CORNERSTONECONNECTIONS
JULY252026

Scripture Story: Romans 1–3; John 15:19, 20.
Commentary: *The Great Controversy* (or *Love Under Fire*), chapters 7, 8.

standing for the right



Photo by Luis Guerra, Jr.

flashlight

"The fear of the Lord dwelt in the heart of Luther, enabling him to maintain his steadfastness of purpose and leading him to deep humility before God. He had an abiding sense of his dependence upon divine aid, and he did not fail to begin each day with prayer, while his heart was continually breathing a petition for guidance and support. 'To pray well,' he often said, 'is the better half of study'" (*The Great Controversy,* p. 122).

keytext

"For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: 'The righteous will live by faith.'"

(Romans 1:17, NIV)

what do you think?

Conduct a survey asking respondents what percentage (0-100) of truth they would ascribe to each statement. Invite your friends to conduct the survey as well. Calculate the average for each answer. Compare and discuss your findings with your friends' results.

What percentage of truth would you give to each statement?

____ There is no absolute truth.
____ We can get to heaven through an equal combination of faith and works.
____ Christianity is a cause worth dying for.
____ The Bible contains mistakes, but it is still the Word of God.
____ People are better Christians today than they were in the past.

did you know?

When Martin Luther married, neither he nor his bride, Katherine von Bora, felt "in love." Katherine was still getting over a broken engagement to a man she truly loved. Martin admitted, "I am not 'in love' or burning with desire." Yet their love for one another and for others flourished throughout their 20-year marriage. They regularly took in so many sick and dying people, their house had to be quarantined long after the plague of 1527 ended. In 1541 a transient woman came to their home. Martin and Katherine fed and housed her, only to discover she had lied and stolen. Even on his wedding night, Luther couldn't refuse a person in need. At 11:00 p.m., after all the guests had left, Radical Reformer Andreas Karlstadt knocked at the door. Largely because Luther fiercely opposed him, Karlstadt had fled town. But now, when Karlstadt was fleeing the Peasants' War and needed shelter, Luther took him in.[1]

INTO THE STORY

"If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. Remember what I told you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also."

"I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: 'The righteous will live by faith.'"

"But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished—he did it to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.

"Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. Because of what law? The law that requires works? No, because of the law that requires faith. For we maintain that a person is justified by faith apart from the works of the law. Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles too? Yes, of Gentiles too, since there is only one God, who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith. Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law."

(John 15:19, 20; Romans 1:16, 17; Romans 3:21-31, NIV)



OUT OF THE STORY

Why do you think the world hates Jesus and His followers? What does it mean to "belong" to Jesus?

What do these passages teach us about the Christian faith?

What do these passages teach us about the experience of salvation?

How do these passages inform us about the gospel?

What is it about the gospel that would make someone ashamed of it? How have you addressed that in your life?

What is the relationship between keeping the law and being saved?

The book of Romans was life-changing for Martin Luther. Why do you think this was the case? Are the concepts in Romans equally life-transforming for you? If so, why? If not, why not?

punch lines

"See, the enemy is puffed up; his desires are not upright—but the righteous person will live by his faithfulness" **(Habakkuk 2:4, NIV).**

"For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish people" **(1 Peter 2:15, NIV).**

"An honest witness tells the truth, but a false witness tells lies" **(Proverbs 12:17, NIV).**

"Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord" **(Acts 3:19, NIV).**

"Do you see what this means—all these pioneers who blazed the way, all these veterans cheering us on? It means we'd better get on with it. Strip down, start running—and never quit! No extra spiritual fat, no parasitic sins. Keep your eyes on Jesus, who both began and finished this race we're in. Study how he did it. Because he never lost sight of where he was headed—that exhilarating finish in and with God—he could put up with anything along the way: Cross, shame, whatever. And now he's there, in the place of honor, right alongside God. When you find yourselves flagging in your faith, go over that story again, item by item, that long litany of hostility he plowed through. That will shoot adrenaline into your souls!" **(Hebrews 12:1-3, *The Message*).**

further insight

"The spirit of the world is no more in harmony with the spirit of Christ today than in earlier times, and those who preach the Word of God in its purity will be received with no greater favor now than then."—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy,* p. 144

Sabbath

Read John 8:32.

After doing the survey in the *What Do You Think?* section, meet with friends who also surveyed others and discuss the following questions:

- What was the most interesting response you got? Why?
- Which statement got the most diverse answers? Which one got the most similar responses? How would you explain the responses?
- Suppose you surveyed Martin Luther. What percentages do you think he would have given to each statement?
- How did the average percentages for each statement compare with your own answers?

Sunday

Read Romans 1-3 and reflect: How have I been set aside for the gospel? What does this mean for me today? (Remember, you have Notes pages in the back of your study guide to write longer answers.)

In what areas does my faith need to be strengthened? What can I do today to strengthen my faith?

If God were to ask me, "Why should I let you into heaven?" how would I respond?

How would I explain the true meaning of Christian faith to an unbeliever?

If I had to explain the gospel solely based on Romans 1-3, what would I say?

Monday

Read Romans 1:17.

Review the *Key Text* and then consider this scenario detailed in Mark Finley's book *Solid Ground.*

Two men confronted each other. One a prison guard, Grecu, and the other a prisoner, Richards Wurmbrand, who was pale and weak from weeks of torture.

Grecu yelled, "Enough! We know you have been communicating in code with the other prisoners. We want to know exactly what you have said. Here is some paper for you to write your confession.

Richard knew anything he wrote could and likely would be twisted and used as evidence that he was a spy.

This is what he finally wrote: "I am a disciple of Christ, who has given us love for our enemies. I have never spoken against the Communists. I understand them and pray for their conversion so that they will become my brothers in faith."

The guard's heart was touched, and Richard's confession led to many discussions about Jesus and the meaning of life.

No matter where you are, your testimony is a powerful witness of Christ's love. Trust Him whatever your circumstances are. He is there for you and will use you to help others.[2]

What does it mean to you to have faith?

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Tuesday

Read Habakkuk 2:4.

Compare and contrast Ellen White's statement in the *Flashlight* section with this text: "See, the enemy is puffed up; his desires are not upright—but the righteous person will live by his faithfulness" (Habakkuk 2:4, NIV).

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Wednesday

Choose one of the *Punch Lines* and incorporate it into a morning and evening prayer to use this week to begin and end your day.

Thursday

Read Ephesians 2:4-10.

How can I experience salvation today?

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Friday

Read Romans 1:17.

How does this text compare to Hebrews 12:1-3? What do these texts tell you about "living by faith"?

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[1] "Martin Luther—The Later Years and Legacy," *Christian History,* Issue 39.

[2] Adapted from Mark Finley, *Solid Ground,* pp. 288, 289.

this week's reading*

The Great Controversy (or *Love Under Fire),* chapters 7, 8.

**Love Under Fire* is a special adaptation of *The Great Controversy*, created for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press. Get more information about it at http://www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books#.URlhF1rBO9s. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.