

Study Hints for Thinking Further

International Bible Lessons

Galatians 2:15-21

Sunday, February 5, 2012

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Some Bible study groups or classes can further discussion by asking some or all of the **Five Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** below. Others may want to send the bulletin size *International Bible Lesson* home with their students for further study in the coming week to encourage continuing Bible study. The *Study Hints for Thinking Further* below are not actually intended to be answers to the discussion questions, but hints a teacher may use to help students think through and discuss the questions in class.

Five Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. Why should a sinner want to be justified? How can a sinner be justified?

If you were on trial for having stolen something, but you did not do it, you would like to be found not guilty or justified (in the right) so as not to be punished by the court system. Someday, a sinner will stand before God's heavenly court system. Because he is guilty of sin, he deserves to be punished. He cannot be found not guilty, justified, or in the right on the basis of God's law, because he has broken (and has even practiced breaking) God's law. Still, God has made a provision for the guilty sinner to be justified and saved from the eternal punishment he deserves, and God has done so through a free gift, the gift of His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. To be justified, a sinner must believe what God has revealed in the Bible about His free gift of salvation and place his (or her) faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

2. What are "the works of the law"?

The moral law of God requires us to love the LORD our God with all of our heart, mind, soul, and strength and our neighbors as ourselves. The moral law includes the commands of Jesus; such as, love one another as I have loved you. The moral law is summed up in the one word "love." God still expects us to obey the moral law and the teachings of Jesus. In heaven, everyone loves God and each other. The "works of the law" are requirements that God placed on the Israelites through Moses (and these requirements grew in number and became the "traditions of the elders"). Primarily, these works of the law were ceremonial in nature (permitting and forbidding the eating of certain foods, prescribing ritual washings and sacrifices, commanding the circumcision of males). Paul insisted that doing these "works of the law" cannot erase the fact that we have sinned (they cannot justify us or put us in the right before God). Only Jesus Christ can do that when He justifies us by grace through faith in Him. We must not add doing these "works of the law" or doing any "works of law" or doing any "good works" to faith in Jesus Christ as the way to be saved or justified by God. The problem Paul dealt with involved some people teaching that in order to be saved a person must believe in Jesus Christ and also practice certain works prescribed by some in the church according to their traditions. They taught that Gentiles had to convert to Judaism and also believe that Jesus was the Messiah in order to be saved.

3. What do believers do after they are justified?

Those who are saved by faith in Jesus Christ love God, love others, and do good works of faith under the guidance of and empowerment of the Holy Spirit. They do not do these things to be saved, but because Jesus has saved them they choose to do these things.

4. Who did Paul “live to” and what did he “live by” (see Galatians 2:19-20)?

Paul chose to “live to God.” He chose to “live by faith in the Son of God.” He chose to put his focus on God and Jesus Christ and trust his future to Jesus Christ and living according to His teachings. He found the true joy of living in his relationship with and service to God in Jesus Christ and with his fellow believers.

5. Where does Jesus Christ live?

In His resurrected human body, Jesus is seated in heaven at the right hand of God the Father (see Hebrews 8:1). In His Spirit, He lives in the person who trusts in Him as Lord and Savior for his salvation.

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