

Sabbath School Lesson #7 – Law and Grace – 6-12 November 2021

Christ would have us not render His death in vain. Said Paul, “I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness *come* by the law, then Christ is dead in vain” (Galatians 2:21). If righteousness came by the law, then there would have been no use for the death of Christ. The law itself can do nothing except point out men’s duty; therefore, to speak of righteousness coming by the law, means by our works, by our individual effort. So the text is equivalent to the statement that if we could save ourselves, Christ died for nothing; for salvation is the one thing to be gained. Well, we cannot save ourselves; and Christ is not dead in vain; therefore there is salvation in Him. He is able to save all that come unto God by Him. Some must be saved, else He has died in vain; but He has not died in vain; therefore, the promise is sure: “He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand, He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied” (Isaiah 53:10-11). “Whosoever will,” may be of the number. Since He died not in vain, see to it “that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.”

Sunday: Law in Heaven – The Prophet Ezekiel in the twenty eighth chapter speaks of a personage which he is pleased to call “Prince of Tyrus” (verse 15). He states, “thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day thou wast *created*, till iniquity was found in thee.” Verse 13 also speaks of a work done for him in the day he was *created*. As God is the creator of all things, this being was one of the “perfect” works of his all-wise skill. And we here learn that he remained perfect from the day of his creation, “until iniquity was found in him,” and he became profane as stated in verse 16. Having power to sin, proves that he was created an intelligent moral actor, capable of keeping a law; for sin is a transgression of law (1 John 3:4). We conclude that there was law in heaven, else Lucifer could not have committed sin.

Monday: Law in Deuteronomy – God gave His law to Israel, and He set forth the result of unfaithfulness through His servant Moses – curses in every area of life, until finally they would be driven from the land. “The Lord shall bring a nation against thee from afar... as swift as the eagle flieth; a nation whose tongue thou shalt not understand; a nation of fierce countenance... he shall besiege thee in all thy gates, until thy high and fenced walls come down... If thou wilt not observe to do all the words of this law that are written in this book... and the Lord shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other; and there thou shalt serve other gods... And thy life shall hang in doubt before thee...” (Deuteronomy 28:49-50, 52, 58, 64, 66). Despite the warnings, apostasy continued in Israel. “At times these warnings were heeded and rich blessings were bestowed upon the Jewish nation and through them upon surrounding peoples” (*Prophets and Kings*, p 20).

Tuesday: Letov Lak – Moses had told Israel, hundreds of years before, that if they would keep the commandments of the Lord, the nations around them would say, “Surely this great nation is a wise, and understanding people” (Deuteronomy 4:6). There is a reason why men prosper when they receive the Word of God. The Word itself is bound to prosper. The Lord says of His Word that goeth forth out of His mouth, “it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it” (Isaiah 55:11). So that when we receive the Word of God into our own hearts, it will prosper there. It is sure to prosper wherever it is, and if we will not have it, it will prosper in others who will receive it. That is why God sends His Word to us, that it may prosper in us, and thus we will prosper too. To Joshua the Lord said, “This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success” (Joshua 1:8). When David’s time came to die, he charged Solomon his son to walk in God’s ways, to keep His commandments, “that thou mayest prosper in all that thou doest, and whithersoever thou turnest thyself” (1 Kings 2:3). Many of the kings of Israel and Judah did not walk in the way of the Lord, and none of them prospered, but of King Hezekiah it is written that “he clave to the Lord, and departed not from following Him, but kept His commandments:” “And the Lord was with him; and he prospered whithersoever he went forth” (1 Kings 18:6-7). Christ Himself testified, “I delight to do Thy will, O My God: yea, Thy law is within My heart” (Psalm 40:8); and so, of Him it is

written, “the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand” (Isaiah 53:10); “And in Thy majesty ride on prosperously, Because of truth and meekness and righteousness. Thou hast loved righteousness and hated wickedness: Therefore God, Thy God, hath anointed Thee With the oil of gladness above Thy fellows” (Psalm 45:4-7). God gives men prosperity in His Word. If His Word dwells in us richly, it will be in all wisdom, and we shall do wisely and prosper. We shall even have the wisdom and prosperity of God, which is more than mind can conceive. “Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper. And this is His name whereby He shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS” (Jeremiah 23:5-6). In Christ we are made not only righteous, but wise and prosperous (1 Corinthians 1:30). Men often think that they are more likely to prosper in this life by not paying any heed to the Word of God. Very likely when Saul was hunting David up and down the country, to take his life, others thought that it was Saul who was prospering and not David, “and Saul became David’s enemy continually” (1 Samuel 18:29). Let us lay hold of God’s Word and trust only in that for wisdom and prosperity. “Delight thyself also in the Lord; And He shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the Lord; Trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass. And He shall make thy righteousness to go forth as the light, And thy judgment as the noonday. Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him: Fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, Because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass, Fret not thyself, it tendeth only to evil-doing. For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: But the meek shall inherit the land; And shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace” (Psalm 37:4-11).

Wednesday: A Slave in Egypt – The Lord called Israel out of bondage, but at Sinai they put themselves into a bondage of works. When the Lord gave them the law, and He would have kept the righteousness of His own law in their lives if only they believed, the children of Israel, in their self-sufficiency, rashly took the whole responsibility upon themselves. It was not God who led them into making that “old covenant” of works, but the contrary. He was leading them out of bondage, not into it, and Paul plainly tells us that covenant from Sinai was nothing but bondage (Galatians 4). Just as the Lord brought Israel out of bondage from Egypt, He has called us out of bondage from sin. Jesus was born, not of blood, nor of the will of man, nor of the flesh, but of God; so that everyone who believes on His name, every spirit, every soul, that confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God. So simple and so easy is it for as to step out of bondage into freedom, out of darkness into light, out of being sons of the wicked one to being the children of God. Everyone who confesses the truth! O, how easy it is for people to be saved! How easy has the Lord made the way of life! It is not necessary to speculate and worry over some hard theory; all we need to do is simply to recognise the things that are, and to believe the truth. That which is, and the truth, is that we are living, not by ourselves, but by Jesus Christ. This is the life of every man in the world. “That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world” (John 1:9).

Thursday: Not for Your Righteousness – No man is saved by their merits. “Not for thy righteousness, or for the uprightness of thine heart, dost thou go to possess their land: but for the wickedness of these nations the Lord thy God doth drive them out from before thee, and that he may perform the word which the Lord sware unto thy fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob” Deuteronomy 9:4-5). “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost” (Titus 3:5). “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast” (Ephesians 2:8-9). “Being justified freely by His grace ... we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law” (Romans 3:24-25, 28). These texts show plainly that no works of man have any effect in securing his justification. But do they discredit the law? – Not by any means. “Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid; yea, we establish the law” (Romans 3:31). The law is the only standard of justice; because, “not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified” (Romans 2:13). Christ’s righteousness is perfect obedience to the law, which was within His heart (John 15:10; Psalm 40:8). Christ dwells in the heart by faith (Ephesians 3:17), His presence in the heart justifies us, as we by faith take His life instead of our own. Faith brings Christ and His obedience into the heart.