestowed upon us. Christ Himself is the gift and we possess Him in our hearts. Because we trust Him, He comes into our hearts by the Holy Spirit. Imputation (justification) is Christ's bestowal of Himself upon us.

THU

The imputation of righteousness is the bestowal of righteousness and power upon the believer.

"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."—*Selected Messages*, book. 1, p. 394.

"Many are not wholly committed to the cause of God. . . . They do not make holy endeavor to overcome every wrong, and through the imputed righteousness of Christ, perfect a righteous character."—*Messages to Young People*, pp. 28, 29.

"Through faith in His name He imputes unto us His righteousness, and it becomes a living principle in our life."—*That I May Know Him*, p. 302.

"The resolutions you may make in your own finite strength, will be only as ropes of sand; but if you pray in sincerity, surrendering yourself, soul, body, and spirit, unto God, you put on the whole armor of God, and open the soul to the righteousness of Christ; and this alone—Christ's imputed righteousness—makes you able to stand against the wiles of the devil."—*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 346.

- 7. How does Paul arrive at the conclusion that the righteousness that God gave to Abraham is also available to the Gentiles? Gal. 3:7-9; Rom. 4:16, 17; compare Matt. 3:7-9; 8:11, 12.**

Heirs of the promise. The Jews prided themselves on the fact that they were blood descendants of Abraham. But John the Baptist, Jesus, and Paul, each in his own way, made it clear that a blood relationship counts for nothing. John went so far as to say that if necessary God could turn the stones into descendants of Abraham.

The Jews also believed that God had promised them the land of Canaan, and ultimately the entire world. They supposed that all nations would be

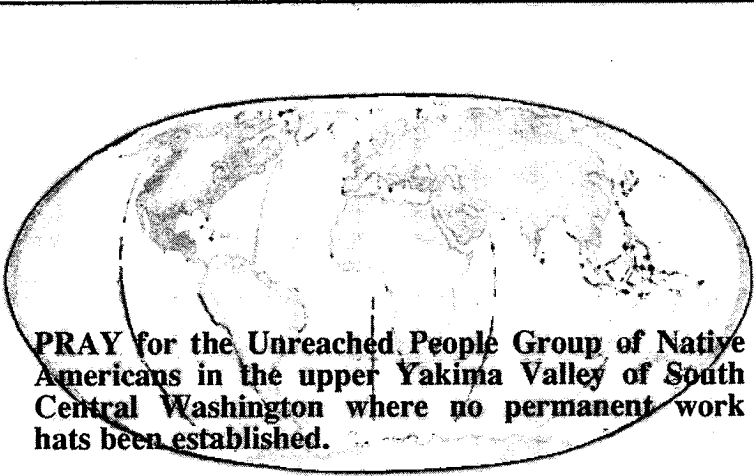
blessed through them (see Gen. 12:3; Gal. 3:8) when they (the Jews) ruled over the nations. But Paul made it clear that the real promise to Abraham was not a piece of land or a throne, but righteousness; and Abraham's real descendants are those who have Abraham's faith, regardless of their blood relationship to him. Any person, of any nation, can by faith lay claim to the promise of righteousness that was first made to Abraham. This, Paul said, is how all nations were to be blessed through Abraham.

APPLICATION TO MY LIFE:

- How important is it to my peace of mind to know that through Jesus my sins are entirely forgiven? What would life be like if I did not know that?
- Most Christians today are not blood descendants of Abraham. Nevertheless, in what ways can we have a false hope of favor with God as the chosen nation did in Christ's time?
- How can I know whether I am truly trusting in Christ or my good deeds for salvation?

FRI **FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:** Read the chapter titled "Justified by Faith" in *Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 389-398.

SUMMARY: We can be saved only by faith in Christ, never by our works, by family ties, or by church membership. Faith in Christ brings both the forgiveness of sin and the power of the Holy Spirit that transforms our lives. Abraham's faith in God's promises brought him the gift of righteousness, and that same gift is available to every Christian who exercises Abraham's faith in God. Christ Himself is the Gift who comes to us by the Holy Spirit.



PRAY for the Unreached People Group of Native Americans in the upper Yakima Valley of South Central Washington where no permanent work hats been established.

Redemption Only Through Christ

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Galatians 3:10-18.



MEMORY TEXT: "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree" (Galatians 3:13).

SALVATION AVAILABLE TO ALL. Christ paid the price for everyone's sins. Those who accept Him as Saviour are fully justified—freed from the law's curse. The justified person who enjoys a covenant relationship with Christ obeys God's law.

OUTLINE:

- I. Justification Made Available to All (Rom. 5:12-19).
- II. The Curse of the Law (Gal. 3:10, 13, 14).
- III. Believers Justified by Faith (Gal. 3:11, 12).
- IV. Law Did Not Abolish Faith (Gal. 3:15-18).
- V. Faith Does Not Abolish Law (Rom. 3:31).

BY THE GRACE OF GOD. John Newton (1725-1807) was an evangelical preacher who wrote the well-known hymns "Glorious Things of Thee are Spoken" and "How Sweet the Name of Jesus Sounds." Two or three years before his death, "when his sight was so dim that he was no longer able to read, a friend and brother in the ministry called to have breakfast with him. Their custom was to read the Word of God following mealtime, after which Newton would make a few short remarks on the biblical passage, and then appropriate prayer would be offered. That day, however there was silence after the words of Scripture 'by the grace of God I am what I am' were read.

"Finally, after several minutes, Newton spoke, 'I am not what I ought to be! How imperfect and deficient I am! I am not what I wish to be, although I abhor that which is evil and would cleave to what is good! I am not what I hope to be, but soon I shall be out of mortality, and with it all sin and imperfection. Though I am not what I ought to be, nor what I wish to be, nor yet what I hope to be, I can truly say I am not what I once was: a slave to sin and Satan. I can heartily join with the apostle and acknowledge that by the grace of God I am what I am!' Then after a pause, he said, 'Now let us pray!'"—Paul Lee Tan, *Encyclopedia of 7,700 Illustrations* (Rockville, Maryland: Assurance Publishers, 1979), p. 529.

Christ died for all. The good news is that Christ paid the price for every man's sins, not only the sins of those who accept Him. Calvary has

made justification available to all humanity, but it must be received to be experienced. In this week's lesson, we study the relationship of law to faith and grace. We will discover that faith does not abolish law and law does not abolish faith. A faith-grace covenant relationship with Christ brings our lives into conformity to God's law.

SUN

I. JUSTIFICATION MADE AVAILABLE TO ALL (Rom. 5:12-19).

1. How many of the people born into this world were made sinners and thus condemned to death through Adam's sin? Rom. 5:12, 15, 18, 19; 1 Cor. 15:22; compare Psalm 51:5. Can you reconcile these texts with Eze. 18:20?

Is it fair? To the Western mind it seems unfair that every human being should be condemned to death for one man's sin. Some have taught that every human being shares the *guilt* for Adam's sin, as though each of us had committed that sin ourselves. Adventists reject this unscriptural teaching. Our guilt can be said to come from Adam only in the sense that we incur guilt when we give in to the fallen nature that we inherited from Adam. Apart from Calvary these natures would have been permanently separated from God.

The message of Romans 5. To understand Romans chapter 5, we must keep in mind two things. First, God created Adam as the head of the human race. Second, God planted the Holy Spirit within Adam's heart when He created him. As he came from God's hand, Adam did not have to be born again. "Man was originally endowed with noble powers and a well-balanced mind. He was perfect in his being, and in harmony with God. His thoughts were pure, his aims holy"—*Steps to Christ*, p. 17.

When Adam sinned, he sold out to Satan, and lost his headship of the human race. He broke the connection with God that had been established at creation. He was now a sinner by nature. He could not pass on to his children the pure nature of one in harmony with God, for he himself no longer possessed such a nature. "Through disobedience, his [mankind's] powers were perverted, and selfishness took the place of love. His nature became so weakened through transgression that it was impossible for him, in his own strength, to resist the power of evil. He was made captive by Satan, and would have remained so forever had not God specially interposed"—*Steps to Christ*, p. 17. "The result of the eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil is manifest in every man's experience. There is in his nature a bent to evil, a force which, unaided, he cannot resist."—*Education*, p. 29.

2. For how many was justification made available by Christ's death? Rom. 5:15-19; 1 Cor. 15:22; 2 Cor. 5:14.

Justification must be received. Some have concluded from the above

texts that all human beings will eventually be saved. Such a notion is patently false in view of texts such as John 3:16, which tell us that "who-soever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life."

How, then, are we to understand those passages of Scripture that say that "the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life to all men"? (Rom. 5:18, NIV). The statement must always be considered in relation to its context. The preceding verse clarifies that "God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness" is for "those who receive" (Rom. 5:17, NIV). Those who in Christ are "made alive" (1 Cor. 15:22) are "those who belong to Christ" at his second advent (verse 23, RSV). Justification, the gift of grace, and the privilege of life in Christ are available to all, but are the *experience* of those only who are willing to receive them.

Choice essential. Imagine a millionaire meeting two beggars on the street. Because he feels sorry for them, he hands each one a check for \$1,000. One man rushes to the bank and cashes his check, but the other scoffs and throws his check in the trash. "Nobody would give away \$1,000!" he says. One thousand dollars of spending power was available to both men, but only the man who believed and cashed his check actually possessed the money. Similarly, every human being is offered God's forgiveness. The provision for all to be justified in God's sight was made available by Christ's death on the cross, but only those who believe and claim eternal life actually enjoy a saving experience with Christ.

Free to choose. "In the work of redemption there is no compulsion. No external force is employed. Under the influence of the Spirit of God, man is left free to choose whom he will serve. In the change that takes place when the soul surrenders to Christ, there is the highest sense of freedom."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 466.



II. THE CURSE OF THE LAW (Gal. 3:10, 13, 14).

3. Why does relying on works of the law result in a curse? Gal. 3:10; compare Gen. 3:17, 18; Deut. 28:15-19.

The real curse of sin is not extra pain in childbirth, or thorns and thistles, or hard labor to make the crops grow. These are symptoms of the real curse, which is death.

God created Adam and Eve with both spiritual and physical life. Spiritual life, which was based on their union with God, made it possible for them to love and obey God naturally. When they sinned, they broke this union, and the result was spiritual death. Now sin came naturally. God had warned them that they would die the day they disobeyed (see Gen. 2:17). Only a few hours after they sinned Adam and Eve fled from the God they loved. This is the surest evidence that they did indeed die spiritually the very day they sinned.

Doomed to death. "The warning given to our first parents—'In the day

that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die' (Genesis 2:17)—did not imply that they were to die on the very day when they partook of the forbidden fruit. But on that day the irrevocable sentence would be pronounced. Immortality was promised them on condition of obedience; by transgression they would forfeit eternal life. That very day they would be doomed to death."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 60.

By His death, Jesus made it possible for us to reestablish our union with God. Jesus said, "He that . . . believeth on him that sent me, *hath* everlasting life" (John 5:24). Although still subject to temporary physical death, eternal life is bestowed on those who believe.

4. What did Christ do to redeem us? Gal. 3:13; 2 Cor. 5:21.

Jesus became a curse for us. The curse of sin is separation from God, culminating in death. This is what the Bible calls the second death (Rev. 20:14). Jesus experienced this death for us. Though Himself the sinless One, He suffered separation from His Father because he took upon Himself our guilt. In Gethsemane He stood "in a different attitude from that in which He had ever stood before. . . . Christ felt His unity with the Father broken up." On the cross, "He feared that sin was so offensive to God that Their separation was to be eternal."—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 686, 753. Jesus accepted this terrible curse because it opened the way for our salvation.

5. What two things does Paul mention that Christ's death opened the way for us to receive? Gal. 3:14.

The "blessing of Abraham" that through Christ comes upon the Gentiles is justification. (Compare Gal. 3:6-9.) Notice that once again Paul relates this blessing to the reception "of the Spirit through faith" (Gal. 3:14, RSV).

A practical response. What do you plan to do beginning today to maintain and strengthen your union with God? What changes in your life do you anticipate as a result?

III. BELIEVERS JUSTIFIED BY FAITH (Gal. 3:11, 12).

6. What is the condition for receiving the justification that saves? Gal. 3:11.

What is saving faith? In this verse (Gal. 3:11) Paul quotes Habakkuk 2:4, as he does in Romans 1:17. He uses the statement "The just shall live by faith" as an explanation of justification. The Revised Standard Version translates the sentence: "He who through faith is righteous shall live." The

Greek translates literally: "The righteous person shall live by faith." The message is that the individual who is living by faith is a righteous person. In what sense is he a righteous person? Paul has already answered that. "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20). Is Christ righteous? Certainly! Does Christ live in the heart of the believer? In that sense the believer has righteousness.

7. Why is obedience not the means by which we can earn eternal life? Gal. 3:12; Lev. 18:5; Deut. 5:32, 33.

When the Lord said to Israel through Moses, "Ye shall therefore keep my statutes, and my judgments: which if a man do, he shall live in them: I am the Lord" (Lev. 18:5), he was not instructing them that law-keeping is a means of salvation. In its context in the Pentateuch the instruction meant this: "You love Me and believe in Me, entering into a covenant relationship with Me, and My law will then be written on your heart, and you will be able to obey all my statutes." (See Deut. 6:4-6.)

Paul lifted the principle of obedience to law from its context and used it to illustrate the impossibility of righteousness and salvation by works. Perfect obedience to the law in the future can never atone for past sin. Since all have sinned (Rom. 3:23), perfect obedience can earn no one justification or salvation.

What kind of obedience does God want? "The man who attempts to keep the commandments of God from a sense of obligation merely—because he is required to do so—will never enter into the joy of obedience. He does not obey. When the requirements of God are accounted a burden because they cut across human inclination, we may know that the life is not a Christian life. True obedience is the outworking of a principle within. It springs from the love of righteousness, the love of the law of God. The essence of all righteousness is loyalty to our Redeemer. This will lead us to do right because it is right—because right doing is pleasing to God."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 97, 98.

Legalism is contrary to faith. "When he [Paul] says that *the law is not of faith*, he is not referring to the law itself, but the law seen as a supposed means of earning God's favour by 'merit.' Later in this Epistle Paul will make perfectly clear that he has no opposition to the law as such. It is important to remember this, for it is an aspect of the Pauline theology which the Judaizers did not appreciate and which a casual reading of Paul's words might equally not make plain."—R. A. Cole, *The Epistle of Paul to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1965), p. 98.

Practical thought questions. Have you ever felt that God would not forgive your sins? Choose the text in this section of the lesson that provides the best response to that feeling.

Some agree that God is willing to forgive them, but they don't feel they have enough faith to qualify. How would you respond to that doubt?

IV. LAW DID NOT ABOLISH FAITH (Gal. 3:15-18).

8. What analogy does Paul use to illustrate the permanence of God's promise to Abraham? Gal. 3:15, 16.
-

Legal terminology. One of the purposes of human government is to give permanence to the promises people make to each other, to ensure that they do what they say they will do. Once a contract has been legally signed, both parties are required to live up to it. If one party has second thoughts, the other can appeal to the law and require compliance. Read Galatians 3:15 again, substituting the modern words "contract" and "signed" for the words "covenant" and "confirmed" in the King James Version.

9. What do the following passages have to say regarding the terms of God's covenant with Abraham?

● Gen. 12:3 (compare Gal. 3:8; John 8:56) _____

● Gen. 15:1-6 _____

● Gen. 17:7, 8 (compare Heb. 11:10) _____

● Gen. 17:9-11 (compare Rom. 4:11) _____

10. Summarize in one sentence Paul's application of the analogy about a legal contract. Gal. 3:17, 18.
-

Law did not replace faith. The Jewish party argued that the law was given several hundred years after the promise of righteousness by faith and therefore replaced it. Paul showed that God's promise to Abraham, sealed with a ceremony, *had* to be perpetually binding. The law given on Sinai could not change that.

Some Christians today believe that before the cross, salvation was by works, while in the Christian era God's people are saved by faith. In Galatians 3:15-18 Paul proves this teaching to be false. If the law given on Mt. Sinai did not do away with the promise to Abraham, God's people before the cross were saved by grace alone through faith just as we are. (See Hebrews 11.)

Thought question. If God's people before the cross were saved by works and after the cross by faith, what false concept would this suggest

about the character of God? Why would it have been necessary for Christ to die?

THU

V. FAITH DOES NOT ABOLISH LAW (Rom. 3:31).

11. Study Romans 3:20-30. Why do you think Paul felt it important to make such a strong statement in support of law in verse 31? Compare Rom. 7:7, 12, 14; 8:3, 4; Matt. 5:17-20.

Two extremes. Apparently one of the strongest points in the teachings of the Jewish party was that law is ultimately more important than faith as a basis for salvation.

Today we face the opposite extreme position. There are those who claim that the New Testament principle of faith did away with the law. Paul recognized the danger that his strong statements in support of faith might be misunderstood. Therefore in Romans 3:31; 7:7-14; and 8:3, 4 he affirmed the importance of the law as the standard of righteousness. This standard, he asserted, can be reached only through a faith-grace relationship with Christ.

The most dangerous of all false teachings. "No error accepted by the Christian world strikes more boldly against the authority of heaven, none is more directly opposed to the dictates of reason, none is more pernicious in its results, than the modern doctrine, so rapidly gaining ground, that God's law is no longer binding on men. . . . It would be far more consistent for nations to abolish their statutes, and permit the people to do as they please, than for the Ruler of the universe to annul His law, and leave the world without a standard to condemn the guilty or justify the obedient"—*The Great Controversy*, p. 584.

REFLECTING ON THIS WEEK'S LESSON.

- What would your life be like today if you did not know that you have been justified by faith? How does this make you feel toward people you know who do not have the assurance that you have?
- What can you tell a person who wants to be saved but does not know how?

FRI

FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION: Read "Satan's Enmity Toward the Law," *Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 221-225.

SUMMARY: Although justification has been made available for all people, it can benefit only those who accept Christ by faith. It is also important to understand that while we can only be justified by faith, and never by keeping the law, the law is still God's standard of righteousness. Faith and law are both essential in God's great plan. Neither must be allowed to cancel the other. They work together.

Lesson 7

May 13-19

The Purpose of the Law

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Galatians 3:19, 20.



MEMORY TEXT: "Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator" (Galatians 3:19).

HOW GOD REVEALED THE GOSPEL. During the Old Testament period God's primary revelation of His will and of the gospel was given on Mount Sinai in the form of law: moral, ceremonial, and civil. At the beginning of the New Testament period much more was revealed about the plan of salvation through Jesus and the Cross. Although the moral law is unchangeable as God's standard of righteousness, Christ's life and death provided a much greater revelation of this standard and of the character of God.

OUTLINE:

- I. The Purpose of the Law (Gal. 3:19, 20).
- II. The Functions of Law Before and After the Cross.
- III. By a Mediator (Gal. 3:19, 20).

WHERE WOULD WE BE WITHOUT LAW? On October 7, 1969, the police of one of North America's largest cities went on strike. Two men were murdered, forty-eight were injured in rioting, seven banks were held up, numerous other robberies were committed, and 1,000 plate glass windows were smashed in the center of the city. The damage was estimated as in excess of one million dollars.

Where would we be without law and its enforcement? Where would our universe and our world be without God's law and His restraining hand?

Great thinkers of the ages have recognized God's moral law as the basis of orderly society. When God's law is ignored, human beings become the victims of their own subjective reasoning. The result is destructive permissiveness, libertinism, and moral and ethical degradation.

This week we study the Bible teaching regarding the correct function of God's law before and after the cross. Because the two situations differed to some extent, God's law functioned differently in some respects before the cross from the way it functions now. The cross made a difference! Even so, the great moral standard of the law, which is as immutable as the character of God, remains in force forever.

SUN

I. THE PURPOSE OF THE LAW (Gal. 3:19).

1. Why does Paul ask the question, "What, then, was the purpose of the law?" Gal. 3:19, NIV.

The Revised Standard Version translates the question more literally: "Why then the law?" (Gal. 3:19). In the immediately preceding verses (Gal. 3:15-18) Paul makes the point that the giving of the law at Sinai, four hundred and thirty years after God entered into the everlasting covenant with Abraham, in no way destroyed the promises to Abraham or the significance of the righteousness-by-faith experience. From Sinai to the cross, salvation was possible only on the same terms that applied for Abraham: by a faith-grace relationship with God.

The Galatian Christians would naturally ask the next logical question: If the giving of the law at Sinai in no way altered the means of salvation, why was the law given? What good purpose did it serve? What follows is Paul's explanation of God's intention in giving the law at Sinai.

2. In Galatians 3:19 Paul says that the law was "added." To what do you think it was added, and why?

What was Paul's purpose? Paul's main purpose in writing Galatians was to prove that God gave righteousness by faith to Abraham as a promise and an experience that benefited Gentiles as well as Jews. Galatians 3:19 comes immediately after his argument that this promise was a legal contract between God and Abraham, "signed and sealed" according to the custom of the day, and the law could not change that. The law was added to the promise.

This in no way implies that Abraham was not expected to keep God's law. Quite the contrary! At the time God renewed His covenant with Abraham He commanded: "Walk before me, and be thou perfect" (Gen. 17:1). By faith in God, Abraham was the recipient of righteousness (Gen. 15:6). The result was that "Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws" (Gen. 26:5).

We need to understand the historical situation. When God gave the law, Israel had just been delivered from Egyptian bondage. Because of their experience in slavery, the people had forgotten God's standard of righteousness. When God spoke His law from Sinai and wrote the Ten Commandments on tables of stone, He was *renewing* the standard of righteousness that had existed all along. Thus *the law had a very important role to fill in making the promise a success*. This concept helps us to understand some of Paul's remarks in Galatians 3:19-25.

MON

3. Why was the law "added"? Gal. 3:19; compare Rom. 3:20; 5:20; 7:13.

“Paul answers: **By reason of the transgressions it was added**; that is, it was given to man in addition to the promise in order to bring about within his heart and mind an awakened sense of guilt. A vague awareness of the fact that all is not right with him will not drive him to the Savior. Only when he realizes that his sins are transgressions of the law of that God who is also his Judge and whose holiness cannot brook such *digressions*, such constant *stepping aside* from the appointed path, will he, when this knowledge is applied to his heart by the Holy Spirit, cry out for deliverance. ‘Where there is no law, there is no transgression,’ no stepping aside from the law (Rom. 4:15). ‘The law came in besides, that *the trespass*—the act of *falling away from* the proper course, as indicated by the law—might abound’ (Rom. 5:20). . . .

“‘Through the commandment sin becomes exceedingly sinful.’ It is *knowledge of sin* that comes through law (Rom. 3:20; 7:7, 13). The law acts as a magnifying glass. That device does not actually increase the number of dirty spots that defile a garment, but makes them stand out more clearly and reveals many more of them than one is able to see with the naked eye. ‘By reason of the transgressions,’ therefore, the law was added, so that when that law demands nothing less than perfect love for God and the neighbor, and the man sees clearly that there is very little of this love in his heart, he may by means of this realization be led to the Savior.”—William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary on Galatians* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1979), pp. 140, 141.

The law as an expression of the character of God has always been there. Only its specific formulation has therefore been “added.” Because mankind had strayed so far away from the knowledge of God, it was necessary for God to speak in very basic and legal terms. (See *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 109, 110.)

II. THE PROPER FUNCTIONS OF THE LAW BEFORE AND AFTER THE CROSS

4. What does Paul mean by saying that the law was added “till the seed should come”? Gal. 3:19. (See also verse 16.)

The law continues to function. This is one of the texts that is seized upon by those who teach that the law was done away by Christ. At first glance, that is what it seems to say. However, we must reject this surface conclusion. Romans makes it clear that the law retains a valid and important function in the Christian Era.

In the phrase “till the seed should come” (Gal. 3:19), the word “till” does not limit the duration and functioning of the law. Paul wrote to Timothy: “Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine” (1 Tim. 4:13). That did not mean that when Paul arrived Timothy could cease reading, exhorting, and teaching. The Lord instructs us: “But that which ye have already hold fast till I come” (Rev. 2:25). But we are not thereby to conclude that once He has come we will cease to hold fast.

The coming of Christ did not render the law inoperative. Christ was the living embodiment of His law. (See Isa. 42:21; John 8:29, 46.) He super-

seded the law only in the sense that He is able to do for the sinner all that the law does—point out sin—and much more besides—deliver him from sin.



God's revelation in Christ went beyond the law. The revelation of God in Christ went far beyond anything revealed at Sinai. Looking at Christ's life and teachings, we have a far greater sense of sin and a much broader and deeper understanding of salvation than was revealed through the moral and ceremonial laws. God's revelation in Christ went beyond the law, but it did not invalidate the moral law.

5. What part of the law given through Moses was replaced at the cross? Eph. 2:14, 15; Heb. 10:1-10.

6. Which part of the law given through Moses is still binding upon Christians? Rom. 7:7; James 2:10-12; 1 John 2:4; Rev. 12:17.

A twofold system of law. "God's people, whom He calls His peculiar treasure, were privileged with a twofold system of law; the moral and the ceremonial. The one, pointing back to creation to keep in remembrance the living God who made the world, whose claims are binding upon all men in every dispensation, and which will exist through all time and eternity. The other, given because of man's transgression of the moral law, the obedience to which consisted in sacrifices and offerings pointing to the future redemption. Each is clear and distinct from the other.

"From the creation the moral law was an essential part of God's divine plan, and was as unchangeable as Himself. The ceremonial law was to answer a particular purpose in Christ's plan for the salvation of the race."—Ellen G. White *Comments, SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1094.

Both moral and ceremonial laws "added." Both aspects of the twofold system of law (moral and ceremonial) were "added" at Sinai "because of transgressions" (Gal. 3:19). The ceremonial law was done away at the cross when type met antitype and the earthly ministry was replaced by the heavenly ministry. The moral law of Ten Commandments continues to function, even though Christ surpasses it as a revelation of the will and the character of God.

7. What do the following passages indicate regarding the correct functions of the law before the cross?

- Ps. 119:1, 9-11 _____
- Neh. 9:13, 29 _____
- Gal. 3:23-25 _____
- Gal. 4:1-5 _____

● Heb. 9:15 _____

WED

Three functions of the law. The Bible teaches that before the cross the law (moral and ceremonial) was employed by God to fulfill three functions:

1. The law pointed out sin: As we have seen, the law was “added because of transgressions” (Gal. 3:19). The Revised Standard Version translates Romans 5:20: “Law came in, to increase the trespass; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more.” Because the children of Israel had forgotten God’s law during their period of Egyptian slavery, the law was given again at Sinai to make sin appear in all its hideous ugliness.

Christ’s perfect life more effectively exposes human sin than does the law. (See 1 Peter 2:21, 22; Phil. 2:5.) But the law still functions as a mirror of human sin. (See James 1:22-25.)

2. The law (moral and ceremonial) provided the primary revelation of God to Old Testament mankind: “Before faith came, we were kept under the law. . . . Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ. . . . But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster” (Gal. 3:23-25). This passage will be interpreted more fully later. Suffice it to say here, that the passage applies to the situation before the cross because of its context (Gal. 3:19; 4:1-4).

Paul refers to Israel before the cross as an “heir” who is a “child” treated like a “servant” (Gal. 4:1). This “child” was “under tutors and governors [the law] until the time appointed of the father” (verse 2). “But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law” (verse 4).

Christ was born and lived in the period before the cross when law was God’s chief revelation to mankind. He came to give a supreme revelation, but lived as a Jew under the Judaic system. The primary revelation of God before “the fulness of the time” (Gal. 4:4) was law, moral and ceremonial.

Christ does not abolish the law as a revelation of God, but He surpasses its efficiency in this respect. “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds” (Heb. 1:1, 2). The book of Hebrews emphasizes that Christ is a better sacrifice, a better High Priest, who provides a better ministry. Moreover, He reveals God’s character in a way that the moral law cannot.

3. Before the cross the law condemned all mankind to eternal death. “When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, . . . to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons” (Gal. 4:4, 5). Redemption was provided for the entire race at the cross. Prior to that those who believed in the Messiah to come were given justification and treated as saved souls. (See Gen. 15:6.) But legally they were not free from the law’s condemnation until the penalty for their sins was paid. None of the believers before the cross would ever be raised from the dead if Christ had failed in His mission. “And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen

asleep in Christ are perished" (1 Cor. 15:17, 18). Freedom from legal condemnation was not achieved until the penalty was paid on Calvary. "And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, *for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance*" (Heb. 9:15, italics supplied).

Now the legal status of all human beings is changed. The penalty is paid. Those who accept the justification Christ has earned and is offering can have eternal life. Because the penalty has been paid, believers before and after the cross can legally be granted eternal life. No longer can the law condemn one who accepts the Messiah. The promise of eternal life for believers both before and after the cross has now become a certainty.

If Christ had failed. "But if Christ could be overcome, the earth would become Satan's kingdom, and the human race would be forever in his power. . . . The awful moment had come—that moment which was to decide the destiny of the world. The fate of humanity trembled in the balance. Christ might even now refuse to drink the cup apportioned to guilty man. It was not yet too late. He might wipe the bloody sweat from His brow, and leave man to perish in his iniquity."—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 687, 690.



III. BY A MEDIATOR (Gal. 3:19, 20).

8. Who were God's instruments in bringing the law to His people? Gal. 3:19, 20; see also Deut. 5:5; 33:2; Acts 7:53; Heb. 2:2.

"The law was ordained through angels by the agency—literally, 'in (the) hand'—of an intermediary. This would seem to be a clear echo of Deut. 5:5, where Moses says, 'I stood between Jehovah and you at that time.' The lesson, then, which Paul is teaching the Galatians is clearly this: the law given at Sinai, though ordained by God through his holy angels by the agency of Moses, and though, accordingly, holy, righteous, and good (Rom. 7:12; cf. 2:18; 8:7; 9:4), is inferior to the promise, for while *the law came indirectly from God to his people, the promise was made to Abraham (and thus to all believers) directly by God himself*. When a ruler, whether president, king, or queen, wishes to communicate a message to his people, there are all kinds of indirect avenues by means of which he is able to do this, but when the message is of supreme importance, he will unburden his very heart by addressing his people directly, today by means of radio or television. Thus also, the gospel of salvation by grace alone is so precious to the heart of God to whom the impartation of this salvation meant nothing less than the agonizing death of his only Son, that he appeals to each of us directly and personally, saying, 'My son—my daughter—give me your heart' (Prov. 23:6). . . .

"Though a human intermediary may be ever so important, he is, after all, only a third party acting between two other parties. Moses served as a human link between God and the people. Such an intermediary lacks inde-

pendent authority. God, however, is *One*. When he made his promise to Abraham—and through him to *all* believers, whether Jew or Gentile (Rom. 3:30!)—he did this on his own sovereign account, directly, personally. He was speaking from the heart to the heart.”—William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary on Galatians*, pp. 142, 143.

9. What experiences stand out as occasions when God dealt personally with Abraham rather than going through a human intermediary? Gen. 15:1-6; 17:1-8; 22:1-3.

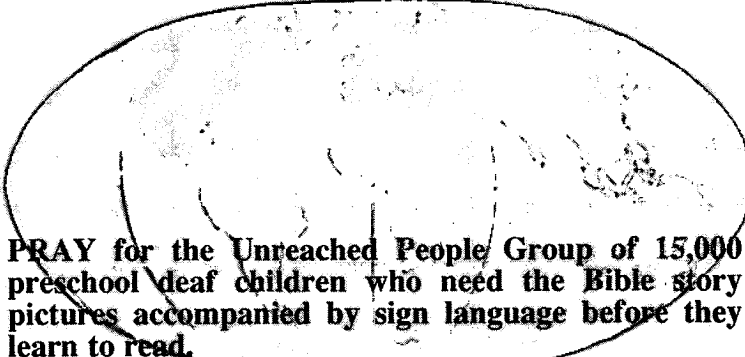
QUESTIONS TO PONDER.

- Why do you think God found it necessary to deal with the Israelites through an intermediary while He was willing to deal with Abraham directly?
- Do you anticipate having a face-to-face relationship with God someday? What preparation will you need to make to have such an encounter?



FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION: Read Ellen G. White, “The Law and the Gospel,” *Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 229-232, and “It Is Finished,” *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 758-764.

SUMMARY: The law given at Sinai did not invalidate the promise of righteousness by faith that God gave to Abraham, but was rather added to the promise to reinforce it. Between Sinai and Calvary, law had several functions that have been surpassed today. Nevertheless, the moral law still carries as much authority as it ever did.



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Law As a Protector

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Galatians 3:21-25.



MEMORY TEXT: "But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe" (Galatians 3:22).

WHERE WOULD WE BE WITHOUT THE CROSS? Would obedience to the Ten Commandments have saved fallen human beings if there had been no cross? Of course not! Would the sacrifices and offerings of the Old Testament period result in salvation for those who offered them by faith, if there had been no cross? Indeed no! Salvation for humanity in every era depends on the sacrifice and ministry of Jesus Christ. This fact was ignored by the Jewish legalists who had deceived the Galatians. Paul answered them by contrasting the situation "under the law" (before the cross) with the situation after Christ had paid the penalty for sin.

OUTLINE:

- I. Law in Relation to Gospel (Gal. 3:23-25).**
- II. "We Were Kept Under the Law" (Gal. 3:23).**
- III. The Positive Side of Law.**
- IV. The Law a Schoolmaster (Gal. 3:23, 24).**

CALVARY MEANS EVERYTHING. As Calvary meant everything for people who lived before the first coming of Jesus, so it means everything to us now. But do we appreciate what God has done?

From Sinai to Calvary. Before the cross, God offered His people salvation by a faith-grace relationship with Himself. This relationship was fostered by means of law (moral and ceremonial). The moral law revealed sin, pointing the sinner to the coming Saviour. The ceremonial law illustrated ahead of time Christ's sacrifice and ministry for sinners. Moral and ceremonial law were designed to teach the people God's will and His plan for saving them. But most people went blithely on, unaware of the great sacrifice God would make for them.

Even after the cross, some professed Christians thought law would save them. The full significance of God's great sacrifice was lost to them. Unfortunately there are many today who, like the Galatians, are looking to their own efforts for salvation, instead of responding with faith and love to God's infinite gift of His Son.

I. LAW IN RELATION TO GOSPEL (Gal. 3:21, 22).

1. What is the meaning of Paul's question: "Is the law then against the promises of God?" Gal. 3:21.

The teaching of the Judaizers was making the law (moral and ceremonial) contradict the gospel. They were urging the Galatians to keep the law as *the means* of salvation. The law was given by God for a purpose, but it was never intended to be a substitute for the everlasting covenant experience. God's law has never been opposed to faith. Righteousness has never been by the law. The law cannot justify us.

The correct function of the law. "Although the Law discloses and increases sin, it is still not against the promises of God but is, in fact, for them. For in its true and proper work and purpose it humbles a man and prepares him—if he uses the Law correctly—to yearn and seek for grace. For only when a man's sin is disclosed and increased through the Law does he begin to see the wickedness of the human heart and its hostility toward the Law and toward God, the Author of the Law. Then he seriously feels that he not only does not love but hates and blasphemes God, the supremely good, with His most holy Law. Now he is forced to confess that there is nothing good in him at all. When he has been crushed and humbled this way, he acknowledges that he is truly miserable and damned. Therefore when the Law forces a man to acknowledge his evil this way and to confess his sin sincerely, it has performed its function."—*Luther's Works: Lectures on Galatians, 1535* (Saint Louis: Concordia, 1963), vol. 26, pp. 328, 329.

2. How does Paul say salvation is attained? Gal. 3:22.

Law and gospel work together. Galatians 3:22 is an excellent summary of the gospel and of how the law and the gospel work together to bring salvation. When Paul says, "The Scripture declares that the whole world is a prisoner of sin" (NIV), he could just as well have said, "The law declares that the whole world is a prisoner of sin," because in another place he said, "through the law we become conscious of sin" (Romans 3:20, NIV). Law declares that we are sinners; Jesus saves us from sin by His death; and each Christian's faith appropriates that salvation to himself. That is the gospel, of which law is an essential part, *after* the cross just as much as *before*.

What does knowledge of the law do for you?

- What important lessons about salvation can we learn by studying the entire law revealed at Sinai?
- Think of a time when you felt convicted of a particular sin, and you repented, confessed, and asked for forgiveness. What did your knowledge of God's moral standard do for you?

MON II. "WE WERE KEPT UNDER THE LAW" (Gal. 3:23).

3. Who does Paul say was "kept under the law"? Gal. 3:23.

A statement to Jews. It is important to understand that in Galatians 3:23-25 Paul is addressing his fellow Jews in the Galatian church, explaining to them the purpose of Judaism before Christ. "We Jews" were kept under the law; the law was a schoolmaster to bring "us Jews" to Christ. Paul began this "we Jews" point of view in chapter 2:15 and carried it intermittently through chapter 4:5.

4. When does Paul say that "we" were kept under law? Gal. 3:23.

Before faith came. This phrase refers in context primarily to the period before the cross. "Before faith came" means before the coming of the Seed (verse 19), before "the fulness of the time" when "God sent forth his Son" (Gal. 4:4). It also is true that "before faith came" may refer to our experience before we found Christ as Saviour and Lord.

Paul does not mean that righteousness by faith was inoperative before the cross. He has just argued exactly the opposite! The Greek actually says, "the faith." In English we use the expression "the faith" when we wish to refer to a particular religious system: "The Christian faith," "the Protestant faith." The Greek seems to carry the same meaning.

Paul might have said, "Before Christ paid the penalty for sin on the cross" or "before salvation was earned for both Old and New Testament humankind" or "before justification could be offered legally and unconditionally to all humanity." (See Heb. 9:15.) There was a conditional element to justification before the cross (1 Cor. 15:17, 18). If Christ had not suffered for sin and risen from the dead, no justified Old Testament saint would experience resurrection to eternal life.

TUE 5. In what sense were the chosen people "kept under the law" before the cross? Gal. 3:23; compare Gal. 4:1-5.

Other translations. "Now before faith came, we were confined under the law, kept under restraint until faith should be revealed" (RSV). "Before this faith came, we were held prisoners by the law, locked up until faith should be revealed" (NIV). "Before this faith came, we were close prisoners in the custody of law, pending the revelation of faith" (NEB). "Before the coming of faith we were all imprisoned under the power of the Law, with our only hope of deliverance the faith that was to be shown to us" (Phillips).

"Kept under the law." The Greek word for "kept under" means "to guard," "hold in custody," "confine." The Greek word translated "shut

up" (Gal. 3:23, KJV) means "to enclose," "confine," "imprison." The meaning is not that the law was done away by Christ's death. Romans 3:20 and 7:7-13 make clear that law still has a most important role to play in the life of the Christian. (See also Matt. 5:17; 1 Tim. 1:8; James 2:8-12; 1 John 3:4.)

"Under the law" in Galatians 3:23 does not mean "under the law as a means of earning salvation." Paul is opposed to such a use of law. In this passage he is speaking of the *correct*, divinely ordained function of the law before the cross.

The phrase "under the law" is explained by the three functions of the law before the cross presented in the previous lesson:

1. Israel was under the law before the cross in that law was then the primary means by which sin was pointed out. God's law still functions in this way, but Christ fulfills the task even more effectively.

2. Before the cross, law (moral and ceremonial) was the means by which God's will and His gospel were made known. Christ has surpassed the law as a revelation of God, even though the law still functions in this way.

3. Before the cross all mankind were under the legal condemnation of the law. Even those who, in terms of experience, were justified by faith were not finally freed from condemnation until Christ died and rose again.

Applying Galatians 3:23 to life today.

- Are Christians today under guard? In what sense?
- What advantages do you have as a believer in Jesus Christ that could not have been enjoyed by a faithful Israelite before the cross?

III. THE POSITIVE SIDE OF LAW.

6. What benefits did Moses tell the Israelites would be theirs in keeping the law? Deut. 7:12-24; 28:1-14.

Blessings for obedience. How can we reconcile Moses' positive view of law with Paul's remarks that may appear negative? Actually, Paul is not as negative toward law as some think. In Romans he asked, "What advantage, then, is there in being a Jew, or what value is there in circumcision?" He answered, "Much in every way! First of all, they have been entrusted with the very words [law] of God" (Rom. 3:1, 2, NIV). Nor is Galatians 3:23 intended to be negative. We applaud parents for guarding their children. When a mother says to her 3-year-old, "Don't cross the street without holding my hand," she has the very best interest of her child at heart. Understood in this way, Moses and Paul do not contradict each other.

The law a wall of protection. "The law of ten commandments is not to be looked upon as much from the prohibitory side, as from the mercy side. Its prohibitions are the sure guarantee of happiness in obedience. As received in Christ, it works in us the purity of character that will bring joy to us through eternal ages. To the obedient it is a wall of protection. We

behold in it the goodness of God, who by revealing to men the immutable principles of righteousness, seeks to shield them from the evils that result from transgression.”—*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 235.

Thought questions.

- Why did God wait until A.D. 27 to present Jesus as the Messiah? Why couldn't Jesus have come at the time of the Exodus?
- How have God's law and man's law protected you?

WED

IV. THE LAW A SCHOOLMASTER (Gal. 3:23-25).

7. In what sense was the law “our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith”? Gal. 3:24.

What is a “schoolmaster”? The word *schoolmaster* in Galatians 3:24 (KJV) comes from the Greek word *paidagogos*. A *paidagogos* was “a tutor, or ‘guardian,’ of children. . . . In Greek households the *paidagogos* was a supervisor of, a companion to, boys. He accompanied them to school, protected them from harm, kept them from mischief, and had the right to discipline them. In Greek art he is generally represented with a stick in his hand.”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 961.

The idea of restriction is definitely present, especially in the sense of an adult protecting a child out of loving concern for his safety. The “schoolmaster” spoken of by Paul is not a teacher wielding a cane with which he forces children into obedience. The law was a guardian, a protector, and a guide.

Which law was the “schoolmaster”? “I am asked concerning the law in Galatians. What law is the schoolmaster to bring us to Christ? I answer: Both the ceremonial and the moral code of ten commandments. . . .

“‘The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.’ In this scripture, the Holy Spirit through the apostle is speaking especially of the moral law. The law reveals sin to us, and causes us to feel our need of Christ, and to flee unto Him for pardon and peace by exercising repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.”—Ellen G. White comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, pp. 1109, 1110.

The law in charge until Christ came. In Galatians 3:19, 23, 24 Paul is concerned to describe the ways in which God intended the law to function up to the death of Christ. The NIV, which translates Galatians 3:24, “So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ” has a footnote that reads, “Or [put in] charge until Christ came.” (Italics supplied.)

8. How does the law's function as a “schoolmaster” (Gal. 3:24) relate to the righteousness-by-faith experience? What evidence is there that the experience of righteousness by faith was possible in Old Testament times? Hab. 2:4; Gen. 15:6; compare Deut. 6:4-6; 10:16; 30:6, 11-14; Rom. 2:29; 10:6-10.

In context, Paul's meaning is that the law functioned as the "schoolmaster" until Christ came. By His death on the cross, Christ provided justification by faith as a historical reality. The promise of ultimate, eternal vindication promised to believers who were justified before the cross was finally made certain by Christ's death and resurrection. Consider the following passages in the context of Galatians 3:24:

Gal. 3:19: The law was "added . . . till the seed [Christ] should come."

Gal. 3:23: "Before faith came," that is, before Christ (the Seed) came "we were kept under the law."

Gal. 4:2: Israel was "under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father."

Gal. 4:4, 5: Only "when the fulness of the time was come" did God send "forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law [i.e. under the "schoolmaster"]."

The cross made justification available to the entire race (Rom. 5:18). Christ died "for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament" (Heb. 9:15). The experience of justification granted to the faithful in Old Testament times was earned and ratified at the cross. Justification and the gift of eternal life before the cross were conditional upon Christ's paying the penalty for sin and rising from the dead (1 Cor. 15:17, 18). In this sense the law was a "schoolmaster" until the cross, when justification for the entire race was made available. We can rejoice with Paul at this event, because it made our salvation possible.

9. What event removed the "schoolmaster" function of law? Gal. 3:25.

Paul would not have us conclude that salvation was not by faith in Old Testament times. He uses Abraham as the great example of faith (Romans 4; Gal. 3:8, 9, 29). He explains that the giving of the law at Sinai did not change God's method of saving humanity (Gal. 3:14-18). "The promise of the Spirit through faith" (verse 14) was available to those who lived between Sinai and the cross as it was to Abraham and to Christians.

By saying that "the faith" replaced the "schoolmaster" Paul does not mean that the cross abolished the law. (See Rom. 3:31; 7:7, 12, 14; 8:3, 4.) He means that Calvary transcends the law as a mirror of sin, and a revelation of the character of God. He also means that on the cross Christ died for the sins of all humanity (compare 1 John 2:2), thus making forgiveness available for all. God forgave sins before the cross conditionally upon Christ's success in bearing the guilt of humanity. Now forgiveness is available to all because the guilt of all has been borne. Those who receive Christ now (Rom. 5:17) are justified without any further sacrifice for sin being necessary.

The law led the nation Israel to Christ historically, and the law leads each of us to Christ in terms of experience. When Christ died, faithful Israelites who died before the cross were legally justified. When we allow the law to point us to Christ, we believe and are justified. Thus the cross meant eternal life to believers before the cross as it means eternal life to believers today.

WHERE DO I STAND IN RELATION TO CHRIST?

Consider your life before you trusted Christ. Rate each of the words below on a scale of one to ten.

Go over the same list again thinking about your experience after you trusted Christ and rate the words on the same scale.

	BEFORE FAITH	AFTER FAITH
Interpersonal relationships	_____	_____
Sense of self-worth	_____	_____
Satisfaction	_____	_____
Happiness	_____	_____
Peace of mind	_____	_____
Sense of well-being	_____	_____
Reputation	_____	_____
Financial condition	_____	_____
Health	_____	_____
Ethical behavior	_____	_____
Prayer life	_____	_____

Put an "X" by the changes above that were most evident to you and an "O" by the changes that were most evident to others.



FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION: Read "The Law in Galatians" in *Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 233-235.

SUMMARY: The law was given to reveal sin and point the sinner to Christ. He alone is the means of justification. The law before the cross was the custodian of God's people until the penalty for sin was paid.



PRAY for the Unreached People Group of 700,000 prison inmates in 800+ prisons in the United States—the third highest prisoner rate in the world.

Sons and Daughters of God

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Galatians 3:26—4:20.



MEMORY TEXT: "If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Galatians 3:29).

CHRISTIANS ARE FAMILY MEMBERS. Every true Christian is a son or daughter of Abraham, adopted into the family of God through his relationship with Christ. We must hold fast to this confidence, refusing to entangle ourselves again with the beliefs and practices that we gave up in order to unite our lives with Him.

OUTLINE:

- I. Sons and Daughters of God (Gal. 3:26-29).
- II. Slaves and Children Set Free (Gal. 4:1-7).
- III. Do Not Return to Slavery (Gal. 4:8-10).
- IV. Paul's Personal Testimony (Gal. 4:11-16).
- V. The Jewish Party's False Zeal (Gal. 4:17-20).

ONE IN CHRIST. "When Wycliffe translator Doug Meland and his wife moved into a village of Brazil's Fulnio Indians, he was referred to simply as 'the white man.' The term was by no means complimentary, since other white men had exploited them, burned their homes, and robbed them of their lands.

"But after the Melands learned the Fulnio language and began to help the people with medicine and in other ways, they began calling Doug 'the respectable white man.'

"When the Melands began adapting the customs of the people, the Fulnio gave them greater acceptance and spoke of Doug as 'the white Indian.'

"Then one day, as Doug was washing the dirty, blood-caked foot of an injured Fulnio boy, he overheard a bystander say to another: 'Whoever heard of a white man washing an Indian's foot before? Certainly this man is from God!' From that day on, whenever Doug would go into an Indian home, it would be announced: 'Here comes the man God sent us.'"—James C. Hefley, quoted by *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations*, p. 757.

We are all one in Christ. Whatever our national or racial heritage, we are children of the heavenly King, and brothers and sisters in Christ. This is the message of the first part of this week's lesson (sections I and II). In the second part of the lesson (sections III and IV), Paul pleads with the Galatians to maintain their freedom in Christ.

I. SONS AND DAUGHTERS OF GOD (Gal. 3:26-29).

- 1. What special relationship do those who accept Jesus Christ have to God, and what does God do to make that relationship possible? Gal. 3:26, 27; 4:5; see also John 1:12; 1 John 3:2; Rom. 8:16.**
-

The family of God. Anyone who has a relationship with Jesus is a son or daughter of God, not by natural birth but through the new birth. The Bible calls this special relationship "adoption." Parents often tell their adopted children that they are special "because Mother and Daddy *chose* you." Jesus said to His disciples, "I have chosen you" (John 15:16).

Loving parents treat an adopted child with as much concern and affection as if it had been born to them. This is the way God treats us. If we consider the angels to be God's "natural-born" children, then those of us who accept Christ have all the spiritual rights and privileges of heavenly angels! We are a part of the family of God. (See Eph. 3:14, 15.) Our relationship to our heavenly Father is intended to be permanent. God will never forsake us. (See Heb. 13:5; Matt. 28:20.) As long as we decide to maintain our union with Him, our heavenly Father will hold us close to Himself.

SUN

- 2. What human distinctions between people does our union with Christ break down? Gal. 3:28.**
-

Equality in Christ. Paul does not mean that in Christ men stop being male or that women are no longer female. Nor is he arguing that we should break down the relationships between men and women that are established in the Bible. Those who are born Jews will always be recognized as Jews, and those who are Gentiles will always be Gentiles. Paul is not even arguing in this context for a break-up of the institution of slavery—though there are other valid biblical reasons for eliminating that barbaric system. Paul recognized the legality of a slave's position under Roman law and encouraged Christians to maintain the spirit of Christ towards a social institution that they could not eliminate. (See 1 Cor. 7:20-24; Eph. 6:5-9; Philemon.)

Paul's point is that in Christ the pride and alienation created by differences of nationality, status, and sex should cease to exist. Even a master and a slave are brothers in Christ and should respect each other as spiritual equals and as persons of equal worth in God's sight.

- 3. What special privilege is ours as sons and daughters of God? Gal. 3:29. See also Romans 8:16, 17.**
-

God's promises to the Jews. Dispensationalists argue that God's promises to the Jews must be literally fulfilled to the Jews themselves. From this they conclude that in these last days the Jewish people have been

restored to God's favor in order to receive His promises. They see the modern reestablishment of the nation Israel as a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy.

The Bible is clear on these two points: (a) Restoration to God's favor is always based on repentance (Deut. 30:1-3), never on blood relationship (Luke 3:7, 8); (b) Through Christ the Gentiles are heirs to all the promises God made to Abraham and his descendants. Therefore, God has kept His promise to Abraham even if the Jews as a race and as a nation do not receive them, because spiritual Israel will accept them. Spiritual Israel, of course, includes those Jews who are believers in Christ. (See Rom. 11:23-26.)

Looking at life today.

- What groups in my society can Christ restore to oneness in Him?
- Many Christians think they have a saving relationship with Christ when in fact they do not. (See Matt. 7:21-23.) What is the difference between them and the person who is serving Christ to the best of his knowledge, even though he has not received light on certain things?

MON

II. SLAVES AND CHILDREN SET FREE (Gal. 4:1-7).

4. What was the condition of God's people before Christ came? To what were God's people enslaved? Gal. 4:1-3.

Jews and Gentiles before Christ. The expression, "elements of the world," comes from the Greek word which means the fundamental principles of a thing. Paul speaks of Jews before the time of Christ as being subject to certain basic, elementary principles of religion. Until the coming of the fuller revelation through Christ, Israel was limited to revelation through law; moral and ceremonial. The moral law, then as now, was a true indicator of the character of God and the expositor of the perversity of sin. The ceremonial law was the gospel in type, an acted parable of the work that Christ would do for the world. God had given His people both aspects of the law. But He intended the coming of Christ to make a difference. Christ was the greater Light (John 1:9) to whom the lesser light (the law) pointed.

Paul goes on to suggest that the condition of Gentile Christians during their former lives, while subject to heathen religions, was even worse (Gal. 4:8, 9). They were serving gods that "are no gods" (verse 8). Paul rebukes the Galatians for wanting to revert to a primitive kind of religion that leaves the Saviour out of the picture.

As heirs of the promises made to Abraham, the Jews before Christ were better off than the Gentiles. But for Jewish Christians to use the law as the means of salvation meant that they were as lost as Gentiles who were worshipping nonexistent deities.

5. What change did Christ bring? Gal. 4:4, 5.
-

Before the cross. As an heir, a child “owns the whole estate” (NIV), yet he is *treated* much the same as a slave (Gal. 4:1, 2). He must obey his parents implicitly, as does a slave. He cannot own property, and he is not free to come and go as he pleases. Similarly, the Jews before Christ, though heirs of the promises and children of God, were nevertheless subject to a religious system involving: (a) law as a revelation of God; (b) a ceremonial system that was an imperfect, earthly representation of the sacrifice and ministry of the Messiah; (c) legal condemnation for all mankind until the penalty for sin was paid by the Messiah.

After the cross. “What is emphasized in these verses [Gal. 4:4, 5] is that the one whom God sent to accomplish our redemption was perfectly qualified to do so. He was God’s Son. He was also born of a human mother, He was human as well as divine, the one and only God-man. And He was born ‘under the law,’ that is, of a Jewish mother, into the Jewish nation, subject to the Jewish law. Throughout His life He submitted to all the requirements of the law. He succeeded where all others before and since have failed: He perfectly fulfilled the righteousness of the law. So the divinity of Christ, the humanity of Christ and the righteousness of Christ uniquely qualified Him to be man’s redeemer. If He had not been man, He could not have redeemed men. If He had not been a righteous man, He could not have redeemed unrighteous men. And if He had not been God’s Son, He could not have redeemed men for God or made them the sons of God.”—John R. W. Stott, *Only One Way, the Message of Galatians* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1968), p. 106.

We add that the redemption won by Christ involved deliverance from the legal condemnation of the law. Not until Calvary was sin atoned for—both that committed before and that committed after the cross. (See Heb. 9:15; 10:4-10, 14.)

TUE 6. How did the condition of both Jews and Gentiles change with the coming of Christ and their acceptance of Him? Gal. 4:6, 7.

Reflections.

- If you became a Christian as an adult, what practices of your former life do you consider to be “basic elements” to which you should not return? If you grew up a Christian, what religious practices do you particularly want to avoid?
- What aspects of the Adventist faith provide freedom for its members?

III. DO NOT RETURN TO SLAVERY (Gal. 4:8-11).

7. To what, specifically, were the Gentile Christians in Galatia enslaved before coming to Christ? Gal. 4:8; compare John 15:15.

False religion. Paul’s statement, “ye did service unto them which by

nature are no gods," is a specific reference to the false religions of the heathen. The pagan deities "were idols, or false gods, and thus really not gods at all. . . . Before they learned of Christ, the Gentiles had been in bondage to their gods. This was not true of Jewish Christians, for they had not been worshiping idols when they learned of Christ."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 967.

8. In accepting the teachings of the Jewish party, what were the Gentile Christians actually doing? Gal. 4:8, 9.

Slaves to Judaism. Paul says, in effect, "You Gentiles were slaves to heathen religions. Do not become slaves to Judaism." At first glance he appears to be comparing ideas that are not at all alike. However, a careful application of his son-slave analogy clears up the difficulty. Before Christ came, Judaism was superior to the heathen religions, but both became false religious systems. A former pagan who was set free in Christ and then accepted Judaism was simply exchanging one bad thing for another. He was substituting a different set of "basic elements of the world."

The Galatians could be likened to a slave, adopted into the family as an adult son and heir, deliberately putting himself in the position of a child heir, subject to practically the same restrictions he was under as a slave.

WED **9. What specific false practice did the Jewish party urge on Gentile Christians? Gal. 4:10.**

Not the Sabbath. Christians who keep Sunday sometimes cite this text as evidence that the Sabbath was done away with in the New Testament. However, "Paul here refers to the seven ceremonial sabbaths and the new moons of the ceremonial system (see Lev. 23; Num. 10:10; 28:11-15). There is no basis in Scripture for assuming, as some do, that the 'days' of which Paul here speaks refer to the seventh-day Sabbath. Nowhere in the Bible is the seventh day referred to in the language here used. Furthermore, the seventh-day Sabbath was instituted at creation, (see on Gen. 2:1-3; cf. on Ex. 20:8-11), before the entrance of sin and some 2,500 years before the inauguration of the ceremonial system at Mt. Sinai. If observance of the seventh-day Sabbath subjects a man to bondage, it must be that the Creator Himself entered into bondage when He observed the world's first Sabbath! And that conclusion is unthinkable."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 967.

Practical application.

- Is spiritual slavery an attitude, a specific kind of behavior, or both?
- How can you tell the difference between a religious practice that constitutes genuine Christian worship or lifestyle, and one that enslaves?

IV. PAUL'S PERSONAL TESTIMONY (Gal. 4:11-16).

10. What do you think was Paul's greatest concern for his Galatian church members? Gal. 4:11, 12; 3:1, 2.

11. What was Paul's physical condition when he first preached to the Galatians? How did the Galatians receive him then? Gal. 4:13-16.

“Paul's manner of life while among the Galatians was such that he could afterward say, 'I beseech you, be as I am.' Galatians 4:12. His lips had been touched with a live coal from off the altar, and he was enabled to rise above bodily infirmities and to present Jesus as the sinner's only hope. Those who heard him knew that he had been with Jesus. Endued with power from on high, he was able to compare spiritual things with spiritual and to tear down the strongholds of Satan. Hearts were broken by his presentation of the love of God, as revealed in the sacrifice of His only-begotten Son, and many were led to inquire, 'What must I do to be saved?'—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 208.

If it had been possible the Galatians would have given their eyes to Paul. “Paul had a bodily affliction; his eyesight was bad.”—Ellen G. White comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1107.

What a contrast was their present attitude to Paul! Sadly the apostle asks, “Have I now become your enemy by telling you the truth?” (Gal. 4:16, NIV).

Making Paul's experience your own.

- Can you identify a time in your life when God used a great trial to lead you where He wanted you to go?
- What blessings have you received through ministry to someone in need? Do you know someone in need who might be blessed through your ministry?

T V. THE JEWISH PARTY'S FALSE ZEAL (Gal. 4:17-20).

12. What does Paul suggest was the motive behind the Jewish party's effort to win over the Galatians? Gal. 4:17.

A false interest. The New International Version paraphrases: “Those people are zealous to win you over, but for no good. What they want is to alienate you from us, so that you may be zealous for them.”

13. What does Galatians 4:18 suggest was wrong with the Jewish party's zeal?

“Zeal itself is to be commended if it reflects worthy motives. . . . Zeal can never be a substitute for sanctified, straight thinking. The zeal of Judaism and the Judaizers was not according to knowledge (Rom. 10:2).”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, pp. 969, 970.

14. What was Paul’s greatest desire at the moment he was writing these words to the Galatians? Gal. 4:19, 20.

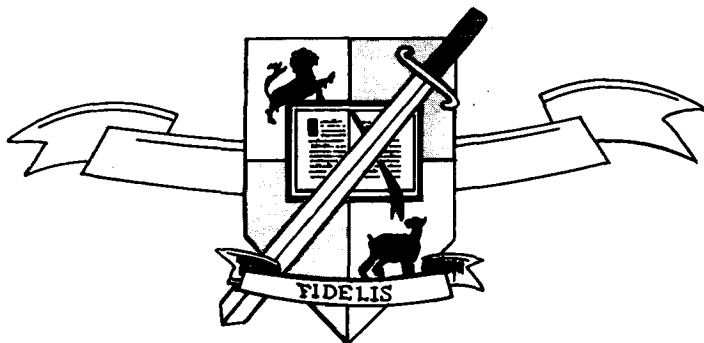
WHAT CAN I DO?

- What can I do to prevent a fanatical church member from destabilizing newly baptized Christians?
- What can I do to preserve unity among my brothers and sisters in Christ? How can I rid myself of attitudes, thoughts, and feelings that will destroy loving unity in the church?
- What can I do to preserve the doctrinal purity of the church without destroying the unity of love that should exist?



FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION: Read the chapter entitled “Christ Our Only Hope” in *Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 226-228.

SUMMARY: Paul felt a deep affection for the Galatian converts, who had ministered lovingly to his needs in years past. His strong language was motivated by a desire to see them free in Jesus.



COMMITMENT

THAT’S WHAT JESUS LOOKED FOR IN HIS DISCIPLES
 THAT’S WHAT HE IS LOOKING FOR IN HIS DISCIPLES TODAY
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New Versus Old Covenant

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Galatians 4:21-31.



MEMORY TEXT: "Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman. So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free" (Galatians 4:30, 31).

FAITH VERSUS LEGALISM. Seeking salvation by works of law is living under the old covenant. By faith accepting salvation as Christ's free gift of grace is living under the new covenant. The new-covenant experience *results in* works of faith and conformity to God's law.

OUTLINE:

- I. The Two Covenants: Earth's First Family (Heb. 11:1-4).
- II. The Two Covenants: Abraham's Experience (Gal. 4:21-24).
- III. The Two Covenants: Sinai (Gal. 4:24-26).
- IV. The Two Covenants: Two Ministries (Heb. 7:20-28; 9:1, 11-14).
- V. Freedom Versus Slavery (Gal. 4:27-31).

CHRIST-DEPENDENCE VERSUS SELF-DEPENDENCE. In the thirteenth century, the pope mentioned to the famous theologian Thomas Aquinas that the Vatican had no financial troubles, since there was an abundant supply of silver and gold in the treasury of the church. He added that, unlike Peter, he could not say, "Silver and gold have I none." Aquinas replied, "But are you able to say, 'In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk?'" (Acts 3:6).

In our personal lives, our professional lives, our church life, all of us seek solvency and independence. Educational systems usually emphasize the importance of self-help. We earned those grades, achieved that academic success, merited those degrees.

We cannot earn righteousness. For the sake of our spiritual health and well-being the Lord confronts us with another way. It is not possible to earn forgiveness for sin; we cannot win favor with God. It is not possible, in and of ourselves, to live the good lives that Christ instructs us to live. It is not possible to make ourselves righteous in God's sight. It is not possible to gain heaven by resourceful, independent, personal endeavor.

In respect to righteousness of heart and behavior, Christ is the only way. In regard to salvation, the crucial factor is total dependence upon the Lord. Of course, our wills are involved! We choose to surrender, we resist sin,

we exert effort to do what is right. But all our efforts are fruitless without Christ's powerful presence living out His will through us.

SUN

I. THE TWO COVENANTS: EARTH'S FIRST FAMILY (Heb. 11:1-4).

1. How did God first reveal to our original parents the method by which he would save the world from sin? Gen. 3:15.

“The covenant of grace was first made with man in Eden, when after the Fall there was given a divine promise that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. To all men this covenant offered pardon and the assisting grace of God for future obedience through faith in Christ. It also promised them eternal life on condition of fidelity to God's law. Thus the patriarchs received the hope of salvation.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 370.

2. How did the worship of Cain and Abel illustrate the false and true ways of coming to God? Heb. 11:4; compare Gen. 4:3-5.

The two covenants are well illustrated by the experiences of Cain and Abel. The Lord offered them both the same terms: salvation by faith in the coming Messiah. They were to demonstrate their faith in the work of the Messiah by offering animal sacrifices. (See *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 71, 72.) These sacrifices were to foreshadow the sacrifice of the Messiah.

Cain offered to the Lord his own terms. He sought acceptance because of the work of his own hands. But his work could not win favor with God. Cain took God's covenant terms and tried to change them to suit himself. He substituted works for a faith-grace relationship with the Lord. Using the terminology of the apostle Paul, we can say that Cain was living under the old covenant. He had rejected the new or everlasting covenant.

In contrast, Abel accepted God's terms, believed in the Messiah to come, “by which he obtained witness that he was righteous” (Heb. 11:4). Abel was living under the new, or everlasting, covenant.

II. THE TWO COVENANTS: ABRAHAM'S EXPERIENCE (Gal. 4:21-24).

3. What question did Paul ask that revealed the problem of the Galatian Christians? What was their problem? Gal. 4:21.

The Galatians did not wish to be “under the law” in the sense of under its

condemnation. No one wishes to be condemned. Their wish to be under the law was a desire to use the law as a means of achieving righteousness and salvation. Such a wish projected them back to the era of history when law was the supreme revelation of God's will and character. They were functioning as if the cross had not occurred. They had not seen that Christ's life, death, burial, and resurrection were the supreme revelation of God to mankind. They had not realized that ceremonial observances pointing forward to Jesus had lost their significance now that He had come. Moreover, they failed to grasp that before the cross all humanity was legally condemned until Christ had borne the guilt of the entire race. (See 1 John 2:2.) Thus, whether they wished it or not, by rejecting the significance of Calvary they had placed themselves under the condemnation of the law.

- 4. What illustration does Paul give of the two covenants? Why do you think the illustration is appropriate? Gal. 4:22-24; compare Gen. 16:1-6; 17:15-21; 21:1-5.**
-

Paul mentions Abraham's two wives and two sons as analogies, or illustrations, of the two covenants. What was involved in the two covenants?

- 5. What three covenant promises did God give to Abraham?**

- a. Gen. 12:3; compare Gal. 3:8 _____
- b. Gen. 17:4; compare Gal. 3:7 _____
- c. Gen. 17:8; Heb. 11:8-10 _____

- 6. By what means was the covenant between God and Abraham to be maintained? Gen. 15:6; Rom. 4:1-5, 21, 22.**
-

God never told Abraham that the covenant promises could be earned by obedience. Only as Abraham maintained a faith-grace relationship with God were the covenant blessings supplied. The essence of the relationship was righteousness by faith: God's grace awakened Abraham's faith, Abraham believed, and the righteousness of God was bestowed upon him. As Abel had been before him, Abraham was righteous by faith.

- 7. When God entered into a covenant relationship with Abraham, what kind of life did he expect Abraham to live? Was Abraham able, by God's grace, to live that kind of life? Gen. 17:1; 26:5.**
-

"This same covenant [the one given to Adam and Eve in Eden] was renewed to Abraham in the promise, 'In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.' Genesis 22:18. This promise pointed to Christ. So

Abraham understood it (see Galatians 3:8, 16), and he trusted in Christ for the forgiveness of sins. It was this faith that was accounted unto him for righteousness. The covenant with Abraham also maintained the authority of God's law. The Lord appeared unto Abraham, and said, 'I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect.' Genesis 17:1. The testimony of God concerning His faithful servant was, 'Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws.' Genesis 26:5."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 370.

8. What temporary sign of Abraham's covenant relationship with God was instituted by the Lord? Why did this sign cease to be necessary when Christ died? Gen. 17:10, 11; Rom. 4:11; Gal. 5:2-6.

Circumcision was never intended to be the means of earning God's favor. Legalistic Jews had given it that meaning, and certain Jewish Christians had convinced the Galatians on that point. Thus the sign of the Abrahamic covenant relationship had become to them the means of righteousness and salvation. By reminding the Galatians that righteousness by faith is the heart of the covenant relationship with God, Paul sought to correct the problem.

Thought question. Do you see any significance in the fact that Paul's primary example of faith and his primary example of works in Galatians both come from the life of one Old Testament patriarch, and that both have to do with the fulfillment of the same promise?

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III. THE TWO COVENANTS: SINAI (Gal. 4:24-26).

9. According to the following passages, what kind of covenant relationship did the Lord offer to His people at Sinai?

Gen. 17:7, 9, 19 _____

Ex. 19:5, 6 _____

Gal. 3:15-18 _____

Ps. 105:8-11 _____

"The covenant that God made with His people at Sinai is to be our refuge and defense. . . .

"And Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before their faces all these words.'

"And all the people answered together and said, All that the Lord hath spoken we will do.'

"This covenant is of just as much force today as it was when the Lord made it with ancient Israel."—Ellen G. White comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 1103.

“The Lord made a special covenant with his ancient Israel if they would prove faithful. . . . [Ex. 19:5, 6 quoted]. And he thus addresses his commandment-keeping people in these last days.”—Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, September 7, 1886.

10. Since the Lord offered Israel the same covenant terms that He offered Abraham, why does Paul identify the Sinai covenant with Abraham's old covenant experience of having a child by Hagar (Gal. 4:24, 25)? Jer. 31:31-33; Heb. 8:8-13.

The Sinai covenant was faulty, not because the terms that God offered were faulty, but because the people's hearts were faulty. Like Cain, they thought they could serve God their way. (See Ex. 19:8; 24:3, 7; Deut. 5:27-29.) As Abraham did when he took Hagar as a wife, Israel at Sinai tried to earn God's promises by their own works. God rejected their promises and punished the unrepentant because they were guilty of self-dependence. The essence of the old covenant is the attempt to earn salvation by works.

Paul's concern was to have them reject legalism. In Galatians 4:24, 25, Paul is not suggesting that God gave a law at Sinai that has now been abolished. The Ten Commandments given then are still the standard of righteousness for Christians. (See Rom. 3:31; 7:7, 12, 14; 8:3, 4.) The ceremonial aspects of the law met their fulfillment in Christ and ceased to have significance for Christians. But Paul's concern is not merely to wean the legalistic Jews and Galatians away from the ceremonial law. His concern is to have them reject the old covenant of works and enter into the new covenant of grace. He refers to Sinai as a symbol of the old covenant of works, because at Sinai the people of Israel made a faulty heart response to the Lord, failed to receive His grace, and so had no power to resist the temptation to make an idol and worship it.

The non-Christian Jews of Paul's day, the legalistic Jewish Christians, and the Galatians were making the same mistake that Israel had made at Sinai. They were substituting their own works for the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.



IV. THE TWO COVENANTS: TWO MINISTRIES (Heb. 7:20-28; 9:1, 11-14).

In Galatians chapter 4:21-31, the old covenant is identified with works-righteousness and the new covenant with the righteousness of faith-grace. The book of Hebrews speaks of the two covenants as two ministries.

11. Why is the first covenant (old covenant) identified with the earthly sanctuary ministry? Heb. 7:20-28.

Because Israel made a faulty response at Sinai and failed to enter into a

heart relationship with God, they made for themselves a golden calf and worshiped it. (See Exodus 32.) Concerned by their fallen spiritual condition, the Lord gave the ceremonial law to be observed as an aid to faith and an evidence of faith. This earthly sanctuary ministry was an earthly representation of Christ's sacrifice and heavenly ministry. Because the earthly sanctuary ministry was temporary, the book of Hebrews speaks of it as the first covenant by contrast with the second, Christ's perfect sacrifice and heavenly ministry.

Two aspects to the old covenant. Thus the old covenant, or first covenant consisted of something bad and something good:

- (1) Something bad: The attempt to earn righteousness by works; the faulty human response to God's terms (Gal. 4:21-31).
and
- (2) Something good: The temporary sanctuary ministry instituted by God because His people had failed. Through it He wished to lead them to salvation by His grace (Heb. 7:20-28).

Two aspects to the new covenant.

- (1) The righteousness-by-faith experience entered into by those who accept Christ.
and
- (2) The sacrifice and heavenly ministry of Jesus Christ, which make His grace available to all who believe.

12. What is to be the spiritual experience of all those who repudiate the old covenant and accept the new? Heb. 8:10-13; 9:1, 11-14.



V. FREEDOM VERSUS SLAVERY (Gal. 4:27-31).

13. Compare Galatians 4:27 with its source in Isaiah 54:1. To what does this passage refer in its context as Isaiah uses it, and what does it mean in Paul's context?

14. To which covenant experience did Paul relate believing Christians? Gal. 4:28.

Just as Isaac was a child of promise and therefore a symbol of the new covenant relationship with Christ, so every believing Christian, whether Jew or Gentile, is a child of God's grace. Born again into the family of God by the transforming work of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 3:2, 3), believers live by faith in Christ. Their obedience to God's law is a work of faith. (See Rom. 8:3, 4; compare James 2:18; Rom. 2:13.)

15. What is the cause of persecution? Galatians 4:29; 1 John 3:12,

13; 2 Timothy 3:12. (See also *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 487, 488.)

16. How did Paul recommend that the Galatian churches deal with their problem? Gal. 4:30, 31.

“The bondwoman [Hagar] and her son [Ishmael]” (Gal. 4:30) represent the old covenant experience of righteousness and salvation by works. Paul urges the Galatians to discard that experience, to receive Christ’s grace, and to enjoy the freedom from sin that is the certain result. (Compare 1 John 5:4.)

TO WHICH COVENANT AM I COMMITTED?

Think of the good works you have done today or this week. Now examine your motives. Circle the words or phrases below that constitute superior motives:

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Love for God or neighbor. | 7. I want to go to heaven. |
| 2. The demands of your culture. | 8. Tradition. |
| 3. Habit. | 9. Fear of punishment. |
| 4. Desire to please Jesus. | 10. Desire to impress. |
| 5. Response to Calvary. | 11. To secure a right standing with God. |
| 6. The obligation to make others happy. | |

“Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith” (2 Cor. 13:5, NIV).

FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION: Study 2 Corinthians chapter 3 in relation to Galatians 4:21-31. Read the chapter entitled “The Righteousness of Christ in the Law” in *Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 236-241.

SUMMARY: By means of Old Testament allusions and analogies, Paul illustrates the foolishness of attempting to earn righteousness and salvation. This attempt he refers to as the old- or first-covenant experience. The contrast is the new- or everlasting-covenant experience of righteousness and salvation by faith in Christ.

Christian Freedom Threatened by Legalism

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Galatians 5:1-15.



MEMORY TEXT: "For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Galatians 5:13, 14).

FAITH COUNTERS LEGALISM. The legalist attempts to earn salvation by personal efforts. For the legalist, obedience to the law is a means of righteousness and acceptance with God. The obedience to the law of the faithful Christian results from union with Christ. Such obedience gives evidence that faith is genuine. The legalist is judgmental of others, measuring worth by a subjective standard of holiness and failing to engage in realistic self-analysis.

OUTLINE:

- I. Legalism a Spiritual Disaster (Gal. 5:1-4).
- II. Faith and Works Contrasted (Gal. 5:5, 6).
- III. How to Restore Erring Christians (Gal. 5:7-10).
- IV. Judgment Against False Teachings (Gal. 5:11, 12).
- V. Freedom and Responsibility (Gal. 5:13-15).

WORKS OF LAW OR WORKS OF FAITH? A woman once asked John Wesley, "Suppose you knew that you would die tomorrow at midnight, how would you spend the time between now and then?" Wesley replied, "Why madam, just as I intend to spend it now. I would preach this evening at Gloucester, and again at five tomorrow morning; after that I would ride to Tewkesbury, preach in the afternoon, and meet the societies in the evening. I would then go to Martin's house, who expects to entertain me, talk and pray with the family as usual, retire to my room at 10 o'clock, commend myself to my heavenly Father, lie down to rest, and wake up in Glory."

Wesley's life was filled with busy activities that can be described as *works of faith*. He was not serving God and humanity to *earn* righteousness and salvation, but because he knew that Christ had bestowed righteousness and salvation upon him.

Works of faith are spoken of by James in chapter 2 of his Epistle. (Compare Gal. 5:6; Rom. 2:13.) They are works that result from faith and give evidence that genuine faith is present. Works of faith result from

Christ living out His life through the believing Christian (Gal. 2:20).

Works of law. In Galatians and Romans, Paul opposes *works of law*. These are works that are not performed by faith in Christ, but for the express purpose of improving one's standing with God. The Galatians had capitulated to the process of performing religious exercises with the intention of earning justification. Paul reminded them that Christian liberty sets us free from such legalism and makes possible works that are acceptable in the sight of God.

I. LEGALISM A SPIRITUAL DISASTER (Gal. 5:1-4).

1. What do you think Paul means in the statement recorded in Galatians 5:1?

Legalism then and now. The New International Version translates the verse: "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery." The word *bondage* (KJV) must be understood in light of chapter 4, where Paul uses the terms "servant" (slave) and "bondmaid" to refer to the old life before Christ. In both analogies, Paul understood acceptance of Judaism to be a return to bondage. (See chapter 4:9.) Few Christians today are tempted to accept Judaism. This does not mean, however, that Galatians 5:1 has become irrelevant. Legalism in any form is a return to bondage similar to that which Paul opposed.

2. Why do you think Paul opposed circumcision so forcefully? Gal. 5:2, 3.

Circumcision was a symbol of circumcision of the heart. (See Deut. 10:16; 30:6; Rom. 2:25-29.) Circumcision of the heart is the new birth experience given to those who accept Christ as Saviour and Lord. (See Col. 2:10, 11.) To continue the practice of circumcision as a religious ceremony was to deny that the symbol had met its fulfillment in Christ. It was a way of saying that Christ's provision at the cross is insufficient.

Circumcision served a temporary purpose. "If man had kept the law of God, as given to Adam after his fall, preserved by Noah, and observed by Abraham, there would have been no necessity for the ordinance of circumcision."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 364.

3. What serious consequence befalls the Christian who looks to the law for salvation? Gal. 5:4.

Once saved always saved? Paul now comes to the basic reason for his letter to the Galatians. Their relationship with Christ was being severed by

false teachings and practices. A hope of salvation built upon one's own efforts is a false hope. The Galatians were nullifying the grace that God had given them.

Some Christians today teach that once a person has been saved he cannot be lost. "Those who apostatize were not converted in the first place," we are sometimes told. However, the whole tenor of Galatians suggests that this is a false supposition. Paul said that the Galatian Christians first received the Holy Spirit by faith (Gal. 3:1-5). He reminded them of the joy they had found in their new faith (Gal. 4:15). He wrote, "You were running a good race" (Gal. 5:7, NIV). The Galatian church members were genuinely converted Christians at the time Paul concluded his evangelistic efforts among them.

The promise of eternal life can be forfeited through apostasy or neglect; and, as Paul points out, it can also be lost through legalism. (See Gal. 5:4.) Legalism is particularly dangerous to spiritual health because it comes clothed in an air of piety and apparent concern for the very salvation that it destroys.

Reflections on legalism.

- Have you ever seen a Christian in bondage to his religious practices? Have you ever felt like a slave to your own standards? Was it the fault of the standards, or of your chosen means of achieving them?
- What is the difference between legalism and the effort to uphold standards of Christian behavior in diet, dress, and entertainment?

MON

II. FAITH AND WORKS CONTRASTED (Gal. 5:5, 6).

4. What does Paul say the Christian waits for? Does the believer have to wait for righteousness? Gal. 5:5; Rom. 8:9, 10; 1 John 3:7.

"In all the six other instances where this word [the verb 'to wait for'] appears (Rom. 8:19, 23, 25; 1 Cor. 1:7; Phil. 3:20; Heb. 9:28) it is used of waiting or looking for the coming of Jesus and the resurrection.

"**Hope of righteousness.** That is, the hope made possible through righteousness. Paul does not imply that those who have received the Spirit must wait for righteousness. They 'wait for the *hope*' imparted by righteousness, the hope of the completion of the plan of salvation at the return of Jesus and the resurrection of the dead (Rom. 8:23; Titus 2:13). Paul consistently speaks of justification as a completed work in the life of the Christian (Rom. 5:1; etc.; see on Matt. 5:48)." —*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 977.

We add that justification is a completed work that is renewed daily as we enjoy the blessings of a daily revitalization of our relationship with Christ. (See 2 Cor. 4:16.)

5. What contrast does Paul make in verse 6?

Not _____ nor _____

but _____


Faith and works. Paul here suggests what a few verses later becomes the theme of the last part of his letter to the Galatians. While he is strenuously opposed to works as a means of attaining righteousness, he clearly recognizes the importance of works that are motivated by love as a product of faith.

“At this point the teachings of Paul and James meet. The two are not in conflict, as some have hastily concluded. . . . It is a counterfeit faith that leads a man to think himself released from obedience to the will of God as expressed in the Decalogue, which is simply a brief outline of how love toward God and man will find expression. . . . Obedience to known duty is an inevitable result of the righteousness that comes by faith, and is the supreme test of its genuineness.”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 978.

III. HOW TO RESTORE ERRING CHRISTIANS (Gal. 5:7-10).

6. From our study so far this quarter, who do you think hindered the Galatians from obeying the truth? Gal. 5:7.

A good beginning. At the beginning of their Christian race the Galatian Christians had been filled with faith, and because of this they were obedient to the truth. Faith makes possible obedience and good works. The teachings of the Jewish party, with their strong emphasis on obeying the law, weakened and, perhaps for some, even destroyed faith. The result was actually disastrous to the very obedience the Jewish party was so intent on achieving. Any effort to gain righteousness by obedience results in disobedience.

-  7. Who do you think had called the Galatian Christians—God or Paul? Gal. 5:8; compare Rom. 8:29, 30.

8. What is the effect upon the church as a whole of one erroneous teaching? Gal. 5:9.

9. What encouragement did Paul now offer the Galatian Christians? Gal. 5:10 (first part).

Blend in confidence. There are times when we must warn others of danger. Jesus commanded His disciples to speak personally to any brother they found in error. (See Matt. 18:15.) God told Ezekiel that those who fail to warn others of sin will be required to share the penalty for that sin. (See Eze. 3:17, 18.) Thus far in his Epistle Paul has faithfully warned—indeed

rebuked—the Galatian Christians, even to the point of calling them foolish for departing from the faith. (See Gal. 3:1.)

However, warnings that only point out error can quickly degenerate into destructive criticism. Paul shows us that along with the warning we must blend in an expression of confidence that the erring one will make the right change.

Reflection. Can you think of a time when a church successfully restored an erring member? Write down the steps that church took.

IV. JUDGMENT AGAINST FALSE TEACHINGS (Gal. 5:11, 12).

10. Who would judge those who were troubling the Galatians? Gal. 5:10 (second part). Compare Eccl. 12:13, 14; James 2:12.

The Bible teaches judgment. The New Age movement that is rapidly gaining ground in Western culture teaches that there is no such thing as a final judgment against sin. Indeed, according to the New Age, there is no such thing as sin. People should create their own moral standards, its proponents say, based on the wisdom inherent in themselves. The only evil is ignorance, not immorality. Human beings were made to be free. Any externally imposed moral code is slavery.

According to the Bible and the insights offered by Ellen White, this is the same line of reasoning that Satan advanced in heaven. The Bible teaches that human beings *are* subject to law—God’s law—and that there *will* be a final judgment based on that law. Paul now makes it clear that legalism, and the effort to ensnare others in legalism, is just as much a sin as out-and-out immorality, and also is subject to the final judgment.



11. What claim did the Jewish party apparently make about Paul? Gal. 5:11.

A preposterous suggestion. Preposterous as it may seem, the Jewish party in Galatia apparently claimed that Paul still supported circumcision for religious reasons, perhaps because he had encouraged Timothy, a half-Jew, to be circumcised. (See Acts 16:1-3.) The *SDA Bible Commentary* suggests that the Jewish party advanced this claim in an effort to make Paul seem inconsistent (vol. 6, p. 979). Another possibility is that, recognizing Paul’s powerful influence, they may have tried to “get him on their side”—as though to say, “See, even Paul agrees with us.” Paul’s logic quickly put a fast end to that argument: “If I support circumcision, why am I still being persecuted for opposing it?”

12. What wish does Paul express for the Jewish party? Gal. 5:12.

A figurative statement. According to the *SDA Bible Commentary*, the Greek word Paul uses here, which is translated “cut off” in the King James Version, is never used in reference to cutting a person off from church fellowship. Rather, it means to dismember one’s self, and is sometimes used of castration. “Paul suggests that the Judaizers, who advocate circumcision, might as well castrate themselves. If a measure of virtue can be secured by circumcision, one should be able to obtain even more by castration!”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 969. We must, of course, understand this as a figurative statement, similar to Christ’s deliberate exaggeration in Matthew 5:29: “If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell” (NIV).

Looking at life today.

- How would you respond to the argument that a loving God would never judge or condemn anyone?
- What are some modern teachings (sincerely held by some Christians) that you believe God will condemn in the judgment? Will He also condemn those who teach such views? What biblical evidence can you give for your answer?

V. FREEDOM AND RESPONSIBILITY (Gal. 5:13-15).

13. How can Christians abuse freedom? Gal. 5:13.

Law is a guide to freedom. The New International Version says, “You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love.” This passage helps us to understand the proper relationship between law and faith. Law condemns those things that the sinful nature would lead us to indulge. Paul might have said, “You were called to be free, but do not use your freedom as an excuse to break the law.” Christians are not free of the obligation to live a holy life in conformity with law. They are delivered from legalism. They are not delivered from obedience, but from *obedience as a way to gain God’s favor*.

14. How is the law related to service? Gal. 5:13, 14.

15. On the other hand, how does legalism affect our relationships to others? Gal. 5:15.

Obedience, legalism, and service. Obedience and legalism are opposites. Obedience and faith go hand in hand on one side, legalism and presumption on the other. Those who bring their impulses under the control of God’s law are able to serve one another in love. Apparently, the

Galatian Christians were not doing that. Galatians 5:15 informs us that they were biting and devouring one another. This is probably a reference to criticism, condemnation, and harsh judgment—common characteristics of legalistic people. Legalists cannot bless others. They cannot serve the church or the world. Only those whose hearts have been transformed by Christ's grace, who obey God's law out of love for others, can do that.

THE MESSAGE APPLIED.

1. If I recognize legalism in myself, what should I do? List three options on the lines below:

2. Complete this open-ended sentence: The best way to help others who manifest a legalistic attitude is to _____

3. I can be concerned about maintaining the church's high standards and not be legalistic. Agree // Disagree //



FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION: Read the chapters entitled "Warnings Against Sensational Teachings and Emotional Religion" and "Earmarks of Erroneous Teaching" in *Selected Messages*, book 2, pp. 13-24, 80-84.

SUMMARY: Legalism is one of the most dangerous sins because those who yield to it think they are doing right. The legalists whom Paul was addressing wished to "restore" the erring and purify the church of false teachings. They thought that obedience to their rules would provide salvation for the Galatians. The legalist sets himself up as the final judge of right and wrong. However, only those whose hearts have been transformed by Christ can judge between right and wrong in a way that will win souls rather than alienate them.

Life in the Spirit

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Galatians 5:16-26.



MEMORY TEXT: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law" (Galatians 5:22, 23).

THE SPIRIT VERSUS THE FLESH. The heart of Paul's message is that if you are infilled and led by the Holy Spirit you are not "under the law" (Gal. 5:18). He does not mean that life in the Spirit releases a person from keeping the Ten Commandments. (Compare Rom. 8:3, 4.) In the context of the book, his meaning is that the Spirit-directed life delivers the believer from: (a) the futile attempt to *earn his salvation* by obedience to the law; and (b) the inevitable spiritual failure and disaster that result from using the law as a means of salvation.

OUTLINE:

- I. Spirit and Flesh in Conflict (Gal. 5:16, 17).
- II. The Secret of Victory (Gal. 5:18; Rom. 8:1-11).
- III. The Works of the Flesh (Gal. 5:19-21).
- IV. The Fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-26).

WHAT IS TRUE RELIGION? Henry Drummond was born August 17, 1851, near Stirling, Scotland. As a young man he entered the ministry of the Free Church of Scotland. Drummond demonstrated his creative ability by writing the sermon entitled "The Greatest Thing in the World." Within a few years copies could be found almost everywhere in the English-speaking world.

In the sermon Drummond wrote, "Love is greater than faith, because the end is greater than the means." He pointed out that the object of faith was to connect the soul with God so that it might become like God in love.

As the years went by Drummond's commitment began to weaken, until he was shocked to discover that he had lost the loving faith he had once known. At 46 years of age he contracted a fatal illness. He confided in one of his friends, Sir William Dawson, "I am going back to the Bible." Once again he found the source of his strength and the warmth of the indwelling Spirit. He fell in love with Christ again.

In the few remaining months of his life he was able to declare without reservation: "Ten minutes spent in Christ's company every morning, aye, two minutes, if it be face to Face and heart to Heart, will change the whole day."

True religion begins when we allow Christ to bestow His Holy Spirit upon our hearts. When Christ is living out His life through us, the characteristics of our fallen humanity are subjugated, and His love becomes the ruling principle.

This week we will focus our attention on genuine Christianity. True religion leads people to treat one another kindly. It leads those who are strong to deal gently with those who are weak and perhaps have fallen.



I. SPIRIT AND FLESH IN CONFLICT (Gal. 5:16, 17).

1. In the space below write a few key words that summarize what you think it means to "walk in the Spirit." Gal. 5:16.

The key to victory. Every human being is sinful by nature. Of ourselves, it is impossible to live above selfishness. It is impossible for us, in our own wisdom, to understand God's way of life, or in our own strength to make it our own. God provides the Holy Spirit to give us this wisdom and power. When we invite the Holy Spirit into our hearts He transforms our attitudes. The harsh spirit becomes gentle and kind. The weak, vacillating mind becomes strong, yet sympathetic to the feelings of others. *The key is to allow the Holy Spirit the freedom to transform us.*

2. List some of the spiritual benefits that Jesus promised would come to His people when He sent them the Holy Spirit. Underline those you think would be particularly helpful in overcoming legalism. John 14:16-18, 26; 15:26; 16:5-15.

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3. What conflict do we experience when the Spirit begins its work in our hearts? Gal. 5:17; Rom. 7:14-24.

Two natures in conflict. When we receive the Holy Spirit, He wars against the tendencies of our fallen humanity. We now have two natures, the fallen self and the new spiritual life bestowed by the Spirit. The nature we feed will be the nature that will grow and control. If we feed our fallen self by dwelling on that which is evil, it will grow, drive the Spirit away, and lead us into sin. If we feed our new spiritual nature by daily receiving Christ and partaking of His Word, it will grow, the Holy Spirit will reign in our hearts, and we will have spiritual victory and fulfillment.

The last phrase of verse 17 may be translated: "so that you might not do those things that you wish." It is not saying that it is impossible to overcome sin. It is saying that Satan's purpose in fostering the warfare in your heart is to keep you from doing the good things that you know God wants you to do.

Paul's daily conflict resolved. "Paul's sanctification was a constant conflict with self. Said he: 'I die daily.' His will and his desires every day conflicted with duty and the will of God. *Instead of following inclination, he did the will of God, however unpleasant and crucifying to his nature.*" —*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 299. (Italics supplied.)

Feeding the spiritual nature or the carnal nature. Place a plus sign (+) by the ideas below that feed the spiritual nature and a dash (—) by those things that would tend to feed the carnal nature:

Dwelling on my sins and mistakes	Busyness
Meditating on Christ's life	The wrong diet
The wrong kind of television	Adequate exercise
Daily study of the Sabbath School lesson	Good nutrition
Reading good literature	Unselfish service for others
Talking about the faults of others	Loss of sleep
Doubts and fears	Selfish thoughts and acts

MON II. THE SECRET OF VICTORY (Gal. 5:18; Rom. 8:1-11).

4. What is the Spirit-led Christian's relation to the law? Gal. 5:18.

Not under law as a method of achieving salvation. Some Christians seize on Galatians 5:18 as "proof" that the Ten Commandments have been done away in the New Testament era. Fortunately, a simple question settles the problem. Paul says, "*If ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.*" Are those who are *not* led by the Spirit under the law? The answer is obviously Yes. An attempt to be a Christian while not filled by the Holy Spirit is to be a legalist; for it involves trying to follow Christ without any power in the life. That was the essence of the problem with the Galatians. They were trying to achieve the Christian ethic without Christ's power. They were under the law as a method of earning salvation, and so were under the condemnation of the law. Christ had ceased to be the ruling power in their lives.

Led by the Spirit to obedience. In the same breath in which Jesus promised the gift of the Holy Spirit, He said, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments" (John 14:15, RSV). Thus, to be "under the law" in the sense referred to in Galatians 5:18 means failing to obey the law through the power of the Holy Spirit. The law of God remains the standard of righteousness for the Spirit-filled Christian.

5. Without reading the comment below, explain why it is important that Paul begins his explanation of victory over sin with the statement that "there is now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1). Then compare your answer with the note.

Why begin with “no condemnation”? The starting point in the Christian walk is justification. This involves complete forgiveness for the sins of the past and the new-birth experience. Paul made this abundantly clear in Galatians 2 and 3 and in Romans 3 through 6. He reaffirms that principle when he says that “there is . . . now no condemnation.”

The justified person has present holiness in Christ. (See Col. 2:10; 1 Cor. 1:30; 6:11.) Holiness is sanctification. The Greek verb meaning “to sanctify” also means “to make holy.” At the point at which he believed, the dying thief had both justification and sanctification. Christ’s justifying act causes holiness. The Bible teaches that no unholy person will go to heaven. (See Heb. 12:14.) But Jesus promised the dying thief that he would be in heaven. (See Luke 23:43.) When the thief trusted Christ, he was both justified and holy in Christ. The justified person is fully qualified for heaven, for Christ has been bestowed upon him. No longer is he under condemnation, no longer is sin reigning in his heart.

Present holiness and growth in holiness. “Sanctification is a state of holiness, without and within, being holy and without reserve the Lord’s, not in form, but in truth.”—*Our High Calling*, p. 214. Of course, sanctification also includes growth in holiness. (See 1 Thess. 3:13—4:3.) The justified person must learn to rely on Christ every day for the gift of His holiness in order to overcome besetting sins.



6. What law, or principle, is primarily responsible for our deliverance from sin? Rom. 8:2.

Not the Ten Commandments. Neither expression, “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus,” nor “the law of sin and death,” is a reference to the Ten Commandments. These are two opposing principles of life, one for Christian living, the other for sinful living. Christ plants His Spirit in our hearts at conversion (justification). At that moment the Spirit’s power sets us free from the power of sin. Whereas before we were slaves of sin, now we are slaves of righteousness, or holiness. (See Rom. 6:17, 18.) This is not an experience that occurs once in a Christian life. It is repeated every day. We need to invite Jesus into our hearts constantly, so that His holy presence can be the source of our freedom.

7. Why is it impossible for the law by itself to change our characters? Is the fault with the law? Rom. 8:3.

Jesus our victory. Paul is talking about the Ten Commandments when he speaks of the law in Romans 8:3. Jesus came to this earth as a human being, took upon Himself our weaknesses, and proved that, by maintaining a continual union with His Father, it is possible to live in harmony with all of God’s commandments. His holy life condemns the sin in our lives. We must think of this positively, not negatively. The phrase “condemned sin in the flesh” means that there is no reason for us to sin.

Purified characters. “We must realize that through belief in Him it is our privilege to be partakers of the divine nature, and so escape the corruption that is in the world through lust. Then we are cleansed from all sin, all defects of character. We need not retain one sinful propensity. . . . [Eph. 2:1-6 quoted.]”—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 943.

8. What is the secret of obedience? Rom. 8:4.

All doubt removed. If there were any lingering doubt about the validity of God’s Ten-Commandment law during the New Testament era, this passage should dispel it. Paul affirms that Christians who are controlled by the Spirit can keep the law.

Some Christians have misinterpreted Christ’s statement in Matthew 5:17, 18 to mean that fulfilling the law means doing away with it. Romans 8:4 dispels that falsehood by explaining what it means to fulfill the law.



9. What does Paul suggest is the Christian’s role in gaining, through the Holy Spirit, the victory over sin? Rom. 8:5.

The set of the mind. The New American Standard Bible says, “For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.”

The Holy Spirit is anxious to transform our lives into the likeness of Jesus, but He will not override our power of choice. The decision is ours whether to set our minds on the Holy Spirit, His teachings, and His life style. In the battle with sin, the secret of victory is to admit to God our weakness, ask for His deliverance, and consciously claim it by faith. When we ask for power, we must add, “Thank You, Jesus. I know You have given me what I have asked.” (See John 15:7.)

10. Besides transforming the character and providing the strength for victory, what else will the Holy Spirit do? John 14:26; 16:7, 8; 1 Cor. 2:14-16.

Insight into our condition. There are many things in our lives that God would like us to overcome, but which we do not recognize as wrong. In fact, there are some things God condemns that we feel quite right about. The work of the Holy Spirit is to reveal to us where we fall short and to bring us into accord with God’s will. No one has the right to usurp the work of the Spirit in this respect. “Judge not, that ye be not judged” (Matt. 7:1).

11. Jesus said that “the righteous” will have eternal life (Matt. 25:46). How do we become righteous? Rom. 8:9, 10.

III. THE WORKS OF THE FLESH (Gal. 5:19-21).

12. To which of the “works of the flesh” in Galatians 5:19-21 do you think the legalist is in the greatest danger of yielding?
-

Cooperation of Word and Spirit. Paul’s great concern for the Galatians, and the Lord’s concern for us today, is in view of the fact that living “under the law” (Gal. 5:18) as a means of achieving salvation results in disobedience to the law. The individual who lives this way has no defense against the sins that Paul enumerates. If we deny Christ entrance into our hearts as the means of our salvation and righteousness, it is inevitable that we will live in sin.

One of the ways the Holy Spirit reveals to us our legalistic tendencies is through the Word. For example, Paul mentions “hatred, variance, emulations [jealousies], wrath, strife, seditions [dissensions].” Those who live “under the law” as a means of salvation can create terrible strife in a church—even in the name of the Lord. Sometimes they congratulate themselves when people quit attending, because they have “succeeded” in keeping the church “pure.”

13. What serious consequence awaits those who indulge the sinful nature? Gal. 5:21.
-

THU

IV. THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT (Gal. 5:22-26).

14. What is the fruit of the Spirit in the life of the person who has accepted a relationship with Jesus as the means of salvation and righteousness? Gal. 5:22, 23.
-

Fixing our eyes on our goal. It is not enough to be against something bad. Evil must be replaced with that which is good. Once we have confessed our sins to God, and where necessary to our fellow believers; once we have received pardon and cleansing, and have the assurance of a right standing with God, it is time to stop talking about the sins in our lives and begin speaking positively about the good we plan to do through Christ’s grace.

15. In light of Galatians 5:18, what do you understand the last part of verse 23 to mean? How does verse 23 help explain verse 18?
-

16. What does Paul recommend we do to the sinful traits in our characters? Gal. 5:24; compare Rom. 6:6.

Putting to death the old life. We may *want* to keep our minds focused on peace and purity; but if anger and lust are still alive they will keep intruding into our thoughts against our wills. When that happens we should say, "Lord, I don't have the power to deal with my anger or my lust. I surrender it to You. Please kill it. Thank You for giving me the victory." Then we should cooperate with the Spirit by keeping our minds focused on pure, kind thoughts. Each time the works of the flesh try to invade our thoughts, we should turn them over to God for crucifixion and ask, believe, and claim His power.

PERSONAL APPLICATIONS:

Can you think of any fruits of the Spirit to add to Paul's list? Read the fruits of the Spirit as listed by Paul in Galatians 4:22. Select those fruits which would affect the following areas and relationships:

1. Marriage

4. Health

7. Personal fulfillment

2. Children

5. Outreach

8. Neighbors and friends

3. Job—Vocation

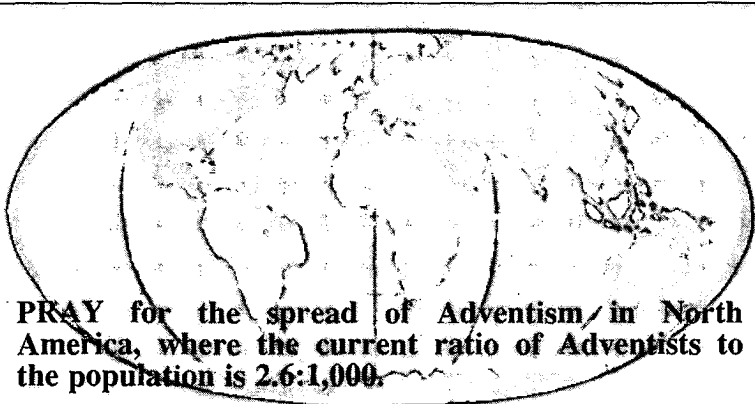
6. Personality

9. Relatives



FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION: Read the chapter entitled "First the Blade, Then the Ear" in *Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 62-69.

SUMMARY: Living "under the law" as a means of salvation renders us spiritually impotent. God's plan for our salvation includes the power by which we can overcome sin.



Lesson 13

June 24-30

Advice to Christian Friends

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Galatians 6.



MEMORY TEXT: "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Galatians 6:7).

LIVING WHAT WE PROFESS. If we profess to be spiritual Christians, we should live that way, treating each other kindly and gently. If we sow that kind of seed, we will reap that kind of harvest.

OUTLINE:

- I. Treating One Another Kindly (Gal. 6:1, 2).
- II. Estimating Ourselves Realistically (Gal. 6:3-6).
- III. We Reap What We Sow (Gal. 6:7-10).
- IV. Glorifying in the Cross (Gal. 6:11-16).
- V. Concluding Remarks (Gal. 6:17, 18).

JUDGING OURSELVES BY OTHERS AND OTHERS BY OURSELVES. Two workmen were repairing a factory roof. Nearby was the opening of a large chimney. Suddenly their scaffolding shifted and they both fell through the black, sooty chimney fifteen feet to the floor below. When they picked themselves up, they found that neither one was hurt. One man's face was smeared with soot, but the other man's face was clean. As he had begun to fall he had placed one arm over his face to protect himself. So his face was clean when he hit the floor.

The man with the clean face immediately went and washed before returning to work. The man with the dirty face went back to work without washing. The two men had looked at each other. The man with the clean face saw the dirty face of his friend and assumed that his was the same. The man with the dirty face saw the clean face of the other man and thought his face was clean also. Both men were wrong because they looked at one another, instead of carefully examining their own true condition.

Realistic judgments about ourselves are not gained by judging others. On the other hand, when our judgments of others result from our concept of ourselves, we are likely to make serious mistakes.

Paul's concluding remarks. Paul addresses this problem in this week's lesson. As so often in his letters, he concludes the letter to the Galatians with practical advice that grows out of the major theme he has been discussing.

We have some of the most succinct, practical advice anywhere in the

Bible in the valuable closing remarks of Paul's epistles—well-known gems such as the following:

“Rejoice evermore” (1 Thess. 5:16).

“Pray without ceasing” (1 Thess. 5:17).

“My God shall supply all your need” (Phil. 4:19).

“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might” (Eph. 6:10).

Search for similar gems of thought as you study Paul's closing words of advice to his Christian friends in Galatia.

SUN

I. TREATING ONE ANOTHER KINDLY (Gal. 6:1, 2).

1. What obligation do we have when we see a fellow Christian involved in a sin? Gal. 6:1; Matt. 18:15-17; Eze. 33:7-9.

Our responsibility to each other. Cain's great sin was in not caring about his brother. Had he cared about him, he would have learned from him and protected him instead of harming him. We may not be tempted to harm others physically, but are we sometimes guilty of character assassination? When we see fellow Christians caught in a wrong, do we whisper about them to others? According to God's Word, if we see Christians involved in wrongdoing, we are to speak to them personally, privately, and kindly about the problem. This is not an easy thing to do, but it is one of the responsibilities we have to each other. I *am* expected to be my brother's helper. His eternal life may depend on how I treat him when I see him doing something I believe is wrong.

Paul says, “You who are *spiritual* should restore him gently” (Gal. 6:1, NIV). People who are trying to earn their way to heaven are not spiritual, and often they are not gentle in their dealings with others. But we should be gentle with such people. The fact that Scripture condemns legalism in the strongest language does not mean that we should treat legalists harshly. If anything, we should endeavor to treat them more gently, because they so desperately need to see Jesus in us as the model for treating sinners lovingly.

2. What warning does Paul give? Gal. 6:1 (last part).

Sin is easy. We have fallen natures. Sin comes easily for us. Spiritual people are those who, because of the converting, transforming power of the Holy Spirit in their lives, appreciate the superior value of God's way of life. But people can be spiritual in this sense, and still feel the conflict with their old fallen natures. Paul makes this abundantly clear in Romans 7:14-24. That is why we must be constantly on our guard and not assume that because we are spiritual we are out of danger.

3. What “law of Christ” do we fulfill when we bear one another's burdens? Gal. 6:2.

4. Write down three "burdens" you've seen others carry recently, and suggest ways you might help these people to bear (NIV: "carry") each one. Gal. 6:2.

Burdens	How to Help
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Reflections.

- Should we deal more kindly and gently with repentant sinners than with those who feel no remorse over their wrong? In what way should our dealings with these persons be different?
- Suppose a church member is found guilty in court of unethical business dealings and is fined heavily. In light of the evidence in this lesson, how should the church relate to that member's situation?

MON II. ESTIMATING OURSELVES REALISTICALLY (Gal. 6:3-6).

5. Can you select one word that would summarize the attitude of people who think more highly of themselves than they should? Gal. 6:3.

The importance of a correct self-understanding. Those who think more highly of themselves than they should in secular affairs are in danger of serious loss. This is the cause of many business failures. Such problems would be less likely to occur if we could estimate ourselves realistically.

The greatest disaster awaits those who have an inflated view of their spiritual condition. This is the Laodicean problem: "You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked" (Rev. 3:17, NIV). The danger here is that we will think we are in a saved condition when we are lost. "Many will say to me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophecy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'" (Matt. 7:22, 23, NIV).

6. How can a person "prove his own work" ("test his own actions," NIV)? Gal. 6:4. Compare 2 Cor. 13:5.

Our most important duty. It is vitally important to have a realistic understanding of our own Christian experience. God has provided the Holy Spirit, to convict us “of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment” (John 16:8). In previous lessons we focused attention on legalism—a reprehensible sin in God’s sight, yet one of the most difficult to recognize in ourselves. Paul’s instruction for each person to “test his own actions” (Gal. 6:4, NIV) is an assurance to us that if legalism is our problem, we can learn to recognize it.

7. Why is it unwise to compare oneself with others in the spiritual realm? Gal. 6:4.

8. How do you explain the apparent contradiction between Galatians 6:2 and 6:5?

“Every soldier is expected to carry his own kit; it is his responsibility to do so. He may also, at times, assist others to bear theirs. He will be called to account for his own ‘burden,’ but not necessarily for the ‘burdens’ of others. Bearing the burdens of others in addition to his own is commendable, but neglecting his own is inexcusable.”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 986.

9. What does Paul mean by the instruction given in Galatians 6:6?

Taking the Bible personally.

- Is it possible to have too low an estimate of one’s self as well as too high an estimate? What are the spiritual consequences of each?
- Pray that God will reveal to you an area of your spiritual life in which you need a more realistic self-understanding.



III. WE REAP WHAT WE SOW (Gal. 6:7-10).

10. Why do you think Paul prefaces the principle that we reap what we sow with the statement that “God is not [‘cannot be,’ NIV] mocked”? Gal. 6:7.

11. What do you think it means to sow to the flesh and to the Spirit? Gal. 6:8.

A life principle. We tend to get out of life what we put into it. We often tend to blame God, or the devil, or other persons for our troubles.

However, the principle that “whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap,” makes it plain that there is another party who is responsible for our troubles: Ourselves! Those who are lost at the end have chosen their own destiny. God sadly gives them up to death because they have chosen to live apart from the Life-giver. (See Rom. 1:24, 26, 28.)

While God will not reverse all the consequences of a life of sin, when we receive Him He forgives our past and erases it from heaven’s record. He guarantees to us an eternal life in heaven where there will be infinite opportunity for better living. Moreover, He grants grace, strength, and wisdom to change our manner of life now so that we can be in harmony with His will and have the fulfillment of achieving worthwhile goals for Him.

12. How would you explain the meaning of Paul’s statement, “Let us not be weary in well doing”? Gal. 6:9.

Losing our first love. We often start a project with our enthusiasm high and with a firm resolve to finish the job. We may work hard at it for a few days or weeks. Then when another project catches our attention, the original project is postponed, and soon we forget all about it.

In Revelation, John tells us that the members of the Ephesus Church lost their first love. They never decided to give it up. They just lost it.

13. What does Paul especially mention that we should do? Galatians 6:10; compare Matthew 25:31-46.

Application to life. Make a list of projects or plans to help others that you have started during the past six months. Circle each one you have finished. Put a check mark by one that you especially want to finish. How do you plan to complete it? When?



IV. GLORYING IN THE CROSS (Gal. 6:11-16).

Paul’s use of a scribe. Apparently Paul dictated his letters to a scribe. However, it was Paul’s custom to write the last few words, or in some cases the last few sentences, of each letter. Galatians 6:11 gives us a clue as to why it was necessary for Paul to have someone else write for him. He says, “See what large letters I use as I write to you with my own hand!” (NIV). This tends to confirm what we noticed in a previous lesson, that Paul had poor eyesight. (See Gal. 4:15.) The churches could immediately recognize whether a letter purporting to be from Paul was genuine or a fraud by checking the last sentence or two.

14. Why did the Jewish party want the Galatian male Christians to be circumcised? Gal. 6:12, 13.

Circumcision to avoid persecution. The *SDA Bible Commentary* says, "For the Judaizers to succeed in making proselytes would be to their credit and glory in the eyes of orthodox Jews. Their objective, apparently, was to convince their devout Jewish compatriots that, as Christians, they were still good Jews, and thus ingratiate themselves with the Jewish authorities. Thus, showing their zeal for the law, they hoped to avoid persecution."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 988.

No doubt they also considered that it would be to their credit and glory in the eyes of God.

15. What does it mean to glory ("boast," NIV) in the cross? Gal. 6:14.
-

True pride. Apparently it was a mark of success to the Jewish party to gain adherents to their cause. They no doubt took pride in the large number of Galatian Gentiles they were able to win over. But Paul said, "I will only take pride in the cross of Christ!" (See Gal. 6:14.)

16. Who is the "Israel of God" in Galatians 6:16? Why does Paul especially pronounce a blessing on them for following the truth?
-

Boasting today.

- What kinds of false goals is it possible to set, and then boast about when they are achieved?
- Is it appropriate for pastors, evangelists, and church members to rejoice and share the good news about church growth? How do you relate these two questions?

V. CONCLUDING REMARKS (Gal. 6:17, 18).

17. Why do you think Paul gave "the marks of the Lord Jesus" that he bore on his body as the reason why the Galatian Christians should not trouble him? Gal. 6:17.
-

"The word 'mark' comes from the Greek word *stigma*, from which we derive our English word 'stigma.' In New Testament times it was used in reference to 'the branding [of] slaves or other property with the owner's name or identifying symbol.' . . . By 'the marks of the Lord Jesus' Paul doubtless refers to the scars left upon his body by persecution and hardship (see 2 Cor. 4:10; 11:24-27). His opponents now insist on compelling his Gentile converts to accept the mark of circumcision as a token of their submission to Judaism. But Paul has marks that indicate whose slave he has become, and for him there is no other loyalty than to Christ (see on Gal. 6:14). The scars Paul had received from his enemies while in the service of his Master spoke most eloquently of his

devotion to Christ.”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 989.

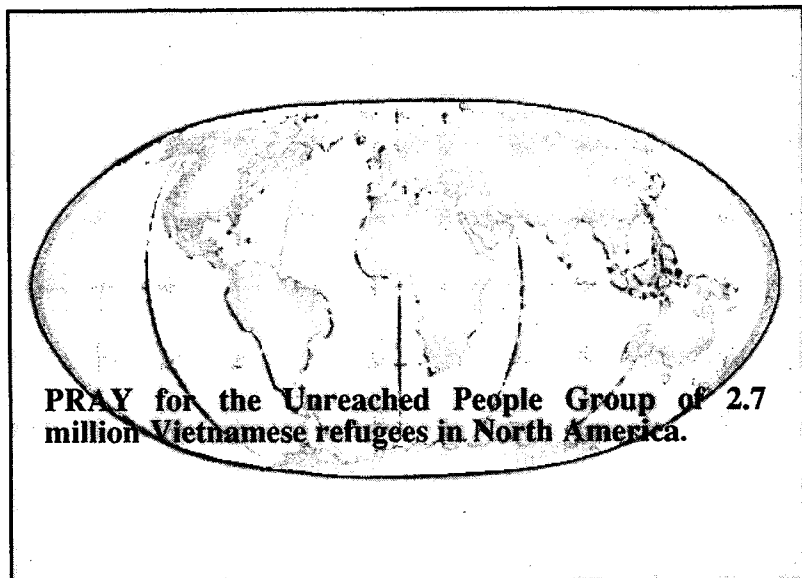
18. What would the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ do for the Galatians? Gal. 6:18; compare 2 Cor. 9:8, 14; 1 Cor. 1:4, 5; 15:10; 2 Pet. 3:18.

FINAL REFLECTIONS:

- Think back on this quarter's lessons. What part of the book of Galatians has meant the most to you in terms of personal spiritual growth. Why?
- Complete the following open-ended sentence. The study of the book of Galatians has helped me to make the following changes in my life:

(FR) **FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:** Read the chapter entitled “Talents” in *Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 325-365? Watch for ideas on how you can sow good seed in order to reap a good harvest.

SUMMARY: The highest evidence of Christianity is that Christians treat each other kindly, even when a fellow Christian errs, and that they help each other through trials. This kindness should extend to non-Christians as well, especially to those in need and in trouble.



Lessons for Third Quarter, 1990

Sabbath School members who have not received a copy of the Adult Lessons for the third quarter of 1990 will be helped by the following outline in studying the first two lessons. The title of the series is "Singing With the Psalmist." This quarter's lessons cover the first half of the book of Psalms.

First Lesson: "Songs of Praise and Thanksgiving"

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: An introduction to the book of Psalms. (See introductions to Psalms 3, 50, 42, 72; Ps. 91:9-11; 24:8; 47:2-4; 103:19; Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 754.)

MEMORY TEXT: Psalm 150:2, 3

WHAT DO THE PSALMS HAVE TO OFFER? The recurring theme of the psalms is: God has relief for man's trouble. The psalms are inspired prayer-hymns spoken or sung by God's servants, expressing praise and thanksgiving to an exalted God and bearing reassuring testimony to His grace and power in judgment and salvation.

OUTLINE:

- I. The Authors and the Author of the Psalms
- II. The Circumstances and Dates of the Psalms
- III. The Message of the Psalms

Second Lesson: "Victory for the Righteous"

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Psalm 1.

MEMORY TEXT: Psalm 1:6

RIGHTEOUSNESS AND UNGODLINESS CONTRASTED. The Lord's blessings now and for eternity are given to those who live by His instruction. Those who do not are called "wicked ones." Their temporary existence will end in eternal extinction.

OUTLINE:

- I. The Secret of Happiness (Psalm 1:1, 2).
- II. The Fruitage of a Righteous Life (Psalm 1:3).
- III. The Fruitage of a Wicked Life (Psalm 1:4).
- IV. Ultimate Unhappiness for the Wicked (Psalm 1:5).
- V. Only One Way (Psalm 1:6).

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The regular Adult Sabbath School Lessons are available free each month in Braille and 16 2/3 rpm records to blind and physically handicapped persons who cannot read normal ink print. This includes individuals who because of arthritis, multiple sclerosis, paralysis, accident, old age, and so forth, cannot hold or focus on normal ink-print publications. Contact the Christian Record Braille Foundation, Box 6097, Lincoln NE 68506.

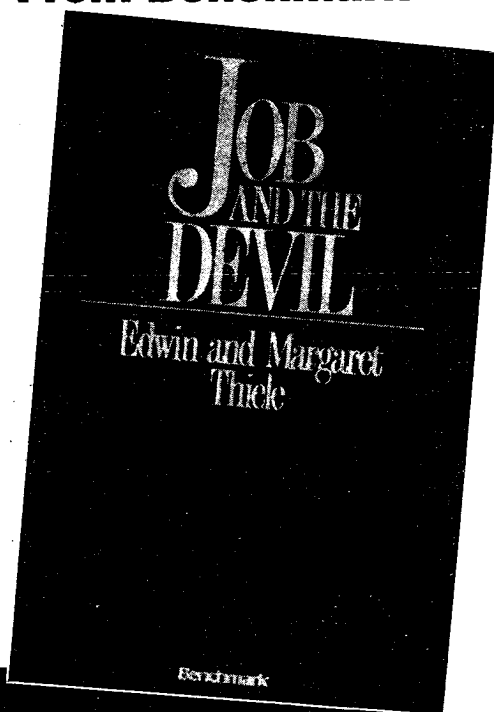
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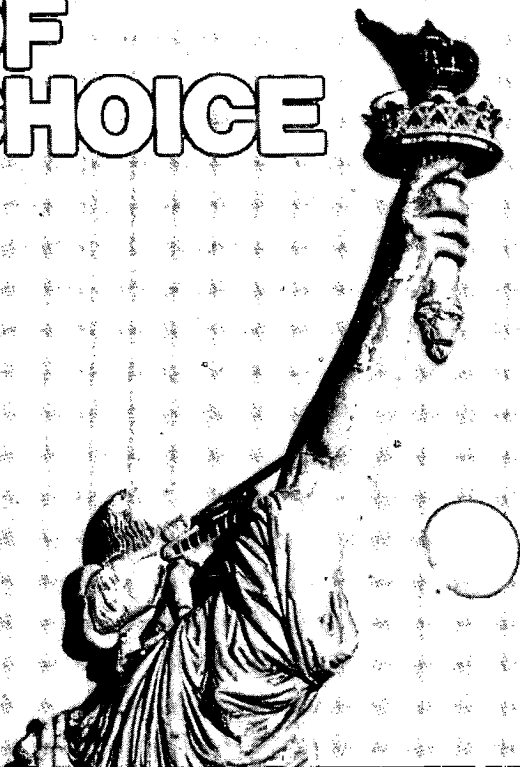
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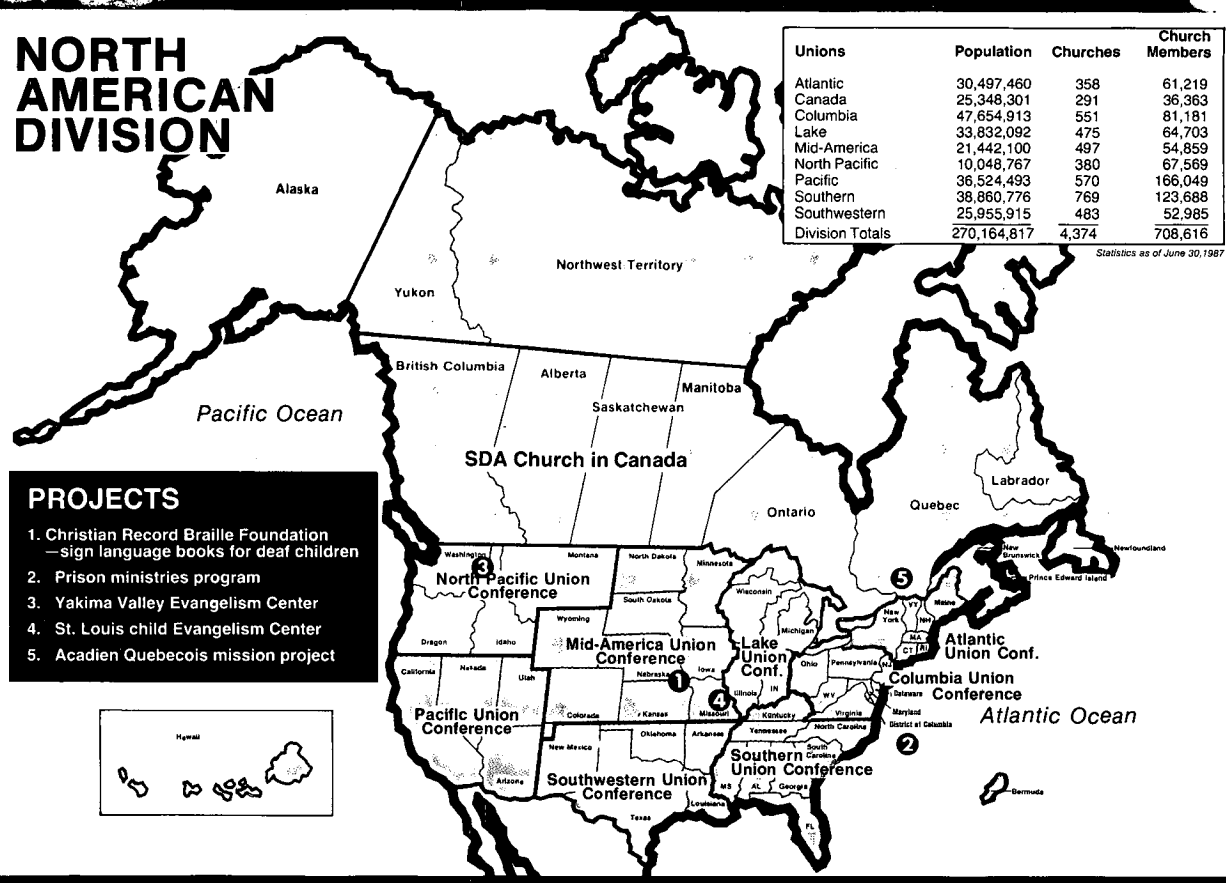
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Unions	Population	Churches	Church Members
Atlantic	30,497,460	358	61,219
Canada	25,348,301	291	36,363
Columbia	47,654,913	551	81,181
Lake	33,832,092	475	64,703
Mid-America	21,442,100	497	54,859
North Pacific	10,048,767	380	67,569
Pacific	36,524,493	570	166,049
Southern	38,860,776	769	123,688
Southwestern	25,955,915	483	52,985
Division Totals	270,164,817	4,374	708,616

Statistics as of June 30, 1987



Pacific Ocean

Atlantic Ocean

- ## PROJECTS
1. Christian Record Braille Foundation
—sign language books for deaf children
 2. Prison ministries program
 3. Yakima Valley Evangelism Center
 4. St. Louis child Evangelism Center
 5. Acadien Quebecois mission project

