

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

Third Quarter 2017: *The Gospel in Galatians*

Lesson 14 “Boasting in the Cross”

Read for this week’s study

Galatians 6:11–18; Romans 6:1–6, 12:1–8; 2 Corinthians 4:10, 5:17, 11:23–29.

Memory Text

“But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world I have been crucified to me, and I to the world” (Galatians 6:14, ESV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. Paul’s Own Hand
- III. Boasting in the Flesh
- IV. Boasting in the Cross (*Gal. 6:14*)
- V. A New Creation
- VI. Final Remarks (*Gal. 6:16–18*)
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Daniel Duda

1. “The words of Jeremiah could just as easily apply to the Galatians as they did to those in Jeremiah’s day: ‘Thus saith the LORD, let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD’ (Jeremiah 9:23, 24).” (Sabbath afternoon)
2. “Nowhere do our ‘glorious’ human wisdom, our riches, and our might appear more clearly in all their futility and vanity than before the Cross of Christ—the focus of Paul’s letter to his erring flock in Galatia.” (Sabbath afternoon)
3. What percentage of the mail you receive do you consider “junk mail”? Why is a personal touch so important in correspondence? How does Paul add his personal touch to the letter to the Galatians?
4. The cross is the cause of a great division not only between the world and the church but also between those in the church who are willing to face persecution and those

who are not. Paul shows that the only marks on his body that matter are the wounds that he has suffered because of his allegiance to Jesus (v. 17), not the circumciser's knife.—What application do you see here for those living in a) the Western world? b) the two-thirds world?

5. Paul argues that circumcision makes sense only if one is willing to keep the whole law. But the “agitators” are only interested in one thing – circumcision. They make a shallow and trivial decision by choosing only one part of the law.
6. Is it possible in our day in a similar way to lose perspective and choose just one part of the message/Christianity/Adventism and that part becomes an obsession and the whole truth? Heresy is seldom an outright lie. Most often it is just truth that is not balanced!
7. New Testament theologian James Dunn says that the first century Judaism used three things as “boundary markers”: Sabbath, circumcision, and unclean food laws. What are the “boundary markers” that some people use today to define who belongs to God's people – concentrating on only one part and mostly ignoring the rest?
8. In the conclusion of his letter, Paul connects the problems in Galatia with the wider issues of the whole Bible story. He wants to lift the minds and hearts of his readers beyond the details of campaigns and plots in the early church to what God is trying to accomplish with the wider cosmos. How is the death and resurrection of Jesus connected with what God is trying to achieve in his cosmos?
9. Through Jesus, God has unleashed upon the world his new creation. Through the gospel of Jesus, he invites all to share equally in its blessings, its present reality, and its future promises. Those who respond in faith belong to the “God of Israel” (v. 16). Thus they are after all: Abraham's family (ch. 3), Isaac's family rather than Ishmael's family (ch. 4), fulfilling the whole law by loving one another (ch. 5). What does it mean to be God's chosen people today?
10. How can we be God's light to this world, be part of God's new creation, to share God's peace and mercy and to bring it to this world?
11. Paul ends his letter to the Galatians the way he started – with grace. Like Paul's apostleship (ch. 1), the gospel does not come from human sources, or inventions. Being part of God's people is not defined by human categories. Grace reaches out and embraces the whole world, bringing the presence and joy of the Spirit. The Church and the world still need the message of Galatians, the message of grace.
12. What does the Seventh-day Adventist Church need to do to become known as the “grace people”?

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

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

But to some of us, the cross is great good news. Yes it is true that sinners will die, but we have no need to be afraid of God; and he died to prove it. And this message has great power to win to repentance and to trust. Paul was so proud of this good news. Look at his understanding of it in 1 Corinthians 1:17, 18:

For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel [what is the Gospel, the good news, about?]. And not with eloquent wisdom lest the cross of Christ [that's the Gospel], be emptied of its power [this good news has great power]. For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. (RSV)

Now compare with that Romans 1:16, that very famous righteousness by faith verse: "For I am not ashamed of the Gospel [this good news]: it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith . . . [wherein lies the power?] for in it the righteousness of God is revealed." (RSV)

The good news is that God is not the unrighteous kind of person his enemies have made him out to be. And it's so wonderful to see all through the Bible that even before the cross God had good friends who trusted him always to do the right thing, the merciful thing, and they were proud to know him and proud to speak about him to others. Look at Jeremiah 9:24: "Let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight, declares the Lord." (NIV)

Jeremiah was able to repeat those words with feeling long before the cross. But now such confidence in God has been confirmed by the way Jesus suffered and died. And among God's friends, whether angels or men, this meaning of the cross will have power to hold God's great family together in loyalty and in peace forever.

Lou: You're saying, if I hear you correctly Graham, that Jesus died primarily to say something about God, to make the truth about God clear to us. But what about the appeal that I can remember from a little child, a very moving appeal, that Jesus died for you? Jesus died for me. And the songs that we sing; and that wonderful thought that if I had been the only one who had responded, Jesus would have come all the way and gone through it all just for me! How do you bring that together?

Graham: I still believe in that, and I think God would want us to rejoice in that. And I think it's understandable that as beginners, perhaps, we tend to be preoccupied with our own salvation and what God has done for me, and you, and others. But as one learns to read the Bible as a

whole and get this larger view of the whole great controversy, one realizes that the all important thing is the settling of these issues in the great controversy. It's the establishing of the truth that would confirm the peace of the universe for all eternity.

Lou: Are you saying then that I ought to kind of get over this? Is it childish for me to feel so moved about Jesus dying for me?

Graham: Fortunately, what God says about himself is what makes it worthwhile being saved. Until God has established the fact that he is not the kind of person his enemies have made him out to be, there will be no security. We'll be saved in a universe of conflict. So first this must be settled. But fortunately, it includes you and me.

Lou: It's not one or the other.

Graham: It isn't one or the other. That's exactly right.

Lou: It's that the good news about what Jesus has done for me is in this larger setting.

Graham: In fact, the way he has sought to win you and me is the way in which he has won the war. So we can't leave one or the other out. It's the same task, the same mission. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *Conversations About God*, #8 with Lou Venden, "The Most Costly and Convincing Evidence" recorded March, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link:*

<http://pkp.cc/8MMCAG>

By the life that he lived and the unique and awful way in which he died, Jesus demonstrated the righteousness of our God and answered any questions, and met any accusations leveled against him. Paul said he was proud to be a bearer of this good news. More than that, he knew what it was all about. Look, for example, at 1 Corinthians 1:17, 18 for the substance of his good news.

Note how he combines the good news with Christ's death, with power. Now put with that the famous Romans 1:16, 17: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel [the good news], it is the power of God for salvation. . . . For in it [something is revealed] the righteousness of our God" (RSV).

Now notice how the good news, power, God's righteousness, and the cross are all tied together. And there's nothing new about this. This is the everlasting good news. Or, to pick just one place in the Old Testament, Jeremiah 9:24: "Let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight, declares the Lord" (NIV).

Now combine them all together. The good news is about God. It's about his righteousness. It cost the death of Christ to prove it. This good news about God's righteousness has great power to move people, if they're willing to listen, to win them back to repentance and faith. It has

great power because it is the truth. It has great power because it is such good news. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #16, “God’s last pleading with His Children” recorded May, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/16MMCAG>*

Lou: It’s a popular phrase, isn’t it? “I’m a born-again Christian.” What does that mean?

Graham: Nicodemus even asked what it meant. And Jesus said, “That should be pretty clear, if you’ve read the fifty-first Psalm and other places.” To be changed from a rebel to someone who can be trusted, to be changed from a stubborn person (who is unwilling to listen), to someone who loves, trusts, and admires God and doesn’t want to miss a single word—that is like being born all over again. And that’s why Jesus used such a dramatic picture.

Now, that’s also the meaning of being converted. You know, you turn around and go the other way like a convertible changes its top on a car. So, to be converted means to turn around and go the other way. Now I’m stubborn and rebellious—now I’m humbly willing to listen, love, trust, and admire. And one picture of this change is being born again. I think that Jesus was chiding Nicodemus for being a little slow to pick up something that he should have known. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #3 with Lou Venden, “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>*

Now he would speak to the truth about God in the great controversy. It was a larger, not a smaller message; a broader rather than a narrower one. It’s just that he was reoriented now. He would always be talking about the truth, revealed by Jesus Christ and in Jesus Christ. “By which the world has been crucified to me and I to the world. For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation.” The plan of salvation does not just offer forgiveness, but it offers a new creation. And now this is a very important verse for us to understand, that Heaven is not going to be peopled by pardoned criminals, but with newly created saints. There has got to be a change there, a new heart and a right spirit. I think that’s a most important statement. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio presentation, Galatians, #5, recorded March, 1978, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/5MMGALATIANS66>*

Further Study with Ellen White

All should be intelligent in regard to the agency by which the soul is destroyed. It is not because of any decree that God has sent out against man. He does not make man spiritually blind. God gives sufficient light and evidence to enable man to distinguish truth from error. But He does not force man to receive truth. He leaves him free to choose the good or to choose the evil. If man resists evidence that is sufficient to guide his judgment in the right direction, and chooses evil once, he will do this more readily the second time. The third time he will still more eagerly withdraw himself from God and choose to stand on the side of Satan. And in this course he will continue until he is confirmed in evil, and believes the lie he has cherished as truth. His resistance has produced its harvest (MS 126, 1901). {6BC 1112.5}

The Holy Spirit comes to the soul as a Comforter. By the transforming agency of His grace, the image of God is reproduced in the disciple; he becomes a new creature. Love takes the place of hatred, and the heart receives the divine similitude. This is what it means to live “by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” This is eating the Bread that comes down from heaven. {DA 391.1}

Through all time this Book is to stand as a revelation of Jehovah. To human beings the divine oracles have been committed to be the power of God. The truths of the Word of God are not mere sentiment, but the utterances of the Most High. He who makes these truths a part of his life becomes in every sense a new creature. He is not given new mental powers, but the darkness that through ignorance and sin have clouded the understanding is removed.—RH, Nov 10, 1904. {1MCP 98.2}