

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

Third Quarter 2017: *The Gospel in Galatians*

Lesson 2 “Paul’s Authority and Gospel”

Read for this week’s study

2 Peter 3:15, 16; Galatians 1; Philippians 1:1; Galatians 5:12.

Memory Text

“For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I 1 would not be a bondservant of Christ” (Galatians 1:10, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. Paul, the Letter Writer
- III. Paul’s Calling
- IV. Paul’s Gospel
- V. No Other Gospel
- VI. The Origin of Paul’s Gospel
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Jon Paulien

1. Read Galatians 1:10-12. According to Paul, what is the danger in being a “people pleaser?” Why does Paul say it is impossible to be a follower of Christ while trying to please people? (Sabbath afternoon)
2. Read 2 Peter 3:15-16. What do these verses tell us about how the early church viewed Paul’s writings? What does this teach us about how inspiration works? What does it tell us about God? The author of the lesson states that some of Paul’s letters have been lost. Do an internet search on lost letters of Paul and see what evidence there is for that in the Bible? What would we do if we found a genuine letter of Paul that is not in the New Testament? (Sunday’s lesson)
3. If the Bible were to be written today, what kind of medium, format and style do you think God would use to reach us now? (Sunday’s lesson)
4. Compare Paul’s opening greeting in Galatians 1:1-2 with Ephesians 1:1; Philippians 1:2 and 2 Thessalonians 1:1. How is the greeting in Galatians similar to and different from the others? Read through the rest of Galatians lightly in an easy-reading translation. Why did Paul’s opponents think that his gospel was undermining

obedience? How did they define obedience? How do we define it today? Is the authority of Scripture being challenged within the Seventh-day Adventist Church today? Where would you see the biggest challenge coming from? (Monday's lesson)

5. In addition to defending his apostleship, what else does Paul emphasize in his opening greeting to the Galatians (Galatians 1:3-5, cf. Ephesians 1:2; Philippians 1:2 Colossians 1:2)? What aspects of the gospel does Paul include in Galatians 1:1-6 (compare 1 Corinthians 15:3-4)? (Tuesday's lesson)
6. What normally follows the opening greeting in Paul's letters? How is Galatians different (compare Galatians 1:6 with Romans 1:8, 1 Corinthians 1:4, Philippians 1:3 and 1 Thessalonians 1:2)? Read Galatians 1:6-9. What strong words does Paul use that demonstrate the degree of his concern about what was happening in Galatia? How does one weigh or balance the tension between relying on experience and relying on correct doctrine? (Wednesday's lesson)
7. Read Galatians 1:6-24. What might Paul have done differently in his letter if he were merely seeking human approval? Why didn't Paul require the Gentile converts to be circumcised? How does this passage make the point that Paul received his gospel and his authority directly from God? How can anyone know for sure what God has called them to do? (Thursday's lesson)
8. In Paul's greeting to the Galatians, what reason does he give for Jesus' death? What meaning does that have for us today? (Friday's lesson)
9. What does Paul mean by "traditions." What place is there, if any, for tradition in the way we understand our faith? (Friday's lesson)
10. Why does Paul seem so intolerant of those who believed differently than he did? How might someone like Paul be viewed in the church today?

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

Recommended Listening: The entire series by Graham Maxwell on the book of Galatians is available at <http://pkp.cc/MMGALATIANS66>

He has a great deal to say about peace. He didn't say much about peace before the Damascus Road, did he? The only peace he supported then was peace under pressure, peace produced by force. The kind of peace he has in mind now is the kind that comes from knowing that God is graciousness personified, and so he doesn't even use the regular word for hello, which is "*chairein*," but a very similar word, "*charis*," which means "grace". {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in all 66 – Philippians and 1&2 Thessalonians, recorded May, 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/69MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/70MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

But do you notice Paul's subject, let God be true. In other words, let God be righteous. He's still talking about the character of God, isn't he? Let God be true, even though you've let him down. "That thou mayest be justified in thy words, and prevail when thou art judged." Now, that can be translated in various ways, but among all the versions, the point is clear, as from the Greek, that there have been questions about God. There have been questions about his character, his truthfulness, his righteousness. This is the subject of the book. True, he's giving the plan of salvation, God's way of setting us right. But instead of talking about us so much, he talks about God.

Is it God's way of setting us right, to reveal the truth about himself? Well, in what way are we wrong? Isn't it that we have not had faith in our God? We have not trusted God. We have not been willing to listen. What leads us to trust, and a willingness to listen, but the revelation of the righteousness of God? Then what is God's way of setting us right? Revealing his own righteousness. So if you translate "the gospel is the truth about God's own righteousness" that doesn't leave out the fact that that's God's way of making us righteous. But if you translate it "the gospel is God's way of making us righteous", you've left out the way he does it. You've left out the fact that that depends upon our seeing the truth about God. And that's the heart of the present great theological controversy among us.

There are some who say, "There is no need to reveal the righteousness of God. That's a given. All we need is the methods and the steps he's used to set us right." But then they use the wrong methods. It's by presenting the truth about God. "This is what God is like." And you use all sixty-six books for that. Look at all the evidence as to what God is like. And does he want to be served from fear? What does he do to his wayward children? We have to explain that. What about his wrath, and the destruction of the wicked? He has to explain that in order to win us back to trust, and the kind of obedience that God desires, that springs not from fear, or law, but from love, trust, and admiration. God's way is to tell the truth about himself. But God has been judged as being untrue and unrighteous. And Paul says, "God, may you be shown to be right in what you have said, and win your case when You take it into court." "When thou art judged" in the Greek can be translated "when you take it into court".

Did anyone drag God into court? Or would he have to take his own case into court? If God is in court, he took himself there. Nobody has power to drag him into court. So I love the translation "and win your case when you take it into court." Has God won his case?

Do you see the court, by the way? In Daniel 7, a hundred million watch when the court sits in judgment and the books are opened. How about in Job? Isn't God on trial there? Isn't he accused of being untrustworthy? Think of other places. The universe has been judging God. He

has invited his children to examine and investigate his character and his government, for he has been accused. In the Garden of Eden he was accused. Think of other places.

Now, has God won his case, and if so, how? How does the infinitely powerful one take his case into court and win? Does he intimidate the jury? Does he bribe the judge? Does he hide the evidence? Does he win on the basis of power? Or of claims? Does he stand there and say, “I have been accused, and I say I’m righteous, and since I’m God, I expect to be believed”? Would he win his case? Only by the presentation of evidence, and the freely given agreement; yes, the evidence is on God’s side. Only on that basis could God actually win.

Now, what evidence would be needed? Well, what are the charges? Genesis records the charge that God has lied, that death is the result of sin. Then that was developed into saying that God is a torturing, destroying, wrathful God. Was this answered, not on the basis of claims, but of evidence? You come right on down to 3:21. Look, leaving out a lot in between: “But now the righteousness of God has been revealed [manifested. This is how he won his case], Apart from law, although the law and the prophets bear witness to it,…” (RSV)

Would you agree, going through book by book in the Old Testament, that the Old Testament has borne witness to the truth about God? That’s clearly in there, isn’t it? “The righteousness of God that comes through trusting in Jesus Christ.”

That is, if we don’t trust, if we don’t believe that what he revealed is true, we don’t have an answer. And this goes on to verse 25, that the death of Christ answered the questions. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in all 66 – Romans, recorded May, 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/61MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/62MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

I love Paul’s comment here. He wants intelligent, rational, spiritual worship. Or do you have “worship of heart and mind” in your version? It’s intelligent worship, because he’s that kind of a God. I believe if God is the kind of a God we are convinced he is from going through the sixty-six, it will greatly affect the way we worship, the way we pray, certainly the way we treat each other. So in the end, nothing is more important than the truth about God. And to me the gospel is that God is not the kind of person his enemies have made him out to be. He is precisely as revealed in Scripture. The law and the prophets bear witness to it, and no witness matches the life and teachings and the sufferings and the death of Christ. This is the revelation of what God is like.

COMMENT: This is the message that we are to take out to the people in Revelation chapter 14 verse 6.

Absolutely! The everlasting gospel is the truth about God which has always been true, and will always remain true. The truth that wins us to faith will remain the basis of our trust for all eternity. That's why it's called the "Everlasting Good News", which means it always has been true. Has God changed because sin came into his family? No. He's acted the way he has because that's the way he always has been and he always will be. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in all 66 – Romans, recorded May, 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:* <http://pkp.cc/61MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/62MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

But even of us damaged sinners who need so much help, all God asks is trust. Because if we only trusted God enough to be willing to listen, to stand humbly in his presence and ask, "What must I do to be saved? What must I do to be well?" You know that God is the Creator that readily and eagerly will heal all of the damage done. There is no substitute for trust. Nothing else is as important as trust. All the generous and gracious provisions of the plan of salvation are of no avail whatever if we don't trust God enough to let him do for us what he's so eager to do.

Now I think this helps explain Paul's very brief reply to the jailer in Philippi. You remember when the earthquake brought down the doors of that jail and the jailer, fearing that the prisoners had escaped (in which case he would be executed himself), ran in and fell down at the feet of Paul and Silas. And you can be sure he earnestly inquired, "What must I do to be saved?" At least "What must I do to be safe?" And Paul replied, not "If you have the time, I have twenty lessons for you. As we sit here among the rubble, I'll lead you through the doctrines of the church." No, all Paul said was, in the familiar wording, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved." {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #3, "All God Asks is Trust" recorded January, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link:* <http://pkp.cc/3MMCAG>

Some of us believe that this understanding of God's way of executing his authority and power is far and away the most important of all our Christian beliefs. Every other Christian doctrine derives its importance, and even its meaning, from this central and essential truth about our God. To some of us, the most important information we have to share with our fellow human beings around this planet is this truth about the way God runs his universe and what he wants of his children. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #7, "The Question of Authority" recorded February, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link:* <http://pkp.cc/7MMCAG>

Further Study with Ellen White

We should day by day study the Bible diligently, weighing every thought, and comparing scripture with scripture. With divine help, we are to form our opinions for ourselves, as we are to answer for ourselves before God. {RH, June 28, 1906 par. 7}

The Holy Spirit loves to address the youth, and to discover to them the treasures and beauties of God's word. The promises spoken by the great Teacher will captivate the senses and animate the soul with spiritual power that is divine. There will grow in the fruitful mind a familiarity with divine things that will be as a barricade against temptation. {COL 132.3}

The words of truth will grow in importance, and assume a breadth and fullness of meaning of which we have never dreamed. The beauty and riches of the word have a transforming influence on mind and character. The light of heavenly love will fall upon the heart as an inspiration. {COL 132.4}

The Bible contains a simple and complete system of theology and philosophy. {RH, June 11, 1908 par. 4}

The Bible is its own expositor. Scripture is to be compared with scripture. The student should learn to view the word as a whole, and to see the relation of its parts. He should gain a knowledge of its grand central theme, of God's original purpose for the world, of the rise of the great controversy, and of the work of redemption. He should understand the nature of the two principles that are contending for supremacy, and should learn to trace their working through the records of history and prophecy, to the great consummation. He should see how this controversy enters into every phase of human experience; how in every act of life he himself reveals the one or the other of the two antagonistic motives; and how, whether he will or not, he is even now deciding upon which side of the controversy he will be found. {Ed 190.2}

The Bible with its precious gems of truth was not written for the scholar alone. On the contrary, it was designed for the common people; and the interpretation given by the common people, when aided by the Holy Spirit, accords best with the truth as it is in Jesus. The great truths necessary for salvation are made clear as the noonday, and none will mistake and lose their way except those who follow their own judgment instead of the plainly revealed will of God. {5T 331.2}

The knowledge of God as revealed in Christ is the knowledge that all who are saved must have. This is the knowledge that works transformation of character. Received into the life, it will re-create the soul in the image of Christ. This is the knowledge that God invites His children to receive, beside which all else is vanity and nothingness. {AA 475.1}

There may be some things here that we do not understand. Some things in the Bible may appear to us mysterious, because they are beyond our finite comprehension. But as our Saviour

leads us by the living waters, He will make clear to our minds that which was not before clearly understood. {Mar 317.7}

The salvation of the human race has ever been the object of the councils of heaven. The covenant of mercy was made before the foundation of the world. It has existed from all eternity, and is called the everlasting covenant. So surely as there never was a time when God was not, so surely there never was a moment when it was not the delight of the eternal mind to manifest His grace to humanity. {AG 130.2}

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. Beginning with the first gospel promise, and coming down through the patriarchal and Jewish ages, and even to the present time, there has been a gradual unfolding of the purposes of God in the plan of redemption. . . . 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. The principles of His government are the same. {AG 130.4}

By His life and His death, Christ has achieved even more than recovery from the ruin wrought through sin. It was Satan's purpose to bring about an eternal separation between God and man; but in Christ we become more closely united to God than if we had never fallen. In taking our nature, the Saviour has bound Himself to humanity by a tie that is never to be broken. Through the eternal ages He is linked with us. "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son." John 3:16. He gave Him not only to bear our sins, and to die as our sacrifice; He gave Him to the fallen race. To assure us of His immutable counsel of peace, God gave His only-begotten Son to become one of the human family, forever to retain His human nature. This is the pledge that God will fulfill His word. "Unto *us* a child is born, unto *us* a son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder." God has adopted human nature in the person of His Son, and has carried the same into the highest heaven. It is the "Son of man" who shares the throne of the universe. It is the "Son of man" whose name shall be called, "Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." Isaiah 9:6. The I AM is the Daysman between God and humanity, laying His hand upon both. He who is "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners," is not ashamed to call us brethren. Hebrews 7:26; 2:11. In Christ the family of earth and the family of heaven are bound together. Christ glorified is our brother. Heaven is enshrined in humanity, and humanity is enfolded in the bosom of Infinite Love. {DA 25.3}

Through Christ's redeeming work the government of God stands justified. The Omnipotent One is made known as the God of love. Satan's charges are refuted, and his character unveiled. Rebellion can never again arise. Sin can never again enter the universe. Through eternal ages all

are secure from apostasy. By love's self-sacrifice, the inhabitants of earth and heaven are bound to their Creator in bonds of indissoluble union. {DA 26.2}

God's ideal for His children is higher than the highest human thought can reach. "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." This command is a promise. The plan of redemption contemplates our complete recovery from the power of Satan. Christ always separates the contrite soul from sin. He came to destroy the works of the devil, and He has made provision that the Holy Spirit shall be imparted to every repentant soul, to keep him from sinning. {DA 311.2}

Looking upon man, God saw his desperate rebellion, and He devised a remedy. Christ was His gift to the world for man's reconciliation. The Son of God was appointed to come to this earth to take humanity and by His own example to be a great educating power among men. His experience in man's behalf was to enable men to resist Satan's power. He came to mold character and to give mental power, to shed abroad the beams of true education, that the true aim of life might not be lost sight of. The sons of men had had a practical knowledge of evil; Christ came to the world to show them that He had planted for them the tree of life, the leaves of which are for the healing of the nations. {CT 33.3}

The study of God's word is continually expanding the mind and strengthening the intellect. There is nothing that will so refine and elevate the character, and give vigor to every faculty, as the continual exercise of the mind to grasp and comprehend weighty and important truths. {4T 545.3}

God does not desire you to remain novices. He needs in His work everything that you can gain here in the lines of mental culture and clear discernment. He desires to have you reach the very highest round of the ladder, and then step off it into the kingdom of God. {SD 330.4}

The Lord desires you to understand the position you occupy as sons and daughters of the Most High, children of the heavenly King. {SD 330.5}

"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness." The sense of unworthiness will lead the heart to hunger and thirst for righteousness, and this desire will not be disappointed. Those who make room in their hearts for Jesus will realize His love. All who long to bear the likeness of the character of God shall be satisfied. The Holy Spirit never leaves unassisted the soul who is looking unto Jesus. He takes of the things of Christ and shows them unto him. If the eye is kept fixed on Christ, the work of the Spirit ceases not until the soul is conformed to His image. The pure element of love will expand the soul, giving it a capacity for higher attainments, for increased knowledge of heavenly things, so that it will not rest short of the fullness. "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled." {DA 302.1}

God takes men as they are, and educates them for His service, if they will yield themselves to Him. The Spirit of God, received into the soul, will quicken all its faculties. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the mind that is devoted unreservedly to God develops harmoniously, and is strengthened to comprehend and fulfill the requirements of God. The weak, vacillating character becomes changed to one of strength and steadfastness. Continual devotion establishes so close a relation between Jesus and His disciple that the Christian becomes like Him in mind and character. Through a connection with Christ he will have clearer and broader views. His discernment will be more penetrative, his judgment better balanced. He who longs to be of service to Christ is so quickened by the life-giving power of the Sun of Righteousness that he is enabled to bear much fruit to the glory of God. {DA 251.1}

By beholding we are to become changed; and as we meditate upon the perfections of the divine Model, we shall desire to become wholly transformed, and renewed in the image of His purity. It is by faith in the Son of God that transformation takes place in the character, and the child of wrath becomes the child of God. He passes from death unto life; he becomes spiritual and discerns spiritual things. The wisdom of God enlightens his mind, and he beholds wondrous things out of His law. As a man is converted by the truth, the work of transformation of character goes on. He has an increased measure of understanding. In becoming a man of obedience to God, he has the mind of Christ, and the will of God becomes his will. {1SM 338.1}

He who places himself unreservedly under the guidance of the Spirit of God, will find that his mind expands and develops. He obtains an education in the service of God which is not one-sided and deficient, developing a one-sided character, but one which results in symmetry and completeness. Weaknesses that have been manifested in a vacillating will and powerless character, are overcome, for continual devotion and piety bring the man in such close relation to Christ that he has the mind of Christ. He is one with Christ, having soundness and strength of principle. His perception is clear, and he manifests that wisdom which comes from God. {1SM 338.2}

As we near the time when principalities and powers and spiritual wickedness in high places will be brought into warfare against the truth, when the deceiving power of Satan will be so great that if it were possible he will deceive the very elect, we must have our discernment sharpened by divine enlightenment, that we may know the Spirit that is of God, that we may not be ignorant of Satan's devices. {MR311 49.1}