

7. The Road to Faith (4Q 2011—Galatians)

Biblical material: Gal. 3:21–25; Lev. 18:5; Rom. 3:9–19; 1 Cor. 9:20; Rom. 3:1, 2; 8:1–4.

Quotes

- Faith is the art of holding on to things your reason has once accepted in spite of your changing moods. *C. S. Lewis*
- “Faith” means not wanting to know what is true. *Friedrich Nietzsche*
- The opposite of faith is not heresy, it’s indifference. *Elie Wiesel*
- Faith is deliberate confidence in the character of God whose ways you may not understand at the time. *Oswald Chambers*
- Faith... must be enforced by reason...When faith becomes blind it dies. *Mahatma Gandhi*
- Faith is putting all your eggs in God’s basket, then counting your blessings before they hatch. *Ramona C. Carroll*
- We are not saved for believing, but by believing. *Thomas Taylor*

Questions

How differently do we see things if we replace the word “faith” with “trust in God”? How do we arrive at trust in God? In what way does the Law help or hinder? What is God really looking for? What’s the difference if we see God as allowing natural consequence or imposing penalties? How does this reflect our picture of God?

Bible summary

Gal. 3:21–25 explains that the Law is not in opposition to God’s promises. But it is through our trust in God that he can save us, not through the Law. As Paul makes clear, the Law is no longer “in charge” of us now that Christ has come, and we are all children of God. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile because our relationship with God is based on our trust in him. “If you belong to Christ, then you are the descendants of Abraham and will receive what God has promised.” (Gal. 3:25 TEV).

Lev. 18:5 tells us that we live by following God’s laws. Certainly disobedience to God’s laws brings its own inevitable result. However just avoiding evil does not make us good! If we remember that sin is a broken relationship with God, then salvation is to do with restoring that relationship, and living together in harmony with God.

Rom. 3:9–19 identifies us all as sinners doomed to die. No one is righteous, neither Jew nor Gentile. We are all judged by God’s law, and we are all failures! In 1 Cor. 9:20 Paul explains how he works—as a Jew for the Jew, understanding their respect for the ceremonies and customs of the Law. However as the next verse continues, he is also willing to live as a Gentile outside of the Jewish law, if that will win the Gentiles. Rom. 3:1, 2 states that there is no advantage, Jew or Gentile; while Romans 8 tells us emphatically that we no longer live under condemnation.

Comment

Faith is the subject, but this is no vague sense of spirituality, or some kind of euphemism for “believing what you know ain’t true.” How we get there is the focus, and

the central answer to belief in Galatians 3. We must trust God. That is it in a nutshell. Those who were trying to upset the Galatians were advocating “faith plus.” You needed to believe in Jesus, but you needed to follow Jewish laws and practices too. Paul’s argument is that yes, you need to follow the fundamental principles of good and right (which would include the Ten Commandments) but that the other aspects such as circumcision and ceremonial cleanness and the various Feasts were no longer necessary. He was concerned to make sure that nothing came between the Gentile (“Foreigner” to the Jew) and God—that the relationship was not impeded by requirements that had been superseded by the coming of Jesus.

How often do we want to “revert back”! We too cannot seem to accept salvation as a free gift—we want to earn it by rule-keeping, by showing we deserve it. Instead of seeing our relationship to our loving, healing Lord as primary, we want to point to all the good we’re doing and all the bad we’re avoiding as our “title deed for heaven.” In this vital lesson written to the Galatians God says “Absolutely Not!”

Nor do we fall into the other error of discounting how we live! If we identify with him, agree with him about the way he runs the Universe in love, truth, right, fairness, and trust, then we cannot operate on any kind of selfish principles. This means we keep the Law, not because we have to, but because we would not want to operate in any other way. But not as a way to vindicate ourselves, rather to vindicate the character of God.

Ellen White Comments

Satan will try to cast his shadow athwart your pathway, and he will seek to misrepresent the character of God, and the nature of his promises to your mind, but you must lay hold of the mighty One. There is no help for you in self, for you are only weakness. Your strength is in having faith in God, that he may work with your efforts. If you trust implicitly in him, you will know that his going forth is prepared as the morning. {RH, July 2, 1889}

Not in freedom from trial, but in the midst of it, is Christian character developed. Exposure to rebuffs and opposition leads the follower of Christ to greater watchfulness and more earnest prayer to the mighty Helper. Severe trial endured by the grace of God develops patience, vigilance, fortitude, and a deep and abiding trust in God. {AA 467-8}

God wants us to bring our lives into closer relationship to Him, who owns all we possess, and who sustains us by His power. All we have is Christ’s. By our reception of the truth we are linked to God in Jesus Christ--linked up with God to meet our opportunities with the very life principles which make this union a possibility... {AUCR, December 1, 1900}

True conversion is a radical change. The very drift of the mind and bent of the heart should be turned, and the life should become new in Christ. There should be a perfect trust in God, a childlike dependence on his promises, and an entire consecration of self to his will, remembering that the observance of mere external forms will never meet the great want of the human soul. We are Christ’s representatives on the earth, and none of us can occupy a neutral position. We are active agents for God or for the enemy. We either gather with Christ or scatter abroad. “Beloved, now are we the sons of God,” says the apostle. We should keep in mind this holy relationship, and do nothing to bring dishonor upon our Father’s cause. {BEcho, September 1, 1888}