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The Way

The West Valley End-Time Ministries Newsletter

In This Issue

Bible Study Passage — Page 2

Acts 23

Honest Questions — Page 4

Thank you for your questions!

Doctrines of Demons — Page 7

“The Lie About the Gospel”



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Acts of the Apostles

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“We are living in the season of Christ's return.”



Bible Study

Acts 23

The Sanhedrin Divided

1 Paul looked straight at the Sanhedrin and said, "My brothers, I have fulfilled my duty to God in all good conscience to this day." **2** At this the high priest Ananias ordered those standing near Paul to strike him on the mouth. **3** Then Paul said to him, "God will strike you, you whitewashed wall! You sit there to judge me according to the law, yet you yourself violate the law by commanding that I be struck!" **4** Those who were standing near Paul said, "How dare you insult God's high priest!" **5** Paul replied, "Brothers, I did not realize that he was the high priest; for it is written: 'Do not speak evil about the ruler of your people.'" **6** Then Paul, knowing that some of them were Sadducees and the others Pharisees, called out in the Sanhedrin, "My brothers, I am a Pharisee, descended from Pharisees. I stand on trial because of the hope of the resurrection of the dead." **7** When he said this, a dispute broke out between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and the assembly was divided. **8** (The Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, and that there are neither angels nor spirits, but the Pharisees believe all these things.) **9** There was a great uproar, and some of the teachers of the law who were Pharisees stood up and argued vigorously. "We find nothing wrong with this man," they said. "What if a spirit or an angel has spoken to him?" **10** The dispute became so violent that the commander was afraid Paul would be torn to pieces by them. He ordered the troops to go down and take him away from them by force and bring him into the barracks.

The Plot Against Paul

11 The following night the Lord stood near Paul and said, "Take courage! As you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome." **12** The next morning some Jews formed a conspiracy and bound themselves with an oath not to eat or drink until they had killed Paul. **13** More than forty men were involved in this plot. **14** They went to the chief priests and the elders and said, "We have taken a solemn oath not to eat anything until we have killed Paul. **15** Now then, you and the Sanhedrin petition the commander to bring him before you on the pretext of wanting more accurate information about his case. We are ready to kill him before he gets here." **16** But when the son of Paul's sister heard of this plot, he went into the barracks and told Paul. **17** Then Paul called one of the centurions and said, "Take this young man to the commander; he has something to tell him." **18** So he took him to the commander. The centurion said, "Paul, the prisoner, sent for me and asked me to bring this young man to you because he has something to tell you." **19** The commander took the young man by the hand, drew him aside and asked, "What is it you want to tell me?" **20** He said: "Some Jews have agreed to ask you to bring Paul before the Sanhedrin tomorrow on the pretext of wanting more accurate information about him. **21** Don't give in to them, because more than forty of them are waiting in ambush for him."



Bible Study

They have taken an oath not to eat or drink until they have killed him. They are ready now, waiting for your consent to their request." **22** The commander dismissed the young man with this warning: "Don't tell anyone that you have reported this to me."

Sent to Felix

23 Then he called two of his centurions and ordered them, "Get ready a detachment of two hundred soldiers, seventy horsemen and two hundred spearmen to go to Caesarea at nine tonight. **24** Provide horses for Paul so that he may be taken safely to Governor Felix." **25** He wrote a letter as follows: **26** Claudius Lysias, To His Excellency, Governor Felix: Greetings. **27** This man was seized by the Jews and they were about to kill him, but I came with my troops and rescued him, for I had learned that he is a Roman citizen. **28** I wanted to know why they were accusing him, so I brought him to their Sanhedrin. **29** I found that the accusation had to do with questions about their law, but there was no charge against him that deserved death or imprisonment. **30** When I was informed of a plot to be carried out against the man, I sent him to you at once. I also ordered his accusers to present to you their case against him. **31** So the soldiers, carrying out their orders, took Paul with them during the night and brought him as far as Antipatris. **32** The next day they let the cavalry go on with him, while they returned to the barracks. **33** When the cavalry arrived in Caesarea, they delivered the letter to the governor and handed Paul over to him. **34** The governor read the letter and asked what province he was from. Learning that he was from Cilicia, **35** he said, "I will hear your case when your accusers get here." Then he ordered that Paul be kept under guard in Herod's palace.



Honest Questions

Honest Question #1: The “Fruit of the Spirit” – what is it?

Bible Answer:

“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.” Galatians 5:22, 23.

Comments: In the above verse, Paul lists nine virtues which develop and exhibit themselves in the life of every Christian as the Holy Spirit lives and moves within the hearts of Christ’s followers. He says, “If we live by the Spirit, let us also behave in accordance with the Spirit.” Galatians 5:25. In verses 19-21 of the same chapter, Paul contrasts the “fruit of the Spirit” with “the works of the flesh.” He says, “the works of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity, depravity, idolatry, sorcery, hostilities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish rivalries, dissensions, factions, envying, murder, drunkenness, carousing, and similar things.”

The Holy Spirit is a Gift given to every person who responds to the Gospel in faith. Paul says, “After you heard the Word of truth, the Gospel of your salvation, and placed your faith in Christ, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee [or deposit], of our inheritance until [the return of Jesus Christ to claim His] purchased possession.” Ephesians 1:13, 14.

The work of the Holy Spirit on our hearts changes us. And while the fruit of His presence and work in our hearts is an ongoing process of changing us into the likeness of Christ, it is never complete until the Day Jesus returns. Again, Paul says, “We can be confident of this very thing – that He who began a good work in us will carry it on to completion **until the Day of His return.**” Further, the work of the Holy Spirit in transforming us into people whose lives are **consistent** with our faith in Christ – into Christians whose lives will not be a distraction or obstacle to our witness – what God does in us through the Spirit will never be contributory to **the finished work of Christ on our behalf**, which is perfect and sufficient in itself to save us! The “fruit of the Spirit” **can never** add to or be counted as meritorious toward our standing with God in Christ – **EVER! But it will change who we are**, demonstrate to others that we are followers of Christ, and give our message of the Gospel credibility before a world that needs to see something of Christ in the messenger!

Honest Question #2: In Ecclesiastes 3, what is meant by “a time for everything”?

Bible Text In Question:

“There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens.” Ecclesiastes 3:1.



Honest Questions

Comments: Solomon was the greatest religious philosopher of all time! He was a follower of Christ (Jesus is the God of the Old Testament), a man of great wisdom and wealth, the son of King David and Bathsheba, successor to the throne of David, a man who perhaps experienced more of human life than any other, and a writer of all aspects of human experience from both a spiritual and secular perspective! He wrote three of the Old Testament books of the Bible – Proverbs (a collection of great gems of wisdom on how to live life successfully); Ecclesiastes (a book on life and death, the meaning of life, what is important and what is “meaningless” and nothing more than “chasing the wind”); and Song of Solomon (a book on his passion for the one(s) he loved and an illustration of God’s love for mankind).

The context of the verse in question is as follows:

“There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens: a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot, a time to kill and a time to heal, a time to tear down and a time to build, a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance, a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them, a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing, a time to search and a time to give up, a time to keep and a time to throw away, a time to tear and a time to mend, a time to be silent and a time to speak, a time to love and a time to hate, a time for war and a time for peace.” Ecclesiastes 3:1-8.

This passage covers almost every aspect of our life on this earth, and as Solomon writes these words, he is describing the normal composite of human experience. What’s interesting to me is that there is no judgment inferred on a single aspect of this life. “There is a time to love and a time to hate – a time for war and a time for peace.” Solomon’s father, King David, says of God, “You **love** righteousness and **hate** wickedness” Psalms 45:7. And for David, there was no greater cause than that of the sovereignty of Israel, the defense of justice, and the honor of God. He lived for this, fought for this, and at the end of his life he was described as “a man after God’s own heart.”

The treatise of Ecclesiastes is a fascinating one – an analysis of life by an incredible man who knew the meaning of life from both his personal experience and his devotion to God. And at the end of this great dissertation, Solomon sums up the entire book with these words –

“Having heard everything, I have reached this conclusion: Fear God and keep his commandments, because this is the whole duty of man. For God will evaluate every deed, including every secret thing, whether good or evil.” Ecclesiastes 12:13, 14 NET.

Honest Questions

Honest Question #3: What does the Bible say about forgiveness?

Bible Answer:

"Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." Matthew 6:12 (from the Lord's Prayer).

Comments: The Bible speaks of two kinds of forgiveness – which Jesus made a function of one another.

- ♦ The forgiveness of God toward man – The forgiveness of God toward man was procured at Calvary when Jesus offered Himself as the satisfaction (or "propitiation") for our debt of sin with God. Romans 3:25. When we claim by faith that act of grace toward us, we stand forgiven before God. **In fact, as we live our lives in faith, we live under the canopy of God's grace and the forgiveness it engenders!**
- ♦ The forgiveness of man toward man – As the Christian lives in an environment of grace and forgiveness with God for the sins we've committed, **and** for our sinful nature which alone condemns us to eternal death, it is only right that those who have sinned against us for much less should also experience our forgiveness for their lesser debts with us! To refuse them the forgiveness that is ours in Christ is to deny our appreciation for all that has been forgiven us!

The story of Simon the Leper and Mary Magdalene – The Saturday evening before Jesus' sacrifice on Calvary, He was invited to have dinner at Simon's house. Mary Magdalene also came, and during the dinner, Mary washed Jesus' feet with her tears and a costly perfume. Simon silently objected because of who Mary was reputed to be, and Jesus read Simon's thoughts and said to him,

"Simon, I have something to say to you." And he answered, "Say it, Teacher." "A certain moneylender had two debtors. One owed five hundred [day's wages], and the other fifty. When they could not pay, he cancelled the debt of both. Now which of them will love him more?" Simon answered, "The one, I suppose, for whom he cancelled the larger debt." And he said to him, "You have judged rightly." Then turning toward the woman he said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven – for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little." Luke 7:40-47 ESV.

What forgiveness is and isn't – Some people think that the kind of forgiveness Jesus enjoins upon us is characterized by sweeping the offenses of others against us "under the rug" – "forgiving and forgetting" – embracing the offender just as if we had never been offended or hurt by his actions. That is not forgiveness, that's naivety and a prescription for more vulnerability and suffering! One Christian writer rightfully said, "Forgiveness is being willing to bear the pain of the offense against you, trusting that God will ultimately avenge you for the wrongs done against you by the offender." (Paraphrase). When God forgave us our sins, He didn't just casually say to us, "It's okay – I forgive you!" He sent His Son to the cross to pay for our sins with His precious blood! He bore the pain of our offense and experienced on our behalf the penalty for our sin so we wouldn't have to! God is just, and the death of hell is the justice of God against those who have sinned against Him and His children – those who have refused His satisfaction for their sin!

Doctrines of Demons

“The Lie About the Gospel”

I grew up in a conservative Christian home. My entire family – parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts, and cousins were pastors, missionaries, and church workers of one kind or another. They were leaders and support personnel in a religious sub-culture of Protestantism, and my father was a pastor. You would think that at some point in my first twenty-five years of life, having lived in such an environment, I would have come to understand and embrace in faith the Gospel of Jesus Christ. But I didn't. For those in my world, the Gospel was the message of Christ's coming, the Sabbath, “the investigative judgment,” and how to become “a portrait of Christ” before Jesus comes. The salvation part of the message went something like this:

Jesus died for your sins so you could have eternal life. If you put your faith in Christ, He will forgive you all your **past** sins and give you a new start toward a life of holiness – the Christian life. Further, His Holy Spirit will change your heart and enable you to live a life in harmony with His will. By the power of His Holy Spirit, you will gradually overcome every sin in your life (the process of sanctification and an integral part of the “salvation package”). If you read your Bible and pray every day, asking God for His forgiveness, He will be “faithful to forgive your sin and cleanse you from all unrighteousness.” 1 John 1:9. But if you die with unconfessed sin in your life, your eternal life could be in jeopardy.

In this doctrine of salvation (the gospel), the emphasis is on utilizing the power of the Holy Spirit to overcome every sin and develop a character “worthy” of heaven. Salvation includes not only the initial justification that comes with faith in Christ, but also the sanctification of the Holy Spirit who imparts the righteousness of Christ to the believer, making him as righteous as he needs to be to face Jesus on the day of His return – sinless. For the new Christian, the hope of eternal life as a result of Christ's death on the cross (justification) **and** of becoming righteous through the impartation of Christ's righteousness (sanctification) sounds good. But this doctrine always leaves the believer uncertain of his standing with God because he never knows for sure when he will achieve the level of holiness necessary to be certain of his salvation, and his salvation is always contingent upon his own efforts and making certain he is in a state of forgiveness with God at all times. It is a doctrine of salvation by **faith plus works** – of **Christ's merits plus my merits**, albeit coming from the work of the Holy Spirit within me. **It sounds so good, but it is a false gospel, devised by Satan to corrupt the true Gospel of Jesus Christ and make the Christian insecure, vulnerable to discouragement and doubt, and ultimately tempt him to abandon his faith!**

This is what I was raised to believe about how to be saved, but for twenty-five years it left me in constant doubt and uncertain about whether I would be ready to meet Jesus when He comes. I knew I could never become what I was taught I must become to be ready to meet Him. I wanted to be, but I never felt secure

Doctrines of Demons

in Christ. Even as a child of ten years, I had a recurring dream of standing in the front yard of our country home in Kentucky, overlooking the large field adjacent to our house and seeing Jesus come. But in every dream, He would come down from the heavens, people would ascend into the clouds to “meet Him in the air,” but when He had gone back into heaven with the saved, I stood alone on the bank that overlooked the site of His return!

But one day at the age of twenty-five, I attended a Jesus People Convention at the Hollywood Palladium and met an elder of the Hollywood First Presbyterian Church who shared the Gospel with me. He told me of the salvation of the Bible that was “by faith from first to last” Romans 1:17 NIV, and “apart from any works of the Law” Galatians 2:16. I argued with him about his understanding of the Gospel because he was telling me that our salvation is based entirely upon what Jesus did for us (past tense) **alone**, and that our obedience to the Law of God, our sanctification by the Holy Spirit, had **no part** in our right to heaven. He spoke of how a person is saved “by grace **alone**, through faith **alone**, in Jesus Christ **alone**,” absolutely apart from **any** works of our own – even those works inspired by the Holy Spirit within our hearts. It all sounded too good to be true, so he told me to go home and, in a newer translation of the Bible, read Romans chapters 1 – 8 to see if what he was telling me wasn’t true. So I did, and it changed my life forever! I have not been the same since! As one pastor friend told me when he heard the Gospel of the Bible for the first time, he said, “I was undone!” I too was undone!

So, what is the devil’s lie about the Gospel that is so evil? What is the false gospel that steals the glory and awe from what Christ has done to save me/you the sinner? The lie says that the work of Christ was not complete at Calvary – that the life that Jesus lived and the death He died was not enough – that a person cannot be saved unless he adds to what Jesus did by himself living a life of righteousness and merit that contributes to his own salvation. It makes a person’s salvation a mix of the righteousness of the Son of God with the righteousness of the sinner who prays enough, studies enough, works hard enough, receives enough of the Holy Spirit, obeys enough, and by doing so becomes **inherently** what God requires for salvation. The lie allows for faith and grace and Jesus, but it isn’t faith **alone**, grace **alone**, Jesus **alone**!

Examples of modern-day churches that deny the Gospel of Jesus Christ:

- ♦ **The Roman Catholic Church** – “Salvation is an ongoing, God-initiated **process of transformation from a state of sin to righteousness**, achieved through grace, faith, and works **in cooperation** with God’s will, ultimately culminating in eternal union with God. Justification is the initial event and **ongoing process by which God makes a sinner righteous, cleansing them from sin and infusing them with His righteousness** through the Holy Spirit.”
- ♦ **The Methodist Church** – “Methodists also understand salvation as a **process or journey, encompassing the whole work of God in a believer’s life.**”

Doctrines of Demons

- ♦ **The Seventh-day Adventist Church** – “The Gospel is becoming a portrait of Christ.” (Ted Wilson, General Conference President, in the official church paper, *The Review*). For Seventh-day Adventists, the Gospel is all about becoming as perfect and sinless as Jesus – adding to what He has done – in order to face Him in the judgment.
- ♦ In 1994, forty **Catholic** leaders **and Evangelical** leaders signed an agreement entitled, “Evangelicals and Catholics Together,” which denied the gross historical differences in Protestant and Catholic doctrine and confessed that both groups were part of the same Christian family with a common faith and mission!
- ♦ In 1999, **Catholics and Lutherans** drafted a document entitled, “Joint Declaration on Justification by Faith” – a document which states that **Lutherans and Catholics now share "a common understanding of our justification by God's grace through faith in Christ."** To the parties involved, this substantially resolves much of the 500-year-old conflict over the nature of justification which was at the root of the Protestant Reformation. Through the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification, "the formal condemnations of both the Catholic and Lutheran Churches against one another" were rescinded.

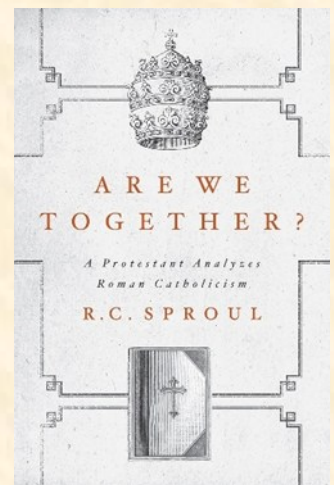
While preparing this article for our newsletter, I happened upon a video by R. C. Sproul, a true warrior for the Gospel. I submit his testimony on this subject as the crowning argument for my case, “The Lie About the Gospel,” and **I strongly encourage my readers to take the few minutes necessary to watch Dr. Sproul’s defense of the Gospel** of Jesus Christ in an age of false doctrine within the Christian Church. **Please click the following link** to hear one of the finest expositions on this subject.



“For Justification by Faith Alone” – R. C. Sproul

In recent years, some evangelical Protestant leaders have signed statements pledging themselves to joint social action with Roman Catholics. Others have refused to participate, declaring that, in their view, the statements went too far, touching on the gospel, which remains a point of disagreement between Protestants and Roman Catholics. Many evangelical

Christians have found themselves confused by the different directions taken by their leaders. In *Are We Together? A Protestant Analyzes Roman Catholicism*, R.C. Sproul takes his stand for the cardinal doctrines of Protestantism in opposition to the errors of the Roman Catholic Church.



Doctrines of Demons

Sproul, a passionate defender of the gospel of justification by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone, cites the historic statements of the Protestant Reformers and the Roman Catholic authorities, then references modern doctrinal statements to show that the Roman Catholic Church has not altered its official positions. In light of this continuing gap, he writes, efforts by some in the evangelical camp to find common ground with Rome on matters at the heart of the gospel are nothing short of untrue to biblical teaching. In Sproul's estimation, the Reformation remains relevant. *Are We Together?* is a clarion call to evangelicals to stand firm for the gospel, the precious good news of salvation as it is set forth in Scripture alone.

In Summary

Paul's Personal Remarks to the Galatians About the Gospel of Jesus Christ –

"I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are following a different gospel – not that there really is another gospel, but there are some who are disturbing you and wanting to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be condemned to hell! As we have said before, and now I say again, if anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, let him be condemned to hell!" Galatians 1:6-9 NET.

My Personal Testimony...

Once I was lost and without hope. Not only did my sins and failures of the past condemn me, but my very sin nature, for which I had no responsibility, condemned me. And asking God for forgiveness seemed fruitless, for the very sins for which I kept asking forgiveness continued to plague my life. As much as I "hoped" to be ready for Jesus to come one day, I knew inside I would always fall short of being ready to see Him come in peace.

Then I learned this!

When Jesus was born in Bethlehem, He literally became a part of our human family — my family — literally "flesh of my flesh, bone of my bone." He became one with me, in the very same way in which I am one with Adam, reaping the consequences of his (Adam's) sin in which I had no part. Jesus' incarnation became the basis upon which His life, death, and resurrection would become my very own. Jesus became for us the "second Adam" — offering to us the credit for ALL He was and did!

For 33 years, Jesus lived a perfect life of obedience to all that God requires of humanity. He not only lived a perfect life, He was perfectly righteous in nature, without sin. Then, at the end of His life on earth as my Savior, Jesus endured Gethsemane and Calvary for MY sin/sins. Jesus' solidarity

Doctrines of Demons

with me enabled Him to bear my sin/sins, in which He had no part, on the cross AS ME, dying my eternal death, a death He didn't deserve. He became me at Calvary, bearing my sin, dying my death.

And what follows is what is so amazing! My solidarity with Jesus, through faith alone, now enables me to claim AS MY OWN a righteousness that is not mine, and a perfect life AS MINE that is not mine but which meets every demand of the just Law of God — bringing for me a right standing with God, quite apart from my own efforts, which will withstand the scrutiny of the final judgment! When I, by faith alone, claimed all that Jesus was and did for me, I “passed from death to life”! Nothing can change that for me — not my fallen nature, not my faltering ways, not anything in me can ever separate me from the love and redemption that is in Christ Jesus alone!

All of this is yours too by simply claiming in faith that which Jesus did for you, as you! He lived your life AS YOU, died your death AS YOU, and came forth from the grave in victory AS YOU. When you claim it all in faith, it becomes yours as certainly as if you had done it! That is what will give you the anchor of safety with God, never to be questioned, at a time when nothing else is sure — even life itself! That is the Gospel with which Paul and the Early Church literally turned the world upside down and gave us our very heritage and identity as Christians! Any other “gospel” is a lie of the devil!

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