

Righteousness, the Law, and the Sabbath

The everlasting gospel is preached to those who dwell on the earth in the words: "Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water. ... Here is the patience of the saints; here *are* those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus" (Rev. 14:6-12).

Here are seen the ones from the earth who have heeded the cry of the 1st angel to worship God the Creator on the seventh day, the Sabbath. We see that these saints only worship on Sabbath by and through the faith of Jesus, not through any effort on their part.

From Gal. 5:6, we see that in Christ "faith working through love" is the only thing that avails or benefits anyone. It is here we learn that it is faith that preforms the works and not us. Again in Gal. 6:15 Paul equates this "faith working through love" with "a new creation." Therefore it is this faith of Jesus that obeys and makes us into new creations.

Now the Law requires perfect obedience, which is called righteousness, yet man cannot produce this righteousness (obedience) no matter how long he lives or how hard he tries. Righteousness is only found in one place, and that is in Christ. The law recognizes and accepts only Christ's righteousness and so for a man to be righteous, the law must see only Christ's righteousness in him. The law will never accept man's efforts to meet its standards.

Knowing the law and what it requires is not the same as keeping the law; "trying" to keep the law or doing our best is not keeping the law – it is sin "for whatever is not from faith is sin" (Rom. 14:23). Man's efforts to obey the commandments of God show his unbelief. Therefore we also conclude that the keeping of the commandments of God are only obeyed by "faith working through love" and the only faith that has ever obeyed is the faith of Jesus.

So how are the commandments of God to be kept? Abram provides us with a great example in Gen. 15:1-6. When Abram believed what the LORD told him, "He accounted it to him for righteousness." By believing that what God has said is true. For example, when God says, "You shall not commit adultery," He is telling us the truth; because we have already been delivered and His promise is He will keep us from adultery. This holds true for all the commandments of God. (Remember the Ten Commandments begin with Ex. 20:1, 2, not with verse 3).

Another example is found in Hebrews 3 and 4. Paul shows why the ones who came out of Egypt could not enter into Sabbath, God's rest. Even though they were completely delivered, given the Ten Commandments and knew them and 'worshipped' on the seventh day – here is what God had to say about this special people: "So I swore in My

wrath, they shall not enter into My rest" (Heb. 3:11; 4:3).

The reason why they could not enter into His rest is found in Heb. 3:18, 19: "And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief." Here we see that their disobedience is called unbelief, therefore obedience is to believe. They did not believe therefore they could not obey. Believing, however, is obedience and the same as faith.

So how do the saints of Rev. 14:12 patiently keep the commandments of God? They don't, it is Christ in them that does. Paul says, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God" (Gal. 2:20). So when crucified with Christ, I am dead, and dead men have no faith and have no strength to do anything, which means I cannot obey or keep anything. However we see that "Christ lives in me and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the One who lives in me. All that Christ is comes with Him and so when He lives in me, the law sees His righteousness and is satisfied.

In 2 Corinthians 5, Paul again says: "For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died" (v. 14), "Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new" (v. 17), "For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (v. 21). Why would God die so that we could be made righteous if we already had the ability to obey the law?

In coming to earth, Jesus took upon Himself our flesh and blood – our sinful fallen human nature, yet without sin – He took it upon Himself. So when Christ died on the cross, He not only died for us, but as us – the true substitution. The death that He died was the second death, the final punishment for sin – the demand for justice of the law being met in Him.

This is important to understand: "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (Isa. 53:6). Here we see that all sin has been laid on Him – all sin. So in the final judgment no one is punished for their sins because Jesus has already died for the sin of the whole world – they die because of unbelief, just like in Hebrews 3 and 4. They fail to enter into His rest – fail to give the glory to God, and they experience the wrath of God. (See Rev. 14: 6-12).

It is interesting that nowhere in the Bible is anything said about how well man has done; nowhere does it say, "They did pretty good! – They did their best! – They did their part!" Nowhere are mans efforts acknowledged, praised, or accepted.

Again we see how it is said that the saints keep the commandments of God: "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with

Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:1-4).

Notice that in saying "we also should walk in the newness of life" – he does not allow for partially walking in the newness of life. He can say this with all confidence because it is "Christ in you, the hope of Glory" (Col. 1:26, 27). It is He that gives us the newness of His life, His faith, His righteousness and His peace.

A jailer once asked Paul and Silas: "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" So they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved" (Acts 16: 30, 31). Paul and Silas did not say, "Promise to be faithful"; "Do your best to obey God"; "Try really hard to be good", etc. Why? Because obedience consists in believing what God has said. Obedience is by faith – righteousness is by faith.

So, it is Christ in us with His righteousness that is in full harmony with the commandments of God. The three angels message is 'righteousness by faith in verity' and the proof of its presence is the Sabbath.

"The work of righteousness will be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever" (Isa. 32:17).

-- Daniel Peters