

A. T. Jones, Excerpts from *The Great Nations of Today*, Battle Creek, MI, Review and Herald Publishing Company, 1901

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## The "Faith of Jesus"

Chapter 21 by A. T. Jones pages 225-234

Christ kept the commandments of God: "I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in His love." John 15:10. By His obedience it is that many must be made righteous. "For as by one man's [Adam's] disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one [Christ] shall many be made righteous." Rom. 5:19. But these are made righteous only by faith in Him, thus having "the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." Rom. 3:22, 23.

All have sinned; and "sin is the transgression of the law." As all have thus transgressed the law, none can attain to righteousness by the law. There is righteousness in the law of God; in fact, the Word says, "All thy commandments *are* righteousness;" but there is no righteousness there *for the transgressor*. If righteousness ever comes to one who has transgressed the law, it must come from some source besides the law. And as all, in *all the world*, have transgressed the law, to whomsoever, in all the world, righteousness shall come, it must be from another source than from the law, and that source is Christ Jesus the Lord.

This is the great argument of Rom. 3:19-31: "Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and *all the world may become guilty before God* . . . Therefore *by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified* in His sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God *without the law is manifested*, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; *even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ* unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."

Then the question comes in, "Do we then make void the law through *faith*? God forbid; yea, we establish the law." Notice, he has already said that although this righteousness of God is "*without the law*," and by *faith of Christ*, yet it is "*witnessed by the law* and the prophets." It is a righteousness that accords with the law; it is a righteousness to which the law can bear witness; it is a righteousness with which the law in its perfect righteousness can find no fault: it is indeed the very righteousness of the law itself; for it is the righteousness of God, and the law is only the law of God. It is the righteousness of God,

which in Christ is wrought out for us by His perfect obedience to the commandments of God, and of which we become partakers by faith in Him; for "by the obedience of One shall many be made righteous." Thus we become the children of God by faith in Christ. By faith in Him the righteousness of the law is met in us. And we do not make void, but we establish, the law of God, by faith in Christ. In other words, in Christ is found the keeping of the law of God.

This is shown again in Gal. 2:17: "But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid." To be found sinners, is to be found transgressors of the law; for "sin is the transgression of the law." Then since the Lord has set His everlasting "God forbid" against any suggestion that Christ is the minister of the transgression of the law, it follows as certainly that Christ ministers *the keeping* of the law. The believer in Jesus finds in Christ the keeping of the commandments of God—the law of God. Whosoever therefore professes to be justified by faith in Christ, and yet claims the "liberty" to disregard the law of God in a single point, is deceived. He is only claiming that Christ is the minister of sin, against which the Lord has set His everlasting "God forbid." Thus faith, justification by faith, establishes the law of God; because faith, the of Jesus Christ, is the only means there is by which the keeping of the commandments of God can ever be manifested in the life of anybody in the world.

This is yet further shown in Rom. 8:3-10: "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit."

What was it that the law could not do 1) The law was ordained to life (Rom. 7:10), but it could not minister life, because "all had sinned," — transgressed the law, — and "the wages of sin is death." And this being so, all that the law can possibly minister is *death*. 2) The law was ordained to justification (Rom. 2:13), but it will justify only the *doers of the law*: but of all the children of Adam there have been no doers of the law: "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." 3) The law was ordained to righteousness (Rom. 10:5), but it can count as righteous only the obedient: and all the world is guilty of disobedience before God.

Therefore, because of man's failure, because of his wrong doings, the law could not minister to him life, it could not justify him, it could not accept him as righ-

teous. So far as man was concerned, the purpose of the law was entirely frustrated.

But mark, "What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the sinful flesh, God *sent His Son to do*, in the likeness of *sinful flesh*. What *the law could not do*, *Christ does*. The law could not minister life, because by transgression all had incurred its penalty of death; the law could not give justification, because by failure to do it, all had brought themselves under its condemnation; the law could not give righteousness, because all had sinned. But instead of this *death*, *Christ gives life*; instead of this *condemnation*, *Christ gives justification*; instead of this *sin*, *Christ gives righteousness*.

And for what? — That henceforth the law might be despised by us? — Nay, verily! But "that the righteousness of the law *might be fulfilled in us*, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

"Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, *but to fulfill*," said the holy Son of God. And so "Christ is the end [the object, the aim, the purpose] of the law for *righteousness* to everyone that believeth." Rom. 10:4. For of God, Christ Jesus "is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." 1 Cor. 1:30, 31.

"The law is spiritual." But "the carnal mind [the natural mind, the minding of the flesh] is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh can not please God." Rom. 7:14; 8:7, 8.

How then shall we please God? How shall we become subject to the law of God? The Saviour says, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh," and we have just read in Romans that "they that are in the flesh can not please God." But the Saviour says, further, "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit."

Therefore it is certain that except we are born of the Spirit, we can not please God; we can not be subject to the law of God, which is spiritual, and demands spiritual service. This, too, is precisely what the Saviour says: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he can not enter into the kingdom of God."

We know that some will say that the kingdom of God here referred to is the kingdom of glory, and that the new birth, the birth of the Spirit, is not until the resurrection, and that then we enter the kingdom of God. But such a view is altogether wrong. Except a man be born of the Spirit, he must still remain in the flesh. But the Scripture says, "They that are in the flesh can not please God." And the man who does not please God will never see the kingdom of God, whether it be the kingdom of grace or of glory.

"Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again." "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he can not see the kingdom of God." The kingdom of God, whether of grace or of glory, is "righ-

teousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." Rom. 14:17. Except a man be born again, he can not see, nor enter into, the righteousness of God; he can not see, nor enter into, the peace of God, which passes all understanding; and except he be born of the Spirit of God, *how can he see*, or enter into, that "joy in the Holy Ghost"?

Except a man be born again — born of the Spirit — before he dies, he will never see the resurrection unto life. This is shown in Rom. 8:11: "If the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you."

It is certain, therefore, that except the Spirit of Christ dwells in us, we can not be raised from the dead to life. But except His Spirit dwells in us, we are yet in the flesh. And if we are in the flesh, we can not please God. And if we do not please God, we can never see the kingdom of God, either here or hereafter.

Again: it is by birth that we are children of the first Adam; and if we shall ever be children of the last Adam, it must be by a *new* birth. The first Adam was natural, and we are his children by natural birth; the last Adam is spiritual, and if we become His children, it must be by spiritual birth. The first Adam was of the earth, earthy, and we are his children by an earthly birth; the last Adam is the Lord from heaven, from above; and if we are to be His children, it must be by a heavenly birth, a birth from above.

"As is the earthy, *such are they also that are earthy*." The earthy is "natural" — of the flesh. And "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God;" "because they are spiritually discerned," and "they that are in the flesh can not please God." Such is the birthright, and all the birthright, that we receive from the first Adam.

But, thank the Lord, "as is *the heavenly* such are they also that are heavenly." The heavenly is spiritual; He is "a life-giving Spirit;" and the spiritual man receives the things of the Spirit of God, because they are spiritually discerned. He can please God because he is not in the flesh, but in the Spirit; for the Spirit of God dwells in him. He is, and can be, subject to the law of God, because the carnal mind is destroyed, and he has the mind of Christ, the heavenly.

Such is the birthright of the last Adam, the one from above. And all the privileges, the blessings, and the joys of this birthright are ours when we are born from above. "Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born from above." Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born from above, he can not see the kingdom of God." With the argument of this paragraph, please study 1 Cor. 15:45-48; John 3:3-8; 1 Cor. 3:11-16; Rom. 8:5-10.

"If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." 2 Cor. 5:17. As a new creature he lives a new life, a life of faith. "The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me." But it is a faith that works; for without works faith is dead.

In Christ nothing avails but a new creation; he lives by faith; it is a faith that works, and the work is *the keeping of the commandments of God*. Thus saith the Scripture: —

1. "In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a *new creature*." Gal. 6:15.
2. "In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but *faith which worketh by love*." Gal. 5:6.
3. "Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but *the keeping of the commandments of God*." 1 Cor. 7:19.

Again: it is "faith which worketh by love," that avails; and "this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments." 1 John 5:3. And "love is the fulfilling of the law." Rom. 13:10. Therefore, in Christ Jesus the faith that avails is the faith that keeps the commandments of God, the faith that fulfills the law of God.

Once more: "We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." Eph. 2:10. "Created in Christ Jesus," is to be made a "new creature" in Christ Jesus. But we are created in Him "unto good works," and these good works are those which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

That is to say, God before ordained good works in which we should walk. But we have not walked in them. Now He creates us anew in Christ, so that we may walk in these good works in which before we failed to walk. These good works are the commandments, the law, of God. These commandments express the whole duty of man, but man has failed to do his duty; "for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." But now Christ is manifested to take away our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness, "that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." 2 Cor. 5:21.

We are made new creatures in Him, that in Him and by Him we may perform acceptable service, and do the duty (keep the commandments of God), which before we failed to do, and which, *out of Christ*, all must ever fail to do. For He Himself said, "Without me ye can do nothing." This is according to that which we have before shown: "What the law could not do," "God sending His own Son" did, "that the righteousness of the law *might be fulfilled in us*, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Rom. 8:3, 4.

## The Keeping of the Commandments of God and the faith of Jesus

Chapter 22

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In the matter of the duty of keeping the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus, it is not to be understood that the two can for a moment be separated. The commandments can not be kept acceptably to God except by faith in Jesus Christ; and faith in Christ amounts to nothing — is dead — unless it is manifested, made

perfect, in good works: and these good works consist in the keeping of the commandments of God.

When the young man came to Jesus, asking, "Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" Jesus answered, "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments," and cited the second table of the ten commandments. The young man replied: "All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet? Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt *be perfect*, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me."

As the record says that Jesus "looking upon him loved him," and as Jesus asked him to follow Him, it is evident that the young man was a person of good intentions and honesty of purpose, and he undoubtedly supposed that he had really kept the commandments. But it is not our own estimate that is the standard of what constitutes obedience to the law; it is God's estimate that is the standard. We might conform so strictly to the law that, according to our own estimate, we could see no point of failure; yet when our actions should be measured by God's estimate, weighed in the balances of the sanctuary, we should be found utterly wanting.

It is not according as *we* see, but according as *God* sees, that the question of our keeping the commandments of God is to be decided. And as God sees it, it has been recorded: "All have sinned, *and come short* of the glory of God." No doubt the young man, when measured by his own standard, stood at the full stature of moral character. But God's standard declares that he had "come short."

Even granting all the righteousness that the young man might claim by the keeping of the commandments alone, — and there are yet many like him, — yet to him and to all who, like him, expect righteousness by the law, the word of Christ is, "*One thing thou lackest yet*." All such lack *the justifying blood*: they lack the *sanctifying power* of the *perfect obedience* of the Son of God. In short, they lack "*the faith of Jesus*;" and so must ever come short until, by accepting Christ, they attain to the righteousness of God which is by faith.

It is in Christ alone that man can reach the full stature of moral character in the sight of God. "Till we all come in the unity of the *faith*, and of the *knowledge of the Son of God*, unto a perfect man, unto *the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ*." Eph. 4:13. However hard a man may strive for righteousness by keeping the law, yet, until he accepts Christ and finds in Him the righteousness which is of God by faith, against him the word will ever stand, Thou hast "come short of the glory of God," "one thing thou lackest yet."

We see then that Jesus taught that those who would be His disciples must keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.

Again: in His sermon on the mount, Jesus said, "Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever

shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." Matt. 5: 19, 20.

Happily we have the record of the best Pharisee that ever lived, and in his experience we have the inspired illustration of these words of Jesus: Paul says of himself, "As touching the law, a Pharisee; . . . touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless." Yet this was not enough; for as he says in another place, "I know nothing against myself, yet am I not hereby justified: but He that judgeth me is the Lord." 1 Cor. 4:4. So even though he might, so far as he could see, be blameless, yet that was not proof that he was justified; for it is God who judges: it is *God's* standard of righteousness, and not our own, that we must meet, to be justified; and that standard is the righteousness of Christ, to which we can attain only by faith.

Therefore it is written: "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: . . . and be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." Phil. 3: 7-9. This is a righteousness which he had not when he was a Pharisee. This, then, is the righteousness which exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees. And this righteousness of faith we must have while *doing* and *teaching* the commandments. In His sermon on the mount, therefore, Christ positively taught the keeping of the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.

James says, "My brethren, have not *the faith* of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons . . . If ye fulfill the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, ye do well; but if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors. For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. For He that said ["that law which said," margin], Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now, if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law. So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty. . . . What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? . . . Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone."

Thus James shows that *the faith of Jesus* is manifested in works, and that these works are the keeping of the law of God. He excludes the very idea that anyone can have the faith of Jesus with respect of persons; and respect of person he declares to be sin, the transgression of the law. Therefore the faith of Jesus can not be held with the conscious breaking of the commandments of God, *even in a single point*. In other words, James teaches as strongly as it is possible to teach, that those who have the faith of Jesus keep the commandments of God, *and* the faith of Jesus.

John says, "*Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ* is born of God: and everyone that loveth Him that begat loveth Him also that is begotten of Him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we *love God*, and *keep His commandments*. For this is the love of God, *that we keep His commandments*: and His commandments are not grievous. For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, *even our faith*. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" 1 John 5: 1-5. The beloved disciple therefore also teaches that Christianity, the love of God, is the keeping of the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.

The Lord Jesus Himself, referring to God, said: "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. Blessed are they that *do HIS [God's] commandments*, that they may have right to the Tree of Life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." Rev. 22:13, 14. He also said, "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that *whosoever believeth in Him* should not perish, but have everlasting life." Christ said, "If thou wilt enter into life, *keep the commandments*;" He also said, "*He that believeth on the Son* hath everlasting life."

The Third Angel's Message, the last message from God that the world will ever hear, embodies in a single sentence all these sayings of Christ: "Here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus."

Therefore, when the Third Angel's Message calls, as it now does call, upon all men to "keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus," it simply calls all men to the performance of the whole duty of man — as he now exists. And when, under this message, we urge men to keep the commandments of God strictly according to the letter, we mean that they must keep these commandments strictly according to the Spirit, too. When we press upon all the obligation of keeping the commandments of God, it is always the obligation of keeping them the only way in which they can be kept, that is, by faith of Jesus Christ; it is always the commandments of God *and the faith of Jesus*; it is that all must be made perfect by His perfect righteousness; and that all our righteousness must be the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ, and *that* righteousness witnessed by the law and the prophets. ♦

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Note:

The largest known collection of A. T. Jones' writings are the 5,700 pages in electronic, searchable format, on the CD-ROM, *Words of the Pioneers*, 2nd Edition, available from Adventist Pioneer Library (APL). There are numerous other sources of his writings in paper form.