

# Living the Life of Faith



## *Sabbath Afternoon*

**MEMORY TEXT:** “He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?” (Micah 6:8).

**T**HIS QUARTER we’ve looked at one of the foundations of the Christian faith—forgiveness, without which we would have no hope of anything beyond the spasm of cellular metabolism we call human life. And that’s not just any forgiveness; it’s the forgiveness that a perfectly holy and righteous God grants to unholy and unrighteous people, a forgiveness that inevitably leads them to a life of holiness and a righteousness that reflects, however imperfectly, the holiness and righteousness of God Himself.

We’ve seen, too, that being forgiven by God brings about a radical change in a person’s life, changes that should influence every part of our being, because the most fundamental aspect of our existence, our relationship to our Creator, has been altered.

This week we’ll take one more look at what forgiveness means in the lives of those who, however unworthy, have been forgiven.

**THE WEEK AT A GLANCE:** What does it mean to live by faith? In what ways are we “complete in Him”? What are some of the blessings that we have been given through Christ? How should these blessings influence the way we treat others? Though salvation is free, what costs are still involved? How do we manifest our love for God because of what He has done for us?

\*Please study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, June 28.

LIVING BY FAITH.

“For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith” (Rom. 1:17).

Romans 1:17 is one of the most well-known texts in Scripture. It was a verse that changed Martin Luther’s life (not to mention the history of the Christian church). But the question is, If the just shall live by faith, *faith in what?*

Dwell on Romans 1:17. If need be, look up the other places where the same phrase is used (Hab. 2:4; Gal. 3:11; Heb. 10:38) and then write out what you think the answer to this crucial question is.

Whatever answer you gave, one thing is for sure: If it didn’t include, either openly or tacitly, the notion that our sins are forgiven by God, then your answer is woefully incomplete. To even be called “just” implies that we have been forgiven. Good deeds, kind words, a loving heart, however fundamental to Christianity, doesn’t make a person just in the sight of God. Only those whose sins have been forgiven, only those who have the merits of Christ granted to them, are “just.”

The question then arises, How do we know that our sins are forgiven? Do we hear a voice shouting down from heaven telling us so? Does God write letters in the sky assuring us of forgiveness? Do we have visions in which the Lord tells us that we are forgiven?

No. We believe it *by faith*. We claim it *by faith*. We accept it *by faith*. How else?

This is why the just, the forgiven, *live by faith*—faith in the promise of forgiveness made to us through the life, death, and high-priestly ministry of Jesus Christ. The hope, the peace, the assurance we have because of the forgiveness that is ours, we have only by faith. Not blind faith, not reckless faith, but faith, nonetheless.

Why is the understanding that our sins have been forgiven so crucial to the Christian? Think of what it would mean if we *didn’t* have that assurance of forgiveness. And why, in order to have that assurance, must our forgiveness be based not on what we can do but only on what Christ has done for us at the Cross? If it were based on ourselves, what assurance would we have?

TEACHERS COMMENTS

Key Text: Micah 6:8.

Teachers Aim:

1. To teach that living by faith is claiming the promise of God’s forgiveness.
2. To show that despite the trials of life, we can by faith have the assurance of eternal salvation.
3. To affirm that God’s love for us gives us the power to live the life of faith.

Lesson Outline:

I. The Just Shall Live by Faith (Gal. 3:11).

- A. Being a just person implies that one has been forgiven.
- B. We have forgiveness through faith in Jesus.
- C. Thus, we are complete in Jesus.
- D. God loves us and has given us, through faith, the assurance of eternal life.

II. Christ, the Perfect Example (Isa. 53:5).

- A. Because of Jesus, we are blessed.
- B. Jesus paid a high price.
- C. Our blessings cost us something, too.
- D. These costs are faith, humility, obedience, death to self, etc.

III. What Is Good? (Mic. 6:8).

- A. The Lord requires us to be just, merciful, and humble.
- B. Micah 6:8 uses action words (to do justice, etc.). This suggests that as Christians, our actions are important in carrying forth God’s will.
- C. Loving God compels us to love even the unlovable.

**Summary:** “The children of God are called to be representatives of Christ, showing forth the goodness and mercy of the Lord. As Jesus has revealed to us the true character of the Father, so we are to reveal Christ to a world that does not know His tender, pitying love.”—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 115.

Commentary.

Living the Life of Faith.

Christ’s life, death, and resurrection reveal the righteousness of God. They show how His love extends to humanity and how He made

## COMPLETE IN JESUS (Col. 2:10).

Look at the text for today. If need be, read a few verses that precede it. What an incredible statement. Verse 9 says that in Jesus “dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.” The NIV says “for in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form.” And now we, through faith, become united with Christ! No wonder, then, the text says that we are “complete in him.” That completeness becomes easier to understand when we know who He is—the one in whom the fullness of the Godhead dwells. Talk about knowing people in high places! Talk about connections!

Thus, through Jesus, who has all power in heaven and in earth, we have been given access to so much that others just don’t have.

“Shall we not strive to use to the very best of our ability the little time that is left us in this life, adding grace to grace, power to power, making it manifest that we have a source of power in the heavens above? Christ says: ‘All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth.’ Matthew 28:18. What is this power given to Him for? For us. He desires us to realize that He has returned to heaven as our Elder Brother and that the measureless power given Him has been placed at our disposal.”—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 186.

Think about what we have through Jesus. First and foremost, we have forgiveness of our sins (Col. 1:14). We have the promise of “no condemnation” (Rom. 8:1). We have the promise, now, of eternal life (1 John 2:25). We have the promise of the Holy Spirit (John 14:26). We have the promise of power to overcome sin (Jude 24). We have the promise of His righteousness (Rom. 1:17). We have the promise that no matter what happens we can trust in the goodness of our Lord (Rom. 8:28).

In short, because of the forgiveness offered us at the Cross, we have the promise that whatever our toils, struggles, pains, fears, and failures, we have a God who loves us, who died for us, and who offers us the assurance that when all is said and done, we will live with Him forever in an eternal paradise where there will be no more pain, no more suffering, no more of the terrible things that we suffer here.

**Now, with all these promises in Christ, shouldn’t we as Christians be the most loving, giving, and self-sacrificing of all people in the world? Because we have been given so much, shouldn’t we be giving so much? Because we are given so much help, aid, comfort, and hope, shouldn’t we be the most generous in giving others aid, comfort, and hope? Ask yourself, If you are not giving freely to others, could it be because you haven’t fully claimed or grasped, by faith, the promises offered you? If so, what can you do to change?**

## TEACHERS COMMENTS

provisions for our salvation, even though we are unworthy. Daily studying Christ’s life and death and appropriating the benefits He died to give all people enables us to live lives of faith.

On our own, it would be impossible to live lives of faith. We simply are not programmed for it. However, God’s work in our lives enables us to claim Christ’s faith. Once we begin to live faithfully, we will find that our faith grows. “The righteousness of God is received by faith, and when received, results in ever-increasing faith. As faith is exercised we are able to receive more and still more of the righteousness of God until faith becomes a permanent attitude toward Him. . . .

“It is by faith alone that a man can be righteous before God.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 477. “Paul declares [in Galatians 3:11] that faith is the fundamental prerequisite to acceptance with God.”—Page 955.

The concept of forgiveness is another essential part of the life of faith. We can rest assured in the knowledge that Christ’s death brought about forgiveness for our sins. We appropriate the forgiveness of Christ through faith. We acknowledge that His death has covered our sins. Therefore we can turn our backs to sin in the comfort of knowing He will enable us to remain strong against temptation. A life of faith implies knowledge that “according to the eternal purpose of God, all things contribute to the welfare of those who love Him. Even the troubles and suffering of this life, far from hindering our salvation, may help it forward. At every step the Christian may be in the hands of God and be carrying out the divine purpose. . . .

“Nothing can touch the Christian except by our Lord’s permission (see Job 1:12; 2:6), and all things that are permitted work together for good to those who love God.”—Pages 573, 574. What comfort can be ours knowing that our loving God has a purpose behind the events of our lives!

In addition to the forgiveness of sins, Christ showers us with blessings. These blessings are an integral part of a life of faith. Through the Holy Spirit, God “is able to impart [the deep things of God] to men who are willing to be instructed.

“Not only would the Spirit reveal new truths; He would also call to mind truths that had slipped from the mind, of those things Jesus had taught, or of those things that had earlier been revealed in the Scriptures of truth. In moments of crisis . . . the Spirit would bring the appropriate ideas into mind (Matt. 10:19, 20). . . . Christians who have been diligent students of the Bible may have the confidence that the Holy Spirit will call to mind passages suited to the occasion.”—Volume 5, p. 1039.

A life of faith includes service. “God does not live for Himself. . . . He is constantly ministering for others. . . . His whole life was under a law of service. He served all, ministered to all. . . . He lived the law of

TO FOLLOW CHRIST.

“The only man who has the right to say that he is justified by grace alone is the man who has left all to follow Christ.” —Dietrich Bonhoeffer

There’s no question: We have through Jesus Christ been given so much. As fallen, sinful beings, we barely can begin to comprehend the blessings we have in Jesus. And only as we marvel at what happened at the Cross can we start to understand how much those blessings cost.

Yet, those blessings come with a cost for us too. Sure, the gap between heaven and earth, caused by sin, was way too great for us ever to be able to bridge ourselves. That’s why Christ had to do it for us. Yet, only those who have surrendered to Christ, in faith—however faulty the exercise of that faith at times is—will be saved in the end.

Look at the quote by Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Do you agree? Is his statement too strong? Look up the following texts and see whether they help illuminate what he meant. Luke 9:23; Luke 18:22; Gal. 6:14; Phil. 3:8; Col. 2:20. After reading them, in the context of the Bonhoeffer quote, write down below your understanding of what being justified by faith alone costs us as followers of Christ.

Four horizontal lines for writing.

Only the most misguided and imbalanced notions of what salvation by faith alone means could cause anyone to believe that being a follower of Christ doesn’t cost us anything. If need be, it could cost us everything. This isn’t salvation by works; this isn’t legalism; this is simply the biblical principle, expounded especially in the New Testament, of dying to self and living a new life in Christ, a life of faith, humility, obedience, reverence, and self-denial. These are not easy objectives for beings who, by nature, are consumed with greed, carnality, egoism, and self-exaltation.

Look at your own life in the past twenty-four hours. In what ways, if any, have you revealed, either in words, deeds, or thoughts, the biblical principle of death to self?

TEACHERS COMMENTS

God, and by His example showed how we are to obey it.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 649. In all things, Christians should seek to emulate the life of Christ. Like Him, they “should give to others . . . , treat others equitably . . . , do good to others, and love others . . . without calculating in advance the probability of getting the same or more in return. Christians are to help even apparently hopeless cases. . . . The Christian is never to be ‘weary in well doing’ . . . , nor should he feel that his labor is ‘in vain.’

“The highest motive of a Christian is not to live the better life in

INDUCTIVE BIBLE STUDY

Texts for Discovery: Isaiah 58:6-12; Micah 6:6-8; Colossians 2:6-15; 1 John 4:7-21.

Him will be more constant, our love will be quickened, and we shall be more deeply imbued with His spirit.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 83. How would an hour spent contemplating the life of Christ aid us in being more loving, more forgiving?

- 1. Forgiveness, like love, peace, mercy, and so forth, seems so intangible. It’s hard to describe, let alone put into practice. Read John 13:34, 35. How important is love and forgiveness in the Christian church? In the life of the individual Christian? Mention some biblical examples when love and forgiveness actually changed the course of someone’s life. Cite some examples from your own experience of the ways forgiveness has changed the life of someone you know.
2. Ellen White wrote: “It would be well for us to spend a thoughtful hour each day in contemplation of the life of Christ. We should take it point by point, and let the imagination grasp each scene, especially the closing ones. As we thus dwell upon His great sacrifice for us, our confidence in
3. The example of Christ’s life and ministry amply illustrate the importance of love and forgiveness to His earthly ministry. Why does it often seem that Christians are less forgiving and more judgmental than the rest of society? What is the solution to this problem?
4. Some Christians have accepted the mistaken notion that God cares more about what we don’t do (what we don’t wear, what we don’t eat) than He cares about what we do. Read Micah 6:6-8. In what ways could your church, or you as an individual, do more to reflect God’s active efforts to reach out to humankind?

“MAH TOV” (Mic. 6:8).

One of the great struggles of living in what has been called the Information Age is that we have so much information. Yet, information isn’t the same as knowledge or, especially, the same as truth. With so much information coming from so many directions, from so many sources, some of the most basic and important questions can get muddled or lost amid the barrage of data and facts that often come with conflicting viewpoints. And one of those crucial questions is, simply, How do we know what is good or evil?

Today’s text comes with the simple Hebrew phrase “Mah Tov,” which means “What is good?” And how fortunate for us that it’s followed by the answer—from God Himself.

**What are the three things the Lord says are good?**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

Notice the two directions these three points move in: our attitudes and actions toward humanity and our attitudes and actions toward God. This isn’t surprising, because the same principle can be found not only in the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20) but also in the words of Jesus Himself (Matt. 22:37-40).

What’s interesting, too, is the balance between justice and mercy here. Justice and mercy are, in some ways, opposites. You can be just and give someone their due; or you can be merciful and spare someone their due. And yet the Lord tells us here to do *justly* and to love *mercy*? How are we supposed to do both?

**Jesus came to reveal the Father to us (John 14:9), and the Father is a God of mercy and justice (Ps. 89:14). What happened at the Cross that reveals both the mercy and the justice of God?**

Look at the third component of what’s required of us, and that is to walk humbly with God. Certainly, that shouldn’t be too hard, should it? Fallen, sinful creatures before the Creator of the universe? Walking humbly before Him should be easy. Nothing to it, at least in contrast to doing justice and loving mercy.

**On the other hand, could one of the ways we walk humbly with God be by doing justice and by loving mercy? Is how we treat others a manifestation of walking humbly before God? If so, why? In what ways are the first two requirements linked to the third?**

TEACHERS COMMENTS

order to acquire certain rewards, though these properly have their place, but rather to live the better life in recognition of the fact that in and of itself it is a better life. A Christian finds ultimate satisfaction in living in harmony with the great eternal principles of the kingdom of heaven. . . .

“They are [God’s children] because they think, speak, and live in harmony with His principles.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 749.

The life of faith is a life that revolves around God and what He has done for us. It does not seek to get its own rewards, nor does it set self above the needs of others. It manifests itself in loving service to even the most unlovable. The life of faith requires appropriating Christ’s sacrifice on a personal level and an acknowledgment that, because of God’s matchless gift, the redeemed sinner can have a better life—a life with an eternal future.

WITNESSING

Many people come to church looking for some sort of guideline to follow, something that will show them how to live a life of faith. The Bible *is* that guideline. And the Bible points to Christ. We can tell searching hearts to keep their eyes on Jesus.

Peter had to learn the hard way what happens when the eyes are taken off Christ. Walking on water was an act of faith. As long as he continued to focus on the Savior, He could do the impossible. But when he began to look at himself and the waters around him, he started to sink.

If we keep our eyes on the Lord, we *can* live a life of faith. To keep our eyes on Christ is to focus on Him with our mind’s

eye, by beholding Him, by studying His life. Jesus lived a life of faith—faith in His Father in heaven. He said, “For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me” (John 6:38). And in the Garden of Gethsemane, overwhelmed with the burden of sin, He prayed to the Father, “not as I will, but as thou wilt” (Matt. 26:39). Even to the very end, Christ did not seek to do His own will, but the will of God the Father. He trusted and relied on the Father’s power in every situation. We can show others that we, too, can live by faith: faith in God’s power to forgive, in His power to make us righteous, and in His power to save.

**FEAR AND LOVE (1 John 4:18).**

Of the things we have spoken, this is the sum: God loves us, and because of His love, Christ died in our behalf; and as a result of His sacrifice, we stand before Him with all our sins forgiven. And, because of the love, the graciousness, the kindness, and the forgiveness He has poured out upon us, we should pour out love, graciousness, kindness, and forgiveness on others. And that should be easy for us, because we know and have experienced the love of God. It is a love that should cast out fear from our lives and free us to live for the good of others, because we have nothing to fear, not now and not in the judgment (see the previous verse).

**Look at verses 19-21 of the same chapter. In what ways is what John is saying here parallel with what we looked at in yesterday's study? How does He link love for God with love for fellow human beings?**

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**Look carefully at verse 21. Why does He say that those who don't love others can't love God? What's the link there, as well?**

In the end, anyone can say he or she loves God; most anyone, too, can go through rounds of rituals that express love for God. But that's not what John is talking about here. We love God because of what He's done for us; and because of what He's done for us, we manifest that love to others.

Of course, sometimes that's not always easy. Some people are just not easy to love. But if we're told to love our enemies (Luke 6:35), then we have no excuse not to love our "brother," no matter his or her disposition.

In short, we have been loved; now we must love.

**Why would spending as much time as possible dwelling on Jesus, on the Cross, and on what He has done for us help us learn to love others? Take some time to think prayerfully and earnestly about what God did for us through Jesus. Praise Him for this, worship Him for this, and then see whether these experiences don't lead you to be more kind, loving, and gracious to others.**

**LIFE-A PPLICATION APPROACH**

**Icebreaker:** Members of the church in the first century were considered peculiar because of their faith, their lifestyle, and their endurance in the name of Christ. Has there ever been a time in earth's history when a life of faith was not nor ever will be considered peculiar?

**Thought Questions:**

1. How is faith like a toggle switch that is pressed both to turn on and off a function? Or is it? Can faith be turned on and off that quickly? Is it more like a dial, perhaps?
2. People can put their faith in knowledge, physical muscle and attractiveness, or family connections. How do you help people within your sphere of influence choose Christ?
3. How does an individual church member's faith or lack of faith affect the reputation and influence of his or her family of origin? His or her local church? His or her entire denomination?

**Application Questions:**

1. "Are we to be so absorbed with faith in God and with God's

involvement with us that we cease to function normally? Should the native personality with which God has endowed us cease to manifest itself? No! The individual Christian's personality becomes the active video screen upon which the vital life and righteousness of God is portrayed."—D. A. Delafield, in *Adult Sabbath School Lessons: Great Chapters of the Bible*, Jan., Feb., Mar. 1995 (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press® Pub. Assoc., 1995), p. 66. What type of programs are you televising on your life screen? How do you know whether your video is sharp and your audio is clear?

2. For many people, life is a puzzle. Will the puzzle for people of faith fit together differently than that of other people? Is it necessary that all life's pieces fit? What insights do the lives of Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, Priscilla, Mary Magdalene, and other Bible characters add to this discussion?
3. When does faith become fanaticism? What do the lifestyles of John the Baptist and Anna, the prophetess (Luke 2:36-38) add to your understanding of faith versus fanaticism?

**FURTHER STUDY:** Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 146, 147.

**Y**our hope is not in yourself; it is in Christ. Your weakness is united to His strength, your ignorance to His wisdom, your frailty to His enduring might. So you are not to look to yourself, not to let the mind dwell upon self, but look to Christ. Let the mind dwell upon His love, upon the beauty, the perfection, of His character. Christ in His self-denial, Christ in His humiliation, Christ in His purity and holiness, Christ in His matchless love—this is the subject for the soul’s contemplation. It is by loving Him, copying Him, depending wholly upon Him, that you are to be transformed into His likeness.”—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, pp. 70, 71.

“Our natures are fallen and we cannot make ourselves righteous. Since we are sinful, unholy, we cannot perfectly obey the holy law. We have no righteousness of our own with which to meet the claims of the law of God. . . .

“More than this, Christ changes the heart. He abides in your heart by faith. You are to maintain this connection with Christ by faith and the continual surrender of your will to Him; and so long as you do this, He will work in you to will and to do according to His good pleasure. . . .

“He desires to restore you to Himself, to see His own purity and holiness reflected in you. And if you will but yield yourself to Him, He that hath begun a good work in you will carry it forward to the day of Jesus Christ.”—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, pp. 62–64.

#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- 1. Look at Galatians 6:7, 8. Here is Paul, the great teacher of justification by faith alone, stressing how important obedience, holiness, and victory are in the Christian life. In fact, he makes it a matter of salvation versus destruction. In light of what we read about being “complete in him,” how do we understand Paul’s words about those who “soweth to the Spirit”? What does that mean, and what promises do we have that assure us we can do the same?**
- 2. If you would summarize in one paragraph the essence of what you’ve learned this quarter, what would you say? If possible, have members of the class stand up and read their paragraphs. Compare. Is there any one particular point that stands out in common? If so, what?**