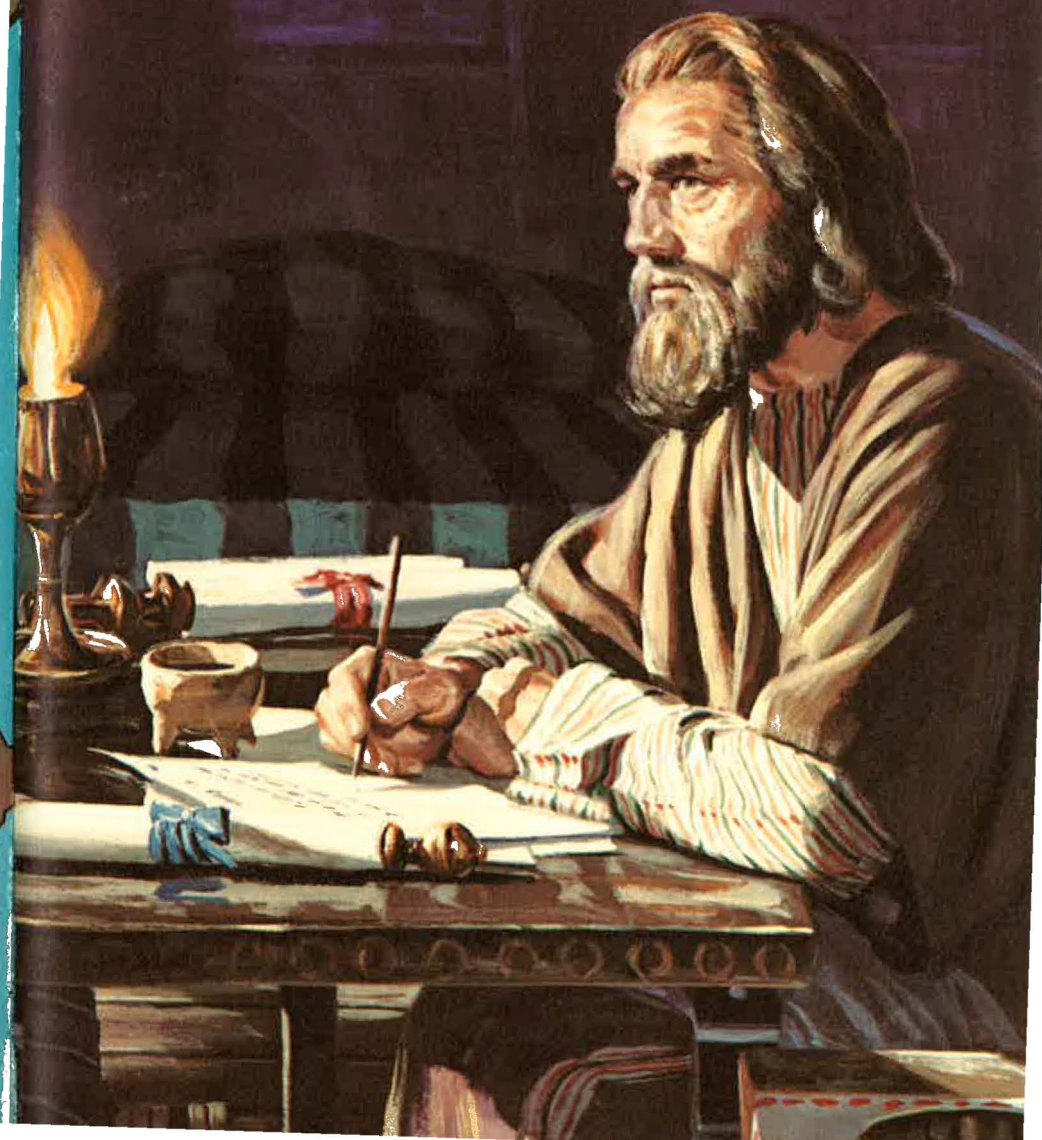


**Adult Sabbath School Lessons**

July-September 1983

# Themes of Faith and Salvation

  
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## THE FAR EAST SAYS THANK YOU



Two years ago you, the members of the worldwide Seventh-day Adventist family invested \$330,000 in the spreading of the gospel in the Far East. As a result of that Special Projects Offering nearly 100 village chapels stand today in the Philippines, and the girls of Mt. Clabat College in Indonesia enjoy a new dormitory.

Pictured above are the Simanggang jungle chapel and the Tual village chapel, both built as a result of your 1978 Special Projects Offering. For your love and generosity through the years, we in the Far East thank you.

Third quarter, 1983, brings the Far East to your attention once again. The projects we present for your prayerful support are: Expansion of our meager publishing facilities in Taiwan; upgrading of Timor Academy; construction of an administration building for Okinawa Junior Academy; and a new classroom block for Marshall Islands Seventh-day Adventist Academy.

The work of God in the Far Eastern Division has been blessed richly over the years through the Sabbath School Special Projects Offerings. Thank you again for your sacrifice.

## Themes of Faith and Salvation

### Introduction for the Quarter

Our study this quarter will draw frequently—though by no means primarily or exclusively—from two New Testament letters: Galatians and James. Both letters have been studied in years past in the Sabbath School but never together in one quarterly. A study drawing from these two books seems highly appropriate. Both discuss faith and salvation and at first glance may seem to give different definitions of faith and to base salvation on different foundations.

The book of Galatians strongly presents salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ with stress on justification by faith. James in no way contradicts that truth but emphasizes that salvation produces good works.

The message to the Galatians confirms that sent to the Romans, and of the Roman letter Ellen White wrote: "Through all the ages the great truth of justification by faith has stood as a mighty beacon to guide repentant sinners into the way of life. It was this light that scattered the darkness which enveloped Luther's mind and revealed to him the power of the blood of Christ to cleanse from sin. The same light has guided thousands of sin-burdened souls to the true Source of pardon and peace."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 373, 374.

In Galatians, Luther found the teaching of justification by faith. It pointed him to freedom from the burden of sin, and presented the source of comfort and joy found in Christian living. He said that "The Epistle to the Galatians . . . is my epistle to which I am betrothed."—Jaroslav Pelikan, ed., *Luther's Works* (St. Louis, Missouri: Concordia Publishing House, 1963), vol. 26, p. ix. He compared his love for the Epistle to the Galatians to his love for his wife, Katie. He leaned upon it for its presentation of the surety of salvation.

As Paul, in this letter, was meeting the need of legalistic Galatians, so James met the need of people who gloried in their Christian faith but failed to produce fruits of righteousness.

In our study, drawing upon these two letters, we shall note the harmony between what many over the centuries have seen as two opposing views of salvation—one by faith, the other by works.

Our study will treat various themes in the two letters rather than attempt an in-depth, verse-by-verse study. With the support of other Bible passages we shall pick up an example here and there from these two letters to illustrate the truths developed by Paul and James.



# “Salvation is of the Lord”

**MEMORY TEXT:** “Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ” (Gal. 2:16).

“Faith without works is dead” (James 2:20).

God’s provision for our salvation represents the only possible solution for our sin problem. It includes our acceptance by God through the forgiveness of sin’s guilt and restoration to God’s image through deliverance from sin’s power. God’s salvation grants to the sinner entrance into His everlasting kingdom. Both our present acceptance with God and our final redemption or salvation are alike His gifts. “Not of works, lest any man should boast” (Eph. 2:9).

The emphases given by Paul and James on the way of salvation are like the two sides of one sheet of paper or like the positive and negative of photographic film. They were each speaking to people with somewhat different problems, possibly, and hence the difference in emphasis given. One stresses the instrument of faith that takes hold of the salvation offered in Jesus. The other stresses that the genuineness of this saving faith will be seen in works of righteousness.

This week we are also looking at three individuals who were “Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles” (Gal. 2:15). We will see how they each responded to God’s offer of salvation.

“He who is trying to reach heaven by his own works in keeping the law, is attempting an impossibility. Man cannot be saved without obedience, but his works should not be of himself. Christ should work in him to will and do of His good pleasure. If a man could save himself by his own works, he might have something in himself in which to rejoice . . . . All that man can do without Christ is polluted with selfishness and sin; but that which is wrought through faith is acceptable to God.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 364.

## Part 1—In Search of Mankind

“The Son of man is come to save that which was lost” (Matt. 18:11).

Sin is departure from God and His will in the least particular. Since God is the only source of life in the entire universe, those who choose to separate themselves from Him will ultimately cease to live. Eternal death will be theirs.

The statement that “the wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23) is absolutely unqualified. In other words, all sinners deserve death. This is a sweeping statement, and most generalizations are not correct. But this one is starkly true. How desperately then we need to have the Good Shepherd search us out and save us!

Contemplate the awful awakening that came to our first parents when they were told about the lethal results of sin. Gen. 2:16, 17.

Without the intervention of God’s love, revealed most fully in the seeking Son, all humankind would have been lost eternally.

How was God’s love for every one of us vividly revealed in the way Christ became one with us? Heb. 2:9.

When Adam and Eve chose to sin by departing from God’s expressed will for them, the Second Person of the Godhead offered to die the second death in their place—the seed of the woman (Gen. 3:15). Jesus did this on Calvary. That is the reason His death was so dreadful to Him. More than that, He had chosen to step down to be forever one of us, that He might lift us up to be one with God.

What part does our faith play in the bestowal of salvation upon us, and how complete was Christ’s stepping down to us? John 3:16; Rom. 5:18.

The gift of life, through the righteousness of Christ, is offered to every sinner. All sinners will not be automatically forgiven for their sins and granted eternal life; each one must accept the gracious offer. But most sinners refuse or just neglect to accept the gift of salvation. Hence they will die eternal death, even though the redemption price has been paid for everyone.

**FURTHER STUDY:** Romans 5; *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 761-764.



**Part 2—New Life in Christ**

"There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews . . . a master of Israel" (John 3:1-10).

In spite of high position, knowledge of the Old Testament, and uprightness of life, Nicodemus had fallen into the snare that had drawn Israel from its divine place. He understood the entire system of Hebrew law as providing a means of earning the favor of God. This also was the problem of the Galatians and can be ours today.

With what complimentary words did Nicodemus open his conversation with Jesus, and what was the significance of Jesus' reply? John 3:2, 3.

If anyone should merit salvation by position or status, Nicodemus certainly should. He was a Pharisee—a member of a strictly orthodox Jewish sect that was concerned deeply with the preservation of the purity of the Jewish religion from all Greek ideas and other foreign influences. But Jesus startled this teacher by saying that he must be born again.

In his hurt pride, how would you expect Nicodemus to respond to this unexpected requirement outlined by Jesus? John 3:4.

"The Saviour did not meet argument with argument. Raising His hand with solemn, quiet dignity, He pressed the truth home with greater assurance."—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 171, 172.

How did Jesus give greater emphasis and clarity to what He had already said? John 3:5-8.

Again in utter astonishment Nicodemus said, "How can these things be?" (verse 9). Jesus went on to explain to him that "as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life" (verses 14, 15).

Not until he saw Jesus lifted up on the cross of Calvary did Nicodemus perceive the darkness in which he and his people had dwelt for generations. The sacrifices, services, and laws had no power to save. They could show sin, illustrate the salvation that is of the Lord, but they had no saving merit. Only the Lamb of God could save. (See John 1:29).

**THINK IT THROUGH:** What is included in being "born again"?

**FURTHER STUDY:** *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 167-177.

**Part 3—Loved, but Lost**

"Behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" (Matt. 19:16).

One can but wonder if the rich young ruler ever entertained the thought that he was not worthy of eternal life. In his question to Jesus he reflected the thinking of his people. The doing of what Jehovah had required of the Israelites was seen as the ground of acceptance with God. As we move into our study of Galatians and James, we will find that this will be the basic issue.

In what respect was the ruler's character deficient when he met the Lord? Mark 10:21.

"Christ looked into the face of the young man, as if reading his life and searching his character. He loved him, and He hungered to give him that peace and grace and joy which would materially change his character. . . .

"Christ was drawn to this young man. He knew him to be sincere in his assertion, 'All these things have I kept from my youth.' The Redeemer longed to create in him that discernment which would enable him to see the necessity of heart devotion and Christian goodness. He longed to see in him a humble and contrite heart, conscious of the supreme love to be given to God, and hiding its lack in the perfection of Christ."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 519.

Why could not Jesus' love guarantee salvation and eternal security of the ruler? Consider Mark 10:21, 22.

God's love alone will not save anyone. A sinner's salvation does not depend *solely* on God's love. There is not a person born in the world whom God does not love or who is excluded from "the world" that Jesus died to save. But, as with Nicodemus, the rich young ruler had depended on outward conformity to ritual and uprightness of character to make him acceptable to God. It is essential to understand that our salvation is not the reward of a good religious life. When subjected to a test of faith such as James' letter requires, the ruler failed. He followed the Galatian heresy. Universalism holds that everyone will be saved no matter what his attitude toward God and His will. But God will not violate a person's free will. If anyone chooses to live apart from God, that choice will be granted in eternal separation from God in death.

**FURTHER STUDY:** Mark 10:17-22; *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 518-523.

## Part 4—Upright but Confessing

"I prayed unto the Lord my God, and made my confession, and said, . . . We have sinned and committed iniquity, . . . by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments" (Dan. 9:4, 5).

Selected for special education and training in order to serve the Babylonian king in the highest levels of civil service (see Dan. 1:4), Daniel apparently was the leader among the four Hebrew captives. It was he who petitioned their sponsor for the favor of a vegetarian diet instead of the flattering meat-and-wine menu taken from the king's table. (See verse 8.)

Although all four youths excelled in their studies (verse 20), Daniel had also understanding of "all visions and dreams" (verse 17). It was this that brought him to the attention of both Nebuchadnezzar and his grandson, Belshazzar. (See Dan. 2:24-49; 5:11.)

After the fall of Babylon to the Medes, Darius also discovered Daniel's gifts and planned to make him his deputy. (See Dan. 6:3.) This led to the lions' den confrontation. (See Daniel 6.) Daniel was assured by Heaven that he was greatly beloved. (See Dan. 9:23; 10:11.)

**In the light of Daniel's high standing with God and man, how do you explain his prayer experience recorded in Daniel 9:20?**

Even the "best" of humans is dependent on grace when he approaches God. The ties were close between God and Daniel because "he trusted God" (Dan. 6:23, TEV) and relied on His mercy (Dan. 9:18) for salvation from sin and the gift of eternal life.

"What great honor is shown to Daniel by the Majesty of heaven! He comforts His trembling servant and assures him his prayer has been heard in heaven. In answer to that fervent petition the angel Gabriel was sent to affect the heart of the Persian king. The monarch had resisted the impressions of the Spirit of God during the three weeks while Daniel was fasting and praying, but heaven's Prince, the Archangel, Michael, was sent to turn the heart of the stubborn king to take some decided action to answer the prayer of Daniel. . . .

"Daniel was a devoted servant of the Most High. His long life was filled up with noble deeds of service for his Master. His purity of character and unwavering fidelity are equaled only by his humility of heart and his contrition before God."—*The Sanctified Life*, pp. 51, 52.

**THINK IT THROUGH:** What link could there be between humility, penitence, and power in prayer in my life?

**FURTHER STUDY:** Daniel 1; 2; 6; 9; 10; *The Sanctified Life*, pp. 46-52; Luke 18:10-14.

## Part 5—Accepted as we Accept

"So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests" (Matt. 22:10).

No one will be entitled to salvation or admitted into heavenly society as a result of his own personal or ethical goodness. Note that the guests were not chosen for their character or worthiness. A garment acceptable to the king was provided by the bounty of the king. Why then do we read that "the wedding garment represents the character which all must possess who shall be accounted fit guests for the wedding"?—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 307. This is our concern this quarter.

**Summarize what happens to those who claim God's promises concerning salvation.** Gal. 5:24, 25.

Paul's thought that the believer in Christ is a new creature (2 Cor. 5:17), led by and walking in the Spirit, supports John's picture of the person who is born again (John 3:3-7). Only God can create and impart new life to man. It is the gift of God. This new life makes possible our escape from the corroding life prompted by sinful flesh. Both the gift of salvation and the power to live loyally for God are received through the kindness of God.

"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. Then as the Lord looks upon us He sees, not the fig-leaf garment, not the nakedness and deformity of sin, but His own robe of righteousness, which is perfect obedience to the law of Jehovah."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 312.

**THINK IT THROUGH:** Is being born again a once-for-all experience, or is it a repetitive experience in Christian living?

In a wedding ceremony both the bride and the groom repeat or assent to the vows presented to them. But this will not suffice for a stable, happy marital relationship. Every day the two partners will remember or renew those vows in their own minds as they go about their daily tasks. This constant renewal of their wedding vows may be even more essential if they are separated one from another for long periods of time. In the same way a Christian will daily, or many times a day, renew his commitment to God and reaffirm his born-again relationship to Him.

**FURTHER STUDY:** *Christ's Object Lessons*, "Without a Wedding Garment," pp. 307, 309-317.



## Part 6—Focus of the Week

Shortly after moving to Washington, D.C., I was driving an automobile to work, paying no attention to speed. In a slight dip in the road were three cars stopped by the curb. As I moved out to pass them a policeman stepped into the street and motioned me to stop behind the last car. When the policeman had dealt with the drivers of the cars in front of me, he told me I had been traveling 46 miles an hour in a 30-mile zone. I was condemned by the law that I had broken, but was able to atone for my violation of the speed law by paying a fine of \$36.

All of us have broken the law of God, and the punishment for this is not just a fine of \$36. It is eternal death. There is no possibility for a violator of God's law to find his own way to escape death.

The only hope of salvation for sinners is God's mercy. And all of us—all born into this world—are sinners. Unless redeemed, we are doomed to extinction for eternity.

The three individuals discussed in this lesson—Nicodemus, the rich young ruler, and Daniel—were good and righteous men in the eyes of their contemporaries. They were "Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles" (Gal. 2:15).

The three were different, however. The rich young ruler never committed himself to God to depend on His salvation and to be guided by the Holy Spirit. Nicodemus, although in the same position as the rich young ruler when he met Jesus, took seriously the Lord's instruction. He came to depend on the merits of the Crucified One. He received divine life through the Holy Spirit and became a devoted follower of Jesus at the cost of ridicule and rejection.

Daniel, as far as we can glean from the brief Bible record of his early life, must have learned from his very youth to trust God for help and rely on His mercy for salvation. Some good Hebrew mother (or father) undoubtedly led him to become personally acquainted with God as a child. When he grew up, he held to a constant commitment to God and became "greatly beloved" by God Himself.

When Babylon was overthrown by the Medo-Persians, Darius also placed Daniel in a high position because he found "an excellent spirit" in him. Yet Daniel, the "greatly beloved" of God, was by nature a sinner, as were Nicodemus and the rich young ruler. Daniel and Nicodemus recognized their need and accepted God's grace in the gift of salvation. The rich young ruler departed in sorrow from the only One who could have helped him.

**APPLICATION:** We also must make a choice when confronted by the gift of salvation. What choice am I making today?



# Faith and Salvation

**MEMORY TEXT:** "Without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Heb. 11:6).

As background to our study of Galatians and James, we need to see that we use the word *faith* with many shades of meaning. Even in the field of religion it has several uses. To some it means mental assent to a religious statement of truth. To others it means confidence and trust, not merely in an abstract truth, but also in a person. We shall see how faith led men to be true to God under trying conditions.

Ellen White says, "Faith in Jesus Christ may be described in few words: It is the act of the soul by which the whole man is given over to the guardianship and control of Jesus Christ. He abides in Christ and Christ abides in the soul by faith as supreme. . . . There will be an assurance that the soul is washed in the blood of Christ and clothed with His righteousness and precious in the sight of Jesus."—*Mind, Character, and Personality*, vol. 2, p. 531.

Both the Epistle to the Galatians and the Epistle of James use the word *faith* many times. In Galatians, Paul makes no attempt to define faith. But he says that faith expresses "itself through love" (Gal. 5:6, NIV), and then he goes on to show what love does to the character (Gal. 5:22, 23). James, by examples drawn from Jewish history, also seeks to clarify how faith manifests itself. (See James 2:20-26.)

Both letters make it clear that faith in a person is essential for salvation. To be saving, faith must lay hold specifically upon the merits of Jesus Christ by which the believer is counted and tested as acceptable to God. From that vantage position he is led by the Spirit into a life of righteousness.

In order to understand the biblical meanings of the word *faith*, we shall look at some of the people in the Bible who possessed different kinds of faith and note how their faith affected them—how it made them act.

Among these exhibits of faith will be three Hebrews—Abraham, Moses, and Mary, the mother of Jesus—and two non-Hebrews—Job and the Syrophenician woman.



## Part 1—Obeying in Faith

**"He believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness" (Gen. 15:6).**

"By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went." Hebrews 11:8. Abraham's unquestioning obedience is one of the most striking evidences of faith to be found in all the Bible. To him, faith was 'the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.' Verse 1. Relying upon the divine promise, without the least outward assurance of its fulfillment, he abandoned home and kindred and native land, and went forth, he knew not whither, to follow where God should lead. 'By faith he became a sojourner in the land of promise, as in a land not his own, dwelling in tents, with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise.' Hebrews 11:9, R.V.

"It was no light test that was thus brought upon Abraham, no small sacrifice that was required of him. There were strong ties to bind him to his country, his kindred, and his home. But he did not hesitate to obey the call."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 126.

It was in connection with God's promises of an heir that Abraham's faith moved from trust in God to trust in God's salvation. We are familiar with the account of the human means by which he and Sarah tried to solve the heir problem. But God had promised a son—and with divine nurturing and tutoring Abraham eventually believed in the Lord. In response God counted his faith, his trust, his submission to him for righteousness.

**From this beginning how did God deepen Abraham's understanding of God's plan of salvation? Gen. 22:1-18.**

Possibly no man has entered more deeply into the sacrifice made by God in sending His Son than the man, Abraham. It would be worthwhile to list the points of parallel as they come to mind:

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**What do you see in the Hagar/Ishmael experience that throws further light on that faith that brings salvation? (See Genesis 16 through 18:15; 21:1-21.) (Compare with Gal. 4:21-31.)**

## Part 2—"Though He Slay Me"

**"There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil" (Job 1:1).**

This great ancient sheik receives the highest character commendation from the Jewish writer of the book of Job. Before disaster overtook him, he was revered by all who knew him. (See Job 29:7-11, 21-25.) But his riches were snatched away; even health failed him. (See chapters 1 and 2.) In his sickness and poverty not even his wife sympathized with him. She wanted her husband to "curse God, and die" (Job 2:9).

**How did Job's "comforters" (Job 2:11) account for his calamity? Job 4:7, 8; 8:3, 4; 11:14, 15; 22:5-11; 34:10, 11.**

The reasoning of Job's "comforters" was along the very best lines of current thinking: that sickness and personal calamity were in every instance the direct result of personal sin.

**With whom did Job himself think that his misfortune originated? Job 10:2, 3; 13:15; 19:9, 21; 27:2; 30:11, 19.**

**What kind of faith could sustain a person in Job's situation? Would it have been saving faith? Job 13:15; 19:25, 27. (See NIV.)**

In Job we do not have explicit statements of his faith as related to salvation. But in the poetry of the book that takes his name we have glimpses of a saving faith. His intercession for his children is one such. (See Job 1:4, 5.) And perhaps he is another who exemplifies the Epistle of James—his faith was very much alive—fruitful in the Spirit.

Luther said, "If someone passes through evil with a courageous and happy spirit, then the Holy Spirit has already performed His work in him."—Jaroslav Pelikan, ed., *Luther's Works*, vol. 26, p. 384.

"God has always tried His people in the furnace of affliction. It is in the heat of the furnace that the dross is separated from the true gold of the Christian character. Jesus watches the test; He knows what is needed to purify the precious metal, that it may reflect the radiance of His love. It is by close, testing trials that God disciplines His servants. He sees that some have powers which may be used in the advancement of His work, and He puts these persons upon trial; in His providence He brings them into positions that test their character and reveal defects and weaknesses that have been hidden from their own knowledge."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 129.



## Part 3—Trusting in Adversity

“By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: . . . for he endured, as seeking him who is invisible” (Heb. 11:24-27).

In the experience of that giant of faith, Moses, we again lack explicit testimony as to the saving nature of his faith. How much of the revelation of God given to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was still shared during the Egyptian bondage, we are not told. In the critical years immediately preceding the Exodus, Israel’s understanding of Jehovah doubtless had dimmed.

Nevertheless there were people like Amram and Jochebed who looked for Jehovah’s intervention and deliverance. And in the child whose life they risked all to preserve, they seemed to expect the beginning of the greatest manifestation of divine intervention in human affairs since the Flood. (See Heb. 11:23; Ex. 1:22 through 2:3.)

**What aspects of Moses’ later experience were not included in Hebrews 11 but could have been added as evidence of his giant faith? Heb. 3:5, 6.**

In the miraculous deliverance of an enslaved people from the clutches of the greatest nation on earth, Jehovah displayed His grace and His power. In the restoration of the sacrificial system in the tabernacle, God gave His people a constant reminder that without the shedding of blood, sins cannot be forgiven. In the Sinai glory the tables of the law were delivered and placed beneath the mercy seat. Righteousness and grace were brought close together. (See Heb. 11:27-29; 9:19-22.)

Moses possibly received the greatest manifestation of the personhood of God ever given to a human being. Yet, in meekness, he offered to give up everything if only God’s people could be saved. (See Ex. 32:32; 33:9-23.)

His life reveals that the work of God’s grace had been effective day by day.

“God shut Moses out of Canaan, to teach a lesson which should never be forgotten—that He requires exact obedience, and that men are to beware of taking to themselves the glory which is due to their Maker. He could not grant the prayer of Moses that he might share the inheritance of Israel, but He did not forget or forsake His servant. The God of heaven understood the suffering that Moses had endured; He had noted every act of faithful service through those long years of conflict and trial. On the top of Pisgah, God called Moses to an inheritance infinitely more glorious than the earthly Canaan.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 479.

## Part 4—Submissive to God

Note the response of Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, when the angel promised that his wife, Elizabeth, would bear him a son in her old age.

“Zacharias said unto the angel, Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years” (Luke 1:18).

Zacharias’ reply to Gabriel’s announcement revealed doubts as to the fulfillment of this welcome promise. Humanly speaking, to have a child so late in their married life was an impossibility. Eagerly wishing that the promise might become a reality, Zacharias wanted to make sure that the thing was not a hoax. Although he was well aware of his people’s history and remembered that Abraham had a son in his old age, doubts arose in his mind when he thought of the advanced age of his wife and himself. Zacharias doubted even though he was “righteous before God” (Luke 1:6). Doubt is destructive of faith unto salvation.

**Summarize in your own words Mary’s response when Gabriel appeared to her about six months later and told her that she would give birth to a son. Luke 1:38.**

Modern-language translations make her response even more clear. Today’s English Version reads, “May it happen to me as you have said.” “I am the Lord’s servant.” What a contrast between Mary’s sweet, childlike trust in God and His will for her and the unbelief of Zacharias! Mary had more reason to doubt the angel’s words because, as she said, “I am not married” (Luke 1:34, Phillips). Nevertheless, she trusted God to whom she belonged.

Mary had abandoned herself “body and soul” to God (Luke 1:38, Phillips). She held back nothing. She was God’s. For His sake and for compliance with His will she would even accept shame. And such she did—first from her fiancé, Joseph (who secretly planned to put her away, Matt. 1:18-20), and later from the Jews when they asserted they were “not born of fornication” (John 8:41). In this remark “there is doubtless a taunt . . . at the supposed circumstances of Jesus’ birth, the implication being that Jesus was born of fornication.”—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 991.

James would have approved the faith of Mary. The “fruit of righteousness” in her life was “sown in peace” and made peace. This is the pedigree of the redeemed. (See James 3:18.)

**FURTHER STUDY:** Luke 2; *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 97-99.

## Part 5—Clinging to God

**“Then Jesus . . . departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David” (Matt. 15:21, 22).**

The story recorded in Matthew 15 tells of a woman who came to Jesus requesting healing for her sick daughter while Jesus and His disciples were visiting in the regions of Tyre and Sidon (present-day Lebanon). At first Jesus seemed to ignore both the woman and her request. His purpose in acting this way was to teach the disciples a lesson about working for non-Jews. He acted out “the contrast between the usual Jewish attitude and His own. . . . The typical Jewish rabbi would have done precisely what the disciples proposed, sent her away without even making a direct reply to her request. . . . Jesus in no way shared the narrow exclusiveness the Jews felt toward Gentiles.”—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 421.

**When Jesus voiced the term in which His people would speak of this woman, what gave her the grace to reply as she did? Matt. 15:27.**

The woman believed that Jesus could help her. She refused to be discouraged by His apparent rebuff. She retained “irrepressible trust in Him whose face and tones so contradicted His words.”—Cunningham Geike, *The Life and Words of Christ* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1880), vol. 2, p. 219.

She kept clinging to Him for help. “Beneath the apparent refusal of Jesus, she saw a compassion that He could not hide.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 401. “Pride and prejudice meant nothing to her, and she would not let these deter her. Her faith and perseverance are truly commendable.”—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, pp. 421, 422.

**THINK IT THROUGH: From Matthew 15:28, what could you say about the importance of the size of a person’s faith?**

This woman from a heathen community may be an example of those who have never heard the exact terms outlined in the story of salvation. But they have responded to the moving of the Spirit of God upon their hearts. And the merits of Jesus must be counted to them. They may not have saving faith in the sense of gospel acceptance, but they have shown how they would respond had they the joy of knowing the gospel story. (See *The Desire of Ages*, p. 638.)

**FURTHER STUDY:** Mark 7:24-30; *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 399-402.

## Part 6—Focus of the Week

It is true of faith as it is of love that it is a “many-splendored thing.” The five parts of this lesson have given evidence that faith has many facets and manifests itself in many different ways.

In the case of Abraham, faith was taking God at His word when God asked him to forsake his kindred and immigrate to a land he had never seen. Abraham did not know what the future would hold in that place. But he did know and trust Him who held his future, and by trusting Him he received object lessons of salvation and thus became “the father of all them that believe” (Rom. 4:11).

Job’s faith was, if possible, more severely tested than was Abraham’s. Abraham’s faith required that he become a newcomer in a strange land. Even so, he soon became wealthy and respected. (See Gen. 14:1-24; 23:3-6.) Job moved from wealth and respect to multiplied disasters. His friends despised him (Job 17:6) and, failing to discern the real cause of his misfortunes, attributed them to secret sins. Understanding the cause of his affliction little better than his friends, Job blamed God for it. He failed to recognize the difference between what God passively permits and what He actively sends.

In his groping, Job came to believe that God Himself had wronged him (Job 29:2-5). In a limited way he was in the place where Jesus was when He cried out, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Matt. 27:46). Nevertheless, like Abraham, “who against hope believed in hope” (Rom. 4:18), and like Jesus, who still committed His spirit to His Father (Luke 23:46), Job believed that some day he would be declared righteous or be “justified” (Job 13:18). Thus he clung to his hope by faith in God despite God’s apparent abandonment of him. By so doing he manifested confidence and trust even in adversity. This is genuine or saving faith. It says of God, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him” (Job 13:15).

Moses’ faith led him to part with earthly glory and cast his lot with a nation of slaves. Loyal to God, by faith he received the gospel in symbol and glorious manifestations of God.

Mary’s faith is possibly the most childlike revealed by any grown person mentioned in the Bible.

Finally, the heathen Syrophenician woman trusted that Jesus, a foreigner to her and a Jew at that, wanted to do her good in spite of His words to the contrary. God Himself makes such faith sprout and grow in receptive hearts and minds.

These five persons reveal a mosaic of faith unto salvation which is most simply “trusting God—believing that He loves us.”—*Education*, p. 253.

**APPLICATION:** What have I learned this week that will help my faith and trust in God grow? What should I pray for this coming week as a result of studying this lesson?



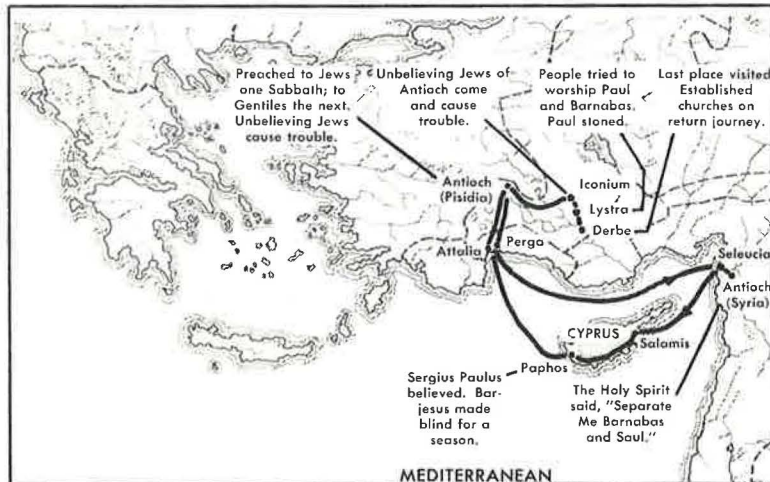
# Backgrounds to Two Letters

**MEMORY TEXT:** "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. 3:16, 17).

This week we study the background of the letters known as Galatians and James. The Roman province of Galatia in Paul's day comprised a large area. (See map.) From the region of Antioch in Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe in south-central Asia Minor within 50 miles of the Mediterranean coast, it stretched northeast to the southern coast of the Black Sea. It is not known with certainty whether Paul's letter is addressed to the Christian believers in the southern part of the Roman province of Galatia or to the Christian ethnic Galatian people farther north.

In any case, the *message* of the Epistle to the Galatians is more important than the identity of its original recipients because in it "Paul and his fellow workers proclaimed the doctrine of righteousness by faith in the atoning sacrifice of Christ."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 207.

As to the background to the Epistle of James, less is known. The author did address it to "the twelve tribes." Some think this refers to literal Jews "scattered abroad" who had accepted Christ, others that it includes all believers. The most likely author is James, brother of our Lord and prominent church leader in Jerusalem.



## part 1—Paul's First Visit to Galatia

After the Jews had turned against Paul and Barnabas at Antioch in Pisidia, Paul for the first time presented the gospel to the Gentiles, because "the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them" (Acts 13:42).

**What led to the departure of Paul and Barnabas from Antioch? Where did they go? (Trace journey on map.) Acts 13:51.**

Paul and Barnabas followed the instructions Jesus gave to His disciples when He sent them out two by two to preach. If they were not received or welcomed in one place, they should go to another. (See Mark 6:11.)

**Study Acts 14:1-6 and fill in the following blanks:**

From \_\_\_\_\_ the missionaries proceeded some 18 miles southwest to \_\_\_\_\_, founded by Augustus Caesar as a Roman colony. But the sense of threat to their lives did not lessen. At Iconium they had been threatened with being stoned. This remained a painful memory to Paul to the end of his life. (See 2 Tim. 3:11.)

**In what way did the feelings of the people of Lystra suddenly change following the healing of a lame man and the subsequent proclaiming of Paul and Barnabas as gods? Acts 14:11-19.**

Unsanctified human sentiments are fickle. The hosannas acclaiming Jesus as the King of Israel soon turned into shouts of "Crucify him," and the palm branches scattered in His path turned into thorns. The same phenomenon marked the missionary experience of Paul and Silas at Lystra. The stoning they had escaped at Iconium became a reality at Lystra. But this did not deter them from returning. (See Acts 14:21.)

**What five specific actions on the part of Paul and Barnabas attest to the thoroughness of their work in Galatia? Acts 14:22, 23.**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

## Part 2—Revisiting South Galatia

**Why did not Paul and Barnabas go on the second missionary journey together? Acts 15:36-40.**

Even good persons may disagree. At times disagreements turn into heated contentions and become so sharp that it is better that the parties be separated and no longer work together. Separately, both may do a great and good work for God. In the disagreement between Paul and Barnabas regarding John Mark, Barnabas may have been right. (See Acts 13:13; 15:35-38.) Years later Paul apparently recognized his mistake, for when he was a prisoner at Rome he wrote to Timothy to bring him John Mark, saying "He is profitable to me for the ministry" (2 Tim. 4:11).

**What is the significance of who accompanied Paul on his second missionary journey, and whom did he choose as a gospel apprentice in Lystra? Acts 15:40; 16:1-3.**

Paul had refused to acquiesce to Barnabas' request to give John Mark another chance, but he still had not lost faith in young people. As evidence of this he enlisted another young helper, Timothy, to assist him and Silas in their gospel work.

Silas was a Roman citizen (Acts 16:37, 38) and was also known as Silvanus (compare Acts 18:5 with 2 Cor. 1:19; see 1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:1; 1 Peter 5:12). He was a leader in the Jerusalem church (Acts 15:22) and a prophet (Acts 15:32). Silas and others brought messages to the church at Antioch from the leaders in Jerusalem, and Silas stayed on in Antioch and strengthened the church there (Acts 15:34). Later Paul selected him as his companion for the second missionary journey.

**Before having this newcomer join them in their work, what action did Paul take regarding him? Why did he do so? Acts 16:3.**

"In his work Paul was to journey from city to city, in many lands, and often he would have opportunity to preach Christ in Jewish synagogues, as well as in other places of assembly. If it should be known that one of his companions in labor was uncircumcised, his work might be greatly hindered by the prejudice and bigotry of the Jews. . . . He desired to bring to his Jewish brethren, as well as to the Gentiles, a knowledge of the gospel, and therefore he sought, so far as was consistent with the faith, to remove every pretext for opposition."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 204.

**FURTHER STUDY:** *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 166-170, 455.

## Part 3—Visit to North Galatia

After revisiting the churches in South Galatia, Paul and Silas turned northward. This took them into North Galatia.

**Why do you think the Holy Spirit prevented Paul and Silas from entering the regions bordering on North Galatia? Acts 16:6, 7.**

The Roman province of Asia comprised most of the western seacoast of Asia Minor. Not being able to move directly westward into the center of the Roman province of Asia, nor being permitted to go north into Bithynia, the missionaries proceeded westward through the northern part of the province of Asia toward the coast.

The fact that they were not allowed to preach in Asia and had tried in vain to enter Bithynia in the very northwestern corner of Asia Minor suggests that they had been in or had gone through North Galatia.

**How did Paul relate to the intervention in and changing of his plans by providence or revelation? Acts 16:8-10.**

Paul possessed a wholesome attitude. He did not pine over the Spirit's denying him his plan of preaching in either Asia or Bithynia. He immediately proceeded west. From his night vision in Troas he concluded that it was God's will for him to cross the Aegean Sea to Macedonia in order to proclaim the gospel to its people. The earlier divine denial opened up the greatest opportunity to Paul and the gospel. Someone has well said that it is practically a law in life that when God closes one door He opens another. The trouble is that we often look with so much regret and longing upon the closed door that we do not notice that one has opened.

**What was Paul's purpose in going back over old ground on his third missionary journey? Acts 18:23.**

Paul's third visit to Galatia was about A.D. 53 and 54 (see *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 931), and his second visit to North Galatia was on this third missionary journey. He discovered the Judaistic beliefs of the Galatian believers while on his third missionary journey. Later he wrote about these erroneous beliefs in the Epistle to the Galatians.

**THINK IT THROUGH:** Can you possibly recall specific occasions in your life when you were denied some cherished desire in order to receive something even better from God? How have your "Bithynias" affected you?



## Part 4—Letter to the Galatians

“See what large letters I use as I write to you with my own hand!” (Gal. 6:11, NIV).

The Epistle to the Galatians is characteristic of Paul. It reflects his thinking as clearly as does the Epistle to the Romans. Some think only the conclusion was penned by Paul, with the rest dictated by him and written down by another. Others believe that he may have written the entire epistle himself although he ordinarily used a scribe, either due to poor eyesight or injury to his hands from persecution he had undergone.

In relation to the council of Jerusalem, when was the Epistle to the Galatians written? Compare Gal. 2:1-10 with Acts 15.

“Obviously the Epistle to the Galatians must have been written after the events recorded in Gal. 2:1-14. If the council at Jerusalem described in Acts 15 is here alluded to, the letter must have been written after the close of the first journey, for that council was held between the first and second journeys (see Acts 15:36-41). Furthermore, according to Gal. 4:13, it seems that Paul had already visited the churches of Galatia twice, and if so the letter must have been written after the close of his second journey. If the North Galatian theory is accepted, the letter to the Galatians must have been written after the third journey, for Paul had not visited the North Galatian churches on his first journey. Accordingly the time of writing could be the winter of A.D. 57/58.”—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 932.

“Galatians is Paul’s declaration of religious independence from men and dependence on God. It is the Magna Charta of the Christian faith, repudiating all authorities, institutions, customs, and laws that interfere with the direct access of the individual to his God.”—*The Interpreter’s Bible* (New York/Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1953), vol. 10, p. 429. In it Paul wanted to free the Galatian believers from the erroneous concept that they could be saved by observing the Mosaic law. But he really goes beyond that and teaches that salvation cannot be obtained by the observance of any law—not even the Ten Commandment law. The simple reason for this impossibility is that everyone has broken God’s law.

As Paul says in Romans 3:23, “All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” For sinners to be saved at all, salvation must of necessity be a gift. This was the basic teaching Paul tried to convey to the Galatian believers. But he ends his epistle by showing that justification by faith and personal salvation will produce the fruit of the Spirit to the glory of God.

**FURTHER STUDY:** *S.D.A. Bible Dictionary*, pp. 397-399.

## part 5—James, to the Twelve Tribes

“James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ” (James 1:1).

James, the author of this letter, gives practically no information about himself apart from what he says here. He simply gives his name as “James.” This was an extremely common name among Jews in general and consequently also among early Jewish Christians. But this very indefiniteness suggests that his readers knew who he was. Early church tradition holds that he was James, the brother of Jesus, who became the acknowledged leader of early Jewish Christianity. (See Gal. 1:19; 2:9, 12.) Over the centuries, this identification has been *rather commonly accepted*.

During Jesus’ ministry what was his family’s attitude toward Him and His work? John 7:3-5; Mark 3:21.

Modern versions like NIV, TEV, NEB, Goodspeed, and Phillips use the expression “his family” or “his relatives” in Mark 3:21, not “friends” as does the KJV.

How can it be determined that James was one of the half-brothers of Jesus? Mark 6:3; Matt. 13:55.

The Bible does not tell us when any of His brothers moved from disbelief and opposition to Jesus to become believers and followers. But when the book of Acts opens, Jesus’ mother and His brothers were among the little group of Christians. (See Acts 1:14.)

Neither is any explanation given of how James emerged as the leader of the Jerusalem church. But it would have been to him that Peter sent the message of his escape from prison. (See Acts 12:17.) It was Peter, John, and James whom Paul met on his first visit to Jerusalem after his conversion. (See Gal. 1:19.) James also presided over the council of Jerusalem. (See Acts 15:13-21; Gal. 2:9, 12.) When years later, on his last visit to Jerusalem, Paul brought a gift from the Gentile churches to the church at Jerusalem, he presented it to James. (See Acts 21:18-25.) This James is linked by Ellen White to the brother of the Lord. She speaks of Paul’s “reverence for the apostles who had been with Christ, and for James, the brother of the Lord.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 405.

**FURTHER STUDY:** *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 194, 195, 399-404.



## Part 6—Focus of the Week

After Jesus had appeared to Paul on the Damascus road, He appeared in a vision to Ananias, a believer in Damascus. In this vision He told Ananias to go to the house of Judas on the street called Straight to find Saul of Tarsus. Saul was already known by name to Ananias as a persecutor of the believers at Jerusalem. Because he was afraid of Saul, he protested that he did not want to go and see him. But God countered Ananias' argument and sent him to instruct Saul about his role as a "chosen vessel." (Acts 9:15, 16).

In due time the Holy Spirit prompted the leaders of the church at Antioch in Syria to set Saul apart for the work to which God Himself had called him. (See Acts 13:2.) Immediately after this Saul and Barnabas set out on their first missionary journey.

They reaped the greatest success on this first missionary journey in South Galatia in the cities of Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe. At Lystra, Saul experienced some of the physical suffering God had told Ananias he would be called upon to endure. (See 2 Cor. 11:23-27.)

But adversity, physical suffering, and opposition from both Jews and false believers did not daunt Paul's courage or zealous commitment to evangelism. Fearlessly he pushed on with one missionary journey after another. And on every one of his trips, except his last one to Rome as a prisoner of the empire, he visited the Galatian believers. They were the firstfruits of his labors for Christ beyond his home base at Antioch in Syria.

It is generally understood that these Galatians to whom Paul wrote were largely Gentile Christians. They were later to be led astray by Jewish Christians. The people addressed by James, on the other hand, were Jewish Christians (James 1:1). "The discussion of faith and works in chapter 2 [of James] reveals an absence of the issues faced by Paul in Rom. 4 and Gal. 3 after the Jerusalem Conference (A.D. 49)." Thus James probably was written before the Jerusalem Council and "may indeed be the earliest New Testament book."—Archibald T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman Press, 1933), vol. 6, pp. 4, 5. (The Epistle to the Galatians, on the other hand, was written after the Jerusalem Council and may be dated A.D. 57 or 58.)

However, at the time James was written there seems to have been only one prominent James in the church. For that reason some commentators think that James was written after A.D. 44, the time when the more prominent James, the son of Zebedee, was killed.

**APPLICATION:** What have I learned about God and the Holy Spirit at work in the early church that will bring me comfort and strength today? What can I do to accomplish better the mission the Lord has given me?



## Galatian Freedom in the Gospel

**MEMORY TEXT:** "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free" (Gal. 5:1).

Paul was a mighty preacher of the gospel. He personally had experienced the grace of God and knew the gospel as "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" (Rom. 1:16). For him the gospel meant freedom from sin and its condemnation with full and unreserved acceptance by and in Jesus Christ. Paul was a living proof of the gospel. Having experienced it personally, he could proclaim it convincingly.

A person converted by the grace and power of Jesus Christ has indeed come back from a sure road to hell. Having experienced such a miracle of divine grace, he becomes a convincing witness of God's grace and power unto salvation. Paul was that kind of preacher wherever he went. When he came to Galatia and preached the saving gospel of Jesus Christ in the fervor of his own experience, many accepted it.

A large number of those who accepted the gospel in Galatia were from among the Gentiles. But to all who accepted the gift of salvation, Paul's gospel brought freedom in Jesus Christ. This was true concerning both his Jewish and Gentile converts.

The Gentiles were given a sense of freedom from the bondage of heathen practices with their attendant guilt. The Jews gained freedom from the burden of a works-related effort to earn salvation by conforming rigorously to the letter of the entire Jewish system of laws. Freedom from such legalism was and is available only in Christ Jesus through His justifying righteousness that gives the believer a new standing with God and, at the same time, by His transforming and sanctifying power that leads the believer to a loving, meaningful compliance to the will of God.

Freedom from sin should never be construed as freedom to sin. "Our sanctification is God's object in all His dealing with us. He has chosen us from eternity that we may be holy. Christ gave Himself for our redemption, that through our faith in His power to save from sin, we might be made complete in Him."—*Selected Messages*, bk. 3, p. 101.



## Part 1—Paul and the Gospel

“This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief” (1 Tim. 1:15).

Paul could never forget his early reaction to Jesus Christ. He had gone against the will of God in attacking His church. But as a Pharisee he had considered himself blameless in the sense of righteousness by works. (See Phil. 3:5, 6).

“Saul had taken a prominent part in the trial and conviction of Stephen, and the striking evidences of God’s presence with the martyr had led Saul to doubt the righteousness of the cause he had espoused against the followers of Jesus. His mind was deeply stirred. In his perplexity he appealed to those in whose wisdom and judgment he had full confidence. The arguments of the priests and rulers finally convinced him that Stephen was a blasphemer, that the Christ whom the martyred disciple had preached was an imposter, and that those ministering in holy office must be right.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 112, 113.

When Jesus appeared to Paul on the Damascus road and called him to be a minister (see Acts 26:16), did he have freedom to refuse? Consider Acts 26:19 and other pertinent references.

The words Paul heard during the Damascus road experience “struck home to his heart with appalling force. Into the darkened chambers of his mind there poured a flood of light, revealing the ignorance and error of his former life and his present need of the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit. . . .

“In that hour of heavenly illumination Saul’s mind acted with remarkable rapidity. The prophetic records of Holy Writ were opened to his understanding.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 115.

The diligence Paul had shown in persecuting the Christians became the measure of his zeal in preaching to sinners of salvation through Jesus. (See Acts 26:18.)

What change in motive and perceived means of salvation came with Paul’s conversion? Gal. 6:14; Phil. 3:7-9.

What can we learn from the confidence Paul possessed when he came to the end of his life? 2 Tim. 1:12; 4:8.

**FURTHER STUDY:** Acts 9:1-16; 26:4-18; *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 112-122.

## part 2—The Gospel Heaven-sent

“I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ” (Gal. 1:11, 12).

No man-made gospel can be true. No matter how lofty, no human teaching or philosophy can redeem a person from the pit of sin. It is God who reaches out to men.

That the gospel had come directly to Paul from heaven gave him an undying confidence and sense of freedom. Although he had not been an immediate disciple of Jesus, as had Peter and John, nor seen Him in the flesh as had the Lord’s brother James, Paul, too, had been met by Jesus. He had seen Him, and upon his “soul . . . the image of the Saviour’s countenance was imprinted forever.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 115.

What significance do you find in the basis of the gospel that Paul preached? Gal. 1:3, 4.

One aspect of the plan of salvation calls for a substitute to die the death the sinner deserves. Only in this way can a sinner be granted the first basis of eternal life. Likewise, when his name comes up in the judgment, he cannot plead his own case because he is a sinner and as such has forfeited life. He must have someone else to represent him. His own righteousness—even though he is redeemed—will never suffice to earn him an entrance into God’s everlasting kingdom. So Paul “presented Christ as the one who, seeing the helpless condition of the fallen race, came to redeem men and women by living a life of obedience to God’s law and by paying the penalty of disobedience. And in the light of the cross many who had never before known of the true God, began to comprehend the greatness of the Father’s love.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 207, 208.

Beside proclaiming the gospel in words, how else did Paul present it? Gal. 1:16.

“The world will be convinced, not by what the pulpit teaches, but by what the church lives. The minister in the desk announces the theory of the gospel; the practical piety of the church demonstrates its power.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 7, p. 16.

**THINK IT THROUGH:** To what extent is God able to present Jesus to the world through me?



## Part 3—Glad-hearted Reception

**“My temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus” (Gal. 4:14).**

Phillips more vividly translates this verse as follows: “You didn’t despise me or let yourself be revolted by my disease. No, you welcomed me as though I were an angel of God, or even as though I were Christ Jesus himself!”

In ways not revealed clearly, Paul was not in the best of health and was not his usual self when he first came to the Galatians. In spite of his weakness they received him readily and with utmost cordiality. Apparently he came to Galatia because, as verse 13 (Phillips) says, of his “physical illness.” But this did not affect their genuine welcome.

**What stood out in Paul’s preaching of Jesus to the Galatians? Gal. 3:1.**

There is salvation in none other than in Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Jesus could not have saved us by coming to this earth and living an exemplary life and then leaving this world and going back to heaven. He had to die for our sins and in our place in order to be able to offer us sinners freedom with eternal life.

**On what basis did the Galatians become free in Jesus? What did they receive with Him? Gal. 3:2. (Compare 4:6.)**

The Galatians had not received the mere theory of salvation nor had they become only nominal church members. They were converted to Christianity and became spiritual children of God. Being born again, they received the Holy Spirit, or rather, they were born to newness of life through the Holy Spirit. For “if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ” (Rom. 8:9, NIV). Paul’s Galatian converts had received the Holy Spirit, belonged to Christ, and thus were genuine Christians. This had happened by means of faith.

**When Paul, in writing to the Galatians, looked back upon their early Christian experience, how did he evaluate it? Gal. 5:7.**

**THINK IT THROUGH:** Compare the reception of the truth of salvation by the Galatians with the response of the rich young ruler, the Ethiopian eunuch, and Cornelius. (See Matt. 19:16-22; Acts 8:26-38; 10.)

**FURTHER STUDY:** Matt. 13:3-9, 18-23.

## Part 4—Free in Christ

**“Brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another” (Gal. 5:13).**

When Adam and Eve chose to obey the tempter in the Garden of Eden, they became his slaves. Everyone is the slave of the one whom he obeys. (See Rom. 6:16; 2 Peter 2:19.) Through procreation they produced “after their kind”; and through physical birth, therefore, everyone born into this world becomes a slave of Satan. But even though all of us have been born slaves, it is not God’s plan that we remain in that state. With this in mind Paul told the Galatians, “As for you, my brothers, you were called to be free” (TEV).

**By what agencies may we, born to become slaves of Satan, become free? John 8:32, 36.**

During their lifetimes Satan holds his prisoners in the prison house of sin. After that he holds them in the prison house of death. Both sin and death are Satan’s prisons. (See Isa. 42:7; 14:17; Jude 9.) No one but Jesus Christ has successfully invaded these prison houses.

**How early in His ministry, and in what terms, did Jesus announce the work He had come to earth to do? Luke 4:18.**

Although Jesus has the power to do it, He does not ruthlessly intrude into Satan’s prison houses of sin or death to set sinners free. At Creation, God endowed the human race with freedom of moral choice. This was evident as He took Adam to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and told him not to eat of its fruit. (See Gen. 2:16, 17.) Satan was aware of the vital nature of this remarkable gift, and he enticed Adam and Eve to use it contrary to God’s will. Jesus does not therefore set anyone free from Satan’s imprisonment even today unless the prisoner himself asks Him to do so.

**What significance do you attach to the picture the revelator presents of this same truth? Rev. 3:20.**

**THINK IT THROUGH:** Occasionally some one of us may think and even say that if God is omniscient and omnipotent and also a God of love, He ought to help me and do what is good and best for me even without my asking. Why cannot God do this?

**FURTHER STUDY:** Mark 5:1-42; *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 337-341.



## Part 5—Remaining Free

**“Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed” (Gal. 1:8, 9).**

Paul was deadly in earnest and fully convinced that his message was the only gospel. Anyone who would turn his converts away from it would lead them to eternal death. The eternal welfare of his converts must not be put in danger. Therefore he declared that anyone who would attempt such a thing would himself “be eternally condemned” (Gal. 1:8, NIV).

**What had the Galatian believers apparently experienced as a result of Paul’s invitation and call to freedom? Gal. 5:1.**

The Galatians had enjoyed the freedom of full salvation. This deliverance possibly was real to his hearers in a vivid way because some of them either had been or even yet were slaves. And those who had gained their civil freedom would be most anxious to retain freedom. They therefore would understand and value highly freedom from sin and the burdens that any man-made restrictions would tend to impose upon them.

**In the light of their freedom in Christ, what was Paul’s admonition to the Galatians? What is its import to us? Gal. 6:9.**

Paul feared that some Galatians, like some modern Christians, might weary in freedom because freedom brings responsibilities neither faced nor anticipated by a slave. A free Christian has to make continual decisions under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

“In matters of conscience the soul must be left untrammelled. No one is to control another’s mind, to judge for another, or to prescribe his duty. God gives to every soul freedom to think, and to follow his own convictions. ‘Every one of us shall give account of himself to God.’ No one has a right to merge his own individuality in that of another. In all matters where principle is involved, ‘let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.’ Rom. 14:12, 5. In Christ’s kingdom there is no lordly oppression, no compulsion of manner.”—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 550, 551.

**FURTHER STUDY:** *The Desire of Ages*, p. 466; *The Story of Redemption*, pp. 15, 16.

## part 6—Focus of the Week

The Galatians had embraced with joy the gospel of salvation through Jesus Christ when Paul first presented it to them. To Paul himself it had imparted peace of mind as a result of trusting in Jesus for salvation rather than depending on scrupulous compliance with the Pharisaic additions to Old Testament requirements. Paul lived the gospel, and his life testified to its power. (See Gal. 1:16.)

His commitment to Jesus also had imparted to Paul physical courage. The Galatians knew that he did not shun physical danger. Although he had been stoned on his first visit to Lystra he did not later avoid it, but revisited it on the return portions of both his first and second missionary journeys.

From Derbe—some 30 miles south of Lystra—it was a comparatively short trip through the Cilician Gates to Tarsus, Paul’s childhood hometown, and then by sea or land to Syria. But this was not the route chosen by Paul and his companion, Barnabas, on the first missionary journey. They had retraced their steps, revisiting Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch in Pisidia, unmindful of the persecution they had just recently met at these places. They could fearlessly do this because they knew that their lives were hidden in Christ with eternal security as long as they remained in Him.

Paul could live with this peace of mind even though surrounded by danger because he had been freed from the burden of sin. In the fervor of his own joy in deliverance from a life of rigid observance of the Mosaic law—made even heavier through the many Pharisaic additions—he lived the gospel. In the exuberance of this freedom he had presented the gospel to the Galatians, and they had responded by accepting it.

The Galatians recognized Paul as a bearer of good news. To the Galatians, Paul had been a fulfillment of the words of Isaiah: “O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid” (Isa. 40:9).

The tidings were good indeed because Paul told them that Jesus had died for their sins; all their shortcomings would be blotted out by their receiving Him as their Saviour, and they would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Paul rejoiced in their acceptance and noticed that they had indeed done well (Gal. 5:7). It was now his earnest hope that they would remain free in Christ.

**APPLICATION:** What can I do to bring the good tidings of freedom in Jesus to those around me?



July 24-30  
Adult Lesson

5

# Confrontation

**MEMORY TEXT:** "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John 1:17).

In order to understand the Epistle to the Galatians well, we must have some knowledge of the membership of the early Christian church. Undoubtedly, all the first converts to Christianity were Jews, as were Jesus' disciples. Even Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, was a Jew. He indicates that the Jews were to hear the gospel first (Rom. 1:16), but in practice—and as time went by—the preference became less and less. Even his synagogue ministry could have included Gentiles.

There is no evidence that the early Jewish converts to Christ shed their Jewish customs and practices immediately upon conversion. Rather, they continued to observe them. The apostles themselves continued to go to the temple to worship after the crucifixion of Jesus. (See Acts 3.) The leaders of the Christians in Jerusalem later counseled observance of Jewish Nazarite vows to meet a situation. (See Acts 21:17, 23, 24.)

But after Gentiles began to join the Christian church, the question immediately arose as to whether *they* should be required to adopt the Jewish laws and observe the Jewish rites in order to become true Christians.

To decide whether Gentiles must become Jews in order to become Christians was the obvious issue raised at the Jerusalem Council. (See Acts 15.) But underneath the surface in Acts and in Paul's letters lies the more basic questions as to *how* a person is saved. Does righteousness by works have any place at all in the Christian religion? If not, can we be saved regardless of "works"? Is obedience to be equated with legalism? Can Christians be saved while ignoring the example of Jesus? These kinds of questions are relevant today. We will search for answers in order to meet our own soul's need and in order to understand clearly what these scriptures are saying.

## Confrontation

5 Sunday  
July 24

### part 1—Abraham's Sign of Faith

"God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations. This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; every man child among you shall be circumcised. And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you" (Gen. 17:9-11). (Compare Acts 7:8.)

Without devoting much time to the institution of circumcision, we need to see what part it played in the particular problems Paul faced in his ministry. God gave circumcision as a sign of the covenant He had made with Abraham. At the time, Abraham was 99 years old and Ishmael was 13. (See Gen. 17:24, 25.) This rite and sign were to be observed by all male descendants as a constant reminder of God's covenant with them.

**Was the sign of circumcision given to Abraham in order that he might believe or as a sign of the faith that he had already? Rom. 4:11.**

There was no saving power in the act of circumcision or in the fulfillment of any other aspect of the laws God gave to and through Israel. We sometimes give undue emphasis to making distinctions between moral, ritual, civil, and other requirements. Only as these symbolized or were the fruit of a saving relationship with the merciful, covenant-keeping God did they have any value in the plan of salvation. Church membership today has no more power to save than had circumcision in Moses' time.

"Joining the church is one thing, and connecting with Christ is quite another. Not all the names registered in the church books are registered in the Lamb's book of life. Many, though apparently sincere believers, do not keep up a living connection with Christ. They have enlisted, they have entered their names on the register; but the inner work of grace is not wrought in the heart."—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 278.

**THINK IT THROUGH:** Fanaticism occurs when symbols, rites, or even methods of approach become more important than the goal or objective they are designed to illustrate or emphasize. Imagine putting the Messiah to death while giving as one excuse for doing so that He blasphemed against the temple that had been designed as a means of pointing to Him and His work! Are we as guilty today of this kind of fanaticism? Do we sometimes elevate symbols, rites, or ceremonies to the place that we are more loyal to them than to the reality to which they point?

**FURTHER STUDY:** Genesis 17; *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 137, 138.



## Part 2—Value of Circumcision

“Egypt, and Judah, and Edom, and the children of Ammon, and Moab, and all that are in the utmost corners, that dwell in the wilderness: for all these nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in the heart” (Jer. 9:26).

What a denial of faith! There was no difference between most of God’s people and the surrounding nations. Circumcision, originally a sign of Abraham’s personal faith in God, lost its significance as a sign of who were God’s people. The form had replaced the heart-experience.

Consider the possible meaning to Seventh-day Adventists of the fact that the Jews of Christ’s day clung so tenaciously to the forms of worship, once the spiritual significance had been lost. (See Luke 2:21; Phil. 3:5; Acts 21:21.)

Concerning the time of Jesus, Geike wrote in the 1880s: “Rabbinism was then in its full glory. The strong hand of Herod the Great had suppressed all political agitation for more than a generation, with the result of turning the attention of the Rabbis supremely to religious questions, which alone were left for their discussion. The ten thousand legal definitions and decisions, which are now comprised in Jewish religious jurisprudence, were for the most part elaborated in those years, and every devout Israelite made it the labour of his life to observe them faithfully, as far as possible.”—*The Life and Words of Christ*, vol. 1, p. 176.

Circumcision was important to the Jews, and to have a child circumcised the family must belong to the synagogue. Therefore it was a dreadful calamity to be put out of the synagogue. (See John 9:22.) “During this time no child could be circumcised nor dead be lamented in the offender’s home.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 472.

The Judaizers among the Jewish Christians insisted on the continued observance of circumcision for salvation even after the death and resurrection of Jesus. In a sense it was a symbol of all the other ceremonial rituals that the Jews had to observe. Their demand produced confrontation.

There was no particular harm in observing some of these regulations, for instance such items as a mother’s purification after childbirth (see Leviticus 12) and Nazarite vows (see Num. 6:1-21). So James, the leader of the Jerusalem church but not a Judaizer, urged Paul to join four Nazarites on his last visit to Jerusalem. (See Acts 21:18, 23, 24.)

**THINK IT THROUGH:** Can you mention options in the church today that some members choose to observe while others do not?

**FURTHER STUDY:** Lev. 12:1-8; Num. 6:1-21.

## Part 3—The Judaizers

“The apostles and brethren that were in Judaea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God” (Acts 11:1).

When Jesus sent out His disciples on learning missions, He told them not to go to the Gentiles. Presenting the gospel to them at first would have prejudiced the Jews against its acceptance. In his evangelistic work, Paul also followed the pattern of first giving the gospel invitation to the Jews (though this pattern was not completely consistent). If they rejected it, he went more decidedly to the Gentiles.

After Gentiles had come into the Christian church, what almost inevitable controversy soon arose at Antioch in Syria? What are its implications to the church today? Acts 15:1.

“While the apostles united with the ministers and lay members at Antioch in an earnest effort to win many souls to Christ, certain Jewish believers from Judea ‘of the sect of the Pharisees’ succeeded in introducing a question that soon led to wide-spread controversy in the church and brought consternation to the believing Gentiles. With great assurance these Judaizing teachers asserted that in order to be saved, one must be circumcised and must keep the entire ceremonial law. . . .

“The Jews had always prided themselves upon their divinely appointed services, and many of these who had been converted to the faith of Christ still felt that since God had once clearly outlined the Hebrew manner of worship, it was improbable that He would ever authorize a change in any of its specifications. They insisted that the Jewish laws and ceremonies should be incorporated into the rites of the Christian religion.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 188, 189.

**Remember that the key question with Paul was, How are we saved? In view of the contention in the church, what course was followed to restore unity? Acts 15:2.**

“To neglect or despise those whom God has appointed to bear the responsibilities of leadership in connection with the advancement of the truth, is to reject the means that he has ordained for the help, encouragement, and strength of His people. For any worker in the Lord’s cause to pass these by, and to think that his light must come through no other channel than directly from God, is to place himself in a position where he is liable to be deceived by the enemy and overthrown.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 164.

## Part 4—The Jerusalem Council

“When they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church, and of the apostles and elders, and they declared all things that God had done with them” (Acts 15:4).

In reviewing the facts of the Jerusalem Council, note Acts 15:1, 7, 13, 22, 27; Gal. 2:2, 3.

A key factor was and is that the Holy Spirit met with the members of the church to direct them in their deliberation and decision making. This is evident from Acts 15:28.

The Council’s decision obviously was against the wishes of the Judaizers—the people who argued for the incorporation of the Jewish laws and ceremonies into the Christian religion.

**What is significant about the way Peter characterized the ceremonial ordinances in his speech before the council? Acts 15:10.**

The original ordinances given by God to Moses had been further expanded over the centuries by rabbinical traditions until they had become an unnecessary burden. Jesus referred to these when He said, “They bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men’s shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers” (Matt. 23:4).

At the same time we need to remind ourselves constantly that the entire Old Testament system of worship and sacrifices did not represent an era of darkness or of isolation of God from His people. Some of the greatest revelations of Himself to men (theophanies) were given by God to Old Testament people. The recurring problem of both Testament periods was the attempted substitution of form for the living, saving relationship of the individual with His God—by grace, through faith.

**What are the implications of the instruction the Jerusalem Council gave to the Gentiles? Acts 15:19, 20..**

“The Gentiles . . . were to take no course which should materially conflict with the views of their Jewish brethren, or which would create prejudice in their minds against them. The apostles and elders therefore agreed to instruct the Gentiles by letter to abstain from meats offered to idols, from fornication, from things strangled, and from blood. They were required to keep the commandments and to lead holy lives. The Gentiles were assured that the men who had urged circumcision upon them were not authorized to do so by the apostles.”—*The Story of Redemption*, p. 308.

## Part 5—Circumcision Not Essential

“Neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised” (Gal 2:3).

Titus was a young Greek who had heard Paul’s preaching and had attached himself to him, desiring to become a Christian and a gospel worker. As is evident from verses 4 and 5, pressure was apparently put on the apostles perhaps at the Jerusalem Council for him to be circumcised. The leaders of the apostolic church upheld the stance taken by Paul and Barnabas, and Titus was not compelled to be circumcised.

Titus is a key person mentioned by Paul in his letter to the Galatians. Titus’ uncircumcision remained an effective weapon in Paul’s defense of the pure gospel against the assaults of the Judaizers who insisted on circumcision as a prerequisite for becoming a Christian.

Paul and the apostles did not reject circumcision as something sinful to retain and practice, but the Council made it clear that it was not necessary for salvation. But **out of reverence toward the Jewish Christians** and possibly out of charity toward those weak in faith, the Jewish Christians were free to observe it and comply also with other features of the ceremonial law until they had time to adjust their thinking. No one was to be forced to be circumcised in order to become a Christian, but neither was anyone to be prevented from being circumcised if he so chose. The Christian leaders wanted all to know that circumcision was not necessary for salvation but that it was a permissible option.

The leaders of the Jerusalem church might have agreed for Titus to be circumcised if he himself had so chosen. But when the Judaizers tried to force his circumcision, the leaders refused support. If Titus had been compelled to be circumcised, it would have negated the Jerusalem Council decision.

**How did the Council go about conveying its decision to the church at Antioch so that the report might be received with confidence? Acts 15:25-27.**

The church was very young at the time of the Jerusalem Council. Still it conducted business in a businesslike manner and duly informed the inquiring church about the council decision.

**THINK IT THROUGH:** What sort of thing are we likely to “Judaize” today?

**FURTHER STUDY:** *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 192-197.



## Part 6—Focus of the Week

The first converts to Christianity were Jews. As such, the males had been circumcised and would generally observe the ordinances of the Mosaic law. This was true particularly of those committed to God. When these Jews became Christians their life-style did not change measurably. Nor did they discontinue or make an abrupt break with the Jewish customs in which was great light.

But soon the good news of salvation through faith in Jesus reached people who were not Jews, and some of these eagerly accepted it. Then a question arose as to whether a person must obey the ritual laws in order to be a true Christian. Peter had accepted Cornelius and his household into Christian fellowship without circumcision. Paul on his first missionary journey had done the same for others. He argued that it was not necessary to become a Jew in order to become a Christian. He believed and preached that the basis for the gospel was faith in Christ. And so God, through Paul, “had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles” (Acts 14:27). Only through faith could a person be “put right” (Gal. 2:16, TEV) and remain in a right relationship with God. But the Judaizers in the early church did not share his views. They insisted that Gentile Christians must be circumcised. (See Acts 15:1.)

This controversy began at Antioch and threatened to split the church there. Consequently, Paul and Barnabas and certain other delegates decided to go to Jerusalem and meet with the apostles and elders to settle the questions about circumcision and the Mosaic law.

The ritual system presented gospel light in Old Testament times. But by misuse it had become a works/salvation system—one that could not save. The “Lamb of God” was forgotten. Merit was attached to circumcision. Unfortunately, however, the Jerusalem Council did not end agitation for the Gentiles to observe the Mosaic law. The problems became especially acute among the churches of Galatia. To allay this controversy and restore peace among the Galatian believers, Paul wrote the Epistle to the Galatians and later, in more detail, the Epistle to the Romans.

The Jerusalem Council was a testimony to the fact that Christianity had jumped the bounds of Judaism. The old bottles were being broken; Christianity was entering new paths both geographically, racially, and religiously. It was freeing itself from Jewish limitations, some of which were solely human inventions. In this, Paul, who “believed and taught circumcision or uncircumcision to be nothing and the gospel of Christ everything” (*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 204), was the driving force.

**APPLICATION:** What have I learned about salvation in this lesson that I can apply personally and share with those about me?



## Apostasy in Galatia

**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” (Gal. 1:3, 4).

The Galatian believers accepted salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ as a gift from God when Paul first preached the gospel to them. They rejoiced in it. But Judaizing opponents of Paul undermined the gospel by convincing some of his converts that they must be circumcised and keep the ceremonial law in order to be saved. It could as easily have been any other Old Testament symbol or requirement that they made into a means or ground of salvation.

When Paul spoke about the law in this letter, he was really concerned with the entire Jewish system, of which circumcision was a point of contention. The Judaizers robbed Paul’s converts of their freedom in Christ and put them under the yoke of Judaistic legalism. In this way, although his Galatian converts claimed to be Christians, they felt bound by the whole system of rituals and rules of Jewish legalism.

Paul was contending with two antagonistic and irreconcilable ways to salvation. Contrary to what some believe, the distinction between ceremonial and moral law was not the major issue.

Although the Galatian believers had accepted Christ and had been born into the kingdom of God through faith in Jesus their Redeemer, many of them were no longer alive in Christ when Paul wrote to them. Birth does not ensure that life will continue. Infants may be born live, but some die soon after birth. As a matter of fact, in some areas of the world mortality of infants is more common than death at any other age. So the Galatians had been alive in Christ, but many of them had died spiritually. Others would soon die unless Paul would be able to turn their eyes away from their religious self-achievements to Christ, who alone can effect the salvation of a sinner. The issue is pinpointed in Galatians 2:16. Is salvation by works of law (any law) or by faith in Jesus?

## Part 1—The Messenger

“Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead)” (Gal. 1:1).

“Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God” (Rom. 1:1).

In his letters, Paul introduces himself in many different ways. Check the following references and indicate in the blanks how Paul introduces himself in the passages indicated:

1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:1 \_\_\_\_\_

Eph. 1:1; Col. 1:1; 1 Tim. 1:1 \_\_\_\_\_

Titus 1:1 \_\_\_\_\_

Phil. 1:1 \_\_\_\_\_

1 Cor. 1:1 \_\_\_\_\_

His introduction of himself in the Epistle to the Galatians, however, is longer and also special to this letter. He does not stop with the categorical statement that he is an apostle. He goes on to explain by whose authority he is an apostle and to justify his claim to apostleship by saying he was called “not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father” (Gal. 1:1). Paul felt that his apostleship was being questioned among the Galatian Judaizers. In order to reject his gospel, they questioned his authority, his apostleship. Thus he wanted to make clear to the Galatians that his apostleship was by God’s own appointment. Some of the Judaizers who insisted that Christians must observe the Mosaic law wanted to challenge his authority by saying that they were spokesmen for the “real” apostles who had known and worked with Jesus and had received their message directly from Him. And Peter, one of the Twelve, had—they might argue—given them some unintended support through his behavior at Antioch and had shown that there ought to be a difference between Jewish and Gentile Christians. (See Gal. 2:11-13.)

For this reason Paul opened his Galatian letter by stating that he had not been called to apostleship by men nor received his gospel from any man. Indeed, after his conversion he had spent only 15 days with any of the apostles. (See Gal. 1:15-19.) That surely was not long enough for him to have learned the gospel he now preached.

Paul wanted his readers to know that he was not only an apostle but also that he was as genuine an apostle as any of those who had been with Jesus during His ministry.

**FURTHER STUDY:** *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 387, 388.

## part 2—Relapse Into Apostasy

“Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law, ye are fallen from grace” (Gal. 5:4).

“I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel” (Gal. 1:6).

The very fact that Paul says that the Galatians have fallen away from the gospel shows that they once possessed salvation through Jesus Christ. But having once been spiritually alive does not guarantee that one is alive at a later time. It is possible to have been a child of God once, but not necessarily to be one today. In 1 Corinthians 9:27, Paul says he makes his body a slave to the will of God, lest he become a castaway after having preached the gospel of salvation to others.

A certain church member was always talking about her experience in coming to Jesus and becoming His child. At the time it happened she had written out her experience, since it had been so vivid and real. Then she put her manuscript in a trunk in the attic. One day, years later, she decided to go to the attic to get the written account of her conversion experience and re-read it. To her horror she found that her account of her precious conversion experience had been eaten by rodents. Surely the lesson is obvious.

**What does Paul say had happened to the Galatian believers and why had this happened to them? Gal. 3:1, 6, 7.**

Under the influence of Judaistic teachers, the Galatians, who had at first accepted Paul’s gospel of salvation by grace through faith in a crucified Saviour, lost this faith. Saving faith is difficult to retain. Apart from God’s grace in the human heart, it seems easier to believe that we receive salvation by earning it rather than as a gift. And so the Galatian believers became victims of self-confidence and gave up their belief in salvation by faith in the merits of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection, and reverted to salvation by works.

**What shows how strongly Paul felt repelled by the teachers who had taken the Galatians away from the true gospel of salvation? Gal. 1:8, 9.**

**THINK IT THROUGH:** After accepting salvation by faith am I sometimes tempted to revert to salvation by works?

**FURTHER STUDY:** 1 Cor. 10:12; *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 383-387.



## Part 3—Circumcision Again

**“In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature” (Gal. 6:15). (Compare Gal. 5:6.)**

Among the early Christians there was some political advantage in being circumcised. Those who were circumcised could escape certain persecutions (see Gal. 6:12), for with circumcision these early Christians were still regarded as Jews, who enjoyed certain privileges in the Roman Empire. Hence those advocating circumcision “saw in it a passport to safety should persecution arise. Circumcision would keep them safe from the hatred of the Jews and the law of Rome alike.”—William Barclay, *The Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1958), p. 61.

**To what did the Galatians, in their apostasy, want to return? Gal. 4:21.**

**How did they hope to attain the goal of perfection? Gal. 3:3.**

“By the flesh” means what can be accomplished by human effort or compliance with the rituals of the Jews and the ceremonial law. Paul makes it clear that he aims to continue to cling to the grace of God. “For if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain” (Gal. 2:21).

**If they returned to the practice of circumcision what would be the result? Gal. 5:2, 3.**

Paul himself had advised that Timothy be circumcised before he joined him and Silas in their missionary work. (See Acts 16:1-3.) This he did to prevent prejudice against him and his ministry among the Jews. It was not a compliance with the Jewish law in order to earn salvation, nor was it for Timothy’s sake, but for the sake of those who were weak in faith and to whom his uncircumcision might thus be a stumbling block. In the case of Timothy, Paul’s statement that a person who chose to be circumcised becomes “a debtor to the whole law” was not true. This was only true of a person who, in his own heart, attempted to be saved by the law.

Circumcision on the part of Timothy was voluntary, not required, and the Council of Jerusalem had decided not to impose it on Gentile Christians. Not even Titus had been circumcised. (See Gal. 2:3, 4.)

**FURTHER STUDY:** Rom. 2:28, 29; 1 Cor. 9:19-23.

## part 4—Return to Law

**“Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified” (Gal. 2:16).**

“Justified” simply means to be put right or put into a right relationship with God. Today’s English Version helps us understand this verse more easily. It reads: “Yet we know that a person is put right with God only through faith in Jesus Christ, never by doing what the Law requires. We, too, have believed in Christ Jesus in order to be put right with God through our faith in Christ, and not by doing what the Law requires. For no one is put right with God by doing what the Law requires.”

No one can possibly be put into a right relationship to God by obeying a law that he himself has already violated. After a law has been broken it only condemns. Something other than a broken law is needed to put us in a right relationship with God.

**What does Paul indicate will result when people attempt to be saved by keeping the law? Why is this so? Gal. 3:10.**

Paul indicates that the law becomes a curse to those who expect to be saved by keeping the law.

**How could Paul be so sure of the impossibility of being put right with God by the law? Gal. 2:19. (Compare Phil. 3:4-9.)**

“By personal experience in seeking salvation through compliance with the requirements of the legal system Paul had proved to his own satisfaction the inefficacy of that system. Furthermore, he now saw that the law pointed the sinner to Christ.”—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 950. From that viewpoint he had nothing more to do with the law. He was dead to it.

**How had Paul come to the place where he could say that he was dead to the law? Gal. 2:20.**

Paul died and was buried with Christ in baptism. Then he rose again and spiritually associated himself with Christ and took up his burdens as he explains in Colossians 1:24, 25. Paul could say that he was in Christ or that “Christ liveth in me.”

## Part 5—Paul Becomes an Enemy

“Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?” (Gal. 4:16).

For most people it is difficult to differentiate between ideas, concepts, teachings, and the person who holds or teaches them. Thus we are prone to hate the sinner with his sin. Jesus, on the other hand, hates sin but loves the sinner. Because of this He was willing to die for you and me. The Galatians were very human. When they rejected the teachings of Paul, they also rejected him as their friend and began to hate the apostle who had given them the teachings they rejected.

What contrast in their regard for Paul was apparent when they believed his presentation of the gospel? Gal. 4:14.

When Paul first brought the gospel of salvation by faith to the Galatians, they had become deeply devoted to him. This is understandable although not altogether wholesome. There is a common danger that a convert might become a disciple of his religious teacher rather than a committed follower of the Christ whom the teacher presented to him. Many of the Galatians had been followers of Paul. When new teachers arrived, many followed them to their own hurt.

In rejecting the true gospel, what did the Galatians choose for themselves? What implication does this have for us? Gal. 4:9.

The most intelligent person is the most skillful rationalizer. The late Bernard Shaw said that a person can find a good reason for anything he wants to do. As sinners we are experts in self-justification and self-defense. It is an inheritance from our first parents. They began in Eden immediately after eating of the forbidden fruit.

The Judaizers believed themselves to be born righteous and reared in righteousness. They gloried in their privileged status as the chosen of God. They were the true spiritual kinsmen of the Jews who said to Jesus, “We be Abraham’s seed.” “We have one Father, even God” (John 8:33, 41). They relied on the law for salvation (Rom. 2:17). “Rabbinical teachers assumed that men were able to fulfill their obligations to the whole law.”—*The Interpreter’s Bible*, (New York: Abingdon Press, 1952), vol. 8, p. 314.

**FURTHER STUDY:** Matt. 20:9-12; *Christ’s Object Lessons* “The Reward of Grace,” pp. 399, 400.

## Part 6—Focus of the Week

Paul’s heart constantly yearned for the spiritual well-being of the believers he had brought into the church. When the Galatian believers were threatened with spiritual shipwreck, he wrote his agonizing letter to them because he was determined to do all he could to avert, if possible, the ultimate sorrow that would come to them through the erroneous teachings of the Judaizers.

In his salutation he expressed the hope that they might be aware of God’s grace and be experiencing the peace of God. (See Gal. 1:3.) Although he wished the grace and peace of God for them, he failed to express any affection for them, as he later did in writing to the Romans on the same subject. (See Rom. 1:7.) Nor did he express confidence in their loyalty to the truth he had preached to them as he did to the Thessalonians (1 Thess. 1:3), nor gratefulness to God for their life witness as he often did in writing to other churches. (See Rom. 1:8; 1 Cor. 1:4; Phil. 1:3; Col. 1:3; 1 Thess. 1:2; 2 Thess. 1:3.) Nor did he call the Galatian believers saints, which was his common appellation for the members of the churches to whom he wrote. (See Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:2; Eph. 1:1.)

Paul wanted the Galatians and all Christian believers always to remember that their hope of acceptance with God and their salvation rested on His free grace and not on compliance with rules and rituals of the Mosaic law or any law. In the same way that he began his letter by reminding the Galatians of the grace of God, he ended it by committing them anew to the grace of God.

In between he tried to direct their eyes again to the cross of Jesus as their only hope of salvation. Paul’s sentiment was that “to remove the cross from the Christian would be like blotting the sun from the sky. The cross brings us near to God, reconciling us to Him. . . . Without the cross, man could have no union with the Father. On it depends our every hope.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 209.

With sorrow Paul noticed that these very people who had welcomed him “as an angel of God”—as if he “were Christ Jesus himself” (Gal. 4:14, NIV)—now, through the influence of Judaistic teachers, looked upon him as an enemy. But even though their attitude toward Paul had changed, his sentiments toward them still were the same. He looked upon them as a mother looks upon the children she herself has brought into the world through much pain and suffering. This makes them so much more precious in her sight. As a parent sorrows deeply for a child in trouble, so Paul was filled with anxiety for his Galatian “children.”

It was not just ritual into which the Galatians were backsliding. In its place the ritual was good, but they were slipping out of the assurance of Christ’s gospel and into the clutches of a false gospel.

**APPLICATION:** How can I avoid and help others avoid making the same mistake the Galatian believers made? Am I as sorrowful as Paul was when I see others backslide?



# Needy Readers of James

**MEMORY TEXT:** "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves" (James 1:22).

In addressing his letter to "the twelve tribes scattered abroad" (James 1:1), James faced a different problem than did Paul in writing to the legalistic Galatians. They had begun to believe that their salvation depended on the observance of the law. The recipients of James' letter, on the other hand, prided themselves in the possession of faith, but it was a faith which produced no fruitage of works matching their faith.

Many Christians have taken the reference to the "twelve tribes scattered abroad" (the *diaspora*) to indicate that James' readers were Jewish. But many others see a parallel to 1 Peter 1:1 which is addressed to "scattered abroad" Gentiles. And yet Peter applies all the old terms for Israel to these Gentile Christians. (See 1 Peter 2:9.) One writer says, therefore "His [James'] epistle, then, is addressed to the entire church: it cannot be limited or restricted to Jewish believers of the dispersion."—Herbert F. Stevenson, *James Speaks for Today*, (Greenwood, S.C.: Attic Press, 1966), pp. 17, 18.

Nevertheless, James' letter may have had special application to the Jewish recipients. They may have been morally reputable members of society, with laudable ethics, even before they received the gospel of Christ. They may not have been moral derelicts like the people gathered by Paul's gospel net in the great port city of Corinth. (See 1 Cor. 6:9-11.) Thus no great behavioral changes had taken place with their acceptance of Christianity.

But to all of these believers, Jewish or Gentile, James pointed out that to know as much as they knew and not act on their knowledge was sin. (See James 4:17.) In this lesson we shall see what we can learn from their shortcomings. In calling James' readers "needy" the lesson focuses primarily on their spiritual condition.

## Part 1—Playing Favorites

"If ye fulfill the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, ye do well" (James 2:8).

God gave Israel this rule for interpersonal relations when He took them out of Egypt and made them a nation. Both the priest and the Levite in Christ's story about the Good Samaritan ignored the teaching. Both undoubtedly were aware of it. Their problem was the definition of "neighbor," as was that of the lawyer who asked Jesus who his neighbor was. (See Luke 10:25-37.)

**Why should favoritism or partiality not characterize the daily conduct of followers of Jesus? James 2:1.**

In the King James Version this verse is not understood readily. Some modern translations help us, as follows: "Show no partiality" (RSV). "Never treat people in different ways according to their outward appearance" (TEV). "Don't show favoritism" (NIV). The NEB and Phillips discourage "snobbery."

Favoring the rich over the poor stems from a lack of true love. As followers of Christ we should remember that even though we may not all be alike in possessions, position, talent, and ability, we are all alike at the foot of the cross. We are all sinners in desperate need of the grace of Jesus. We all depend on Calvary—the great equalizer—for salvation now and eternal life to come.

**How should we apply what James tells us about treating visitors to our churches? James 2:2-8.**

Showing honor to favored classes may be grounded in selfishness, since the rich, the powerful, and the leaders can repay our favors with interest while the poor cannot. "Love . . . does not pursue selfish advantage" (1 Cor. 13:5, Phillips).

**What does James indicate as being wrong with deferential treatment? James 2:9.**

One of the world's greatest cruelties lies in the treatment handed out to anyone who deviates from custom, in appearance or in action. How does the church relate to a Sabbath-morning visitor who does not conform to our standards of dress? How would James classify any discrimination that we might show? (See James 2:10.)

## Part 2—Loose Speech

What will characterize a true Christian's communication?

"If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain" (James 1:26).

James says that one measure of the genuineness of a person's religion is his speech. It will be controlled and directed, as a horse is directed by the bit in his mouth. His words will not run in all directions as does an unbridled horse. A person may think he is a Christian; he may appear to others as a Christian, but his speech will verify his claim or refute his pretension. The importance of correct speech is indicated by James' devotion of a chapter to its discussion.

What applications can you draw from James' illustrations of the tongue in speech? James 3:2-12.

1. Bits in horses' mouths \_\_\_\_\_
2. Ship's helm \_\_\_\_\_
3. A little fire \_\_\_\_\_
4. Deadly poison \_\_\_\_\_
5. Fountain \_\_\_\_\_

The tongue is the only bundle of muscles in the body attached at only one end. What a miracle, for good or ill!

James is concerned that our speech too often contradicts the faith we proclaim. (See James 3:9-12.) A spring cannot send out bitter and sweet water at the same time. But quite often even those who acclaim Christ as their Saviour speak both bitter and kind words. They may refrain from bitter speech during the Sabbath hours only to resume it after sunset. But that is not true religion. Religion is not a ritual to be performed on occasion. It is rather like yeast that saturates the whole lump of dough and makes the bread edible. The love of Christ will be heard in word and tone of our speech. "By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned" (Matt. 12:37).

In the light of Christ's words, what chance is there that we poor mortals shall ever be acceptable to God in the control of our speech? James 4:5, 6.

**THINK IT THROUGH:** Does God expect me always to keep my tongue under control? If so, how can this be done?

## part 3—Boastful Self-assurance

"Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain" (James 4:13).

Whether they were Jews or Gentiles, there was certainly nothing wrong with the skills of the ambitious people that James speaks about in this verse. Jesus Himself admonished, "Occupy till I come" (Luke 19:13). This involves planning and foresight, which are commendable. "Many who are qualified to do excellent work accomplish little because they attempt little."—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 498. In Christ's parable, the servants who traded with their capital were commended, while he who did not trade was condemned. (See Luke 19:20-24.)

What was wrong with the self-confident planning of these people, and what should their attitude have been? James 4:15.

A family was expecting some relatives to spend a week's vacation with them. The expected guests wrote and gave their plans with the time for their arrival in this way: "We shall arrive on Monday, God willing. In any event, we shall not arrive later than Tuesday." Unintentionally they had possibly unveiled a common attitude. Our piety may allow God to affect our plans a little. But after a day, we decide to regain control of events. That is different from the attitude of the psalmist, who exclaimed, "Thou art my God. My times are in thy hand" (Ps. 31:14, 15).

As followers of the Lord Jesus, we have received the following advice: "Consecrate yourself to God in the morning; make this your very first work. Let your prayer be, 'Take me, O Lord, as wholly Thine. I lay all my plans at Thy feet. . . . This is a daily matter. Each morning consecrate yourself to God for that day. Surrender all your plans to Him, to be carried out or given up as His providence shall indicate.'"—*Steps to Christ*, p. 70.

The fault of these enterprising people was not their determination to act decisively, but their distance from God and their failure to submit their plans to Him.

What counsel that Solomon gave should these people have remembered? Prov. 27:1.

In which of His parables did Jesus reemphasize the teaching of Solomon about selfishly glorying about tomorrow? Luke 12:16-21.

**FURTHER STUDY:** Ps. 37:3-5; Prov. 3:5, 6; *Steps to Christ* "Growing Up Into Christ," p. 70.



## Part 4—Self-seeking Wealth

**“Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire” (James 5:2, 3).**

William Barclay phrases the text to show the kind of riches James had in mind. He renders it this way: “Your wealth is rotten, and your garments are food for moths. Your gold and silver are corroded clean through with rust.”—*The Letters of James and Peter*, p. 135. James is referring here to the three main sources of wealth in the East—grain, garments, and precious metals. Garments commonly represented wealth in the East. Joseph gave garments to his brothers (see Gen. 45:22); Achan and his family perished for a coveted Babylonish garment (Joshua 7:21); Samson promised garments to his riddle solvers (Judges 14:12); Naaman brought garments as a gift to Elisha (2 Kings 5:5). So it was even in Paul’s day; and to make clear that he had sought no man’s wealth, he said in his farewell speech to the Ephesian elders: “I have coveted no man’s silver, or gold, or apparel” (Acts 20:33). Gold and silver normally do not rust. But final destruction will be so complete that even the indestructible will be destroyed.

**When will this total destruction occur? James 5:3.**

It is said that money or wealth is power and that money talks. In other words, a person with wealth or money exerts influence and wields power. People are more prone to listen to a person who has money than to a pauper. But when Jesus comes, money or wealth will be of no help or value. (See Rev. 6:15, 16; Eze. 7:19.)

**The Bible speaks of many rich people without condemnation—Job, Abraham, David, Solomon, and others. Why then does James speak so disapprovingly of rich men in his letter? James 5:4, 5.**

Riches in themselves are not sinful. They are neither good nor bad. People impart their own moral qualities to wealth, making it good or bad. It is not money that is sinful but the love of money that is the root of all evil. (See 1 Tim. 6:10.) A poor person can love and desire money just as much as a rich one—sometimes even more. Riches, however, bring certain temptations that never assail a poor person. Jesus said therefore that it is difficult for a rich man to be saved. (See Matt. 19:23.)

**THINK IT THROUGH:** Why are many Christians anxious to get ahead financially when, according to the words of Jesus, the possession of riches makes our salvation more difficult?

## part 5—Kinds of Wisdom

**“If ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth” (James 3:14).**

Seventh-day Adventists often say that they have “the truth.” But mental or theoretical possession of truth may be of no particular value. It may make us conceited, as it did the Jews in the days of Jesus. They knew they belonged to the right people and hence thought they were guaranteed salvation. (See John 8:33-39.)

A more vital consideration than possession of the truth is the following: “Does the truth have us? Have we been captured by the truth?” Luther, standing before Emperor Charles V at the Diet of Worms, was asked by him to renounce his alleged heresies. Luther replied that he could not do that unless shown from the Holy Scriptures that he was wrong. He said that he was a captive of the Word of God. Are you and I willing captives of the Word of God so that we choose to live by its precepts? If so, not only our words and actions but also our thoughts and feelings will be coming into harmony with God’s will.

Without selfishness there would be no envy; envy sprouts in the seedbed of selfishness. From it strife and multiple crimes result.

**What are the contrasting results of true wisdom? James 3:17.**

James already had discussed the tongue and its contradictory speeches. He now advanced to the source of our utterances. Earthly and devilish wisdom breed jealousy, strife, and selfish ambition with snobbery. Apparently James was finding these among the church members to whom he wrote. He championed peace and meekness as the cure for strife and division.

**What is the source of true wisdom? James 1:5.**

James does not leave his readers helpless or in a quandary. He refers them to a source of wisdom superabundantly adequate for all their needs.

**What can you learn from the way true wisdom is defined in other Bible passages? Ps. 111:10; Prov. 1:7; Deut. 4:5, 6.**

**THINK IT THROUGH:** Where does purity stand in my scale of values?

**FURTHER STUDY:** 1 Corinthians 1 and 2; 3 John.





## Part 6—Focus of the Week

What James thinks about his readers may show in the way he opens his letter. It lacks the kind of preamble commonly found in New Testament letters. It contains no thanks to God for these readers in their faithfulness to Christ and in the virtue they possess and manifest in service for God. Nor does it include a petition for their needs. James bluntly begins by calling attention to certain items they ought to be aware of. This may be an indirect rebuke for shortcomings in their lives. In this lesson we have discussed only a few of these. We purposely left the discussion of wisdom to the last, even though James broaches this subject at the very beginning.

Partiality or snobbishness threatened the early church. William Barclay mentions this in the following illustration from Dr. James Black: "A notable convert has been made, and the great man comes to his first Church service. He enters the room where the service is being held. The Christian leader points to a place. 'Will you sit there please?' 'But,' says the man, 'I cannot sit there, for that would be to sit beside my slave.' 'Will you sit there please?' repeats the leader. 'But,' says the man, 'surely not beside my slave.' 'Will you sit there please?' repeats the leader. 'Once again. And the man at last crosses the room, sits beside his slave, and gives him the kiss of peace. That is what Christianity did; and that is what it alone could do in the Roman Empire. The Christian Church was the only place where master and slave sat side by side. It is still the place where all earthly distinctions are gone, for with God there is no respect of persons.'"—*The Letter to the Romans*, rev. ed., (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1975), p. 169.

Apparently the speech of the Christians to whom James wrote reflected their envy and strife (James 3:14 to 4:2) rather than the peace and harmony that is to characterize the followers of Christ. With this went their boastful self-assurance and their self-willed independence of God and His will as the ruling force in their lives.

Their neglect of the Christian principle of sharing showed in their overbearing and hardhearted dealings with the poor among them. They did not recognize that it is God who gives power to acquire wealth (see Deut. 8:18) and that it is not to be used for self-aggrandizement. Rather, wealth is to be regarded as means entrusted by God for the good of His children and work. God has left the poor in the world (see Deut. 15:11) to test the Christian's faithfulness as His steward.

The problems mentioned by James might have been prevented if his needy readers had drawn on the wisdom that God would have been willing to give "to all men liberally."

**APPLICATION:** Am I living so closely to the Lord that even my speech testifies to my love for Him? How positive is the witness I give by my words and deeds?

## Justification in Galatians and James

**MEMORY TEXT:** "A man is not justified by the words of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ" (Gal. 2:16).

This lesson discusses justification by faith. This is one of Paul's main themes in Galatians as well as in Romans. He borrowed the figure of justification from courts of law. This is only one among several illustrations used in the Bible for coming to Jesus and accepting Him as Saviour. Paul uses this figure more than any other Bible writer, but James made use of one of its literal meanings in remonstrating against the kind of Christianity practiced by his readers who made a profession of Christianity but produced no fruit of Christian grace.

As mentioned before, when Paul used the word *law* in his letters to the Galatians and to the Romans, he was dealing with people whose problem dealt more with the ceremonial than the moral law. In principle, however, the whole Israelitish system was involved—with all laws. The theme of the two books is the same, and they were written practically at the same time, probably during Paul's three-month stay at Corinth during his third missionary journey. Ellen White wrote about the situation in Galatia that prompted Paul to write the Galatian letter: "These false teachers were mingling Jewish traditions with the truths of the gospel. Ignoring the decision of the general council at Jerusalem, they urged upon the Gentile converts the observance of the ceremonial law."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 383.

As we read the letter to the Galatians and Romans today, this side of the cross, when the ceremonial law is no longer needed to point us to that cross, we do well to think of the law as all law, including the moral. And this moral law is just as helpless to save anyone as was any other aspect of law. To save is not the function of law. It serves to portray the character of God and thus point out sin (see Gal. 3:21-26 and Rom. 3:20) and our need of a Saviour by showing us that we have fallen short of His standard.

Ellen White did not limit the term *law* in Galatians to the ceremonial law. She wrote "I am asked concerning the law in Galatians. What law is the schoolmaster to bring us to Christ? I answer: Both the ceremonial and moral code of ten commandments."—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 233. The same principle would apply to the law in Romans.



## Part 1—Meaning of Justification

“No man is justified by the law in the sight of God . . . for, the just shall live by faith” (Gal. 3:11).

*Justification* basically means “to be put right with God.” The TEV translates Romans 7:24 as follows: “By the free gift of God’s grace all are put right with him through Christ Jesus, who sets them free.”

“To justify” comes from the Greek word *dikaioō* and means to “make righteous,” “declare righteous,” or “consider righteous.” Before justification by faith a person is unrighteous and unacceptable to God. Through justification by faith he is put into a right relationship with God or regarded as righteous and acceptable.

God’s grace manifests itself both in the attitude He shows and in what He does for the person He favors. When a sinner turns to God, then He, as an act of grace, considers and declares that person to be righteous.

“Grace is unmerited favor. The angels, who know nothing of sin, do not understand what it is to have grace exercised toward them; but our sinfulness calls for the exercise of grace from a merciful God.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, pp. 331, 332.

Justification is spoken of as punctiliar, or taking place at a moment of time. The moment before justification by faith is accepted, the person is regarded as a sinner; the next moment when justification takes place and he is put right with God, he is regarded as righteous. In this way the person who is justified or put right with God by being “in Christ” looks upon justification as a past event; it took place when he fully surrendered himself to Christ. Thus the phrase “being justified” (Rom. 5:1) literally reads in the Greek as “having been justified” or—as the TEV renders it—“having been put right with God.”

Naturally, if the justified sinner turns his back upon God and later returns to Christ, justification must take place again. Since conversion may be considered a daily experience (see Ellen G. White Comments, *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1115), justification may be looked upon as a relationship needing constant renewal. In this sense there is a need for it to be “retained.”

**Consider the weight of testimony on the impossibility for a person to justify or put himself right with God. Eph. 2:8; Titus 3:5; Acts 4:12.**

“What is justification by faith? It is the work of God in laying the glory of man in the dust, and doing for man that which it is not in his power to do for himself.”—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 456.

**FURTHER STUDY:** *Steps to Christ* “Faith and Acceptance,” pp. 49-51; *Selected Messages*, bk. 1, pp. 366, 367.

## part 2—Abraham Illustrates Justification

“Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?” (James 2:21).

“If Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness” (Rom. 4:2, 3).

It is interesting that two inspired writers refer to experiences of Abraham and use them—one as an *apparent* illustration of justification by works, and the other as an example of justification by faith. But, rather than taking the position that we are justified by works, James actually is countering any thought that faith can exist without accompanying works.

**Why does some faith not produce matching works? James 2:26.**

Last week we studied a so-called faith that did not produce works or fruits of righteousness. Hence the sins of partiality, unbridled speech, selfish independence of God, and self-seeking with neglect of the poor existed among the Christians to whom James wrote. All these were the *results* of the absence of the indwelling of the Spirit in response to saving faith. Abraham’s faith contrasted sharply with that of the believers to whom James was writing: his faith produced works. He had faith before works. His works were an evidence of his faith.

“The apostle James saw that dangers would arise in presenting the subject of justification by faith, and he labored to show that genuine faith cannot exist without corresponding works. The experience of Abraham is presented. ‘Seest thou,’ he says, ‘how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?’ Thus genuine faith does a genuine work in the believer. Faith and obedience bring a solid, valuable experience.”—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 936.

Abraham is a key Old Testament example of righteousness by faith alone. He was justified while he was still uncircumcised. “He believed in the Lord; and He counted it to him for righteousness” (Gen. 15:6). This was before Ishmael was born. Circumcision as a sign of faith was introduced when Ishmael was 13 years old. (See Gen. 17:10-12, 23-26.)

“In the Epistle of James ‘faith alone’ refers to a dead faith, one which even the devils have; in this same epistle ‘works’ implies the presence of a faith that is indeed a faith. In Paul’s letters ‘faith (alone)’ is this living faith mentioned by James; and in Paul’s letters it is ‘works of the law’ that are excluded, this spurious substitute for faith. James and Paul express the same truth: faith, faith, faith! James: not a dead faith which *is* no faith; Paul: no substitute for faith, there is none. How may we know when we have this real faith? James says: Investigate whether it has the real works.”—R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans* (Columbus, Ohio: Wartburg Press, 1945), p. 288.

## Part 3—Rahab, the Believer

**“Was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and sent them out another way?” (James 2:25).**

Rahab was a prostitute in Jericho. The two spies, strangers in the city, may have chosen to resort to her house in order not to attract any undue attention. Undoubtedly, her neighbors had seen many a man go to her house. If the spies had chosen to go to someone else's house it might have been an event worthy of note.

**What significance do you see to the way Rahab spontaneously expressed her faith in the God of the two spies? Joshua 2:9-11.**

This pagan woman had come to faith when she heard reports of the miraculous things God had done for the Israelites. Now it was her faith in their God which prompted her to protect the two spies. She believed that “the Lord your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath.”

We have no way to know how much knowledge of God this heathen woman possessed. She had evidence enough to make a commitment of herself to God's cause and people. As did the thief on the cross, she reached out in faith on the evidence she had and the level of morality then known to her. It was to this that she responded, and God's people accepted her. She entered the lineage of Jesus Himself. (See Matt. 1:5.)

**From a human angle, what reward did Rahab receive for saving the spies? Joshua 6:25.**

Faith itself cannot be seen, but it will be evidenced by words and works. Rahab's deed of mercy was the result of her faith.

“Works will never save us; it is the merit of Christ that will avail in our behalf. Through faith in him, Christ will make all our imperfect efforts acceptable to God. The faith we are required to have is not a do-nothing faith; saving faith is that which works by love, and purifies the soul. He who will lift up holy hands to God without wrath and doubting, will walk intelligently in the way of God's commandments.

“If we are to have pardon for our sins, we must first have a realization of what sin is, that we may repent, and bring forth fruits meet for repentance. We must have a solid foundation for our faith; it must be founded on the word of God, and its results will be seen in obedience to God's expressed will.”—Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, June 16, 1890.

**FURTHER STUDY:** Joshua 2; *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 482, 483, 491.

## part 4—Actions Rather Than Words

**“If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone” (James 2:15-17).**

There is a time and a place for words of sympathy and good wishes. But when actions or deeds are lacking, then words are better left unsaid, lest they turn into sheer mockery.

**Summarize what Jesus taught on this same subject, as recorded in Matthew 25:24-40.**

Good works do not earn merit unto salvation, but they are evidence that the person who performs them is alive in Christ. In a court of law the evidence leads to a decision in harmony with the law. Both angels and men will one day be able to see all the evidence. Only God can discern the attitude of faith in the heart before it has materialized in deeds.

**What is the standard of saving faith in the judgment of believers? Matthew 25:41-45.**

“Those whom Christ commends in the judgment may have known little of theology, but they have cherished His principles. Through the influence of the divine Spirit they have been a blessing to those about them.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 638.

**Why is it insufficient to possess faith without corresponding deeds? James 2:19.**

In the Greek, in which the New Testament was originally written, there is no difference between “faith” and “belief.” The only reason we have these two words in English is that one is of Latin and the other of Anglo-Saxon origin. Thus to “have faith” and “believe” are translated from the same word in the Greek.

In English the two words may have acquired a slightly different meaning. Faith is more religious while belief is more secular. Belief may be thought of as theoretical while faith implies action. Belief may say Yes to the articles of faith, but have no effect on daily life.

**FURTHER STUDY:** Matthew 25:31-46; *The Desire of Ages*, p. 637.



## Part 5—Paul and James on Justification

“No man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, the just shall live by faith” (Gal. 3:11).

“Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only” (James 2:24).

The words *righteous* and *just* are translated from *dikaïos*, and *righteousness* is from *dikaïosunē*, which come from the same root word as *justify* and *justification* but also is equated with “rightness,” “uprightness,” and “justice,” and thus should not be limited to “justification.” In translating, the English language uses words from different English roots for one Greek root. Hence the close connection between the English words “just,” “justify,” “justification,” “righteous,” and “righteousness” is not so easily seen in English as in the Greek of the New Testament. The TEV brings out this similarity by translating the verses above as follows: “Now, it is clear that no one is put right with God by means of the Law, because the scripture says, ‘Only the person who is put right with God through faith shall live’ ” (Gal. 3:11). “You see, then, that it is by his actions that a person is put right with God, and not by his faith alone” (James 2:24).

“James does not say that ‘works’ alone will declare a sinner righteous. He is emphasizing that Abraham’s works proved the genuineness of that faith which God had declared righteous. Like Paul . . . , James places faith at the core of justification and illustrates its vitality by citing the worthy deeds of justified men.”—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 522.

## How do faith and works complement each other? James 2:22.

The NIV says about Abraham in this verse “that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did.”

It is not so difficult to understand what James is saying about justification if we pay attention to the setting or context of James 2:17-26. James says, “I will shew thee my faith by my works” (verse 18). And when verse 24 says, “Ye see then how that by works a man is justified,” the word translated *justify* has another shade in its range of meanings. It can mean “to attest.” (See Matt. 11:19.) Thus the conclusion just quoted from verse 24 can read, “Ye see then how that by works a man is shown to be (attested to be) justified, and not by faith only”—that is, not by mere belief such as the devils have. If there are no “works,” it is evident that faith does not exist.

**FURTHER STUDY:** Ellen G. White, *Faith and Works*, pp. 103, 104.

## Part 6—Focus of the Week

“Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.”

“But will thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?” (James 2:17, 20).

The supposed clash between James and Paul is not based on facts. Paul is no more in favor of a faith that is fruitless than is James. True faith, saving faith is always attested or demonstrated in a Spirit-filled, law-abiding life.

Justification is not by faith for Paul and by works for James. Justification is an act of God’s mercy and grace based upon the infinite merits of Jesus Christ. By His life, death, and resurrection He has purchased the right to count penitent, believing sinners as though righteous—by His righteousness. The fruitage of a sustained justified relationship with Jesus Christ is the fruit of the Spirit. James wants to see that fruitage as the evidence that the saving relationship with Jesus Christ, by faith, is indeed a reality.

So with Abraham or Rahab or the faithful church welfare worker, there are works that show or attest the genuineness of the faith. Under some conditions, good works may result from upbringing or training, but in the ultimate test—as between Abraham and his strong, young son, Isaac—works that are acceptable to God are the result of a faith that loves, trusts, and obeys.

“To rely on ‘works of law’ is never to have justification, for the whole Old Testament witness shows that it ever was and is obtained . . . [without law], altogether apart from anything like law. To produce ‘works’ is to have justification, for their absence shows that faith which we claim to have is dead and barren (James 2:17, 20), their presence that faith is faith indeed, alive, embracing Christ, and that full of good works. The devils believe, are they justified (James 2:19)?”—R. C. H. Lenski, *St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans*, p. 284.

Throughout the great Bible faith chapter, Hebrews 11, the faith of each person dealt with is attested by “work,” often at some length.

“Faith and works go hand in hand; they act harmoniously in the work of overcoming. Works without faith are dead, and faith without works is dead. Works will never save us; it is the merit of Christ that will avail in our behalf.”—*Faith and Works*, p. 48.

**APPLICATION:** What does this lesson teach me about personal faith and about my attitude toward God and His requirements? What do I need to pray about? And how can I demonstrate to those about me that my faith is based on a genuine relationship with the Lord?

# No Justification by Law

**MEMORY TEXT:** "No man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, the just shall live by faith" (Gal. 3:11).

In the years before Christ came the Jews became sticklers for the law. For them as a nation the problem began soon after the Exodus when they aimed to make themselves acceptable, or put themselves right with God, by doing everything He commanded. They thought they could do it, since they were not aware of their sinfulness in the light of God's holiness. But they failed miserably.

After their miraculous escape from slaughter by the Egyptian army through the direct intervention of God at the Red Sea, the Israelites soon forgot their need of divine help. Their physical salvation from death in the Red Sea was due solely to God's grace. That experience should have prepared them for sensing their helplessness to obey God's laws. But, still not sensing their need for help, they failed to depend on God. They were like children—confident and self-assured of their own ability to pass every hurdle and solve every problem and even work out their own salvation.

A four-year-old girl was told by her father that, for lack of money, he was unable to buy something that was needed. Her instant reply was, "You may have my money, Daddy," and away she ran to get her piggy bank with its few coins. She was confident that, with her help, her father would be able to buy what he had declared was beyond his financial reach. That is typical of the self-confidence and self-sufficiency of children.

Spiritually the Israelites were but children when they left Egypt. With all the instruction in the gospel provided by the tabernacle services, even with the passing of centuries, they did not mature to any great extent. Fourteen hundred or more years later, when Jesus walked among them, they still mistook symbol for reality, form for experience. At that point they did not seem to be able to grasp that they could not be put right with God—or be justified—by their own works. When Paul wrote to the Galatians, the Judaizers and their followers lacked faith in the Saviour who had come. In Romans 9:31, 32 Paul says, "But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law." In this lesson we shall note the impossibility of being saved by "the works of the law."

## No Justification by Law

### part 1—Law and Covenant

"If ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel" (Ex. 19:5, 6).

Great promises were given the Israelites that contained glorious prospects for their future (see Deut. 28:1-14) providing they complied with God's conditions.

**What was the significance of the response of the people to God's plan?** Ex. 19:8. (Compare also Ex. 24:3, 7.)

This agreement is part of the old covenant. It included, as does the new covenant, the moral law or the Ten Commandments. The moral law formed its basis. The only fault with the old covenant was in the people. Grace always has been available to sinners. The tabernacle sacrifices should have kept their faith strong in the Lamb of God to come. The Passover perpetuated the significance of the blood of the Lamb. But Israel perverted the system and turned it into a self-exalting works system. Although the people as a whole failed to meet the terms of the old covenant, many *were* saved under the covenant of grace. Moses, for example, was resurrected and taken to heaven out of this same era.

There was a harmony between God's holy law and His divine grace in God's revelation of Himself to Israel at the Red Sea and at Sinai. But Israel was not willing to learn in humility by the hand of her divine Instructor. In order to give the Israelites any hope of learning from this experience, God must not intervene to force compliance from them.

The Lord was desirous of renewing to Israel all the benefits of the Abrahamic covenant, but His people were not ready to receive them.

**What would you expect to be the result of Israel's promise to obey and do "all that the Lord hath spoken"?** Ex. 32:1, 7, 8.

"God's work is the same in all time, although there are different degrees of development and different manifestations of His power, to meet the wants of men in the different ages. . . . He who proclaimed the law from Sinai, and delivered to Moses the precepts of the ritual law, is the same that spoke the Sermon on the Mount. . . . The teacher is the same in both dispensations. God's claims are the same."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 373.

**FURTHER STUDY:** Ex. 19:1-8; Deut. 28:1-68; *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 371, 372.



## Part 2—The New Covenant

“I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel” (Gen. 3:15).

As soon as sin entered the world, God announced His plan of rescue to Adam and Eve. “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.

“This same covenant was renewed to Abraham.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 370.

**Review some of the biblical evidences of the earliest provisions of the plan of salvation.** (See Eph. 1:4; 1 Peter 1:20; Rev. 13:8; 2 Tim. 1:9.)

God had not predetermined the fall of man or the entrance of sin into the world. But He foreknew them, and He had made provision for them. Genesis 3:15 is God’s first unveiling of His eternal covenant of salvation. It is also called the Abrahamic covenant since it was renewed with Abraham and his descendants.

“The plan for our redemption was not an afterthought, a plan formulated after the fall of Adam. It was a revelation of ‘the mystery which hath been kept in silence through times eternal.’ Rom. 16:25, R.V. It was an unfolding of the principles that from eternal ages have been the foundation of God’s throne. From the beginning, God and Christ knew of the apostasy of Satan, and of the fall of man through the deceptive power of the apostate. God did not ordain that sin should exist, but He foresaw its existence, and made provision to meet the terrible emergency. So great was His love for the world, that He covenanted to give His only-begotten Son, ‘that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.’ John 3:16.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 22.

**In what way is the moral law part of the new covenant?** Jer. 31:33, 34.

At Sinai God entered into the old covenant with His people of Israel. (See Jer. 31:31, 32.) But the people were faulty. (See Heb. 8:7, 8.) Because of this, God purposed to make known to them again the “new” covenant for which provision had actually been made in the days of eternity. It is called the second or new covenant only because it was ratified after the old covenant, namely, with the blood of Christ at the cross.

## part 3—The Old and New Covenants Compared

“He gave unto Moses, when he had made an end of communing with him upon mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God.”

“The Lord said unto Moses, Hew thee two tables of stone like unto the first: and I will write upon these tables the words that were in the first tables, which thou brakest” (Ex. 31:18; 34:1).

The moral law of Ten Commandments was phrased by God Himself; He was its Originator. These commandments embody the basic principles of His kingdom and are a transcript of God’s character. They form the basis of both the old and the new covenants.

**What makes the promises under the new covenant better than the promises under the old covenant?** Eze. 36:26, 27. (Compare also Heb. 8:6.)

The terms of any of God’s covenants with men have been essentially the same. The provision of grace and the offer of justification by faith are always there. Obedience to God’s law is always looked for as the result of the saving faith in the Lamb of God—whether coming (to Israel) or already come (to the church).

**In what respect do the first two sons of Abraham represent the two covenants?** Gal. 4:22, 23.

Human efforts to bring God’s promises to reality were responsible for Ishmael’s birth; Isaac was the result of God’s promise and power. Isaac would not have been born apart from Abraham’s faith in God’s promise. He was the son of faith, while Ishmael was the result of human works apart from faith.

**PERSONAL APPLICATION:** How can the following be applied practically to the daily life of the Christian?

“The requirement of God under the covenant of grace is just as broad as the requirement He made in Paradise—harmony with His law, which is holy, and just, and good. The gospel does not weaken the claims of the law; it exalts the law and makes it honorable. Under the New Testament, no less is required than was required under the Old Testament.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, pp. 373, 374.

**FURTHER STUDY:** *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 372, 373.

## Part 4—No Salvation by Deeds of the Law

“Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin” (Rom. 3:20). (Compare also 7:7.)

Because the controversy of the ages between Christ and Satan has centered around the law of God, the plan of salvation, to be effective, must lead to joyous obedience to that law. The security of heaven demands it. The happiness of *all* God’s creation is secured by it. Both before and since the inception of sin it has been God’s plan to write His law in the heart. For sinners only acceptance of His saving grace makes this possible.

Consider several Old Testament references that place God’s law in a believer’s heart. (See, for example, Ps. 37:31; Isa. 51:7; Eze. 36:26, 27.)

What is the determining factor that makes it possible for God to write His law in a human heart? (Consider Rev. 3:20-22; Rom. 8:3, 4; Ps. 119: 10, 11.)

“Righteousness is obedience to the law. 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. This is how faith is accounted righteousness.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1073.

“Genuine faith appropriates the righteousness of Christ, and the sinner is made an overcomer with Christ; for he is made a partaker of the divine nature, and thus divinity and humanity are combined.

“He who is trying to reach heaven by his own works in keeping the law is attempting an impossibility. Man cannot be saved without obedience, but his works should not be of himself; Christ should work in him to will and to do of His good pleasure. If a man could save himself by his own works, he might have something in himself in which to rejoice. The effort that man makes in his own strength to obtain salvation is represented by the offering of Cain. All that man can do without Christ is polluted with selfishness and sin; but that which is wrought through faith is acceptable to God. When we seek to gain heaven through the merits of Christ, the soul makes progress.”—*Faith and Works*, p. 94.

**FURTHER STUDY:** 2 Corinthians 3.

## part 5—Salvation by Faith Alone

“By him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses” (Acts 13:39).

The Galatian believers to whom Paul wrote were both Jews and Gentiles in background. From Judaizing teachers they had accepted erroneous concepts and had come to believe that a person could be justified or come into a right relationship with God by keeping the Old Testament laws. But no sinner—and all men are sinners—can come into right relationship with God by keeping the law—any law. Paul most emphatically stresses this impossibility.

As discussed earlier, Paul was primarily referring to ceremonial aspects of the law that represented the entire system. But the moral law was actually the basis of and reason for that system. He therefore did not have to make any sharp distinction between the different laws. He could refer to part of one and also to a section of another. When the function of the ceremonial law ended at the cross, the moral or eternal law continued in force. And when we read about the law today, we certainly may think of the moral law.

The coming of Jesus sealed the plan of redemption in the security of reality. (See Rom. 3:21.) This righteousness it offers through Jesus is called “the righteousness of God.” This is a righteousness that God provides, and is the only righteousness that He accepts as valid for the restoration of a harmonious relationship with Himself. It was as available in the Old Testament as the New. Some in each era received it by faith. However, the righteousness with which most of the Jews were acquainted and which was advocated by the Judaizing teachers was a righteousness of law.

What important lesson can we learn about how the righteousness of God is received? Rom. 3:22.

It seems to be a continuing problem to keep what Jesus has done *for* us in permanent linkage with what He wants to do *in* us.

What will actually happen to us if we think we can be justified or put into a right relationship to God by the deeds of the law? Gal. 5:4.

He who mingles works-righteousness with his faith in Jesus Christ for justification thereby impairs his connection with Jesus. Abraham, the father of faith, had been declared righteous because he “believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness” (Rom. 4:3). (Compare also Gen. 15:6.) As a result of his trust and confidence in his divine Friend, he received circumcision as a seal of his righteousness by faith.



## Part 6—Focus of the Week

The old covenant came into existence because God saw that the Israelites, slaves just out of Egypt, were a needing people. They wanted to do God's will and thought they could comply with His commands in their own strength. On their own they planned to put themselves into a right relationship with God or justify themselves. They actually were not too different from many of us who once thought that we had to straighten out our lives and rebuild our characters in accordance with God's will before we would dare come to Him for salvation. Many of us planned to present ourselves to God as worthy of His acceptance and salvation.

In the same way, the Israelites at the Exodus readily responded to God's call by saying, "We will do everything the Lord has said" (Ex. 19:8, NIV). We will prove to God that we are reformed and entitled to His blessing. God had great plans for the people of the Exodus, in spite of their weakened knowledge of God brought about by their bondage. They were called to be God's people.

"He had bound them to Himself as their deliverer from temporal bondage. But there was a still greater truth to be impressed upon their minds. Living in the midst of idolatry and corruption, they had no true conception of the holiness of God, of the exceeding sinfulness of their own hearts, their utter inability, in themselves, to render obedience to God's law, and their need of a Saviour. All this they must be taught."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 371.

That was God's purpose in giving the Israelites what we call the old covenant. "Only a few weeks passed before they broke their covenant with God, and bowed down to worship a graven image. They could not hope for the favor of God through a covenant which they had broken; and now, seeing their sinfulness and their need of pardon, they were brought to feel their need of the Saviour revealed in the Abrahamic covenant and shadowed forth in the sacrificial offerings. Now by faith and love they were bound to God as their deliverer from the bondage of sin. Now they were prepared to appreciate the blessings of the new covenant"—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 372.

Perhaps we are more like the Israelites than we can recognize. "I can do it myself" is the boast of many. They feel, therefore, that they cannot accept the gift of salvation. They feel it is more honest for them to pay for their own sins and wrongdoings than to let the load of their guilt fall on Jesus. But for such there is no hope of eternal life; for a sinner can never atone for his own sins and still live eternally. Jesus "came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance," for "they that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick" (Mark 2:17).

The new covenant, which was and is older than the old covenant, provides pardon for every sin. "None are so sinful that they cannot find strength, purity, and righteousness in Jesus, who died for them."—*Steps to Christ*, p. 53.



## The Purpose of the Law

**MEMORY TEXT:** "Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith" (Gal. 3:24).

The object of this lesson is to try to understand more fully what we have touched upon earlier—the purpose of God's law in a world of sin.

The moral law is a reflection of the character of God. As such, that law of God is eternal. At Creation its principles were written on the hearts of Adam and Eve. After the Fall, to help them to understand His character, God gave them the principles of the Ten Commandments. These are adaptations of the eternal principles of God's universal kingdom suited to men and women living in a world of sin.

Adam and Eve passed on their knowledge of the law to their descendants. In this way Abraham knew the law. God Himself testified "that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws" (Gen. 26:5). Abraham in turn gave the knowledge of the law to his descendants.

During the Egyptian bondage the knowledge of the will of God as expressed in the law almost was blotted out. As a result, when God made Israel a nation at the Exodus, He repeated the law to them at Sinai. In addition to the moral law expressed in the Ten Commandments, He also gave them a civil law in the light of the fact that they were now to be a nation. To guide them in their religious life and services He also gave them the ceremonial law. This detailed system pertaining to the sanctuary service and the sacrifices and offerings was a further development of the sacrifices begun in Eden. Many of these were object lessons of the plan of salvation to help them understand more easily the will and plan of God. We use object lessons, symbols, and pictures in teaching children. God did the same for the people of Israel. He also gave them sanitary laws to safeguard their health.

## Part 1—A Fence of Love

**“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8).**

A traveler reports: “Some years ago I spent a few days with other travelers in a tourist camp on the Amboseli Game Reserve in southern Kenya. In front of our cabins the semi-desert spread out, and in the distance the snowcapped peak of Kilimanjaro appeared through the high clouds for several hours each day. A few hundred feet across the open field in the direction of the mountain, I found signs reading: ‘Do not walk beyond this point; the lions have the right of way.’ Traveling around in official sightseeing buses accompanied by armed guards during the day, we saw lions and other big African game. In our cabins at night we could hear the distant lions’ roar. We were in lion country, and our lives depended on following the rules the guides and guards gave us.”

**As soon as Adam and Eve were created, what instruction did God give to safeguard them from being caught and destroyed by our raging, lionlike adversary? Gen. 2:16, 17.**

“Our first parents were not left without a warning of the danger that threatened them. Heavenly messengers opened to them the history of Satan’s fall and his plots for their destruction, unfolding more fully the nature of the divine government which the prince of evil was trying to overthrow. It was by disobedience to the just commands of God that Satan and his host had fallen. How important, then, that Adam and Eve should honor that law by which alone it was possible for order and equity to be maintained. . . .

“The tree of knowledge had been made a test of their obedience and their love to God. The Lord had seen fit to lay upon them but one prohibition as to the use of all that was in the garden; but if they should disregard His will in this particular, they would incur the guilt of transgression. Satan was not to follow them with continual temptations; he could have access to them only at the forbidden tree.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 52, 53.

**What is significant about the way Job 1:6-10 illustrates the fact that God protects His people with a fence of love?**

“In obedience to God’s law, man is surrounded as with a hedge and kept from the evil. He who breaks down this divinely erected barrier at one point has destroyed its power to protect him; for he has opened a way by which the enemy can enter to waste and ruin.”—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 52.

## part 2—To Protect From Sin

**“Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee” (Ps. 119:11).**

Sin is calamity and disaster. From these God in His divine goodness is anxious to protect us. For this purpose He gave us His law and His Word. Glad-hearted acceptance of His will protects us from calamity. “There will grow in the receptive mind a familiarity with divine things which will be as a barricade against the temptations of the enemy.”—*Counsels to Parents and Teachers*, p. 172.

**What application can you draw from Joseph’s response to sexual enticement? How did his devotion to truth preserve him from following an urgent invitation to pleasurable sin? Gen. 39:7-12.**

Without doubt this woman was both attractive and amorous. It must have been a tempting invitation, particularly as it was not wise for a young male servant not to be on good terms with his employer’s wife. Her husband was not only the young man’s employer, he was his master, and the young male servant was his slave. He could not terminate his employment as one might do today by leaving the place of temptation to look for another job.

To resist temptation as this young man did takes more than a passive reception of truth; it is the result of a positive decision to stand for the right in accordance with truth before temptation is actually met.

**What does the result of Joseph’s integrity teach us about whether it pays to be true to God? Gen. 39:11-20.**

Some shallow Christians are prone to conclude that it does not pay to serve God if they are not immediately rewarded for their faithfulness. When loyalty to God does not bring immediate benefits, they throw their righteous integrity overboard. Such are not settled in the truth. They may live by it temporarily to see if it pleases. When it does not, they forsake it. But only those who cannot be shaken from the truth are fit for heavenly society, not those who do good sporadically without thoughtful commitment to God.

**Can it be established that Adam and Eve understood God’s will before they sinned? (See Gen. 1:26, 27; 2:16, 17; Rom. 4:15; 5:13, 14.)**

“Adam and Eve, at their creation, had a knowledge of the law of God; they were acquainted with its claims upon them; its precepts were written upon their hearts.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 363.



## Part 3—Points Out Sin

“Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin” (Rom. 3:20).

Only by comparing our lives with the law of God can we become fully aware of our sinful condition. As we compare our manner of living with God's requirements we recognize how far short we fall. The law, whatever law it is—moral, ceremonial, civil, sanitary, or all combined—cannot put a violator of the law into a right relationship to God.

“Though the law cannot remit the penalty for sin, but charges the sinner with all his debt, Christ has promised abundant pardon to all who repent, and believe in His mercy. The love of God is extended in abundance to the repenting, believing soul. The brand of sin upon the soul can be effaced only through the blood of the atoning Sacrifice. No less an offering was required than the sacrifice of Him who was equal with the Father. The work of Christ—His life, humiliation, death, and intercession for lost man—magnifies the law, and makes it honorable.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 371.

**What makes James' comparison of the law with a mirror so applicable to our situation? (See James 1:23-25.)**

Our self-appraisal is not always reliable and accurate. We need a standard with which to compare our motives, feelings, thoughts, words, and actions. That standard is the moral law. When we look into the mirror of the moral law, which is a transcript of God's character, we recognize our failure to reflect the likeness of Him in whose image we are created (see Gen. 1:26), and whose glory we are to show forth (Isa. 43:7). Having discovered our shortcomings, we will be led to seek divine help just as we look for water, soap, and washcloth when we discover dirt on our faces. The most perfect mirror is powerless to cleanse the slightest blemish!

**By what means did Paul become aware of the sinfulness of certain thoughts? How broad is the scope of the word of God? Rom. 7:7; Heb. 4:12.**

Even though “the word” in Hebrews 4:12 is equated with the gospel message, as made clear in verse 2, it may also be extended to include all the writings of the Bible since all the Bible is verily the word of God. These are not secrets, unknown to God. He reads our most private thoughts as an open book, noticing both our good motives that never reach fruition and our evil thoughts and plans never carried out due to lack of opportunity.

**FURTHER STUDY:** *Selected Messages*, bk. 1, pp. 236-239.

## part 4—The Schoolmaster

“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” (Gal. 3:19).

In Galatians 3:1-18 Paul has been giving a series of propositions and a line of reasoning to show that righteousness by faith is God's method of justifying sinners—setting them right with God. Now in the text for today he deals with the unspoken question by raising it himself. The question is the subject of this week's lesson.

If the Jewish system of laws, including ceremonial and moral laws, was not to be obeyed for the purpose of earning or meriting salvation, what was its purpose? “Wherefore then serveth the law?” It was God's purpose that the law should lead the nation to Christ.

**What is the meaning of the term *law* as Paul uses it in Galatians? Gal. 3:24.**

*Law* in this verse refers to all law—moral, ceremonial, and civil. With reference to the ceremonial system which pointed forward to Christ, the Jews were “‘kept under the law’ (v. 23) until God's provision for salvation by faith should be ‘revealed’ with the coming of Christ.”—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 961.

The Greek *paidagogos*, translated “schoolmaster,” does not refer to the child's teacher but rather to the trusted servant who took the child to and from school. “He had nothing to do with the actual teaching of the child, but it was his duty to take him in safety to the school and to deliver him to the teacher. That—said Paul—was like the function of the law. The law was there to lead a man to Christ.”—William Barclay, *Galatians and Ephesians* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1958), p. 34.

In this sense the broken law, like a truant officer, leads, urges, compels a sinner to come to Christ for help in desperate need. It sharpens the sinners' sense of need and exercises discipline over those who are inclined to or are guilty of misconduct.

Going back to the context of Galatians 3, we should note that Paul's concern is not what happens to the system of Old Testament laws nor is he concerned with debating the relationship between different parts of the system of laws. The major thrust he is making is that the role of the system in leading the nation to Christ is now over. Christ has come face-to-face with the nation. Now the entire world, the Gentiles as well as the Jews, has been enlightened through the Teacher who demonstrated by His life how to live and makes it possible to do so by the indwelling of the Spirit and His victory over sin and death. The law is no longer to be seen as impersonal. It has been brought into a living reality in the life of Jesus. To accept His guidance is to become like Him (Gal. 3:27).

## Part 5—Guide in Virtuous Living

**“Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word” (Ps. 119:9).**

The Word or the law serves as a cleansing agent only if we are motivated by deep awareness of the debt Christ has paid to restore ourselves to acceptance with God and thus joyfully choose to comply with the directions God gives. Theoretical knowledge of the Word will not cleanse and purify life; only experimental knowledge of the Word by faith in and dependence on the merits of Jesus will do that. God therefore wants our knowledge of truth to be experimental rather than theoretical.

**What kind of persons were some of the Corinthians before Paul brought them to a saving knowledge of the gospel? 1 Cor. 6:9, 10.**

Corinth was a port city and as such, by tradition, was notoriously wicked. Sailors were transients; they were here today and gone tomorrow. Such a life had special temptations. General prosperity tends to foster evil after a time.

**What happens in the lives of people who, like the Corinthians, accept the gospel? 1 Cor. 6:11.**

With new life within, “born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:13) men and women did not remain the same. The gospel, put into the cesspool of Corinth, worked a change of relationships and then of morals. “Born again” men and women belong to a new family. (See 1 John 3:1, 2.)

**Having this possession through hope, what will a person do? 1 John 3:3.**

No informed person would appear at a seat of government while dressed in his work clothes. He would not only change into suitable clothes but bathe himself and brush his hair. In the same way, as people who someday hope to see Jesus face-to-face, we will do all we can through His grace and because of His constant outreach to us to be ready to meet Him in peace and live in His presence. (See Psalm 15.)

**THINK IT THROUGH:** Am I anxious to learn and carry out God’s ideals, or do I attempt to get by with the minimum standards that will keep me in the church?

**FURTHER STUDY:** *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 243-254.

## Part 6—Focus of the Week

Many have misunderstood the purpose of the laws God gave to His ancient people, including the moral, ceremonial, civil, and sanitary laws. Christians have had parallel problems. The true purpose of all God’s laws is to be a help and not a burden to His people.

The object of all laws is to reduce the complexities of living. Laws help to simplify and make life easier. We have rules for operating bicycles or motor vehicles. If two vehicles come to a street crossing at the same time from different directions, the rules of driving tell us which has the right of way. The rules of driving eliminate uncertainty on the part of the two drivers. They are a form of law to simplify the operating of vehicles.

Some of us adopt personal rules for more comfortable living. We have decided on a time to rise in the morning and have designated certain times for meals. Both make life easier. Otherwise we would have to decide such things each morning as when to get up and when to eat. Such a procedure would unnecessarily consume much valuable time and energy. To save both, we have personally adopted some rules as a structure for living. These simplify life.

Before the fall the law was intended to protect Adam and Eve from getting into trouble. The record we have from that time indicates that the law was very simple. It had one prohibition—stay away from and do not eat of the fruit of the tree of good and evil. If they had followed this simple rule no problem ever would have come to them. That law was the safeguard of the harmony between God and His creatures.

With the entrance of sin, law became much more specific, and its offices were enlarged. Violation of unwritten rules of behavior in a home likewise forces the addition of more rules. The same is true of society. Thus Ellen White says:

“After Adam’s sin and fall nothing was taken from the law of God. The principles of the ten commandments existed before the fall, and were of a character suited to the condition of a holy order of beings. After the fall, the principles of those precepts were not changed, but additional precepts were given to meet man in his fallen state.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 1104.

The law thus became an agent for pointing out departures from God’s will. As true followers of our Lord Jesus, we will choose to regard the law for what it actually is—the gift of God’s love to us to help us live as He desires. We are His children who have been rescued from eternal destruction by His love. So we shall ask Jesus to open our eyes that we “may behold wondrous things” out of His law. (See Ps. 119:18.)

**APPLICATION:** What can I do to relate more adequately to God’s intended purpose for the law in my life? Am I using the “mirror” in the right way? What sins are pointed out in my life?





# Led by the Spirit

**MEMORY TEXT:** "If ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law" (Gal. 5:18).

Most people reading, discussing, and writing about the epistle to the Galatians gain and give the impression that the main thrust of this letter is justification by faith. We have agreed earlier that it is a major thrust, but is it the main thrust?

The Epistle to the Galatians deals, in the end, with the Holy Spirit and His imparting of new life to the believer. This results in a new way of life. In the early part of the letter *justification* is presented on the basis of faith in the merits of Jesus whereas in the latter part the Holy Spirit is presented as the agency in effecting transformation of life by the fruit of the Spirit. The result of the Spirit's coming and filling the soul-temple at the time of conversion is a changed life. Christianity was essentially a way of life, or "that way." (See Acts 9:2; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14.) For the ancients, ways of life were more than life-style. They were the outward result of underlying and determining factors.

Justification by faith, the apostle shows, is such a determining factor and consequently the means to a changed life—or a means to an end. It provides the factors that influence human behavior by providing the "new way" (Acts 24:14, NEB). It is the beginning of a new life in Christ that provides continuity, guidance, and assurance for the task of coping with the daily struggle against evil. It will immunize a believer against the lusts of the flesh and enable him to bear the fruit of the Spirit, as the believer is led by the Spirit after he becomes a new creature in Christ Jesus.

"Through the work of the Holy Spirit, the sanctification of the truth, the believer becomes fitted for the courts of heaven; for Christ works within us, and His righteousness is upon us. Without this no soul will be entitled to heaven. We would not enjoy heaven unless qualified for its holy atmosphere by the influence of the Spirit and the righteousness of Christ."—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 395.

## Part 1—Spirit-Born

"Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth" (James 1:18).

"Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?" (Gal. 3:3).

James and Paul agree on the necessity of a spiritual new birth. In what way does that take place?

Birth is the only way a son or daughter is brought into the world. God brings a Christian into existence by means of the salvation made known in the Word of truth. We are "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth forever" (1 Peter 1:23).

God-given laws operate in the way children are born, but no law can create or beget children. Neither can the law of God bring about a new birth and give men and women a new nature. Faith alone in Jesus Christ as Saviour can make men and women sons and daughters of God through the power of the Holy Spirit. Luther says that the Word "is the divine womb in which we are conceived, carried, born, reared, etc."—Jaroslav Pelikan, ed., *Luther's Works*, vol. 26, p. 392.

**How do we become sons and daughters of God? John 1:13; 3:5.**

**What do the following scriptures contribute to our understanding of how the Spirit works to bring about a new birth?**

1. John 14:26 \_\_\_\_\_
2. John 16:8 \_\_\_\_\_
3. Rom. 8:2 \_\_\_\_\_
4. Rom. 8:5 \_\_\_\_\_
5. Rom. 8:11 \_\_\_\_\_
6. Rom. 8:14-16 \_\_\_\_\_

When the sinner chooses to trust himself to the Father, God confirms that relationship by giving him the Holy Spirit (see 2 Cor. 1:22). The indwelling Holy Spirit is God's sign that the believer is His and belongs to Him.

**FURTHER STUDY:** Eph. 2:1-5; Mark 4:26-29; *The Desire of Ages*, p. 172.

## Part 2—Children of God

“Because ye are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father” (Gal. 4:6).

This positive assertion on the part of Paul refers back to Galatians 3:26, where he assures the Galatians that they are children of God. The Galatian believers had begun to doubt their sonship if they neglected aspects of the ceremonial law. But Paul is trying to convince them that sonship is not earned by obedience to any law but is based on their having accepted and having “been baptized into Christ”—having “put on Christ” (Gal. 3:27). A more reliable evidence of their being children of God than the outward sign of circumcision, he says, is the gift of the Holy Spirit. Circumcision, the observance of the ceremonial law, or any law did not make them sons and daughters of God. But the Holy Spirit dwelling within them assures them that they are. (Compare Rom. 8:15, 16.)

*Abba*, in this statement of belief, is a transliteration of the Aramaic word for father. And *Father* is a translation of the Greek word for father. Paul may have used both terms in consideration of the fact that the churches to which he was writing included both Gentiles and Jews.

It is Satan’s continuous aim to make us doubt that we are God’s children. He tries to convince us that God is angry with us as sinners and will destroy us for eternity. It is for this very reason that God has given us His Spirit. Whenever we are tempted to doubt that we are sons and daughters of God we are reassured that we belong to God by the presence of the Holy Spirit within us. When we first believed, we “were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise” (Eph. 1:13). This, of course, does not give us license to sin.

**What parallels may be drawn between our temptation to doubt our sonship and the temptation of Jesus? Matt. 4:6.**

When we are nearest to despair, the Holy Spirit is nearest to us. We must not decide to whom we belong on the basis of feelings of unworthiness. The greatest blasphemy we commit is to doubt the promises of God. And Jesus says, “Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out” (John 6:37).

As Christians we will discipline ourselves not to fall into the abyss of uncertainty. This is the most sickening feeling we can harbor. Rather we must exercise hope, remembering that God is always favorably disposed toward us and is longing for us to be in a faith relationship to Jesus. While we are abiding in Him, the Father does not see us but Him.

**FURTHER STUDY:** John 10:27-30; *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 553.

## Part 3—To Walk in the Spirit

“This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh” (Gal. 5:16).

This imperative sums up Paul’s concept of the Christian life based on the view that human existence is basically a way of life.

As far as the Galatian believers were concerned, they had originally chosen the life that was guided by the Spirit by their acceptance of the full merits of Jesus. (See Gal. 3:2, 5; 4:6; 5:5.) Paul’s advice therefore was an admonition to continue to do what they had been doing—not to stop or change course but to persevere in the good under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Then comes the promise: If you do this, “you will not fulfil [or carry out] the desires of your lower nature” (Gal. 5:16, NEB). In other words, if the Christian allows the Holy Spirit to influence or fill out his life, then the opposite force represented by the flesh or his lower nature will be prevented from achieving its goal. In this way “the lust of the flesh” or the desires of the lower nature will not be served.

**What basic conflict makes Paul’s challenge necessary? Gal. 5:17.**

Jesus reminded Nicodemus of this conflict by saying, “That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit” (John 3:6). The heart of each one of us is a battlefield for these two forces within, and if we do not ally ourselves with the Holy Spirit, the evil impulses will be victorious over the good. Then we will not be able to control the impulses, actions, and doings of our bodies and carry out our good intentions. We will be defeated. The only hope of the Galatians, as of every Christian, was that they be possessed by the Spirit.

The drives within the body may be wholesome in themselves, but a person’s manner of fulfilling them may be outside the pale of God’s will and thus be sinful. A hungry person craves food. The body is not particular how that craving is satisfied. The craving for food is satisfied even though it is met with stolen food or items not intended by God for food. The same is true about sexual desires. These are wholesome in themselves, but the time, place, and relationship to the person with whom they are shared may make these promptings—implanted by God Himself in human nature—sinful as far as action or results is concerned.

**PERSONAL APPLICATION:** “If we consent, He will so identify Himself with our thoughts and aims, so blend our hearts and minds into conformity to His will, that when obeying Him we shall be but carrying out our own impulses.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 668.

**FURTHER STUDY:** *Steps to Christ*, “Consecration,” pp. 47, 48.



## Part 4—The Curse of the Law

**“As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them” (Gal. 3:10).**

The TEV renders this verse as follows: “Those who depend on obeying the Law live under a curse. For the scripture says, ‘Whoever does not always obey everything that is written in the book of the Law is under God’s curse!’ ”

Those who depend on a supposed justification—or being put into a right relationship with God—by obeying law are accursed. The reason why is that all of us already are sinners—having broken God’s law. There is therefore no hope that any of us can be placed in a comfortable relationship with God by the law. The broken law only condemns us to death. This is true even though the law was and is good and was given by God Himself.

As God is holy, so the law is holy. (See Rom. 7:12.) Still, it condemns sinful men and women to death. That which was designed to be a blessing for Adam and Eve becomes a means of condemnation to their descendants when they in turn break it. (See Rom. 7:10; Deut. 6:24.)

**What would be the result if it were possible for a human being to live in obedience to the law from birth until death? Gal. 3:12; Lev. 18:4.**

This, of course, is impossible. To possess the right attitude and spirit, without which even any good work is sinful, a person must be born again. He must come into a faith relationship with God. “Whatsoever is not of faith is sin” (Rom. 14:23).

The only person who has fulfilled all that the law requires is Jesus. But He did it because He chose God’s will before He came to earth (Heb. 10:7-10), was born of the Spirit (Luke 1:35), and remained in a faith relationship with His Father throughout His whole life. From beginning to end of His earthly life the devil had no claim on Him (John 14:30), such as he has on you and me.

**What did Christ do to rescue all believers from the curse hovering over every sinful person? Gal. 3:13.**

In 2 Corinthians 3:7 Paul says that the Ten Commandment law became a “ministration of death.” Every violated law of God condemns—be it moral, ceremonial, or any other divine law. And the law makes no provision for releasing those under its curse. That can be achieved only through faith in Christ.

## part 5—Not Under the Law

**“If ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law” (Gal. 5:18). (Compare Gal. 2:19.)**

Paul was free from the demands of the law as the means of salvation. To him it was a matter of indifference. Thus he might circumcise Timothy (Acts 16:1-3), and he might join others in taking a Nazarite vow (Acts 21:17-26). He might comply with aspects of divine laws from choice but not from necessity for salvation.

Paul was indeed free, yet he chose to fit into whatever place or society he happened to be as best he could without violating principles, in order to win men and women to Christ. He expressed his philosophy well in 1 Corinthians 9:19-22, where he says: “Though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews. . . . To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.” His rule for living was, When in Rome, do as the Romans do, subject always to the will of God.

The Judaizers in Galatia were specifically concerned with the ceremonial requirements represented by circumcision. But in Galatians Paul is not concerned with the differences between different aspects of divine law. He wants to make clear how a person is saved. Is it by works of law or through faith in Christ?

**What is the significance of the phrase “not under the law,” in Galatians 5:18? (Compare with Rom. 6:14.)**

The phrase, in the context of Galatians and Romans, can be understood to have the following meanings: (1) The believer is not under law as a method of salvation (as the Jews of Paul’s day used it), but under grace as a method of salvation. Or (2) the believer is not under the condemnation of the law, but is under the forgiveness of grace (as in Rom. 8:1). Paul’s emphasis probably is on the first definition. He is not arguing freedom from the ceremonial law or the moral law. He is arguing that justification is by faith and not by works (Gal. 2:16) and that Christians are dead to law as a method of salvation.

In spite of what many think, Paul would in no way dispute James’ position that faith without works is just as *dead* as a means of salvation (James 2:17, 26). Neither are against the works of the law that come about as a result of genuine faith. What they both are opposed to is the concept of earning salvation by such works. James is not comparing faith with works but genuine faith with dead faith.

**FURTHER STUDY:** Rom. 6:14; 8:2, 4, 14.

## Part 6—Focus of the Week

In his Epistle to the Galatians Paul makes clear that anyone who has been justified or put into a right relationship with God has then received the Holy Spirit. The presence of the Holy Spirit in the life is God's sign that a person belongs to Him—to the family of God. Every Christian is a person in his own right, with his own identity, even as every person born into the world has his own unique fingerprints. But although all believers differ from each other, they are under the guidance of the same Holy Spirit who dwells within every one of them.

At times when we say that we want to remember something, we also say, "I am going to tie a string around my finger." So God Himself has given us His Spirit so that we always may remember that we are His children. This assurance will give us staying power and keep us loyal to Him in moments of temptation and doubt.

Before He could seal us with the Holy Spirit, Jesus must free us from the curse of the law. This curse rested on every one of us. By our own violation of the law, at least, we had placed ourselves in a position where the law constantly condemned us to death. As sinners the burden of death was placed upon every one of us. To free us from this, Jesus Himself became a curse for us. In writing to the Corinthians, Paul says that He became sin for us. He who knew no personal sin became sin by taking our sins, so that "we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (2 Cor. 5:21).

Through the law a sinner is condemned to death. Christ stands in his place and dies for him. The sinner dies with Christ and with Christ rises to "walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:4) through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. No longer is he a slave oppressed by the demands of the law, but joyfully he lives at peace with the law as day by day and moment by moment he is animated and guided by the Holy Spirit. When Satan causes him to stumble, he gladly accepts God's forgiveness and, like a toddler, rises from his fall and courageously continues along the road Jesus has gone before and mapped out for him to follow. As he remains in a faith relationship to Jesus, he is free from condemnation and has "peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:1).

Having been put into a right relationship with God, a person will do good deeds. Christ's justifying righteousness puts the believing, repentant sinner at a vantage point so that the Spirit can possess him and produce in him deeds in compliance with the law as the fruit of the Spirit.

The humility, repentance, and faith that marked the sinner's first recognition of his complete dependence upon the imputed righteousness of Jesus when he is converted are needed equally through every day of his walk in the path of sanctification. Imparted righteousness—the fruit of the Holy Spirit—thrives only in a climate of humility, faith, and love.

**APPLICATION:** Am I becoming fitted for the courts of heaven through the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit?



## The Joy of Being Spirit-Led

**MEMORY TEXTS:** "We through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith."

"Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh" (Gal. 5:5, 16).

The Jews in the days of Jesus had the law. They, above all other nations, had been favored by God with His oracles. (See Rom. 3:2.) They knew the law of God. This is evident from the discussion Jesus had with the lawyer who asked Him, "Which is the first commandment of all?" (See Mark 12:28-34.) Probably many of the Jews were like this scribe to whom Jesus said, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God."

Through the law the Jews possessed a knowledge of God's will. Nicodemus, the rich young ruler, and Paul represented this group of Jews. They were morally good and upright, but they were slaves to the letter of the law—not only to the ceremonial law with its innumerable Pharisaic additions, but also to the moral law. They lived under the oppressing obligation to comply with God's requirements as the basis of salvation. The law was a burden to them. They had not learned to know God and to respond to His love as a God who in mercy had provided a Saviour for them. Hence, they did not love and serve Him out of gratitude but as aliens. They rendered Him the service of slaves, and as such they were lost for eternity.

The Jewish Christians needed to be freed both from the burdens of the ceremonial law and from their misunderstanding of the moral law. This could be done only by meeting Jesus as the eleven disciples had and as Paul did on the Damascus road. After their conversion the disciples did not follow Jesus and serve God from stern necessity but because of their love for Him. Paul says to us today as he did to the Romans, "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost" (Rom. 15:13).



## Part 1—Joy in the Spirit

“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy . . .” (Gal. 5:22).

Genuine love always manifests itself in joy. It need not be boisterous merriment but the same kind of calm, quiet joy that is experienced by a lover when he is with his sweetheart. Such lovers may not even speak; they may just sit close, perhaps holding hands as an expression of joyous mental and emotional oneness and intimacy. The most unalloyed joy is derived from such fellowship—the quiet but exhilarating interaction of the mind with the mind of another person whom we respect, admire, and love. Children know the joy of fellowship. A boy’s greatest desire therefore is to be able to be with “Dad.” What he cherishes most is not gifts but the opportunity to be with his father. The same is true of the little girl and her mother. Children want their parents. This gives them the greatest joy.

**Under what adverse conditions will God’s people possess Spirit-inspired joy? 1 Thess. 1:6.**

The life of Paul’s early Thessalonian converts was not easy. As soon as they accepted the gospel they became objects of persecution. But the Holy Spirit gave them joy in the midst of persecution. “This paradox of experience (Moffatt) shines along the pathway of martyrs and saints of Christ.”—A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman Press, 1931), vol. 4, p. 12.

**What spirit did Zacchaeus show that we should emulate when he received Jesus into his house? Luke 19:6.**

**What can we learn from James about the attitude that will characterize a genuine Christian even amid trials? James 1:2.**

Tests, trials, and even temptations should not discourage but bring us joy. Not every student is qualified to sit for every test. So the very fact that a person is permitted to take a special spiritual test shows that he has qualified. Even the fact of temptation shows that man has free choice. Our freedom to choose shows that we are not mere automatons or robots. God in His omnipotence allows His creatures to choose their course. This shows how highly He values each of us. Someone has said that “when you are greatly tested, remember God is not trying to break you, He is trying to make you.”

## part 2—Joy of Being With the Bridegroom

“Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away” (Song of Solomon 2:13).

Jesus wants every person born into the world to come into a love relationship with Him. For this purpose He has paid the redemption price with His own blood to free all from Satan’s claims on them. The only thing that can render His redemption ineffective is the action of a perverse human will. (Even inaction is a choice.) Despite His omnipotence, God has given each person freedom of moral choice, with the consequence that only those who choose to respond to His call will be drawn into a love relationship with Him.

**With reference to Jesus, what assurance should every Christian have? Song of Solomon 7:10.**

This knowledge or awareness the gospel tries to convey to every person. Some are not aware of it. Satan has tried to tell men ever since the Fall that the Father hates sinners. But that is a lie. The Father loves sinners, and because of His love for sinners He gave His Son to redeem us from Satan’s bondage in sin.

**What can we learn from the bride’s response to her beloved, and how often she thinks of him? Song of Solomon 1:2, 3, 16; 3:1.**

The psalmist said the law of God was his meditation day and night. (See Ps. 1:2; 119:97.) The thoughts of a bride and a groom instinctively turn to one another as soon as full attention is not demanded by some other work or duty. This also was the formula for success that God Himself gave to Joshua when he assumed the leadership of Israel. (See Joshua 1:9.) Compare this with the mental outlook of the wicked. (See Micah 2:1.)

**What significance can we find in the expressed purpose of the bride toward her beloved? Song of Solomon 3:4.**

Such will be our commitment to Jesus when we have found Him as the One altogether lovely. You and I shall find that “his banner over me is love” and that finally “he has taken me to the banquet hall” (Song of Solomon 2:4, NIV).

**FURTHER STUDY:** Read Song of Solomon in Today’s English Version (Good News Bible) or in the New International Version; read also *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 175, 176.

## Part 3—Friend of God

“Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters” (Gen. 5:22).

Only a few verses are devoted to Enoch in the entire Bible. They are Genesis 5:18-24; 1 Chronicles 1:3; Hebrews 11:5; Jude 14, 15. His only equal in one particular in the Scriptures, Elijah, has several chapters devoted to him and his activity and is mentioned also in more books of the Bible than is Enoch.

Enoch was probably much like the other God-fearing antediluvians until his son was born. “He walked with God.” He continued to do so after the birth of his son Methuselah. But a change came into his relationship with God with the birth of his son. He thought there must be some similarity between his feelings and attitude toward his son and God’s love toward him.

“After the birth of his first son, Enoch reached a higher experience; he was drawn into a closer relationship with God. He realized more fully his own obligations and responsibility as a son of God. And as he saw the child’s love for its father, its simple trust in his protection; as he felt the deep, yearning tenderness of his own heart for that first-born son, he learned precious lessons of the wonderful love of God to men in the gift of His Son, and the confidence which the children of God may repose in their heavenly Father. The infinite, unfathomable love of God through Christ became the subject of his meditations day and night; and with all the fervor of his soul he sought to reveal that love to the people among whom he dwelt.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 84.

**What may indicate the closeness of the friendship existing between God and Enoch? Gen. 5:24.**

On school campuses we see young men and women walking together. If their walks together continue and increase in frequency, it witnesses to their growing friendship. Enoch and God walked together. They enjoyed each other’s company.

Many of the young couples who continue to walk together on campus continue to walk together in marriage. They enjoy one another’s company so well that they decide never to separate. They want to be together for life. God must have felt that way about Enoch. He wanted him close to Himself, so He took him to heaven.

**THINK IT THROUGH:** What do you think it means to walk with God, and how do you think you can do the same?

**FURTHER STUDY:** Gen. 5:18-24; *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 84-89.

## Part 4—Christ in Me

“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).

The cross is central to Paul’s preaching because it was central in his experience. “In the glorious Being who stood before him [in the Damascus road vision] he saw the Crucified One. Upon the soul of the stricken Jew the image of the Saviour’s countenance was imprinted forever.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 115.

In a spiritual sense Paul had died and been buried with Christ in baptism. He was dead to all that prevented complete dedication to God and His work. But his death to self was not a single event in the past. It was a present experience. He said, “I die daily” (1 Cor. 15:31). His resurrection with Christ had resulted in newness of life, in the Spirit, in which his will had become captive to the mind of Christ. Through his acceptance of the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, Paul had come to share the motives, purposes, and the way of Christ’s self-sacrificing life.

Through this death-and-resurrection experience with Jesus, however, Paul had not become merged into or absorbed by Him. He retained his own personality. Christ and Paul still were two distinct persons. When Jesus came into Paul’s heart, he began to share Christ’s attitude toward both God and men. In body he was still “in the flesh” living among men, but by faith he was intimately joined to Jesus.

There is not and never has been any other way of proving that the gospel is true than by daily living in accordance with the mind of Christ. Thus Paul chose to abide in Christ: “The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith in the Son of God” (Gal. 2:20).

**As a result of Paul’s being crucified with Christ and Christ’s living in him, how does Paul relate to the will of God? Rom. 1:1.**

“When the apostle Paul, through the revelation of Christ, was converted from a persecutor to a Christian, he declared that he was as one born out of due time. Henceforward Christ was all and in all to him. ‘For to me to live is Christ,’ he declared. This is the most perfect interpretation in a few words, in all the Scriptures, of what it means to be a Christian. This is the **whole truth of the gospel**. Paul understood what many seem unable to comprehend. How intensely in earnest he was! His words show that his mind was **centered in Christ**, that his whole life was bound up with his Lord. Christ was the author, the support, and the source of his life.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 903.

**FURTHER STUDY:** John 15:1-11; *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 674-677.



## Part 5—The Christian's Glory

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

In today's portion of our lesson Paul returns, in the very last part of his letter, to the glory of the cross and the possibilities inherent in it. Only through it, he assured the Galatians, can God's plan for sinners be fulfilled.

God created man to show forth His glory. (See Isa. 43:7.) By enticing Adam and Eve into sin, Satan for a time frustrated God's purpose—but not permanently. Through the plan of salvation God's plan for everyone who accepts it ultimately will be fulfilled. Because of this Paul says he will boast about nothing else but the cross. The Judaizers gloried in circumcision and all the rites, rituals, and ordinances of the Mosaic law for salvation. From this misuse of law Paul had been delivered. (See Gal. 2:19; 3:13; 4:4, 5.) The ritual law had met its fulfillment at the cross. This had been recognized at the Council of Jerusalem.

**What applications can you draw from what Paul said about the cross in writing to the Corinthians? 1 Cor. 2:2.**

To the Jews a crucified Messiah was a stumbling block; to the Greeks it was sheer foolishness. (See 1 Cor. 1:23.) But to Paul, and to everyone who believes the gospel about the death of Jesus, it was indeed the power of God unto salvation. (See Rom. 1:16.)

**To make our redemption, purchased by Christ on the cross, effective unto a person's salvation and glory, what is needed? Gal. 3:27. (Compare Eph. 3:17; 2:22.)**

Christ lives through every genuine Christian. John 15 is a parallel to Paul's picture of the oneness of Jesus with the believer. Here Jesus Himself presents the intimate relationship that exists between Himself and His followers. He said, "Abide in me, and I in you" (John 15:4). To be in Christ is like the unity of branch with vine. But there is a difference. The natural branch cannot help being a part of the vine, but the believer has freedom of choice and belongs to Jesus only by continuous exercise of free moral choice. Though a believer may be one with Christ today, he may choose to be detached from Him and His saving relationship any time he chooses.

**FURTHER STUDY:** Jer. 9:24; 1 Cor. 1:31 to 2:2.

## Part 6—Focus of the Week

"Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation" (Isa. 12:3).

A young bride-to-be who was about to be married to the young man of her choice told her pastor that the months after his proposal to her had been the happiest time of her life. Her demeanor and facial expression certainly seemed to verify her words.

After a brief honeymoon the young man was going to take his bride to another part of the country, away from her friends and the pleasant climate where she had been living. When the pastor asked her if she did not dread leaving shirt-sleeve weather for a climate where the temperature might drop down to minus 20° Fahrenheit, her instant reply was, "More than anything else I want to be where my husband is." A few months later he had occasion to ask her how she liked what was, to her, the new and cold part of the country. Again her answer came, "I like it and enjoy it here." What she really was saying was that she liked to be with her husband, and inasmuch as he happened to live in a new climate, she liked that too. Her love for him made the place enjoyable for her.

The Bible refers to the quality of this first love as a symbol of the ideal relationship existing between a believer and Jesus. Love and devotion are mutual, loyal, and all-absorbing. They are characterized by faith, trust, and commitment that lead to glad-hearted and joyous surrender. Love protects from outside intrusions. No one can come between the believer and his Lord. Nothing can deflect the attention. Commitment is wholehearted, sincere, and genuine.

The Bible portrays this kind of love in the Song of Solomon. This collection of love poems, spoken alternately by a man to a woman and a woman to a man, pictures the love between God and the church. It represents the love of Christ for the church and the love and devotion of the church for Jesus through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Another illustration of this love may be that exemplified by a father for his children and the love of the children for their father. Joy and peace animate a child toward its father. So our religious experience may be measured by the joy and peace we as Christians sense as we acclaim God as our Father.

"The genuineness, nay the actual existence, of religious experience is to be measured, not by any transcendence of feeling nor by great deeds that all men can see, but by the joy and the peace which are diffused through the soul that can say 'My Father.'"—Adolf Harnack, *What is Christianity?* (New York/Evanston: Harper and Row, 1957), p. 66.

**APPLICATION:** Do my attitude and expressions testify to those about me that I enjoy being with Jesus?

# Christian Fruit Bearing

**MEMORY TEXTS:** "In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love" (Gal. 5:6).

"Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone" (James 2:17).

We have now come to the last lesson for this quarter centering in the letter of Paul to the Galatians and of James to general believers.

In the Galatian letter Paul wanted to make clear to his readers that their acceptance with God did not rest on observance of law of any kind but on faith. Through faith they had become new creatures in Christ Jesus—sons and daughters of God. This faith could be seen in fruits of righteousness.

In his letter, James attempted to point out to his readers that a faith that does not bear fruit is dead and does not reveal a living, saving relationship with the Lord. There was not then, and never has been, any other way of proving, in this world, that the gospel is right and correct. Only the daily lives of those who have been brought into accord with the mind of Christ can give such a testimony and revelation. Jesus' faith was not theoretical; it was experiential because He Himself "went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him" (Acts 10:38).

This lesson aims to reemphasize that both Paul and James conclude that a believer led and indwelt by the Spirit will manifest fruit unto righteousness, or the fruit of the Spirit. Due to the limits of space just a few of the facets of the fruit of the Spirit that could be introduced will be.

One question that crops up repeatedly is, How can we tell the difference between genuine fruits of the Spirit and the kindly, helpful deeds of those about us who make no profession of faith in Christ? This lesson shows that it is the motive behind the deed that makes the difference. Because only God can read hearts and judge motives it is not our concern to make such distinctions. Our concern should be to make sure that Christ is in control of our life and that it is our love for Him that alone motivates our thoughts and actions.

## Part 1—A New Creature

"In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature" (Gal. 6:15).

The Judaizers gloried in all that was represented by circumcision. Through it they believed that before God they possessed a great advantage over the uncircumcised Gentiles. In today's verse Paul says that neither is it an advantage nor a disadvantage—the one no gain, the other no loss. At no time was any law capable of gaining or earning salvation for anyone. What really ever mattered to God was that a person had accepted Jesus' merits in penitence and faith, had been born of the Spirit, and had become a new creation in Christ Jesus.

In what way does Paul, in his writings to the Corinthians, express the same concept of the importance of being a new creature? 2 Cor. 5:17.

Sinful human beings can only become new creatures by being born again and being spiritually in Christ Jesus. As noted last week, as the branch is connected in a life-giving way to the vine, so men and women will remain in Christ in order to be and remain new creatures. It is not sufficient to be a member of the church. Those who are new creatures in Christ Jesus will join and belong to the church, because the church is the body of Christ. (See Eph. 5:23.) As a branch no longer partakes of the life of the vine when it is cut off, so Jesus says, "Whoever does not remain in me is thrown out like a branch and dries up; such branches are gathered up and thrown into the fire, where they are burned" (John 15:6, TEV).

What are the implications, according to Paul, of the renewal process which takes place within us as a result of this new creation? Col. 3:10; Eph. 4:24.

Luther says, "Thus a new creation is a work of the Holy Spirit, who implants a new intellect and will and confers the power to curb the flesh and to flee the righteousness and wisdom of the world. This is not a sham or merely a new outward appearance, but something really happens. A new attitude and a new judgment, namely, a spiritual one, actually comes into being, and they now detest what they once admired. . . .

"Therefore a new creation is . . . a renewal of the mind by the Holy Spirit; this is then followed by an outward change in the flesh, in the parts of the body, and in the senses. For when the heart acquires new light, a new judgment, and new motivation through the Gospel, this also brings about a renewal of the senses. The ears long to hear the Word of God instead of listening any longer to human traditions and notions."—Jaroslav Pelikan, ed., *Luther's Works*, vol. 27, p. 140.



## Part 2—The Result of Faith

**“In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but faith which worketh by love” (Gal. 5:6).**

**“Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone” (James 2:17).**

Physical life will always manifest itself in some form of growth or activity. So will also spiritual life and genuine faith within a Christian. Luther says that Christians will “exercise their faith through good works; for unless these works follow faith, this is the surest possible sign that the faith is not genuine.”—Jaroslav Pelikan, ed., *Luther's Works*, vol. 27, p. 127.

“Faith . . . is a cup that is never empty but is always filled with Christ Jesus. It may be a small or a large cup, it is never an empty one. The entire value and the power of faith lie in this its divine content. And since this is Christ who loved us and died for us, faith ever brings forth its fruit of love. How can a heart embrace him who is supreme love without glowing with love and love's energy?”—R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistles to the Galatians, Ephesians, and Philippians* (Columbus, Ohio: The Wartburg Press, 1946), p. 263.

**How should the fruit of the Spirit continually increase in the Christian life? Gal. 5:22, 23.**

James does not give a list of sample aspects of the fruit of the Spirit as does Paul, but several of those listed by Paul appear in his admonitions to his readers. For instance, Paul's long-suffering is James' admonition to *patience* (the same Greek word in Galatians 5:22 and James 5:7); and Christians are to have *joy* (same Greek word in Galatians 5:22 and James 1:2).

**As the fruit of the Spirit appears in the Christian's life, what will fall off? Gal. 5:19-21.**

These works may appear in the life of a person who is not under Christ and the control of the Holy Spirit, but who rather is dominated by the desires and promptings arising from his physical body. Luther writes that even “the godly are conscious of the desires of the flesh; but they resist them and do not gratify them. When they fall into sin unexpectedly, they obtain forgiveness, if by faith they return to Christ.”—Jaroslav Pelikan, ed., *Luther's Works*, vol. 27, p. 82.

**Having crucified the flesh with its desires when we decided to live for Christ, how should we relate to it now? Gal. 5:25.**

## Part 3—Joy in the Lord

**“My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into divers temptations” (James 1:2).**

In this verse most versions translate *temptations* as “trials” or “tests.” Tests are designed to measure a product's strength, efficiency, or durability. Students pass tests to show their knowledge. No patient would like to entrust his fate to a surgeon who had never been required to take or pass any tests during his medical training. For a student it is an indication of achievement to be able to take the final test. He may not enjoy the process but is thrilled with the results when successful.

**What can we expect trials or tests in the school of life to produce in the life of a true Christian? James 1:3.**

A parishioner told her pastor that she had been praying for patience. But then she said it seemed to her that she had had to face more unexpected problems and trials than in her entire past life. As a result she confessed that in spite of her prayers for patience she was getting more impatient with each passing day. Her pastor asked her, “Do you think it is possible to find out whether you have any patience or to develop patience without trials?”

**What application can you draw from the way patience is said to culminate? James 1:4.**

“Higher than the highest human thought can reach is God's ideal for his children.”—*Education*, p. 18. This quotation refers to character development. And a mature, all-around character cannot be developed without trials and tests both from circumstances and people. As we realize this, then let us rejoice, for who wants to remain immature and lacking in character? The assurance of our eternal welfare is revealed in our development of character, for “character . . . is the only treasure that we can take from this world to the next.”—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 332.

At one time a particular department of the Loma Linda University School of Medicine gave the students the option of taking only the final test in the course if they so desired. Some unwise students availed themselves of this option, while the more circumspect students took every test throughout the entire course, although the results of these tests would not affect the final grade. When the final test came—on which the grade was based—the wise students who had taken all the earlier tests did much better than those who had taken no tests.

## Part 4—Temptation and Victory

“Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed” (James 1:14).

A person is tempted when inducements from without meet sinful desires from within. William Barclay comments: “Desire is something which can be nourished or stifled. A man can check and control his discipline, and even, by the grace of God, eliminate desire if he faces it and deals with it at once. But a man can allow his steps to take him into certain places . . . , he can encourage his eyes to linger on certain forbidden things, he can spend his life fomenting desire. . . . He can so hand himself over to Christ . . . and be so engaged on good things that there is no time or place left for desire.”—*The Letters of James and Peter* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), p. 61.

**What must happen for temptation to change into sin? James 1:15.**

Imagine that you need about twenty dollars. Then you step into an unattended office and notice a twenty-dollar bill lying on a desk. Instantly the thought occurs to take the money and disappear, since no one has seen you enter the room. Sin lurks where you begin to think of the pros and cons of stealing the twenty-dollar bill. Hence, there can be temptation without commitment of sin. You could not avoid seeing the money nor forget your financial need, but you did not have to think of solving your financial need by stealing. Likewise we cannot prevent the thought of sin from intruding upon us, but we can refuse to consider it as soon as we become aware of it.

**What is meant by the expression that “neither tempteth he any man”? James 1:13. (Compare verse 17.)**

There are places and circumstances where temptations more readily assail us than at other places under different conditions. It might be well for us to remember what Joseph did when he found himself in a place of temptation. (See Gen. 39:7-20.)

**What is significant about what James says about a person who successfully meets trial and temptation? James 1:12.**

The Greek word translated “temptation” includes afflictions such as sickness, poverty, or calamity as well as direct enticements to sin.

## part 5—The Law of Christ

“If ye fulfill the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well” (James 2:8).

“All the law is fulfilled in one word, even this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (Gal. 5:14).

This summary of the second table of the Decalogue about love to one’s neighbor, called by James part of the royal law, did not originate with the man Jesus, but dated back to Old Testament times. It was given by God to Moses (Lev. 19:18) together with other laws and ordinances. When Jesus compressed the Ten Commandments into two (Matt. 22:36-40), this admonition dealt with one’s relationship to his fellowmen. Paul, after citing several of the commandments from the second table of the Decalogue, ended by saying that “love is the fulfilling of the law.” (See Rom. 13:8-10.)

**When motivated by this divine love, what should the followers of Christ do? Gal. 6:2.**

“A woman who had served her church for nearly twenty years asked her pastor, ‘Do you remember the wretched health I had when you first learned to know me, what a nervous wreck I was?’ Of course he remembered. Then she added, ‘I have had to bear so many burdens in my family that today I am a relatively well woman.’ Bearing the heavier burdens of others lifted her own. Perhaps a major key to mental health can be found in deliberately assuming the burdens of others.”—*The Interpreter’s Bible* (New York/Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1953), vol. 10, pp. 578, 579.

**What is the essence of true Christianity? Gal. 6:10.**

It is possible to comply with certain rules, regulations, and requirements. But the demands of love can never be exhausted by rules and requirements. A good husband and father does all he can for his wife and children, and then he still wishes he could do more. No matter how much he does for them, the demands of love clamor for more. Such is love.

Because of His love for a rebel world, God emptied the storehouse on high and depleted the resources of heaven. By giving Jesus for our salvation, God gave all. And He did not give Him for something worthless; He gave Him for the soul jewels that for eternity will be ornaments in Christ’s crown of glory. (See Matt. 3:17.)

“When love fills the heart, it will flow out to others, not because of favors received from them, but because love is the principle of action.”—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 38.



## Part 6—Focus of the Week

Christian fruit bearing depends on the believer's being a new creature in Christ Jesus. It is not spontaneous or automatic in the natural man. It is the result of new spiritual life within. The prophet Ezekiel used the illustration of a valley filled with dry bones. Through the life-giving power of the Holy Spirit these dry bones became alive and clad with flesh and blood. (See Ezekiel 37.) This story illustrates the miracle wrought by the Holy Spirit in men and women dead in sin. Jesus used the illustration of the vine and its branches to show the life-giving power of the Holy Spirit within. (See John 15:1-10.)

Both illustrations show that Christian fruit bearing is not coerced or forced goodness imposed from without; it is produced by implanted goodness from within. It is not like apples or oranges tied to a Christmas tree, but like fruit actually grown on the fruit tree itself.

If we as followers of Jesus perform good deeds reluctantly, our acts may look good and commendable to the onlooker, but they are not Spirit-fruit, although the deeds we perform may feed the hungry and clothe the naked. They are nothing but dead works of the law, since they are prompted by a sense of obligation to do good. Although they may look like fruit of the Spirit, they are as much wild grapes as were those the ancient Jews produced in their apostasy. (See Isa. 5:4.)

The deeds of humanistic ethics or deeds of the law may look confusingly like genuine Spirit-fruit. Because of this both may be praised and commended by even church leaders. In this way a person with strong willpower and good personal discipline may at times seem to live a better and more god-like life than may a weak Christian. But the motive power behind the life reveals its origin. Possibly the Pharisee Paul lived a more blameless life in the eyes of his beholders than did the impetuous Peter, even as a disciple.

Paul told the Galatians what some facets of the fruit of the Spirit in their lives would be. (See Gal. 5:22, 23.) James told his readers that as true Christians they would encounter both trials and temptations with joy and patience and manifest love in their relations and dealings with other people. Thus they would neither practice partiality nor be unjust in their dealings with the poor among them.

Instead of being grossly upset by trials and temptations we should remember that temptations come to everyone. The believers to whom James wrote were, as are many Christians today, apparently puzzled by trials and temptations. But "God is no respecter of persons" (Acts 10:34). Both temptations and trials came to Jesus. As His followers we should face trials, adversities, and temptations with both courage and joy. God does not joyfully afflict His children. He is polishing them as jewels for His crown of glory. (See Mal. 3:17.)

**APPLICATION:** What have I learned about faith and salvation this quarter that will make me a stronger Christian and a more effective witness?

## Lesson for 4th quarter, 1983

Sabbath School members who have not received a copy of the Adult Lessons for the fourth quarter of 1983 will be helped by the following outline in studying the first two lessons. The title of this series is "Songs of Experience."

## First Lesson

## OVERVIEW OF THE PSALMS

Memory Text, Ps. 89:1

1. *Authorship* (Luke 24:44)
2. *An Ancient Hymnbook* (Ps. 81:1, 2)
3. *Poetic Form* (Ps. 45:1, NIV)
4. *Divisions and Types* (Ps. 41:13)
5. *Theme and Theology* (Ps. 102:1, 2)
6. *Application to Our Needs* (Ps. 119:18)

## Second Lesson

## NATURE AND REVELATION TESTIFY OF GOD

Memory Text, Ps. 8:1

1. *What Is Man?* (Ps. 8:4)
2. *The Great Creator* (Ps. 104:1-5)
3. *Power That Sustains* (Ps. 104:27, 28)
4. *"The Heavens Are Telling"* (Ps. 19:1, 2, NASB)
5. *The Written Revelation* (Ps. 19:7, 8)
6. *Application to Character and Conduct* (Ps. 19:10, 11)

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Arnold V. Wallenkampf

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North Philippine	32,484,667	768	86,651	53,606
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