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The Fivefold Appeal to Be Justified By Faith Alone

Study 5: Galatians 5:7-12

—Teacher's Outline and Study Bible™

<p>1. Obey the truth, for the Christian life is a race</p> <p>2. Obey the truth, for God does not call you to error</p> <p>3. Obey the truth, for a little untruth corrupts the whole</p> <p>4. Obey the truth, for the minister of God has confidence in you</p>	<p>E. Appeal Five: Obey the Truth, 5:7-12</p> <p>7 Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?</p> <p>8 This persuasion cometh not of him that calleth you.</p> <p>9 A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.</p> <p>10 I have confidence in you through</p>	<p>the Lord, that ye will be none otherwise minded: but he that troubleth you shall bear his judgment, whosoever he be.</p> <p>11 And I, brethren, If I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offence of the cross ceased.</p> <p>12 I would they were even cut off which trouble you.</p>	<p>5. Obey the truth, for false teachers will be judged</p> <p>a. Because they cause trouble</p> <p>b. Because they spread falsehood about the true minister</p> <p>c. Because they stumble over the cross</p> <p>d. Because they deserve condemnation</p>
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Section IV

THE FIVEFOLD APPEAL TO BE JUSTIFIED BY FAITH ALONE

Galatians 4:8–5:12

Study 5: APPEAL FIVE: OBEY THE TRUTH

Text: Galatians 5:7-12

Aim: To stop backsliding: obey the truth.

Memory Verse:

“Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?” (Gal. 5:7).

INTRODUCTION:

A constant frustration for sailboat owners is barnacles. These tiny sea creatures attach themselves to the hull of the boat. For the sailor who wants to keep his boat in “shipshape” condition, the barnacles must be removed.

If the Christian believer wants to be in the best shape, he too must be free of worldly attachments. How is this done? He must stop backsliding by scraping away the barnacles of sin until he sees the surface of the truth. Paul gives us specific instructions on how to do this needful chore.

The Galatian churches had backslidden. They were turning away from the truth, from Jesus Christ Himself. In this passage, Paul makes one last appeal to them: obey the truth. The only hope for the backslider is to turn back to Christ and obey the truth.

OUTLINE:

1. Obey the truth, for the Christian life is a race (v.7).
2. Obey the truth, for God does not call you to error (v.8).
3. Obey the truth, for a little untruth corrupts the whole (v.9).
4. Obey the truth, for the minister of God has confidence in you (v.10).
5. Obey the truth, for false teachers will be judged (vv.10-12).

1. OBEY THE TRUTH, FOR THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS A RACE (v.7).

The phrase you did run well is a picture of athletes running in a race.

1. The Galatians had been running and running well. When they first heard the gospel, they believed...

- in God's love—that God loved the world so much that He sent His Son into the world to save it.
- in the righteousness of Christ—that Jesus Christ lived a perfect and righteous life, securing righteousness for them.
- in the death of Christ—that Jesus Christ died for their sins—that He actually bore the punishment for their transgressions.

As stated, the Galatians had been running the Christian race well. Having believed in Christ, they had been living for Christ: living clean and pure lives and bearing testimony for Him. They had been worshipping and serving Him with zeal. They had been living what they were professing. There had been no false profession about them: no counterfeit and no hypocrisy. They had not been Sunday only Christians; they had been busy for Christ seven days a week, and people from all over the city were coming to know Christ.

But note: some person had stepped in and had begun to hinder their running the Christian race. We know from the previous four chapters that some false teachers had arisen in the churches of Galatia. However, the present reference is to a single individual. Apparently one person had taken charge, becoming a ringleader of the trouble and false teaching. The word "hinder" means to cut in, to edge in, to interfere, to obstruct. The picture is still that of the running track. While the Galatians had been running the Christian race, some had edged in on them and begun to hinder and interfere with their running. They were no longer obeying the truth. They were now trying to approach God by some way other than Christ. They were now thinking. . .

- that God accepted them because they had been ritualized: circumcised and baptized.
- that God accepted them because they tried to keep the law: tried to be as good as they could and did good deeds as opportunity arose.
- that God approved them because they were faithful to the church: its rituals, ceremonies, services, rules, and regulations.

They were no longer running well. They had allowed some false teacher to hinder them and to turn them from the truth. They had a need to think about the matter, a desperate need...

- to think about the race they had been running.
- to think about who it was that was now hindering their running.

"Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain" (1 Co.9:24).

"Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us" (Heb.12:1).

ILLUSTRATION:

Has anyone tried to hinder you in your spiritual race? Listen to this illustration about a little boy who knew how to keep on course. Dennis wasn't a big fellow, but as he played Little League Baseball, his knowledge of the game made up for any lack of size. On a particular summer day he swung at the ball with all his might, and to his amazement, the ball rocketed off his bat in the general direction of left field.

Off he ran! As he rounded first base, his head was down. In doing so, he failed to see whether or not the ball had landed in fair or foul territory. Before he arrived at second base, the second baseman on the other team flagged Dennis down and said, "Go back. It was a foul ball."

Without hesitation, Dennis ignored the second baseman and slid safely into second base. The umpire, whose opinion mattered the most, signaled that the ball was fair.

What is the lesson for us here? Keep on running until the Umpire of our souls, the Lord Jesus Christ, tells us to go back. We need to ignore any other voice that would hinder our running ahead to the next base.

Fair or foul? Fair ball—keep on running to the Lord. In Him, you'll always be called safe!

QUESTIONS:

1. What types of things represent the "second basemen" in your life? Who or what hinders you from being faithful in your Christian race?
2. How do you feel when you have listened to the advice of someone who hinders you in your spiritual race? What could you do differently the next time?
3. Why do you fail to obey the truth? What changes do you need to make to become more faithful?

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2. OBEY THE TRUTH, FOR GOD DOES NOT CALL YOU TO ERROR (v.8).

Note how concise and forceful this statement is; it is direct and to the point: "This persuasion does not come from him who calls you!" The Greek word is *persuasion*. Any persuasion, any position, any teaching that leads away from the truth of Jesus Christ is not of God. God and God alone determines how He can be approached, and He has determined it. A person approaches Him through the righteousness and death of His Son Jesus Christ. There is no other way to be justified and saved other than by His Son. There is absolutely no other way to approach God. Therefore, any person who teaches otherwise is teaching a false doctrine; the person's persuasion or teaching is not the persuasion of God.

"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

QUESTIONS:

1. Who tends to be easily persuaded by false doctrines? Why?
2. How can you know the truth? What can you do to protect yourself from false teachers?
3. Has your knowledge of the truth helped you to resist temptation? If you had not known the truth, what would have been the result?

3. OBEY THE TRUTH, FOR A LITTLE UNTRUTH CORRUPTS THE WHOLE (v.9).

Leaven stands for evil and corruption, fermentation and infection. It takes only a little leaven to permeate and influence the whole lump of dough. So it is with false teachers. (Remember, Paul was referring only to the ringleader in this present passage.) One false teacher can inject his false teaching into the church, and it will soon permeate and influence the whole church. This is what Paul and Scripture are proclaiming. If the Galatians did not root out the false teaching, the whole church would soon be corrupted and the truth would be destroyed. Jesus Christ would no longer be the focus of attention. The church and its people would be focusing upon their rituals, ceremonies, and good works instead of upon Christ.

They would be trying to approach God through their own goodness and merit. Jesus Christ would soon be placed on the back burner, demphasized, and lost sight of by many. His prominence and the absolute necessity of His righteousness and death would be diminished and downplayed. This always happens when false teaching is allowed in a church. The only answer to false teaching is what has been stated: root it out.

"Then understood they how that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees" (Mt.16:12).

"Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ" (Col.2:8).

ILLUSTRATION:

Is there any way you can avoid the corruption that falsehood brings to your culture?

There once was an "old fashioned" prophet who came to a large city. His agenda was pretty simple, "Repent or perish!" At first glance, many of the city's residents listened to his sermons. But after a few days, they went back to doing what they wanted to do. Listening to this prophet was not on their list of things to do.

The prophet did not stop preaching. Every day he would stand in the market place and preach to those within the sound of his voice. A shopkeeper approached the prophet and asked, "Why are you still preaching? No one is paying any attention to you." The prophet narrowed his eyes and responded, "I'm preaching so their hardness to the gospel will not change me!"

Are you allowing a little evil into your life each day? Or do you bind yourself to God so closely that it has no room to get in? Don't compromise and allow the leaven of the world to water down the gospel. Keep on preaching the truth. The more you speak it and hear it, the more you will live like a Christian believer ought to live.

QUESTIONS:

1. What secret sins do you need to confess to the Lord right now? Remember, He wants to cleanse you and forgive you (1 Jn.1:9).
2. We cannot hide our sins from God. Why do some people think they can fool God?
3. What kind of advice would you give to someone like the above illustration describes?

4. OBEY THE TRUTH, FOR THE MINISTER OF GOD HAS CONFIDENCE IN YOU (v.10).

What an amazing statement! When you think about all that has been written in the book of Galatians (the terrible attacks against Paul himself and the seriousness of the false teaching that had threatened the church), Paul's confidence in the Galatians is shocking.

However, note exactly what he said: his confidence is "through the Lord"; that is, the Galatians could overcome the false teaching only through the Lord. Through Christ they could conquer the situation and come out victorious. In fact, Paul had confidence that the churches would heed his warnings and turn back to the Lord and begin to obey the truth.

APPLICATION:

The only way false teaching or any other difficulty in the church can be handled is "through the Lord."

"Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever" (Jude 24-25).

QUESTIONS:

1. Paul had an amazing confidence in the Galatian's ability to do what was right. What was the secret to his confidence? Do you have the same confidence in other Christians that you know? Why or why not?
2. Is it easier for you to confront someone with the truth or easier to ignore people who are being deceived? Why?
3. What can you do to build your minister's confidence in you? What can any Christian believer do to build confidence in one another?

5. OBEY THE TRUTH, FOR FALSE TEACHERS WILL BE JUDGED (vv.10-12).

The fact is stated in no uncertain terms: the false teacher who was troubling the church would bear the judgment of God. Paul gave four reasons why false teachers will be judged.

1. False teachers shall be judged because they trouble the church and its believers. By trouble is meant to unsettle and disturb. The false teachers were loosening the cords of faith in Christ, disturbing the security and lives of the believers and the ministry of the churches. They were misleading believers and defiling the church of God with false teaching.

“If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are” (1 Co.3:17).

2. False teachers shall be judged because they spread falsehood about the minister of Christ. Paul did not preach that ritual was necessary for salvation (circumcision, baptism, church membership, etc.); but the false teachers were saying that he did. However, the fact that Paul did not preach circumcision was the main reason the Jews persecuted him so much. That is the reason Paul simply asks: Why am I persecuted by the Jews so much if I preach salvation by ritual (circumcision, baptism, church membership, etc.)?

The point is this: the false teachers had attacked Paul, attempting to discredit him and his ministry among the believers. And one thing God does not tolerate is an attack on His anointed.

“Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand” (Rom. 14:4).

3. False teachers shall be judged because they are offended by the cross. Paul preached the cross, that a person was justified and acceptable to God only by the cross of Jesus Christ. The false teachers (Judaizers) were offended by this. The word “offense” means stumbling or staggering. It was the cross that had caused the false teachers to stumble in their approach to God. They had taught that the death of Jesus Christ was not enough to make a person acceptable to God. The cross was not sufficient by itself; more was needed. A person had to be ritualized (circumcised, baptized) and subject himself to the law of God and keep all the

rituals, ceremonies, and rules of the church. If he did, then he was a true Christian.

Salvation by works and law, of course, is false. Salvation is through God's Son, Jesus Christ, and through Him alone. Scripture is clear: anyone who follows or teaches any other salvation shall be severely judged by God.

4. False teachers shall be judged because they deserve condemnation. Paul is gripped with intense emotion here: he wishes the false teachers would just go and castrate themselves—cut themselves completely off. This is a repulsive thought to some and rightly so, for false teaching is the most serious offense. Nothing surpasses it, in particular when it adds or takes away from the cross of Christ. God gave His Son to die for men, and if men miss Him, they miss the righteousness necessary to live in God's presence. There is no other righteousness than the righteousness of Jesus Christ, and there is no other death that can stand as the Ideal substitute for man's death—not to God. God will not accept any death other than Christ's death—not to cover the death of man. If a man wishes to approach God, he must come through the cross, through the death of Jesus Christ. God accepts no other way. Therefore, if a person takes any other way to God, it would be best if he just went ahead and went all the way with whatever he teaches—better if he just went all the way and cut himself off and got out of the way—much better than to continue destroying the people of God.

The point is this: a false teacher deserves to be judged. There is no punishment too good for him. As stated above, “He shall bear his judgment.”

“For the son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works” (Mt.16:27).

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad” (2 Co.5:10).

QUESTIONS:

1. What consequences do false teachers face?
2. Some would say that God is too harsh in His dealing with false teachers. Would you agree or disagree? Why?
3. What would happen to your church if a false teacher had an opportunity to teach your people?

SUMMARY:

Are you in the best shape you can be in your Christian life? Are the barnacles of sin, of worldly attachments, scraped away? If you are having a difficult time, remember the instructions given on how to become “ship-shape”:

1. Obey the truth because the Christian life is a race.
2. Obey the truth because God called you to freedom.

3. Obey the truth because a little untruth corrupts the whole.
4. Obey the truth because of the confidence others have in you.
5. Obey the truth because false teachers will be judged.

1. The most important thing that I learned from this lesson was:
2. The area that I need to work on the most is:
3. I can apply this lesson to my life by:
4. Closing Statement of Commitment

PERSONAL JOURNAL NOTES (Reflection & Response)

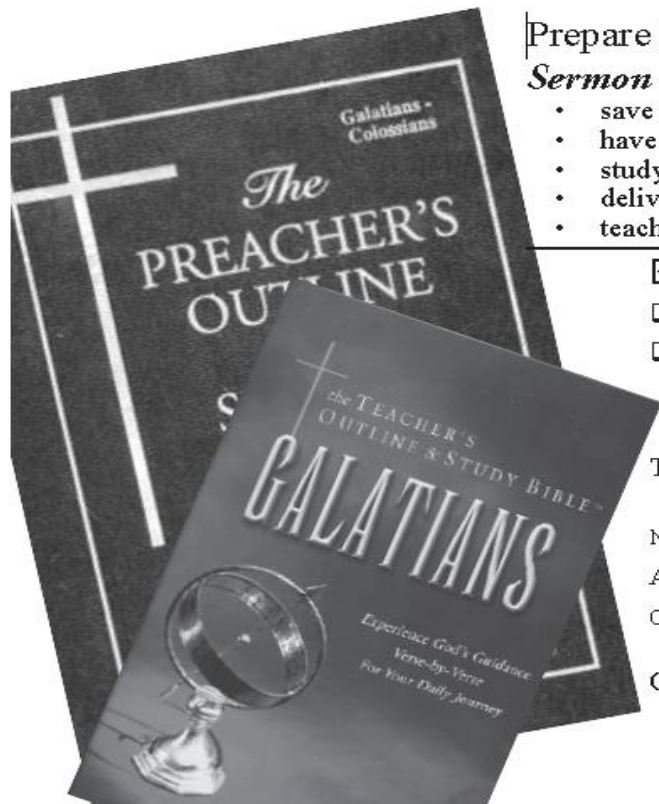
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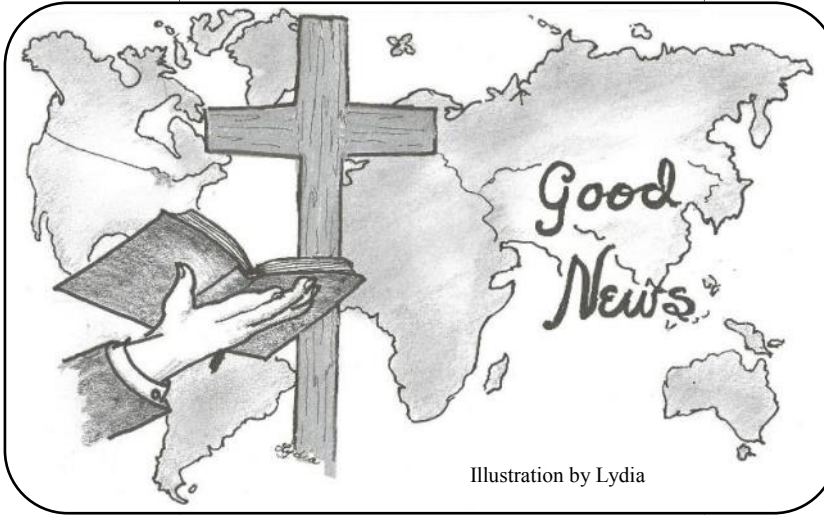
“The Kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.”

This was Jesus’ message in Luke 10 to the seventy disciples as He sent them out: heal the sick and preach the good news. Those few words were not hard to remember. Nothing about repentance or salvation was said at this time. Thus began the sending of groups of people to speak the gospel to those outside of their community.

I recall when I first heard what God was doing in foreign lands. Missionaries told of things taking place among those not living in North America. We had never imagined such things. One outstanding story described how people gathered for worship in China. Since China is a Communist country, anything to do with religion was frowned upon. It was quite dangerous to be a believer. It was common for those who taught and preached to be arrested, disappear, and never be heard from again. Arranging Sunday services was dangerous, as the authorities merely waited until believers assembled, and then swooped in and arrested them. The Christians began to pray and something very unusual happened. Believers would hear from the Holy Spirit, telling them to be at Mr. K’s house or some other place at 6:00 AM. This completely baffled the authorities as the place and time was constantly changing. I asked myself, does God still do that?

We hear many stories of people in Islamic countries meeting Jesus in a dream. Their lives are changed so

dramatically there is no doubt that they have met the real Jesus. Life often becomes difficult after such an event, but they persevere. God is on the move, and I want to be part of it.



Since I was young I have heard many such missionary stories. I want to be part of a church that has a vision for reaching out. It’s about God changing lives.

Here in North America we face very little opposition, but things are changing. It seems our people are uncertain about what we are to say or of what God will do in our behalf. We are not convinced of the power in the name of Jesus Christ. I have heard people say, “We have so much work to do to get our own lives in order that you can’t expect us to serve.” Well, if the good news about Jesus is doing things to get right with God, then indeed this expression is valid. But the gospel is not about what we do, but what has been done for us. Sure, works will follow, but God has the plan, not us. First, people will need to hear and believe as Romans 10: 13-15 states:

For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. ¹⁴How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not

heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? ¹⁵And how shall they preach, except they be sent? As it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!

Many people speak of loved ones who have died as being in heaven. But we know heaven is not an automatic destination for everyone. Sin is in the way. Sin leads to death as Romans 6:23 states. First we need to know that sin makes heaven impossible to inherit. Sin must be dealt with. We cannot vote people into or

out of heaven, even with a 100% vote. No church has such power. God sets the standard, and we cannot get around it. Therefore the human race has a severe problem. No one is perfect; we inherited a sin nature from our fathers. Every nation on earth has this problem.

When God spoke to Abraham, he said that all nations will be blessed by his offspring. See Genesis 22. In the days of Jesus, the gospel was first proclaimed to Jewish people only. No one outside was yet invited take part in the new covenant. Only when the apostle Peter preached the fairly short message to Cornelius and his family and friends did the church expand to include non-Jewish people. Cornelius was Roman, and Jews were not supposed to even enter Gentile houses. The wall that kept Gentiles out was now broken down. And I am glad it was. Otherwise none of you reading this would have a chance of getting into heaven. What God has called clean, do not call unclean.

—the end

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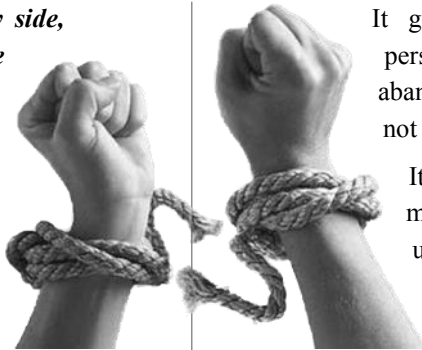
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Crushed Down, But Not Destroyed

—Lynn Miller

We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body (2 Corinthians 4:8-10).



It goes on to say, "I am persecuted, but not abandoned, crushed down but not destroyed..."

It really spoke to me this morning. People may do to us what they want, but we are not to remain victims. People can strike us, smite us, curse us, and try to stop us. They can hurt us, push us, and knock us down, but they can't keep us there! They can't destroy us.

Paul says, "I will not fear what man can do to me." Jesus said we should not fear man who can destroy our bodies, but should fear God who is able to destroy both body and soul in hell.

The less we focus on humans and their opinions of us, and the more we trust our God, the better off we will be. Humans

cannot do lasting damage unless we let them. We may be "crushed down but not destroyed," as the song says. No one can destroy us.

Further, opposition is good for us. It strengthens us; it gives us wisdom and compassion for others.


Another thing is this: though they may try, no one can silence us unless we allow them to. I am not saying that we shouldn't be silent sometimes. We should often be more silent than we are. We do not need to promote ourselves, but if someone is trying to take our voice, it is up to us to keep it.

When we see who we are IN CHRIST, we no longer feel threatened by others. Those who try to destroy us are humans also, with hopes, dreams, goals, worries, fears, and struggles.

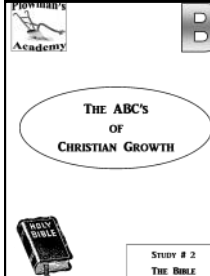
Don't accept who they say you are. Find out who God says you are. After all, He made you! —End

This morning I went to our school for Grandparent's Day since Mark's parents (my in-laws) were able to come from Indiana to be with our school-age children. During worship we sang the song, "I'm Trading My Sorrows." It says, "I'm trading my sorrows, I'm trading my shame. . . . I'm trading my sickness, I'm trading my pain, and I'm layin' them down for the joy of the Lord."

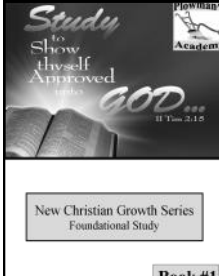
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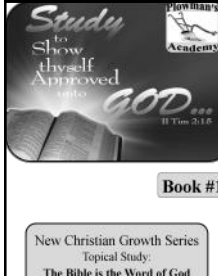
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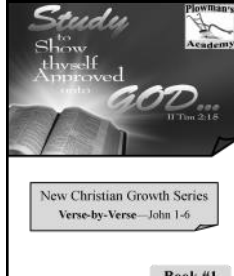
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4. New Christian Growth Verse-by-Verse Study

When first awakened to a sense of sin, Luther became unspeakably troubled. Once and again deep anguish took hold of his soul, and it seemed as if he would sink under it. On one occasion he had been conversing with a friend upon the things of God. No sooner had the conversation ended, than the truths of which they had been speaking struck home with awful power to the tossed soul of Luther. He left the room and sought the nearest chamber to give vent to the feelings of his bursting heart. He threw himself up on the bed and prayed aloud in agony; repeating over and over again these words of the apostle, "He hath shut them all up in unbelief, that He might have mercy upon all" (Rom. 11:32).

Luther now began to try to make himself holy. He fasted for days together. He shut himself up alone in his cold cell. He passed many nights, sometimes for weeks, without sleep. He read, he studied, he prayed, he wept, he watched, he strove, but all in vain! He found himself as far from holiness and peace as ever! If ever anyone could have gained heaven by his own merits, Luther would have gained it. To those around him, he seemed the holiest man alive. But the light of the law showed him that within all was vile. His soul cried out for rest, but he found it not, for he was seeking it not in God's way, but in a way of his own. He wanted to be sure that his sins were forgiven him, for he felt that until he knew this, he could not have peace. But his fear increased upon him, and he knew not what to do, nor which way to turn. He saw everything that he thought and did to be sin, and how could he rest until he knew that all was forgiven! His friends told him to do good works and that would satisfy the justice of God. Miserable comforters!

"What good works," said he, "can proceed out of a heart like mine; how can I, with works like these, stand before a holy Judge." The terrors of the fiery law compassed him about and consumed his soul. His "sore ran in the night and ceased not." He saw nothing in God but the angry Judge. He had not yet learned the riches of His grace through Jesus Christ. His bodily health gave way. "A wounded spirit, who can bear." He wasted away. He became thin and pale. His eyes, which were

peculiarly bright, looked wild with despair; and death seemed just at hand. In this state he was visited by an old priest. His name was Staupitz. He pitied the dying monk, and all the more so when he was told the cause of his suffering, for he had himself passed through the same conflict. But he had found the peace of Christ in his soul, and was therefore well fitted to give counsel to Luther.



"It is in vain," said Luther to him, "that I make promises to God; sin is always too strong for me."

"Oh, my friend," said Staupitz, "I have often made vows myself, but I never could keep them; I now make no more vows; for if God will not be merciful to me for Christ's sake, I cannot stand before Him with all my vows and works."

Luther made known to him all his fears. He spoke of God's justice, God's holiness, God's sovereign majesty. How could he stand before such a God? "Why," said his aged friend, "do you distress yourself with these thoughts? Look to the wounds of Jesus, to the blood which he has shed for you; it is there that you will see the mercy of God. Cast yourself into the arms of the Savior. Trust in Him — in the righteousness of His life — in the atoning sacrifice of His death. Do not shrink away from Him. God is not against you; it is only you who are averse from God. Listen to the Son of God. He became man to assure you of the divine favor."

Still Luther was dark. He thought he had not repented properly, and asked, "How can I dare believe in the favor of God, so long as there is in me no real conversion? I must be changed before He can receive me."

He is told that there can be no real conversion so long as a man fears God as a stern judge.

"There is," said his friend, "no true repentance but that which begins in the love of God and righteousness. That which some fancy to be the end of repentance is only its beginning. If you wish to be really converted, do not try these penances. Love Him who has first loved you."

Luther listens and is glad. The day breaks, new light pours in. "Yes," said he, "it is Jesus Christ that comforts me so wonderfully by these sweet and healing words."

In order to true repentance we must love God! He had never heard this before. Taking this truth as his guide, he went to the Scriptures. He turned up all the passages which speak of

repentance and conversion; and these two words which were formerly his terror, now become precious and sweet. The passages which used to alarm him, now "seemed to run to me from all sides, to smile, to spring up and play around me. Formerly I tried to love God, but it was all force; and there was no word so bitter to me as that of repentance. Now there is none more pleasant. Oh, how blessed are all God's precepts when we read them not in books only, but in the precious wounds of the Savior."

Thus he learned that we are not forgiven because we love God, but we love God because we are forgiven. We cannot repent, we cannot love, until we have known and believed the love that God hath for us. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and gave His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10).

Still Luther's darkness at times returned. His sins again went over his soul, and hid the face of God. "Oh, my sin! My sin! My sin!" cried he, one day to his aged friend. "What would you have?" said Staupitz. "Would you like if your sin was not real? Remember, if you have only the appearance of a sinner, you must be content with the mere appearance of a Savior. But learn this, that Jesus Christ is the Savior of those who are real and great sinners, and

Continued—next page

deserving of utter condemnation.” “Look at the wounds of Christ,” said he, on another occasion, “and you will see there shining clearly the purpose of God towards men. We cannot understand God out of Christ.”

But Luther’s peace sometimes gave way, and his fears returned. He was taken ill and brought down to the gates of death. Terror again took hold on him. Death seemed full of gloom. It was a fearful thing to meet a holy God! An old monk visited him in his sickbed, and in him God gave him another comforter and guide. Sitting at his bed side he repeated this sentence of the Creed, “I believe in the forgiveness of sins.” These words, thus simply and sweetly brought to mind, were like balm to the soul of Luther. “I believe,” said he to himself, “the forgiveness of sins.” “Ah, but,” said the old man, “we are not merely to believe that there is forgiveness for David or Peter; the command of God is that we believe there is forgiveness for our own sins.”

Luther’s spirit was revived. He found on this rock a sufficient resting place, and his soul rejoiced in the forgiving love of God. Thus his weary soul found rest. He was now like a vessel that has reached its haven. No storm can reach or harm it. He was like the dove in the clefts of the rock. He was like the man who had reached the city of refuge. He found himself safe and at rest. Jehovah his righteousness was his song, and his joy. It was what he saw in Christ that gave him

hope and confidence toward God, and not what he saw in himself. It was what he knew of Christ and His righteousness that took away all fear and filled his soul with peace.

He believed and was forgiven. Nor did he reckon it presumption to count himself a forgiven soul. He gloried and rejoiced in this. He counted it one of the most grievous of all sins to doubt it. He saw that the gospel was intended to bring us forgiveness, and to assure us of it. He saw that whenever we really believe in the gospel, then that forgiveness is as completely and certainly ours as if we were already in heaven. This was the very life of Luther’s soul. It was this that made him so bold in the cause of Christ, in all his future life. He was assured of the favor of God, and that took away all fear of men.

There was one text of Scripture which seems to have been greatly blessed to him. It was very frequently on his mind during his many struggles. It was the text which Paul quotes from Habakkuk, to prove that we are justified by faith alone: “The just shall live by faith.”

Once, he was sent to Rome on some business, and he thought that good works done at Rome were better and had more merit than those done anywhere else. He was told that if he would crawl up a very long stair, called Pilate’s staircase, on his bare knees, he would acquire a great stock of

merit. With great earnestness he set himself to do this miserable penance. While he was crawling up the steps, he thought he heard a voice like thunder, saying aloud to him, “The just shall live by faith.” Immediately he started from his knees, and stopped in the middle of the ascent. The words went to his soul like the voice of God reproving him for his folly. Filled with shame, he instantly left the place. He saw that it was not by his works that he was to save himself at all, far less by works such as these — “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but by His mercy He saved us” (Titus 3:5).

At another time, he was appointed to lecture on divinity. After explaining the Psalms, he came to the Epistle to the Romans. In studying this he took great delight. He used to sit in his quiet cell for many hours with the Bible open before him, meditating on that Epistle. The seventeenth verse of the first chapter fixed his eye, and filled his whole thoughts: “The just shall live by faith.” In this he saw that there was another life than that possessed by man in general, and that this life was the fruit of faith. In the midst of much darkness these simple words were “a lamp to his feet, and a light to his path.” Clearer light soon dawned upon his soul, and through him the bright beams of the gospel shot forth upon the benighted nations of Europe. The conversion of Luther was the dawning of the Reformation. —End

The just shall live by faith.
Habakkuk 2:4

Conflicting Choices

—Lydia Chorpeneing

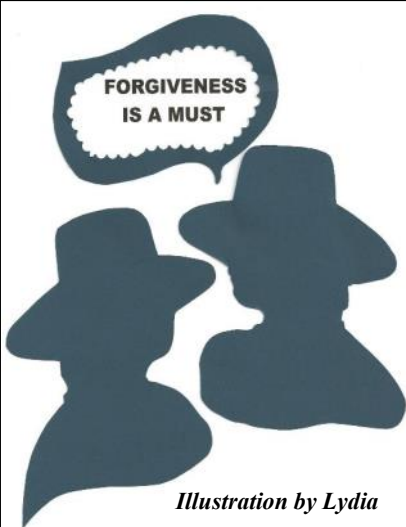


Illustration by Lydia

David and his life-long buddy, Jonas, stepped into the darkness of night as they left the singing and headed for the barn. Neither one had asked for a date as they stepped into the late winter night. Under the cover of darkness, David cleared his throat and then spoke: “I want to tell you what happened to me about a month ago. I hope you’ll understand me better than some did whom I have talked to about it.”

“Does it have to do with our church rules and regulations?” Jonas wanted to know.

“Well, you might say that, but it’s really something of a deeper and personal choice I’ve made. Do you remember when we were Christmas caroling in December?”

“I do remember, and I also remember you just turning sober all of a sudden and it was as if you lost the luster of your voice.”

“It wasn’t that I lost my voice. It was rather that it seemed like I heard another voice inside of me calling me to come to adore Christ the Lord. I can’t really explain it, but I just couldn’t shake the call, and so I started reading my New Testament. I read from Matthew 11:28, which is Jesus’ call for the tired and weary to come to Him; but later when I read in Revelation 22:17 where the apostle John wrote, ‘The Spirit and the bride say come. . . ,’ the call was so direct to me that I knelt by my bed and asked Jesus to become my Savior and forgive my sins.”

Continued—page 10

Conflicting Choices—cont. from page 9

“Well, did that help you?” said Jonas, who seemed defensive.

“It did help me. It was as if a door opened for me to come and adore the baby Jesus, but it also led me to see beyond His birth all the way to His cross and to His resurrection from the dead. There’s something about His resurrection which compels me to want to live a Godly lifestyle.”

“Goot fa dich,” (good for you) Jonas spoke into the darkness. “For me it’s not so easy. You didn’t have to go through what I’m experiencing. Do you remember that my cousin, Levi, gave me the transistor radio so I could listen to Gospel preachers?”

“Yes, I remember.”

“Well after we made hay last fall I snuck out to the hayloft where I’d hidden and was listening to a song—something about Jesus dying on the cross for me. Billy Graham had

just come on when my old man caught me red-handed with the forbidden instrument. We had a big argument and he took it from me. I am still angry!

“Calling your dad the ‘old man’ is not very respectful.” David reminded him.

“We haven’t talked harmoniously since that occasion. I absolutely refuse to forgive him for what he did,” Jonas said.

“We have to walk in forgiveness if we will receive God’s forgiveness in our own lives. In the Lord’s Prayer recorded in Matthew 6:12, we ask God to forgive our debts as we forgive others. Living in forgiveness is a must for God’s children. I recently heard that nobody can hurt us unless we permit them to,” David ventured.

“Now you’re preaching at me. I don’t need that!”

“I’m sorry if it sounds that way, but I am only sharing what the Word of God teaches us.”

“I suppose now that you’re reading your Bible, you think you have the right to throw the Word of God at me,” Jonas exploded.

The two had reached the barn and were unhitching their horses. David didn’t want to leave the evening’s conversation on this note. He placed his hand on Jonas’ shoulder and pled with him. “Please don’t be angry with me. You can learn about God’s Word the same way I am learning. I am reading my Bible and asking God to speak directly to me through it. I am not going to say that there may not be a day that I will be listening to sermons on the radio. I don’t know that, but I find it important to use what I have at hand. Please forgive me if I have spoken out of turn.”

“I’ll think about it.” Jonas turned away and climbed into his rig. David stood in silent prayer and watched his friend head down the road. “*I don’t know what lies ahead of me,*” he told himself. “*I know I have some hard choices to make, and I pray I’ll always walk in forgiveness.*” —Lydia Chorpensing

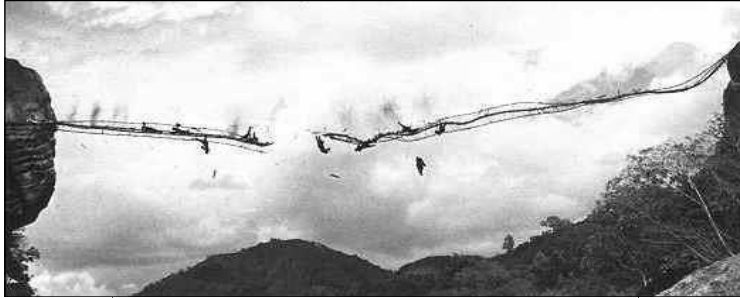
11 Reasons Marriages Fail

—Josh Daffern

- Lack of communication.** Constant and meaningful conversation is the lifeblood of a marriage. You would think that all marriages have meaningful conversation, but they don’t. Couples don’t carve out time. They’re too tired. The husbands don’t want to talk. Television replaces conversation, and separation begins.
- Busyness.** We can be too busy for our own good. A career is good, but not if it comes at the expense of your marriage. Hobbies are good, but not if it comes at the expense of your marriage. Friends are good, but not if they come at the expense of your marriage. Even kids can drain away precious energy from your marriage. The couples that can’t cut back see their marriages float away in a sea of busyness.
- Selfishness.** At the core, marriage is about serving your spouse, about submitting yourself and your needs to the needs of your spouse. If the couples can’t grasp this, submit their ego and embrace the concept of mutual submission, then fault line cracks will appear at the base of your marriage.
- Can’t overcome your family of origin.** Many spouses were raised in broken, abusive, or dysfunctional homes. They walk into marriage knowing only destructive marriage habits from the example of their parents. If they can’t overcome and move past their family of origin, their parents’ destructive marriage will become their own destructive marriage.
- Unwilling to grow in your marriage.** Marriage is all about change. You change. Your spouse changes. If you’re unwilling to grow and change with your spouse, you don’t have much of a shot. The trick of marriage isn’t finding a perfect spouse who will never change, but to find a way to continuously fall in love with your ever-changing spouse.
- Lack of investment in your marriage.** Husbands, your marriage isn’t complete when you say “I do.” Without constant and intentional investment, your marriage will struggle. Just like a farmer’s work isn’t done when he plants the seed, neither is your work done when you walk the aisle. Marriage takes hard work, lots of it.
- Addictions overwhelm a spouse.** Sometimes a latent addiction can rear up and consume a spouse. An eating disorder, a pornography addiction, alcoholism, if left unchecked, will wreck a marriage. It takes two people to make a marriage work, but only one person to wreck it.
- Bitterness and un-forgiveness overwhelm you.** Your spouse will hurt you more than any other person on the planet. They will continually remind you that they are a sinner in need of God’s forgiveness. Because you’re the person closest to them, you will deal with the brunt of their imperfections. If you choose to hold on to past hurts and slights, bitterness will poison your soul and consume you.
- You give up too easily.** Make no illusions: marriage is tough. It’s not for the faint of heart. Every couple will come to points where divorce seems like the easy option. The marriage that works is the marriage that chooses to fight when things get tough, not quit.
- Sin entices and destroys the marriage.** Sin is always looking for a way to destroy the beauty of your marriage. It may use the approach of greed, selfishness, an affair, or any other number of enticements. If you’re not constantly on your guard, sin will destroy your marriage.
- The love grows cold.** Love is like a campfire that must be constantly tended to and stoked. If left alone, the fire will eventually burn itself out and grow cold. When the love grows cold, there doesn’t seem to be much left to save. Don’t let your fire grow cold.

Letter From a Reader... *Continued*
from back page

no one is justified by the works of the law, that we are saved by grace through faith, and not of ourselves, etc. I do not think that you would disagree with that—that salvation, justification, being born again, are a matter of faith and do not depend upon works. That is, we can have eternal life *now*, as John explained and as Jesus taught, by believing in Jesus. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved. John writes that we can know *now* that we have eternal life (I John 5:13).



You know, MG, that there is a huge chasm between mankind and God, and that gap must be bridged somehow. Now, some seem to think that we can build our own bridge and work as hard as we can on it during our lives, and then Jesus will come along at the end and take our bridge and fix what needs fixed and make our bridge work. The Bible seems to say, though, that no matter how much we work on our bridge or how big we make it, it is never close to sufficient, and can never work. Rather, Jesus has made the bridge for us—not using our own feeble attempts, but in His strength and wisdom—in His dying on the cross. The question then is, “In which bridge do we trust?” Do we trust in our own bridge and hope that Jesus can use what we have made and make it work, or do we trust in the bridge that Jesus Himself made for us and has told us is all that is needed? If I want to add my own efforts and improvements to the bridge that Jesus made, then I do not real-

ly trust Him, do I? I must have complete faith in Him. That faith is proved when I cast myself on the bridge that Jesus made—the way of salvation that He provided—and I rest my eternity on Him rather than on my own efforts. Jesus made a bridge for us, and I will trust Him and cross the bridge that He

made. My faith is proved when I trust in Him alone to get across. If, however, I want to say that I must help to make that bridge, then I am not really trusting in what Jesus has done.

MG—are you trusting in Jesus *alone*, or do you think that you can *combine* your own efforts to make a better bridge than Jesus made?

Certainly it is absurd to think that I can sit on this side of the canyon and claim that I trust in the bridge that Jesus made while never being willing to step foot on that bridge. It is absurd, as you would agree, I think, for one to simply claim that he trusts in Jesus, but has no works to show that he does in fact trust in Jesus alone for salvation.

The reality of the Scriptures indicates that one is saved—born again—given eternal life—as a gift—paid for by the blood of Jesus—and that I cannot improve upon it or

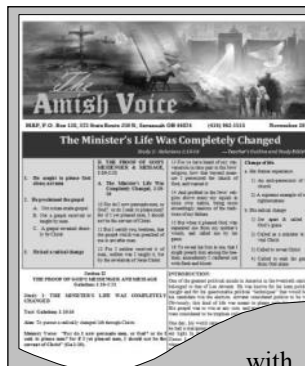
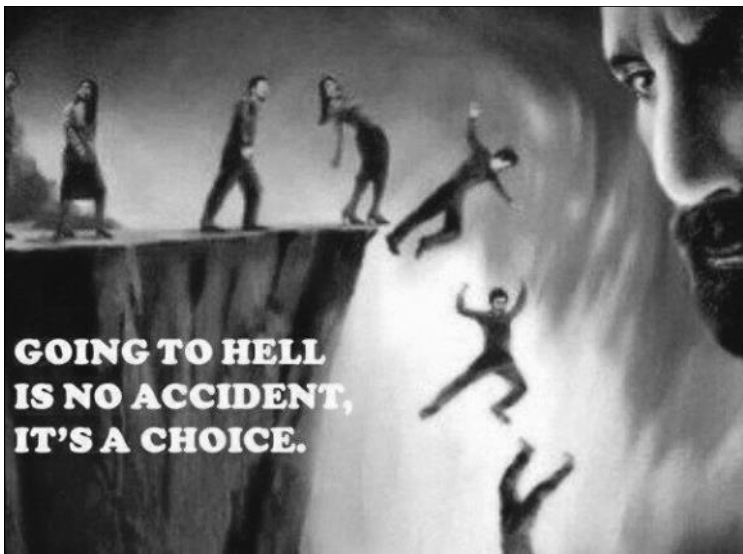
help it by my efforts (that would not really be trusting in Jesus, anyway, but in myself). However, once a person is born again, saved, been changed by God’s Holy Spirit—then one’s life should be different and should be full of good fruit as evidence of a good tree. If a bad tree cannot bring forth good fruit, then an unsaved person cannot bring forth works pleasing to God.

As for Noah’s ark, it was not Noah’s work in building the ark that justified him before God. The Bible states that Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD—that “Noah was a just man” and walked with God. You see, MG—Noah was justified by his faith—before God ever instructed him to build the ark. Noah trusted in God, and his works proved that as he obeyed God and built the ark. Noah’s works did not justify him, for God’s word states that Noah was already “just” due to his faith.

Noah was declared a just man who walked with God, long before he ever began building the ark. It is the same with us. Our efforts and works do not save us. We are justified by faith alone—and because we have been made new creations in Christ—we obey and love Him and live for Him. Faith without works is indeed dead. Works without faith are also dead. Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. We are saved by faith, the Scriptures teach.

I look forward to hearing from you as we seek the Scriptures together.

—Paul Miller



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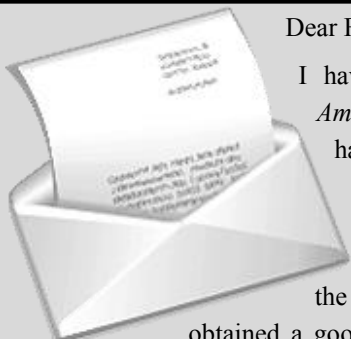
The Amish Voice
Conference Call Schedule
is listed on page 7!

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Letter From a Reader

Dear Friend,




I have been receiving your publication, *The Amish Voice*, for some time. Your publication has a lot to say about justification through faith only. This last one's title was "The Fivefold Appeal to be Justified by Faith Alone." In reading Hebrews chapter 11, the old patriarchs or elders through faith obtained a good report (verse 2). Ironically, it (the good report) came about through the works they did through that faith. Noah in verse 7 says, "By faith Noah being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house by the which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith." How do we know he had faith? I believe it is because of his works that we know he had faith, and the two together need to be evident.

So it also needs to be in our lives. What would have happened if Moses would have refused to hold his staff out over the water they had just gone through? Would his faith in being saved from the Egyptians been sufficient to save them and also have the enemy destroyed? Hebrews 11:30 says, "The walls of Jericho fell down by faith after they were compassed about seven days." Suppose they had walked around only six times, or not even once! A Christian's life will have evidence of both.

Faith is trusting and believing in something without the proof of it being happened. We all have, with God's help, "an ark" to build to save us and our house from the wrath of God to come. And that will take faith and works to accomplish. No, I will never work my way into heaven by my fallible attempts. Without trusting and believing in His saving grace, I will not be able to attain atonement for my sins through works alone, but by the fruits we will know the tree and with the bad fruit or no fruit I will not be recognized. —MG

Paul Miller Replies



Hello, MG.

Thank you for your letter. It is good to know that you read the Amish Voice. We want you to know that The Amish Voice is sent to freely proclaim the good news of Jesus. We know that God's word often falls on hard paths, rocky soil, and stony soil, but we continue to scatter the seed of God's word, rejoicing that it does sometimes land on good ground and produces fruit.

As the article states to which you referred, "And now for the rest of the story." I am glad to know that you love and believe the Scriptures. It is good that we can examine the word of God together. This faith and works topic has caused many arguments throughout the centuries. For the Roman Catholic Church, it was (and still is) a matter of works and faith both being needed in order to be saved. They, too, would say that faith in Jesus is needed for salvation, but that works and faith go hand-in-hand. The Reformers, though, went back to the Bible and saw that while works are indeed evidence of one's faith and are necessary in the life of a Christian, works play no role in salvation—that is, one is born again by faith and not works. I suppose you would agree with the Reformers who re-discovered the Bible, rather than the traditions and sacraments of the Roman Catholic Church.

I do not think that we are too far off in agreement, as we both seem to want to know and follow the Bible. Perhaps the misunderstanding comes by way of a specific word or two. Maybe it is the word "salvation." Maybe it is "born again." Whatever it is, I hope that we can continue corresponding and reach an agreement on the Scriptures. Certainly you know that Paul often contrasts faith and works. He states often that

Continued Inside—Page 11