

A Study in Galatians: Chapter 5, Verses 22-26

In the book *Lessons on Faith*, there are a great number of wonderful studies from which we may draw knowledge. I would say, in fact, it is our positive *duty* to seek knowledge from our spiritual forefathers, to benefit from their dedication, from their faith, from their hours of earnest study.

The last few chapters of the book might, I imagine, tend to be overlooked because they are simply named after Bible verses. The one that forms the foundation of today's study, for example, is simply entitled "Galatians 5:22-26." Despite the "plain" title, however, upon reading this study I have found it to be one of the most powerful statements of the victory over sin in any of the pioneers' writings, and it also contains an eloquent explanation of the difference between sin and temptation.

We well know, as CSDA evangelists (every one of us), how little the world and Christendom are educated about victory over sin, the nature of sin, and the distinction between sins and temptations. This is no mere happenstance; these concepts are essential for a proper understanding of the Gospel, for accepting the gift of salvation. It has been Satan's special focus to keep knowledge from those who would be Yah's people, and he has succeeded to the point that true knowledge is rejected, and the world rejoices in lies.

Just as it is our duty to learn the work of Yah in the plan of salvation, so it is our duty to teach others this work. It is our duty to learn to speak with invincible faith, to say without a shadow of doubt or wavering, "I do always those things that please my Father. I have victory over sin." These are the things that one tends to learn about us first of all when encountering a member of this faith, and yet I am troubled that among us are some who have not yet learned the boldness to declare these things with confidence. Some of us, when we speak, and teach, and pray... still have a tendency to sound uncertain.

I suspect that a part of this comes from the guilt we have been taught as members of other faiths, and the reinforcement of that guilt by our encounters with those still captive to Satan's deceptions. In other words, many of us still have a work to do, to undo the errors we have accepted in the past, perhaps as early as our childhoods.

We have a work to do to understand that true humility does not mean lowering one's self in the sight of men. It means lowering ourselves in the sight of our Father, so that He may lift Himself up before men through His willing instruments... and that, for their own sakes. We must all learn what that means, and most perfectly. Last week, I was asked in a mocking tone, as mocking as an email can be, "Are you a saint?"

Let us look at this study from A.T. Jones, "Galatians 5:22-26," and see what our Father has to say about such things. We begin:

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"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance; against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the passions and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not be desirous of vainglory, provoking one another, envying one another."

We have seen somewhat of the essential evil and deceitfulness of the works of the flesh. But, thank the Lord, there is a better picture.

The Spirit of God, which, in His fullness, is freely given to every believer, lusteth against the flesh, so that in Him who is led by the Spirit of God the flesh cannot do the things that it would. In such the Spirit of God rules, and causes to appear in the life “the fruit of the Spirit,” instead of “the works of the flesh.”

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I actually desire to hold my comments on some sections to a minimum, to let the study speak for itself, but I would point out here that the faithful will be, and certainly are, accused of pride, of arrogance, merely because we claim the promises of our Father in Heaven. We do not, of ourselves, overcome the works of the flesh. We cannot, of ourselves, cause the fruit of the Spirit to appear. The fruit of the Spirit can only come forth FROM the Spirit, and this is obvious... but there are some who, because of their own faulty viewpoint, cannot accept the testimony of Yah’s people that the Spirit, which brings forth this fruit, dwells in them. Thus, it appears that we must repeat ourselves. As a result of this Spirit’s indwelling, we become the vehicle through which those fruits appear on the earth. It is our privilege, but not our merit (our own personal value), that this is so.

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And though it be true “that they which do such things” as are described in the list of the works of the flesh, “shall not inherit the kingdom of God,” yet in the gift of the Holy Spirit, through the grace of Christ, God has made full provision by which every soul, in spite of all the passions, lusts, desires, and inclinations of the flesh, can “inherit the kingdom of God.”

In Christ the battle has been fought on every point, and the victory has been made complete. He was made flesh itself--the same flesh and blood as those whom He came to redeem. He was made in all points like these; He was “in all points tempted like as we are.” If in any “point” he had not been “like as we are,” then, on that point he could not possibly have been tempted “like as we are.”

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I pause here to rejoice for a moment. Brethren, victory over sin is NOT a “CSDA doctrine.” Victory over sin is an Adventist doctrine. It is a Christian doctrine. In the year 1900, a hundred and twelve years ago, A.T. Jones tells us that “God has made full provision” for each soul, because “in Christ [...] the victory has been made complete.”

Now, some will say that this was the victory for Christ Himself, not for us. Others will argue about what victory over sin “really means.” But let us be simple when it comes to the Word of Yah. Let us be plain of speaking and clear of understanding, because for such as this were these words written. And these things Jones will say again, yet more clearly, in the paragraphs ahead.

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He was “touched with the feeling of our infirmities,” because He “was in all points tempted like as we are.” When He was tempted, he felt the desires and the inclinations of the flesh, precisely as we feel them when we are tempted. For “every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lusts [his own

desires and inclinations of the flesh] and enticed.” James 1:14. All this Jesus could experience without sin, because to be tempted is not sin. It is only “when lust hath conceived,” when the desire is cherished, when the inclination is sanctioned--only then it is that “it bringeth forth sin.” And Jesus never even in a thought cherished a desire or sanctioned an inclination of the flesh. Thus in such flesh as ours He was tempted in all points as we are and yet without a taint of sin. And thus, by the divine power that he received through faith in God, He, in our flesh, utterly quenched every inclination of that flesh and effectually killed at its root every desire of the flesh and so “condemned sin in the flesh.” And in so doing He brought complete victory and divine power to maintain it to every soul in the world. All this He did “that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.”

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So here it is, already. He brought complete victory, and divine power to maintain complete victory, to every soul in the world. This needs to be kept before the eyes of everyone who could possibly still be seeking after the Father and Son. And Jones, further, explains EXACTLY what that “complete victory” means, to be in control of our thoughts to the degree that we have “utterly quenched every inclination of that flesh” to bring about sin in our lives. Jones does not say that Yahshua HAD no thoughts or desires contrary to the Law. He said that no such thought was ever cherished, seen as desirable, entertained beyond the time it took to rebuke it. We are only tempted when we are drawn by our desires, and thus to be “tempted in all points” means that there were desires by which our Savior could be drawn. There is no sin in being tempted, as we have said before... but there is no contradiction between being tempted and condemning sin in the flesh by rejecting any thought that would lead us away from faithfulness to our loving Father.

And I do, indeed, love the wording here. Not only are we given complete victory over sin, a wonderful gift, but we are not left on our own to see if we will keep it or lose it. No, we are given “divine power to maintain it.” And is this power for the holy men who live on the mountains? Is it for those who lock themselves away in cells under the earth? Is it for those born with a special gift for holiness? No... it is for “every soul in the world.” The power to overcome sin, and the power to maintain a life free from transgression, has been given to every soul in the world. Let us help them learn to accept it.

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This victory in its fullness is free to every soul in Christ Jesus. It is received by faith in Jesus. It is accomplished and maintained by “the faith of Jesus,” which He has wrought out in perfection and has given to every believer in Him. For “this is the victory which overcometh the world, even our faith.”

He “abolished in His flesh the enmity” that separated mankind from God. Eph. 2:15. In order to do this, He took the flesh and must take the flesh in which that enmity existed. And he abolished in his flesh the enmity,” “for to make,” in order to make, “in himself of twain,” God and the estranged man, “one new man, so making peace.” He “abolished in his flesh the enmity,” in order “that he might reconcile both” Jew and Gentile--all mankind who are subject to the enmity--”unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity in himself.” Eph. 2:16, margin. “The enmity” was “in himself” by being “in his flesh.” And there “in his flesh” He slew it and abolished it. And He could do this only by its being indeed “in his flesh.”

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Christians in general, and Adventists in particular, have no excuse for failing to understand the power in the Gospel. We see SDA theologians writing articles and books about what faith means, and why we cannot possibly succeed as Christ did. We see the learned men of our generation slighting and attacking those who believe just what has been stated in this study.

If only the modern scholars would be silent, and the ancient voices allowed to speak. If only the writings of our pioneers would be set before the people again, well, I do not think a revival is possible at this point, for we know the organization to be forever fallen. But what it would do is ignite a fire in the hearts of those who still desire to live for Yahshua. It would lead them to be dissatisfied with the weekly sermons, and the Sabbath school lessons, and the online Bible studies that tell them they ought not to believe fully in the precious promises of Yah. What it would do is cause faithful men and women to seek the truth, so that they can find it.

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Thus Jesus took upon Him the curse in all its fullness, precisely as that curse is upon mankind. This He did by “being made a curse for us.” but “the curse causeless shall not come” and never came. The cause of the curse is sin. He was made a curse for us, because of our sins. And to meet the curse as it is upon us, He must meet sin as it is in us. Accordingly, God “hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin.” and this “that we might be made the righteousness of God IN HIM.” 2 Cor. 5:21. And though He thus placed Himself entirely at the same great disadvantage as are all mankind--made in all points like us and so “in all points tempted like as we are”--yet not a single tendency or inclination of the flesh was ever allowed the slightest recognition, even in thought; but every one of them was effectually killed at the root by the power of God, which, through divine faith, He brought to humanity.

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The nominal Christian might well look upon those words, describing Yahshua’s perfect victory, and think, “How wonderful that He did this for us.” But let us teach them the Faith of Yahshua more fully. “How wonderful that WE may do this through Him!” He placed Himself at our disadvantage and overcame sin. If we honestly believe in the truth of those words, then surely we must understand that we may do the same, through His power, for there are truly OUR disadvantages, and not any lesser than what we have to face.

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And thus, “as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same, that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted.” Heb. 2:14-18.

And this victory which Christ wrought out in human flesh is brought by the Holy Spirit to the rescue of everyone in human flesh who today believes in Jesus. For by the Holy Spirit the very presence of Christ Himself comes to the believer, for it is His constant desire to “grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith, that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God.” Eph. 3:16-19.

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I want to repeat the first sentence of that last paragraph. “And this victory which Christ wrought out in human flesh is brought by the Holy Spirit to the rescue of everyone in human flesh who today believes in Jesus.” It does not say that the benefits of this victory were brought to every human, that they should have salvation without victory. It does not say that the effects of this victory were brought to every human, that Yah should favor us without victory. No, it says that “this victory,” this overcoming of sin, this quenching of the unlawful inclinations of the flesh, this rejection of cherishing sinful thoughts, it is this that was brought to every human being... and the results that follow are but cause-and-effect of our Father’s perfect gift.

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Thus the deliverance from the guilt of sin and from the power of sin which holds the believer in triumph over all the desires, the tendencies and inclinations of his sinful flesh, through the power of the Spirit of God--this is wrought today by the personal presence of Christ Jesus in human flesh in the believer, precisely as it was wrought by the personal presence of Christ in human flesh eighteen hundred and seventy years ago. Christ is ever the same--“the same yesterday and today and forever.” The gospel of Christ is ever the same--the same yesterday and today and forever. The gospel of Christ today is the same that it was eighteen hundred and seventy years ago. Then it was “God manifest in the flesh,” and today it is the same--“God manifest in the” same flesh, the flesh of sinful men, human flesh, just as human nature is.

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And the Gospel is the same this very day as well, a hundred years and a decade after this study was published. Human nature has not changed. It may have grown bolder, perhaps, in open sin than the 1800s and 1900s, but it has gained no greater power to resist the glory of our Father. It is still subject to the Faith of Yahshua, and we are blessed indeed that it is so.

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That gospel is “Christ in you, the hope of glory,”--Christ in you just as you are, sins, sinfulness, and all; for He gave Himself for our sins and for our sinfulness. And you, just as you are, Christ has bought and God “hath made accepted” in Him. He has received you just as you are and the gospel, “Christ in you, the hope of glory,” brings you under the reign of the grace of God and through the Spirit of God makes you so subject to the power of Christ and of God that “the fruit of the Spirit” appears in you instead of “the works of the flesh.”

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Some have said, “Jesus loves me, sins and all.” This is certainly true, but the statement is made with the idea that the sins are accepted along with the beloved person, and thus made “acceptable.” This is not the case. Yahshua accepts the person as they are, but does not leave them where they are. What loving father would accept a repentant son, filthy with the dust of the street, and not have his cleansing as the first priority? And as it is taught to us in the Scriptures:, if WE, who are but human, know how to treat a returning loved-one, how much more will our Father not cleanse us, and give us all that we need for our joy?

Jones goes on to give a description of the parts of the fruit of the Spirit, which I will relate here:

[quote]

And the fruit of the Spirit is--

LOVE--the love of God which is shed abroad in the heart by the Spirit of God. And instead of hatred or any of its kin ever being allowed, even in thought, no man can possibly do anything to you that can cause you to do anything but love him. For this love, being the love of God, is “the same yesterday and today and forever” and loves not for reward but for the mere sake of loving; it loves simply because it is love and being only that, it cannot do anything else.

JOY is “ardent happiness arising from present or expected good.” But in this case, the alternative “or” is excluded, for this joy is ardent happiness arising from present AND expected good, for the cause of it is eternal. Accordingly, it is everlastingly present and is everlastingly to be expected. And therefore it is “exultant satisfaction.”

PEACE--perfect peace that rules in the heart--“the peace of God which passeth all understanding,” and which “keeps the heart and mind” of him who has it. LONGSUFFERING, GENTLENESS, GOODNESS, FAITH--This faith-- pistis, Greek-- is “firm persuasion; the conviction which is based upon trust, NOT upon knowledge [the faith of “the heart,” not of the head; the faith of Christ, not of the creed]; a firmly relying confidence cherished by conviction and bidding defiance to opposing contradictions.”

MEEKNESS, TEMPERANCE--Temperance is self-control. Thus, the Spirit of God delivers the man from subject to his passions, lusts and habits, and makes him a free man, master of himself. “Against such there is no law.” The law of God is against nothing but sin. In human lives the law of God is against everything that is not the fruit of the Spirit of God. Therefore it is certain that everything in human life that is not the fruit of the Spirit of God is sin. And this is but stating, in another way, the eternal truth that “whatsoever is not of faith is sin.”

Therefore “if we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.” And because we do live in the Spirit and walk in the Spirit, “let us not”--yea, we shall not; yea, we cannot “be desirous of vainglory, provoking one another, envying one another.”

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This is the end of Jones’ study. It is one of the more uplifting that I have read from the book out of which we are taking these lessons. There is a feast here for all who desire to eat the flesh of the Savior. These

things, these fruit of the Spirit, are not some theoretical description, nor a list of the characteristics of Christ alone. They are what WE are, as Christ indeed dwells in our hearts. What I want you to take from this lesson, among other things, is the confidence that comes from truly accepting that these promises are for us.

When the world, and the heathen, and the mocker, try to convince you that you are less than what Yah has declared you to be, you have a choice. When they say, "You cannot be serious. Nobody can live without sin," you have a choice. When they ask if you have the arrogance, and the pride, to call yourself a "saint," and to speak and act as if your faith is invincible, you have a choice. The only reasonable choice.

Choose to believe, not in your own powers or merits, nor in your own goodness. Choose to believe in the victory that was won for you, by Christ Yahshua, and then GIVEN to you, complete and perfect. We choose to believe that because we have received the Victory over Sin, our lives can only bring forth the fruit of the Spirit, and we do not even entertain the thoughts of the flesh. Since we do not entertain the thoughts of the flesh, we cannot ever do the works of the flesh, for we well know that "thoughts lead to actions." Let us, therefore, think the thoughts of Yahshua, and we will live the very life of Yahshua, perfecting holiness in the fear of Yah. We are the saints of Yahweh, most certainly, because of what we have been certainly given by His Son.