

Studies in Galatians: Galatians 5:16-18

Happy Sabbath to all. Today, we are doing another one of the studies from the New Testament's Book of Galatians, Chapter 5. In *Lessons on Faith*, this particular study is called "Galatians 5:16-18." A better name for it, however, in light of the present circumstances in Adventism, would be, "A Pioneer's Explanation of Romans 7."

As you know, the modern Seventh-day Adventist Church resists the doctrine of Victory over Sin, the very core message of the Gospel, just as strongly as any Sunday-keeping, Evangelical church in the world today. They are no better at explaining the change made to a born-again believer than the most nominal, worldly organization. In terms of the saving power of the Father and Son, they are no better off than the open commandment-breakers. In a sense they are no better off, and in a sense they are worse off, for the more we read the writings of the SDA pioneers, the more we find the purity of the faith reflected in their writings – and the more clearly we see the character of our Father, expressed in the CSDA message to the world, confirmed and vindicated, the more we come to understand the great difference between "then and now" as it pertains to the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Upon reading the past few weeks' studies, we may well be led to explain, "How the mighty have fallen!" I have thought this several times while reading *Lessons on Faith*. The more we see our doctrines, our pure faith, reflected in words of the forefathers of those who today reject and imprison us, the more dire we understand the judgments that will fall on them will be. The teachers, who have kept the truth from the Adventist people, they will have much to answer for. Those who have failed to set before the SDA constituency, because these writings reveal their own unconverted nature, and make them ashamed, will have much to answer for. Those who say, "We are the people of God. We have accepted the 1888 message. We believe in the Gospel of Jesus Christ," they will have much to answer for.

And while my words here may seem forceful, and it is proper to be righteously indignant, we must also feel urgency FOR such people as these... to reach out to them, to seek to correct them from these soul-endangering errors.

But today, we who accept the Faith of Yahshua, we may rejoice when we read the words of A. T. Jones, who says of Romans 7, as of most things, exactly what WE say and teach in our ministry. We are truly of the spirit and doctrine of Philadelphia, even in an age of Laodicea, and we are not ashamed that this is so. Let us begin, then:

[quote]

"This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law."

"If ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law," because "as many as are led of the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." As sons of God, these have the mind of the Spirit, the mind of Christ, and so with the mind they "serve the law of God."

Accordingly, whosoever is led of the Spirit of God and thus has the mind of Christ fulfills the law, because by that Spirit there is shed abroad in the heart the love of God, which in itself is the fulfilling of

the law, in whomsoever has it. On the other hand, whosoever is led of the flesh and so has the mind of the flesh does the works of the flesh and so serves the law of sin.

[endquote]

This is a continuation of the thoughts that we have examined in previous weeks. The issue here is not about whether one is justified by works or by flesh. We know well that works-based religions are false, and impossible, for Yah's law requires *perfect* obedience. This, no human who has inherited Adam's legacy can fulfill, and therefore, it can only be accomplished through faith. However, once that faith has been accepted, the state of the convert does not remain as it was before the new birth. The one who has been born of the Spirit has now inherited the legacy of Christ, and not that of Adam. BY that person's faith, the law IS fulfilled. It is not up to him or her to "begin to fulfill the law" by subsequent actions. The love of Yahweh that rules the heart after one is born of the Spirit "is the fulfilling of the law," and the actions that result from that are, by necessity, in harmony with that law that is fulfilled.

[quote]

And the two ways, the way of the Spirit and the way of the flesh are always open before every man. As certainly as the flesh is there, it "lusteth against the Spirit" and as certainly as the Spirit is there it "lusteth against the flesh." Whosoever is led of the flesh cannot do the good that he would. He serves the law of sin and so is under the law. But whosoever is "led of the Spirit is not under the law."

And every man is always free to choose which shall be his way-- the way of the Spirit or the way of the flesh. "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die, but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." Rom. 8:13.

[endquote]

Here Jones begins to talk about the theology of Romans, which will play a major role in the significance of this study. Even here, though, we see that a man has to choose which will be the way he will walk. In the pioneer mind, as in ours, there is no third "saved in sin" way, where one is on the path to righteousness, but is occasionally led by the flesh. We will see more of this shortly.

[quote]

Note that, in the text of Galatians now under consideration and its kindred texts in Romans and also in Colossians, it is stated in words and constantly held in view that the flesh, in its true fleshly sinful nature, is still present with him who has the Spirit of God and that this flesh is warring against the Spirit.

That is, when a man is converted and is thus brought under the power of the Spirit of God, he is not so delivered from the flesh that he is actually separated from it with its tendencies and desires so that by the flesh he is no more tempted and that with it he has no more contest. No, that same degenerate, sinful flesh is there with its same tendencies and desires. But the individual is no longer subject to these. He is delivered from subjection to the flesh with its tendencies and desires and is now subject to the Spirit. He is now subject to a power that conquers, brings under, crucifies, and keeps under, the flesh, sinful as it is, with all its affections and lusts.

[endquote]

To this we may all say, "Amen." Here we find the balance between the powerful gift of Yahweh through the earnest of His Spirit dwelling within us, and the "work" of sanctification that involves resisting the flesh and keeping it under subjection. It is a subtle, but vital, point... that our work is not to "subject" the flesh to the Spirit, but rather to "keep" it under subjection, where Christ has placed it already by His divine power. The Victory is not, and never was, ours to win. It is Christ's victory for us, and therefore it is ours to receive and maintain with joy. Our work is to "keep" ourselves in the state that Christ has already placed us. It is not to move from that spiritual condition... in essence, it is to "rest." Here, again, is the Sabbath rest principle.

[quote]

Therefore, it is written that "ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body." "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry." Col. 3:5. Note that all these things are there in the flesh and would live and reign if the flesh were to rule. But since the flesh itself is brought into subjection to the power of God, through the Spirit, all these evil things are killed at the root and thus prevented from appearing in the life.

[endquote]

At this point, I call to mind some of the other transcripts of Jones' sermons we have studied, such as "Creation and Evolution, Which?" and I can imagine him asking the congregation, "And if all these evil things are killed at the root, and thus prevented from appearing in the life, how often can they appear?" And the audience might say, "Never." And the reply might be, "Correct, because if the power of God has killed something, it is dead indeed; and if a tree is killed at the very root, no part of it – not the branches, nor the leaves, nor the fruit – can possibly live."

[quote]

This contrast between the rule of the flesh and the rule of the Spirit is clearly shown in Rom. 7:14-24 and in 1 Cor. 9:26, 27. In the seventh of Romans is pictured the man who is under the power of the flesh, "carnal, sold under sin," who longs to do good and wills to do good but is subject to a power in the flesh that will not let him do the good that he would. "For the good that I would I do not, but the evil which I would not, that I do." "I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man; but I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

That describes the man who is subject to the flesh, "to the law of sin" that is in the members. And when he would break away from the power of the flesh and would do good, that power still brings him into captivity and holds him under the dominion of the flesh, the law of sin, which is in his members.

But there is deliverance from that power. Therefore, when he cries out, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" there is given instantly the answer: "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." There is the way of deliverance, for Christ alone is the Deliverer.

[endquote]

If I were delivering this study on paper, I think I might be tempted to highlight the entire passage I just quoted. It is very good news. And yet, if we were to take the statements I just pasted, and put them in a document entitled, "The CSDA understanding of Romans 7," I can guarantee that Adventists would not give it a second look, or upon reading it, would say, "That's impossible." I know this, because that is just what has happened. I was not aware of this study by Jones until I read *Lessons on Faith*, but even before that I had been explaining Romans 7 in this way, and with very similar language, according to our understanding of Paul's teachings and beliefs. I have explained that when Paul asks, "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death," he immediately answers his own question, and then turns from the past to the present of Romans 8. The Paul of Romans 7 is the one who is yet under the power of flesh, and that is NOT a description of a born-again, Spirit-filled believer.

That Jones also understood Romans 7 to be an account of Paul's pre-Christian, pre-conversion state is further validated below:

[quote]

And now this man, though he is thus delivered, is not delivered from a contest; he is not put into a condition where he has no fighting to do with the flesh. There is a fight still to be carried on and it is not a make-believe fight. It is not the fighting of a phantom. Here is the man of 1 Cor. 9:26, 27: "So fight I, not as one that beateth the air." What does he fight? What does he beat? Read: "But I keep under my body and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."

Thus, in the battle that the Christian fights is his body, is the flesh with its affections and lusts. The body is to be, by the Christian, kept under and brought into subjection by the new power of the Spirit of God to which he is now subject and to which he became subject when delivered from the power of the flesh and the law of sin.

This is made yet more expressive by the fuller rendering of the Greek word translated "keep under," in 1 Cor. 9:27: "I keep under my body." It means, literally, "to strike under the eyes, hit and beat the face black and blue." Accordingly, Conybeare and Howson translate this passage thus: "I fight not as the pugilist who strikes out against the air, but I bruise my body and force it into bondage." Thus the seventh of Romans shows the man subject to the power of the flesh and the law of sin that is in the members, but longing for deliverance. The ninth of first Corinthians shows the flesh subject to the man through the new power of the Spirit of God. In the seventh of Romans, the flesh is ruling and the man is under. In the ninth chapter of first Corinthians, the man is ruling and the flesh is under.

And this blessed reversal of things is wrought in conversion. By conversion the man is put in possession of the power of God and under the dominion of the Spirit of God so that by that power he is made ruler over the flesh with all its affections and lusts and through the Spirit he crucifies the flesh with the affections and lusts in his fighting "the good fight of faith."

[endquote]

We certainly agree that sanctification is a work, and a battle. But, by the power of Christ, it is a battle we always win, because we are justified – and made fit for that battle – by faith. And note the terminology Jones uses for the event of conversion: "now this man [...] thus delivered." "new power of the Spirit of

God [...] to which he became subject when delivered from the power of the flesh and the law of sin.” The contrast is made between Romans 7 and 1Corinthians 9, and more than a contrast, it is called a “blessed reversal,” which means that one state is entirely unlike the other, that 1 Corinthians 9, where Paul mentions overcoming his flesh, is entirely separate from the condition in which he, subject to the flesh, cannot fulfill the Law of Yah. There were, indeed, “Two Pauls” described in the New Testament, as I entitled my article that examines this very issue.

[quote]

Men are not saved by being delivered utterly from the flesh but by receiving power to conquer and rule over all the evil tendencies and the desires of the flesh. Men do not develop character (in fact, they never could) by being delivered into a realm of no temptation, but by receiving power in the field of temptation exactly where they are to conquer all the temptation.

If men were to be saved by being delivered utterly from the flesh just as it is, then Jesus need never have come to the world. If men were to be saved by being delivered from all temptation and set in a realm of no temptation, then Jesus need not have come into the world. But never, by any such deliverance as that, could man have developed character.

[endquote]

There is a subtle, but extremely important point here... not just about “doctrine,” but about the character of Yahweh. If men could be saved by simply removing them from the flesh, then the pagans and the paganised Christians that believe in the “immortal soul” would have cause to rejoice. Theirs would be the far more reasonable belief that, when one dies, his spirit goes to Heaven, since it is now separated from the flesh that caused all the evil actions that the person did in life.

But it is not about merely removing the flesh. Yah could just give us another flesh, and the problem of sin in the universe is solved. If this were the solution, why would He have us endure the horrors of this world before receiving us unto Himself? The problem is that, through the flesh, Satan has corrupted the character of mankind... and character transcends (goes beyond) mere flesh. This is easy enough to demonstrate – Satan, who never had flesh, developed a corrupted character, and thus he fell. The flesh is the vehicle for temptation to enter the soul, but the flesh is not the essence of the problem. Therefore, it is the development of character, so that we can overcome (not escape from) the flesh, this is what accompanies salvation.

[quote]

Therefore, instead of trying to save men by delivering them utterly from the flesh just where they were, Jesus came to the world and put himself IN THE FLESH just where men are and met that flesh JUST AS IT IS, with all its tendencies and desires, and by the divine power which he brought by faith, He "condemned sin in the flesh" and thus brought to all mankind that divine faith which brings the divine power to man to deliver him from the power of the flesh and the law of sin, just where he is, and to give him assured dominion over the flesh, just as it is.

Instead of Jesus' trying to save men in a way in which they would be limp and characterless by setting them in a realm of no temptation, He came to man just where man is in the midst of all his temptations.

Jesus came in the very flesh such as man has and in that flesh He met all the temptations known to that flesh and conquered every one of them, and by that conquest brought victory to every soul in the world. Bless His name.

[endquote]

I have read that we will be studying the “Science of Salvation” in the ceaseless ages of eternity. I can believe it. There is so much power, so much light, in even the simplest things. Yah has done just as was necessary to utterly save mankind. He could keep us from destruction. He could stop the flow of time, or directly prevent us from committing sin. He could utterly remove temptation, so that it would never even *occur* to us to transgress. But none of these things would restore us to the Image of Elohim, the morally free condition, in which and for which we were created. For us to truly be sons of Yah, we must overcome as the Only Begotten Son did, without any lessening of the obstacles, but with a “greatening,” a full acceptance, of the power to overcome. Yahshua gives us the will and the power to overcome sin in the flesh – and that, always.

This is no strange, new doctrine, as I have been stressing, and as we ourselves ought to emphasize when we speak to others. This is the power of Yah unto salvation. As Jones concludes his study:

[quote]

And every soul can have in its fullness that victory, who will receive and keep "the faith of Jesus." For "this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."

[endquote]

Jones, just like the CSDA Church, puts a difference between Paul as he describes himself in Romans 7, and Paul as he describes himself in Romans 8, 1Corinthians 9, and everywhere else. He understands that the apostle is describing a time when he was subject to the flesh, so that his description of being led by the Spirit might be made all the more glorious by the contrast. He understands that the Gospel message kills the very root of sin in the heart, heals the character to its intended Christ-likeness, and makes it so that sin, forever and always, is “thus prevented from appearing in the life.”

We must conclude that A. T. Jones, and all of the like-minded pioneers we have been examining recently, were “for all intents and purposes” Creation Seventh Day Adventists. They knew who our Father is. They knew His character, and they understood His purpose for calling us out of Babylon, out of corruption, and placing us in a spiritual environment where this light would become clear to us, so that we would both be redeemed ourselves, and equipped to serve others.

It is my prayer that this study, and this insight into the pioneer mind, has further strengthened us, and given us confidence in the message that we bear at this end of all things.