

The following Scripture passages are offered to aid beginning fellowships. The readings and commentary for this week are more in line with what has become usual; for the following will most likely be familiar observations. The concept behind this Sabbath's selection is *Salvation & Faith*.

Weekly Readings For the Sabbath of August 19, 2006

The person conducting the Sabbath service should open services with two or three hymns, or psalms, followed by an opening prayer acknowledging that two or three (or more) are gathered together in Christ Jesus' name, and inviting the Lord to be with them.

The person conducting the service should read or assign to be read Luke chapter 18, verses 18 through 30.

Commentary: From last Sabbath, we see the same question asked as was asked by the lawyer: the rich young ruler wants to know what he must do to inherit eternal life.

Jesus asked the lawyer how he read the law. Here, Jesus tells the young ruler, "You know the commandments" (v. 20). So as He did the lawyer, Jesus points the young ruler to the law as given in the *Decalogue*. But before he points to the law, He asks the young man why he calls Him good, saying that no one is good except God alone (v. 19).

Jesus was without sin. He never broke a commandment, never broke even a precept of the law. He came to fulfill the Law and the Prophets, and He did. So if ever a human being could be called *good* that human being would have been Jesus of Nazareth. Yet He refused to allow to stand unchallenged being called *good*.

What Jesus did was to place all commandment-keeping, all law keeping into a category not labeled either *good* or *evil*.

The above is a difficult concept for still naturally minded disciples to grasp: if keeping the commandments—being literally sin free—doesn't make a person "good," then what can possibly make a person good? And the answer has to be, Nothing! That's right, nothing the flesh does can make a person into a *good person*. As long as the person is flesh, the person exists in a category to which *good* and *evil* does not apply.

Good and *evil* are value-based attributes not inherited by the flesh, nor properly assigned to the flesh, which is nothing but so-much meat, sometimes attractively packaged, sometimes shopped around as if being sold in a specialty market. The flesh is a tent not unlike a hide tipi in which a Lakota dwelt two centuries ago. The person—or that which has personhood—is the self-aware consciousness dwelling within the heart and mind of the tent of flesh, and it is to this self-aware consciousness that intangible, value attributes are properly assigned.

The difficulty of babes in Christ separating personhood from the flesh has produced all sorts of theological nonsense from *the flesh being evil* to *the Elect cannot sin; only the flesh sins*. Well, take the analogy to its logical conclusion: a Wal-Mart shopper buys a Coleman umbrella tent, then flies to Kodiak Island and across the Island to Uganik Bay,

and proceeds to pitch that tent in the middle of a bear trail. [The reader is ahead of me.] This year Kodiak has an excellent pink salmon run, and maybe a million fish will enter Uganik Bay. The bears are working overtime to put on as much fat as they can, for winters are long. So when a sow and her three half-grown cubs find this tent blocking the trail down to the beach—um, uh, that's right, they delicately tiptoe around the tent. No? They clear the trail? Probably. And who is responsible for our Wal-Mart shopper having the scare of his or her life? The bears? Or this shopper?

Who is responsible for the actions of the flesh? Bears on Kodiak Island? Or the person who dwells inside the tent of flesh?

To the surprise of some, sin [lawlessness] is not counted or reckoned as sin where there is no law (Rom 5:13). The person is under a previously unused theological term, *natural grace*. Because this person has been consigned to disobedience by God (Rom 11:32), the one to whom the person has been consigned is responsible for the person's sins: Satan is responsible regardless of whether Satan directly or indirectly caused the person to figuratively camp in the middle of a bear trail ... on one occasion, only the feet in the shoes were ever found.

The law brings knowledge of sin (Rom 7:7), and with knowledge comes responsibility. Thus, the rich young ruler was responsible for his law-breaking—but unlike the majority of disciples who have read Luke's gospel and can point to which commandments this young ruler had broken, Jesus does not bring any indictment against the young man. He didn't come to accuse (John 5:45), for all who would be saved have an accuser in Moses (Deu 31:26-27). So He didn't need to bring an indictment, for the self-aware consciousness of the young man knew how he stacked up against Moses, and knew whether he had covered his transgressions of the law. Thus, Jesus said only, "One thing you still lack" (Luke 18:22) and that was an act of faith and open profession [through following Jesus] that Jesus was Lord.

Jesus asked no more of the rich young ruler than He had asked of the Twelve.

Because the young man was circumcised with knowledge of the law, he was responsible to the law (Rom 2:13), but him keeping the law neither gave him *goodness*, nor righteousness. Again, if *goodness* and righteousness could come by law-keeping, then Jesus would not have asked why the young man called Him good. Keeping the law is the reasonable expectation by God of everyone who knows what the law is—and the foot-washing Baptist atop Clinch Mountain, Tennessee, knows what the law is, and cannot deny that he knows what the law is. All this foot-washing Baptist can do is deny that he is under the law as his excuse for weekly breaking the law by trying to enter into God's rest on the following day, the 8th-day.

Don't tell the teacher of this foot-washing Baptist that the laws of God have been written on the heart and placed in the mind of every disciple (Heb 8:10). Let this teacher of lawlessness be surprised when, in his judgment, Jesus denies knowing him ... or out of love, should we tell him? Should we tell this teacher that the difference between the hated son and the loved son, both to be born empowered by the Spirit when the Tribulation begins, is that the hated son has relaxed the least of the commandments and teaches others to do likewise whereas the loved son keeps the commandments and teaches others to do the same (Matt 7:21-23 & 5:19). And the least of the commandments is the Sabbath commandment, just ask him.

What outdoors man or woman doesn't know enough not to camp in the middle of a brown bear trail? The person who would camp in the middle of a trail is a real

cheechako. Likewise, what Christian doesn't know the ten living words of God in the person's first language—every Christian can recite most of the commandments from memory, and knows where to find the ones he or she doesn't remember. So why is not keeping these commandments as much of an expectation for this Christian as it was for the rich young ruler? The truth is, keeping the commandments is the reasonable service of every disciple who has access to a Bible.

But again, keeping the commandments does not produce *goodness* or righteousness. Keeping the commandments is, as John writes, the way disciples show God that they know Him (1 John 2:3-4).

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The reader should now read Acts chapter 16, verses 16 through 34.

Commentary: A different situation: when the jailer brought Paul and Silas out, he fell down before them, and asked, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved” (v. 30). This is, really, the same question that the lawyer asked, and the rich young ruler asked Jesus. But Paul doesn't point to the law, of which this Philippian jailer would have had no or very little knowledge. Instead, Paul said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household” (v. 31).

The carnally minded teacher of Israel will now point to the difference between how Jesus answered the question of what one must do to be saved, and how Paul answered the same question—and this spiritually immature [trying to be nice] teacher will say, *Ah, hah, the dispensation of law and the dispensation of Grace*. But as with a human toddler that still needs his nose wiped, the teacher of lawlessness missed the lesson and has snot on his cheeks—

- The one more thing that the young ruler needed to do was an act of faith equivalent to that of the patriarch Abraham when leaving Ur and journeying to Canaan, even after his father and relatives had settled in Haran.
- But it was Abraham believing God about an heir coming from his loins that is counted to the patriarch as righteousness (Gen 15:6).
- For the rich young ruler to sell all he had and to give his wealth to the poor would have been an act of faith equivalent to Abraham leaving Ur.
- For the Philippian jailer to take Paul and Silas from the jail and into his house, and to wash and dress their wounds [he has done what the Good Samaritan did], then feed them required an act of faith equivalent to Abraham leaving Ur.
- For the rich young ruler to have followed Jesus would have required that by his actions that the young man believed that Jesus was Lord, a profession of belief equivalent to Abraham believing God.
- For the Philippian jailer to *believe in the Lord Jesus* was a profession of belief in God equivalent to Abraham believing God.
- Thus, with the faith of Abraham, both the young ruler and the Philippian jailer would have cleansed their hearts—and with the righteousness of Abraham that came from believing God, both the young ruler and the Philippian jailer would have been justified before God.
- But the rich young ruler lacked faith, whereas on the basis of an earthquake and Paul's and Silas' behavior, the Philippian jailer had faith.

The same standard for salvation extends from Jesus to Paul. There is no difference here that could possibly justify a snout-nosed theologian finding in one place a *dispensation of law* and in the other incident a *dispensation of Grace*. That is banal drivel, and not worthy of any teacher of Israel.

Hearts are cleansed through faith.

The Apostle Paul writes that “if a man who is uncircumcised keeps the precepts of the law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision” (Rom 2:26). What would be the motivating force that would cause an uncircumcised person to keep the precepts of the law? Faith in God? Belief in God? What other reason might there be? And if his uncircumcision is counted as circumcision, will this uncircumcised man make a natural Israelite jealous? (Rom 11:11) You better believe that he will.

There are some teachers of Israel who make much of the semantic difference between */believing God/* and */belief in God/*. These are also spiritual children even if they have white beards—they are still suckling paps when they should have been eating solid food decades ago. But their spiritual growth was stunted by this piece of nonsense, or that piece [often by British Israelism], and now they are fearful of venturing off the advertising copy that would have most of endtime Israel being *nominal Christians in Churchanity*. These are vulgar little men who are spiritually the size of Zacchaeus before he climbed that sycamore tree. Perhaps they, too, will offer to repay four times what they have spiritually stolen from a generation of disciples.

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The reader should now read Acts chapter 15.

Commentary: The crux of the conference is in what Peter said: *God has made no distinction between natural Israel and Gentile converts, having cleansed the hearts of those Gentile converts by faith.* Receiving a circumcised heart and mind requires faith of the magnitude Abraham displayed when leaving kith and kin and journeying to Canaan where he sought a city whose builder and designer was the Lord (Heb 11:8-10). A circumcised heart doesn't require physical circumcision, or any physical thing to remind the person that the Commandments are written on the heart and placed in the mind through receipt of the Holy Spirit. It doesn't require relocating to physical Jerusalem.

Although the ruling of the Jerusalem Council was simplified in the letter sent out, the logic behind the letter was that the degree of faith that is necessary for a Greek living as a Greek [or the Philippian jailer living as just another resident of Philippi] to turn to God, profess that Jesus is Lord, and cease living as a Greek, cease eating blood, cease eating meats that were strangled so as to retain the blood, cease eating meats offered to idols, cease frequenting prostitutes, and begin entering the synagogue on the Sabbath day to hear Moses read was approximately the degree of faith comparable to the faith of Abraham who left home and kin to journey to Canaan, the Promised Land. And since Abraham needed to do nothing more than believe God, then Greek converts need to do nothing more to have their hearts cleansed by faith.

But a different situation exists with the second generation Greek disciple: familiarity with the law will put this young disciple in a situation similar to that of the rich young ruler. The faith that parents displayed, or the faith that Abraham had will require that this second generation disciple sell all he or she has and follow Christ as, perhaps, a missionary like Timothy was. Yes, this second generation Greek disciple will have grown up hearing Moses read, and will not have matured eating blood, strangled meats, and meats offered to idols. Therefore, more is required than living by what cleansed the

heart of his or her parents. If this next generation disciple does not move beyond his or her parents in knowledge and in deeds done by faith, then he or she will not have cleansed his or her heart and will, before long, die spiritually while continuing to identify him or herself as a Christian. But this is next Sabbath's subject.

Meanwhile, understand that common sense would tell a person that camping in the middle of a bear trail is not wise. This same common sense should also tell a disciple that if it isn't lawful for the disciple to murder someone, or to steal, or to bear false witness, or to commit adultery, or to covet, or to disrespect mother and father, then it isn't lawful to ignore the Sabbath that is to be remembered. And may the person who would have the disciple ignore the Sabbath take a fishing vacation to Kodiak this month.

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The person conducting the Sabbath service should close services with two hymns, or psalms, followed by a prayer asking God's dismissal.

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