

# **GALATIANS AND “THE MARK OF THE BEAST”**

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Is it possible that the six little chapters of Galatians which shook the ancient world of the Apostle Paul, could do it again with its “present truth” for our time?<sup>1</sup> The gospel truth of Galatians is yet to “lighten the earth with His glory” (Revelation 18:1).

A terrific tension has erupted worldwide over the truth of the gospel. Is Christ truly the Saviour of the world? or is He a “wanna-be” Saviour who offers salvation to all, but only becomes an individual’s Saviour when he does something right in believing upon Him? In other words, are we co-saviors? Is salvation by faith and works? or is it faith alone? What is true faith? What is its origin and source?

The great controversy between Christ and Satan has infiltrated every level of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Satan used to mask his deceptions in crude ways during the 19<sup>th</sup> century with rappings on the walls and séances. But he has become much more sophisticated in his fine arts by cloaking the religion of “self” as righteousness by faith.

In an article in the *Sunday-School Times* of May 7, 1932, there is a remarkable statement in regard to Satan making a change in his plans in 1888 as to the future. “In 1888 Satan changed his plan, and prepared to take advantage of the Age of

Intellectual Egotism, which is now in full bloom. Orders were given to appeal to the Intellect and Reason in high places. Christian churches are to be changed into synagogues of Satan. The devil desires a Federation of Churches. This Federation eventually will merge into a Brotherhood of Religion.”<sup>2</sup> It is the religion of “self” that binds all the “Christian” religions and pagan religions of the world into one grand Federation of Spiritualism. It was Lucifer who invented the religion of the “ego” when he said “I [ego] will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High” (Isaiah 14:14). The religion of *ego* is the religion of Satanism. It is this religious combine that will make an image to the beast—the union of church and state—and enforce “the mark of the beast.”

In the early church of the apostles the religion of “self” or “the works of the law” (Gal. 2:16), was a subtle temptation. The seeds of the full-flowering of the papacy were planted in the first century church of the apostles. It was over the issue of circumcision of the Gentiles in the Antioch church that this religion of “self” was manifested.

For a brief moment in time there was harmony between Peter, Paul and Barnabas in their proclamation of the gospel among the Gentiles. They pressed together in the unity of the faith. They lived and taught “the faith of Jesus” by uplifting the cross among the Galatians. The principle of God’s self-denial was supreme in the Gentile-Jewish Christian community.

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<sup>1</sup> As Sister White said last winter, “Let us have all of Romans and all of Galatians.” EJW to O. A. Olsen [n.d.]

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<sup>2</sup> F. M. Wilcox, “Modern Atheism,” *Review and Herald* (March 8, 1934), p. 7.

But the gospel was never intended to produce “holy flesh” before the second coming of Christ. The gospel teaches Christians to say “No” to ungodliness and worldliness. It teaches us to say “No” to the temptations of the flesh. Consequently, Peter gave in to the flesh when certain “historic Christian” brethren visited the Antioch mission from Jerusalem headquarters.

Formerly Peter had table-fellowship with the Gentiles because he believed that Christ was “the Saviour of the world” (1 John 4:14). God had supernaturally revealed to Peter through the vision of the unclean animals, that “God hath cleansed” (Acts 10:15) the Gentiles. Jesus is the Saviour of the uncircumcised as well as the circumcised. Now he must take the knowledge of that gift of salvation to Cornelius the Roman centurion.

But the church at headquarters with James the half-brother of Jesus appointed as leader, did not so understand salvation as a gift to all men. They believed only the circumcised were the elect ones. In other words, Jesus died only for those who believed and did something right; namely, they submitted to circumcision. In other words, salvation is by faith and works. The death of Christ was a limited atonement.

The Jerusalem gospel was believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and be circumcised, then you will be saved. The problem with this gospel was the fear-factor. Because once the door was opened to require the circumcision of the Jews for salvation, then there were a multitude of other Jewish laws to be fulfilled in order to retain salvation and one never

knew whether he had done enough in order to have the assurance of salvation. So it was a religion of fear with the radius of self-motivation concerned about the avoidance of hell and a heavenly reward and the heart remained untouched and unchanged in its alienation toward God.

This is what Peter was up against with the pressure of the Judaizing visitors from James. Peter was “*fearing* them which were of the circumcision” (Galatians 2:12).

At Antioch only one man had the discernment of the Holy Spirit to see “the truth of the gospel”. It meant that he had to oppose the whole church leadership including James, the brother of Jesus, and Peter, the premier saint (and first claimed Pope by the Roman Church). The true gospel, the true cross of Christ, has always been opposed within the church itself and even from the earliest birth-pangs of its history. What makes us think that we will be exempt from the same “great controversy” in the last-days?

Paul realized that “the truth of the gospel” was not determined by church councils, or even by apostolic example, it was “by the revelation of Jesus Christ” (Galatians 1:12). Even if the “remnant” be a majority of one, he would speak up publicly so that Jesus might receive His reward for which He died. God was on trial and Satan would defeat the true religion of the cross before the eyes of these Jewish and Gentile Christians. Everything depended at that moment on Paul’s stand for the truth.

The Gentiles would become confused about the gift of salvation and the true motivation of *agape*

[God's self-denying love] for their faith. The Jewish Christians would continue in their blind self-motivated love of works-righteousness which could only produce lukewarmness. So Paul opposed Peter's hypocrisy publicly. "I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?" (Galatians 2:14).

Before the coming of the Judaizers, Peter, an ethnic Jew, was freely mingling among the Gentile Christians and treated them as equal brothers in Christ. But fear of the brethren from Jerusalem caused Peter to throw his brethren "under the bus" and compel them to conform to the Jewish laws of rites and ceremonies in order to be saved and enjoy fellowship with Jewish Christians.

This teaching of salvation by rites and ceremonies, legalism, divides people. It destroys fellowship in Christ. It proclaims the character of a God who makes distinctions based on race. This ethnic distinction comes through in Paul's characterization of the Judaizer's attitude—"We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles" (Galatians 2:15). The Jews are the favored race simply by the fortuitous luck of birth. All the rest of humanity are sinners. All religion that is self-motivated tends toward a superior race.

Hence Paul clearly proclaims two kinds of faith. These two kinds of faith are diametrically opposed. They are the faith proclaimed by the conglomerate of Babylonian religion and the faith of true Adventism at the end of time. They are faith

motivated by self-interest: avoidance of hell and reward of heaven; or faith motivated by the self-denying love of God. In other words, Paul reveals the final conflict in preview—"the mark of the beast" kind of faith versus "the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus" (Revelation 14:12). "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law [forgiveness by self-motivated works], but by the faith of Jesus Christ [subjective genitive, i.e., Jesus' atonement faith], even we have believed in Jesus Christ [objective genitive, i.e., faith motivated by Jesus' self-denying love], that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified" (Galatians 2:16). Here is "the third angel's message in verity" contrasted with the mark of the beast.

Three times in this one verse (16) and once more in vs. 17 ("if, while we seek to be justified by Christ"), Paul definitively contrasts "justified by the works of the law" with "justified by the faith of Christ." The law of God is not the problem. It is "*a man . . . justified by the works of the law*"; "*no flesh be justified*"; "*we seek to be justified*" that is the problem. In fact, Paul never associates the word "faith" with any of these self-motivated methods of justification.

In contrast, twice Paul uses the word "faith" in the subjective sense of Jesus' faith; and once he uses the word "faith" in the objective sense of "believed in Jesus". The source of true "faith in Jesus" is "the faith of Jesus".

What is “the faith of Jesus”? Paul defines this for us. “I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me” (Galatians 2:20). “The faith of the Son of God” is the divinity of Christ united with our “sinful flesh” (the “self” which He took, Romans 8:3), motivated by *agape* denying himself through the whole span of His life culminating in the complete surrender of His humanity as well as His divinity to the Father on the cross. The ultimate meaning of the cross is the atonement. By faith His heart was at one with the Father.

An issue arose back in 1940 raised by a sermon which Eld. J. F. Anderson, former pastor of the Takoma Park Church, preached. W. W. Prescott tried to convince him “that Christ did not die as the Son of God. . . ‘I do not appreciate your leaving me without a Christ for three days and nights.’ . . . This statement was made after he had taken the position that the Son of God did not die but only the Son of Man.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> J. S. Washburn, “The Trinity,” p. 4. Washburn is quoting a letter from Eld. J. F. Anderson to J. S. Washburn 1-16-40, 112 St. Louis Avenue, Forth Worth, Texas.

“The Bible teaches that the Son of God died, as the Son of God. ‘For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son: much more being reconciled we shall be saved by his life.’ Rom. 5:10. See also Col. 1:13-22, I Thess. 1:10. The words ‘Son of God’ and ‘Christ’ are synonyms [*sic*.] Matt. 16:16. And again and again the scriptures state that Christ died for our sins, the foundation principle of the Gospel.

“Nothing is clearer in the scripture that the truth that the Son of God died for us and we have a Divine and not simply

If it was only the Son of man who died on the cross and not the Son of God, then we have no Savior from sin because it was only God Himself become a man, one who is equal with the law of God, who could give the atonement for sinners.

The apostle Paul is in complete agreement. He writes, It was “the Son of God . . . who gave Himself for me.” It has been the accusation of Satan since the beginning that God demands self-denial from His creatures, but never gives it Himself.<sup>4</sup> But the whole of Jesus’ divine-human life on this earth from His incarnation to the cross that was a perfect demonstration of self-denial. The cross was the denouement of that self-giving *agape*.

It is true that the greatest temptation that Christ faced throughout His earthly life was unbelief that He was the Son of God. Satan presented it to him three times in the wilderness when he said, “If thou be the Son of God, turn these stone into bread.” Do a hang-glide off this high tower “if thou be the Son of God.” “If thou be the Son of God,” you must have some Napoleon-complex. I will give you all the empires of the world, “if you bow down to me.” It was the same temptation echoed in the words of

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a human atonement. Those who believe that the Son of God did not die quote an unpublished statement of Sister White. ‘Deity did not sink and die, that would have been impossible.’ [*Lift Him Up*, p. 76.] “The Trinity,” pp. 4, 5.

<sup>4</sup> Satan “had accused God of seeking merely the exaltation of Himself in requiring submission and obedience from his creatures, and had declared that while the Creator exacted self-denial from all others, He Himself practiced no self-denial and made no sacrifice.” GC 502; RH, Feb. 18, 1890.

the casual passers-by, “If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross” (Matthew 27:40).

Do you think this was not a real temptation to disbelieve that He was the Son of God? In His hour of utter loneliness, with nothing but Mary’s anointing of His feet with her tears in His memory, He was sorely tempted, “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” It was just then that the Father resisted everything in His being to refrain from embracing His Son, but the rules of engagement with the devil in the great controversy would not permit Him to comfort His Son. Christ must tread the winepress alone until every drop of life-blood was squeezed out of Him.

The chasm created by our sins bearing down upon His soul would tend to forever rupture the fellowship between Father and Son. Really, the whole government of God rested on the shoulders of this weak, frail Divine-human. He could have given in to unbelief and sinned. It was a real possibility.<sup>5</sup> Had that happened then there would be no genuine faith to make the atonement-bridge between sinners and God.

This was the moment of truth. Satan had hoped that by forcing God’s hand in sending His own Son “in the likeness of sinful flesh” that this was his opportunity for victory. He had even hoped that Christ would come down off His cross to prove His detractors wrong. However, by faith Jesus

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<sup>5</sup> “He could have sinned; He could have fallen, but not for one moment was there in Him an evil propensity.” Ellen G. White, *The Faith I Live By*, p. 49.

demonstrated beyond a shadow of a doubt, that He was the Son of God.<sup>6</sup>

Luke emphasizes that “when Jesus had cried with a *loud* voice, He said, Father, into thy hands I commend *my spirit*: and having said this, He gave up the *ghost*” (Luke 23:46). He proclaimed His faith in the Father with the ultimate act of self-denial in giving up all control of His divinity to the Father.<sup>7</sup> Paul writes, “He gave Himself for me.” This is “the faith of Jesus Christ.”

But more, he died the second death.<sup>8</sup> He did not just take a three day holiday for some “R-and-R”. The popular notion of death being a release of the soul from the body to go to its reward does not lead to a deeper understanding of Jesus’ atonement on His cross. It was not a vicarious substitution as is the common Christian notion. Such a legal fiction leads to faith being a mental assent of the mind to a creedal statement which has no basis in reality.

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<sup>6</sup> “By faith He rested in Him whom it had ever been His joy to obey. And as in submission He committed Himself to God, the sense of the loss of His Father’s favor was withdrawn. By faith, Christ was victor.” Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 756.

<sup>7</sup> “The Saviour could not see through the portals of the tomb. Hope did not present to Him His coming forth from the grave a conqueror, or tell Him of the Father’s acceptance of the sacrifice. He feared that sin was so offensive to God that *Their separation* was to be eternal.” *Ibid.*, p. 753.

<sup>8</sup> “Christ felt the anguish which the sinner will feel when mercy shall no longer plead for the guilty race. It was the sense of sin, bringing the Father’s wrath upon Him as man’s substitute, that made the cup He drank so bitter, and broke the heart of the Son of God.” *Ibid.*, p. 753.

Such “faith” initiates a legal adjustment of one’s accounts in heaven, but there is no heart-appreciation.

Rather, faith is seeing “the faith of Jesus Christ”, seeing the cross, appreciating what it cost for the Son of God to buy you; that is, an alienated heart has been reconciled to God—that is true faith. “The light shining from the cross reveals the love of God. His love is drawing us to Himself. If we do not resist this drawing, we shall be led to the foot of the cross in repentance for the sins that have crucified the Saviour. Then the Spirit of God through faith produces a new life in the soul. The thoughts and desires are brought into obedience to the will of Christ.”<sup>9</sup>

“The faith of Jesus” is the cleansing of the sanctuary truth. The ultimate meaning of the cross is the cleansing of the sanctuary or “the third angel’s message in verity. “The faith of Jesus” is given to every man. If it is not hindered, it will produce justification by faith. A deepening appreciation of the cross of Christ, moment by moment, day by day, in repentance for sin that crucified the dear Saviour, is ongoing justification by faith. So that, according to E. J. Waggoner, all a person really needs is justification for a perfect character.”<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 175.

<sup>10</sup> “There is but *one* thing in this world that a man needs and that is *justification*—and justification is a fact, not a theory. It is the gospel. That which does not tend to righteousness is of no avail, and not worthy to be preached. Righteousness can only be attained through faith; consequently all things

“The faith of Jesus” expresses the essential features of the 1888 message: 1) the third angel’s message in verity”; 2) justification (objective and subjective); 3) the humanity of Christ; 4) the atonement (objective and subjective); and, 5) God’s self-denying *agape*.

“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. For if *I* build again the things which *I* destroyed, *I* make myself a transgressor” (Galatians 2:17-18). “By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified” (vs. 16). So when Paul writes “*we* seek to be justified by Christ” making “Christ the minister of sin” he is referring to the counterfeit of true faith which is egocentric. Indeed, he writes “*I* build.” “*I* make myself a transgressor”. The radius of concern is self. This is the default position of every natural-born sinner. It is the old covenant.

The new covenant is the principle of the cross. “For *I* through the law am dead to the law, that *I* might live unto God” (Galatians 2:19). The “*I*”—ego—is crucified. This is what the law had demanded all along—death to self. This is where all conscious as well as unconscious temptations arise. Self can never be converted. It is only by crucifixion of self that one may live unto God. The ego is not removed this side of glory. We have no holy flesh until this corruptible shall be changed into incorruption at the second coming of Christ.

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worthy to be preached must tend to justification by faith.” E. J. Waggoner, March 11, 1891, GCDB 74.9.

Self has the potential of rising up at any time in the Christian's life. A recognition of this fact will keep us every watchful and vigilant. We cannot even crucify our ego. "No outward observances can take the place of simple faith and entire renunciation of self. But *no man can empty himself of self*. We can only consent [permission] for Christ to accomplish the work. Then the language of the soul will be, Lord, take my heart; for I cannot give it. It is Thy property. Keep it pure, for I cannot keep it for Thee. Save me in spite of myself, my weak, unchristlike self. Mold me, fashion me, raise me into a pure and holy atmosphere, where the rich current of Thy love can flow through my soul."<sup>11</sup> That is an appropriate prayer of the heart.

"How does the blood of Christ cleanse one from sin?" Is it by a cold-as-ice, dry-as-dust legal substitution of merit, like a bank transferring credit from one account to another? The merits of Christ's perfection applied to the unworthy sinner so he goes scot-free? Like an insurance company's policy? Is that the biblical doctrine of Substitution? Many assume so, and don't wish to be disturbed into realizing that something far more profound is involved. "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and 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" (Galatians 2:20).

The idea of substitution is I identify with Him, says Paul; my heart is won; my heart is moved; He

"loved me, and gave Himself for me." Getting to heaven is no longer my main concern; responding to that love has become "the life I now live in the flesh [that] I live by the faith of the Son of God." It's "not I, but Christ." He "lives in me." A legal substitution? Yes, of course; but infinitely more than that.

The cross is a living reality which is ever-present by virtual of Christ's High Priestly work in the Most Holy. Paul preached the cross so clearly, vividly, that the people saw themselves crucified with Christ (3:1-5). That is, unfortunately, rare preaching today! It wasn't superficial emotionalism; it was heart-gripping truth as solid as granite.

"The truth of the gospel" produces in cold, selfish, world-loving, addiction-cursed hearts, a new passion: "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross" (6:14). Sometimes I "glory" in a Mozart Andante; it keeps going through my mind, night and day, I can't get it out. Well, without a trace of fanaticism (which cold, persecuting hearts like to attribute to "the truth of the gospel") the sacrifice of the Son of God has gripped the heart so that it has become the "new song" we sing night and day—a holy obsession forever. And here's some Good News: such a new song can be "learned" (Rev. 14:3).

Nobody hates the gospel of God's "grace" like Satan does. The word is there in both Galatians and Romans (yes, Ephesians), and he can't blot it out. So the best he can do is to "frustrate the grace of God," and inject into the idea some poisonous infiltration of legalism cleverly disguised. That's

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<sup>11</sup> Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 159.

Paul's idea in Galatians 2:21 where he says, "I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain."

In other words, if an iota of self-seeking pride is mixed in with our "gospel," grace is "frustrated." Take a seven-course dinner prepared by the best gourmet chef imaginable, full of wholesome food, and add a mere 5% of arsenic, maybe even only one percent - if the dinner didn't kill you it would paralyze you.

Take a sermon, an article, a book, that is 99% "gospel" truth full of Christian verbiage, and add one percent of subtle, poisonous legalism, and you have the recipe for "lukewarmness," the enervating malady that Jesus says afflicts His last-days church (Rev. 3:14-21). Wherever human pride or self-sufficiency raises its head even a little, there you can be sure the grace of God is being somehow "frustrated." "Righteousness by the law" is the sure result. Close by 2:21 in context Paul defines what he means by "grace": "before [your] eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified" (3:1). The people in Paul's Galatian audience forgot who they were, where they were, for he brought them to the cross and they saw, "comprehended," "the width and length and depth and height" of the revelation of that grace (Eph 3:18, 19), as if they were at Calvary itself. They responded with what Paul called "the hearing of faith," precisely the same as Abraham's response ("he believed" when "God . . . preached the gospel unto" him, Gal. 3:6-8). I walk softly here; I tread on holy ground; here is the solemn truth behind all the

"frustration" of confusion about the gospel that so afflicts the modern lukewarm church. As James Stewart said long ago, "No man can give the impression that he himself is clever and at the same time preach Christ crucified." "Who is sufficient for these things?"