

Sabbath School Lesson #4 – Justification by Faith Alone – 15-21 July 2017

Christ is our life, and like Paul, you may say: “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” (Galatians 2:20). Now, first read Galatians 2:15-21.

“Sinners of the Gentiles”, and Sinners of the Jews – Paul said to Peter, “We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles” (Galatians 2:15). Did Paul mean that they, being Jews, were, therefore, not sinners? – No, for he immediately adds that they believed on Jesus Christ for justification (verse 16). They were sinners of the Jews, and not sinners of the Gentiles; but whatever things they had to boast of as Jews, all had to be counted loss for the sake of Christ. Nothing availed them anything except faith in Christ; and since this was so, it was evident that the Gentile sinners could be saved directly by faith in Christ, without going through the dead forms which had been of no service to the Jews. “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners” (1 Timothy 1:15). “All have sinned” (Romans 3:23), and stand alike guilty before God; all, whatever race or class, can accept this saying: “This Man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them” (Luke 15:2). A circumcised sinner is no better than an uncircumcised one; a sinner in our Seventh-day Adventist Church is no better than one outside. The sinner who has gone through the form of baptism is not better than the sinner who has never made any profession of religion. Sin is sin, and sinners are sinners, whether in the church or outside; but, thank God, Christ is the propitiation for our sins, as well as for the sins of the whole world. There is hope for unfaithful professor of religion, as well as for sinners who have never professed Christ.

Justified – “Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law … we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified” (Galatians 2:16), said the apostle. “Justified” is ‘made righteous.’ In an accommodated sense we use the term ‘justified’ of a man who has done no wrong in that he is accused of. But, strictly speaking, such an one needs no justification, since he is already just; his righteous deed justified him. He was justified in his deed. But since all have sinned, there are none just or righteous before God; therefore they need to be justified, or made righteous, which God does. Now the law of God is righteousness (Romans 7:12; 9:30, 31; Psalm 119:172). Paul did not disparage the law, although he declared that no man could be made righteous by the law, the law written on stones or in a book. Paul so highly appreciated the law that he believed in Christ for the righteousness which the law demands but cannot give. “For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh; that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Romans 8:3-4).

The Faith of Jesus Christ – Much is lost, in reading the Scriptures, by not noting exactly what they say. In Galatians 2:16 we have literally, “the faith of Jesus Christ,” just as in Revelation 14:12 we have “the faith of Jesus.” He is the Author and Finisher of faith (Hebrews 12:2). God has “dealt to every man the measure of faith” (Romans 12:3), in giving Christ to every man. “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God” (Romans 10:17), and Christ is the Word. All things are of God. It is He who gives repentance and forgiveness of sins. There is, therefore, no opportunity for any one to plead that his faith is weak. He may not have accepted and made use of the gift, but there is no such thing as ‘weak faith.’ A man may be ‘weak in faith,’ that is, may be afraid to depend on faith, but faith itself is as strong as the Word of God. There is no faith but the faith of Christ; everything else professing to be faith is a spurious article. Here is comfort. Whoever will accept the faith of Jesus, has that which is as sure to work righteousness in him, and to save him, as the victory of Christ over sin and death is assured. He gives to us His own tried and approved faith. It has not a flaw, and we need not fear to use it: it will not fail us in any contest. “By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God” (Ephesians 2:8). We are saved by Christ’s faith – it is His victorious experience and life as a Man that comforts the sinner (Hebrews 2:17-18). We are not exhorted to try to do as well as He did, or to try to exercise as much faith as He had, but simply to take His faith, let it work by love, and purify the heart.

Believing Is Receiving – “As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name” (John 1:12). That is, as many as believed on His name received Him. To believe on His name is to believe that He is the Son of God – and His Sonship is real, not a role-play as taught by “false brethren;” – to believe that He is the Son of God, means to believe that He is come in the flesh, in our flesh, for His name is “God with us” (Matthew 1:23); so to believe on His name means to receive or allow Him to dwell personally in you, – in your flesh. Christ pleads, “Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in Me” (John 15:4). It follows, believing in Christ, we are justified by the faith of Christ, since we have Him personally dwelling in us, exercising His own faith. All power in heaven and earth is His; ‘in the fullness of this trust, we shall lose every care,’ and let Him exercise His own power in us.

Dead to the Law – Many think that “dead to the law” (Galatians 2:19) means that the law is dead. Not by any means! The law must be in full force, else there could be no death to it. How does a man become dead to the law? By receiving its full penalty, which is death. He is dead, but the law which put him to

death is still as ready as ever to put to death any other criminal. Suppose now that the man who was executed for gross crimes, should by some miraculous power come to life again, would he not still be dead to the law? – Certainly; nothing that he had done could be mentioned to him by the law; but if he should again commit crimes, the law would again execute him, but as another man. Now Paul says that he through the law is dead to the law, that he might live unto God. By the faith of Christ he is raised from the death which he has suffered from the law because of his sin, and now he walks “in newness of life” (Romans 6:4). Like Saul of old, he is by the Spirit of God “turned into another man” (1 Samuel 10:6).

Crucified with Christ – “I am crucified with Christ,” says Paul, “nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me” (Galatians 2:20). Christ was crucified; “delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification” (Romans 4:25). Unless we are crucified with Him, His death and resurrection profit us nothing. If the cross of Christ is separated from us, and outside of us, even though it be but a moment of time and an hair’s breadth of space, it is to us all the same as if He were not crucified. No one was ever saved simply by looking forward to a cross to be erected and a Christ to be crucified at some indefinite time in the future, and no one can now be saved simply by believing that at a certain time in the past Christ was crucified. No; if men would see Christ crucified, they must look neither forward nor backward, but upward; for the arms of the cross that was erected on Calvary, reach from Paradise lost to Paradise restored, and cover the entire world. But let us note particularly in the following paragraphs how it is that Christ must be crucified in every soul that derives any real benefit from the sacrifice, for sin is personal.

Christ was delivered for our offenses. He “His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree” (1 Peter 2:24). He “taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). But every man is guilty only of the sins that he himself has committed. I do not sin where I am not, but where I am. Sin is in the heart of man: “For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness; all these evil things come from within” (Mark 7:21-23). “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked” (Jeremiah 18:9). Others have sinned as well as I; but their sin is not mine, and I do not have to answer for it. What I need is freedom from my own personal sin, – that sin which not only has been committed by me personally, but which dwells in the heart, – sin which constitutes the whole of my life.

What I Can Not Do – I can not free myself from sin. “His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins” (Proverbs 5:22). “For though thou wash thee with nitre, and take thee much soap, yet thine iniquity is marked before Me, saith the Lord” (Jeremiah 2:22). My sin is committed by myself, in myself, and I can not separate it from me. Cast it on the Lord? Ah, yes, that is right, but how? Can I gather it up in my hands, and cast it from me, so that it will light upon Him? – I can not. If I could separate it but a hair’s breadth from me, then I should be safe, no matter what became of it, since it would not be found in me. In that case I could dispense with Christ; for if sin were not found on me, it would make no matter to me where it was found. I should be clear of sin. But no works of any kind that I can do can save me; therefore, all my efforts to separate myself from my sins are unavailing.

Christ Bears the Sin in Us – It is evident that whoever bears my sins must come where I am, into me. And this is just what Christ does. Christ is the Word, and to all sinners, who would excuse themselves by saying that they can not know what God requires of them, He says, “The Word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it” (Deuteronomy 30:11-14). Therefore, He says, “If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved” (Romans 10:9). What shall we confess about the Lord Jesus? – We confess the truth, that He is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart, and believe that He is there risen from the dead. “Now that He ascended, what is it but that He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?” (Ephesians 4:9). The risen Saviour is the crucified Saviour. As Christ risen is for every sinner, so Christ crucified is for every sinner. If it were not so, there would be no hope for any.

Living by Faith – Christ is to every man “a very present help in trouble” (Psalm 46:1). He comes to the sinner so that the sinner may have every facility for turning from sin to righteousness. He is “the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6). There is no other life than His; He “is our life” (Colossians 3:4). Christ is knocking at the door (Revelation 3:20), but not every man opens for Him; for some “hold down the truth in unrighteousness” (Romans 1:18). Paul prayed that we might be strengthened with might by the Spirit of God in the inner man, “that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; ... that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God” (Ephesians 3:16-19). Although Christ died to save every man, not every man will be saved. Whereas Christ is crucified and risen for every man, the sinner does not receive Him, while the Christian receives Him and Christ dwells in him *by faith*. Christ is crucified for every sinner, for wherever there is sin, there is Christ crucified to bear it. All that is needed now is for the sinner to be crucified with Christ, to let Christ’s death be his own death, in order that the life of Jesus may be manifested in his mortal flesh. Faith in the eternal power and Divinity of God, that are seen in all the things that He has made, will enable any one to grasp this mystery. The seed is not quickened “except it die” (1 Corinthians 15:36). “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit” (John 12:24). As soon as I am crucified with Christ, “I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.”