

THE SABBATH-SCHOOL WORK. (PART 3)

THE book of Galatians is God's protest of the true gospel against salvation by formalism; against salvation by self-righteousness; against salvation by our own works. It is God's protest forever against all formalism, against all ceremonialism of whatsoever sort.

And that book of Galatians, of all the books in the Bible, is present truth to-day, to Seventh-day Adventists. [Voice: "Amen."] Do you suppose that it is a mere make-up, to fill time with something only to be doing on Sabbaths, that these lessons have been arranged? Do you think that it is a mere happen-so that the book of Galatians should be brought before Sabbath-schools throughout the world now, to be studied itself, within itself, for just what it says? Do you think that it has come about without any of God's thought at all? [Voice: "No."] I do not suppose you do. I believe that you believe that the Lord has brought it about, that this portion of the Scriptures should be studied *now*." [Voice: "Amen."]

Well, then, that itself shows that it is present truth now; because—do not make the mistake of thinking that all the ceremonialism in the world was forsaken when they of the Pharisees and of the Jews, in Paul's day, were left behind. Seventh-day Adventists can be formalists and ceremonialists, just as really as could those "Pharisees which believed" back yonder. I say, They *can* be. A man can turn Sabbath-keeping into ceremonialism just as really as they did. True, they had other, and more, ceremonies than we have; but that makes no difference. We have ceremonies just as really as they had, even though not so many. Have not we the ceremony of baptism? Have not we the ceremony of the Lord's Supper? Have not we the forms of worship—going to church on Sabbath, prayers, singing, etc.? Now, we can turn all that into formalism and ceremonialism, just as really as those other folks did. The principle is the same now as ever.

Bear in mind also that the book of Galatians was not given to correct simply a *particular form* of ceremonialism; it was given to correct the THING. If it had been given to correct only *some particular* form of ceremonialism, and that was corrected at the time, what then would be the use of that book at the present time? It would not fit any other particular form or ceremony. But when the book deals only with the *thing* itself; when it strikes at the very root of ceremonialism *in whatever form* it could possibly appear,—then the book is forever *present truth*, and is applicable everywhere and to all people.

Indeed, ceremonialism is the culmination of things in the world, in our day. Therefore the book of Galatians is not only present truth to us, but is likewise present truth to the whole world. What do the Scriptures say shall come in the last days?—"In the last days perilous times shall come." There is a cause of these perilous times. What is the cause? There are nineteen or twenty causes mentioned; but *one* of them is that men are "lovers of pleasures mores than lovers of God," and another is that they have a "*form of godliness*," but deny "the *power* thereof." 2 Tim. 3:1-5. With the Pharisees in Paul's day

—the "Pharisees which believed," and confused the Galatian Christians—the trouble was that they had the *forms* of godliness but not the *power*.

The gospel is "the power of God." It is right to have the forms which God has ordained, *when we first* have the *power* of God. But it is only perdition to have *only* the forms.

First of all *in the gospel of God* is the *power of God*. First of all in that "*other gospel*" are *forms and ceremonies*. In that "other gospel" the way is, *Do this, do that, do the other, and you will be all right*. The first thing in the gospel of God is, *BE all right, THEN do this, that, or the other thing, as God calls you to do*.

And right here is where even Seventh-day Adventists are in danger of making a mistake in these times, and with relation to this very thing that is given to us to preach to the world. You have heard it said that "righteousness is right doing." It is no such thing—*except as a consequence*. If you have had the idea that, rightly speaking, primarily and in itself, "righteousness is right doing," please abandon that idea before you leave the house. [Voices: "Amen," "amen."] Righteousness is not that. Listen! consider something familiar: you speak of *sweetness*. Now, in speaking of *sweetness*, do you, did you ever in your life, mean, or expect, to be understood that *sweetness* is *sweet doing*? *Is sweetness sweet doing*? [Voice: "No."] True. What is it? [Voice: "It is the thing itself."] It is *sweet being*. Richness—is that *rich doing*? As a *consequence* the doing comes, just as the quality of *sweetness* will impart *sweetness* to other things. But *sweetness* itself is not *sweet doing*; no more is *righteousness* itself *right doing*.

The very construction of the word itself excludes the idea of righteousness being in itself *right doing*. Is the word "righteous-*ing*"?—No; it is *righteous-ness*. Does the suffix "*ness*" signify *action*?—No; never. It signifies *quality*. The suffix "*ing*" signifies *action*. *Sweeten-ing* tells of *doing* something. *Sweet-n-ess* tells only of *being* something. *Right-en-ing* suggests *action*: it tells of *doing*. *Right-n-ess* is *being*: that signifies *quality*, essence. For the word "righteousness" is only the lengthened form of the word *right-ness*, which has descended from "right-ness" through "right-wise-ness" to "right-*eous-ness*." Do you not all now see that there is a difference between *righteousness* and *right doing*? It is just the difference between *being right* and then *as a consequence* doing right, and *being wrong* and then trying to *do right in order to be right*.

There is danger of Seventh-day Adventists falling into the idea that *right doing* is itself *righteousness*, rather than its being only the *consequence* of *righteousness*; and then going about to do right things, in order to be *righteous*. And that is exactly the case of the "Pharisees which believed," who had confused the Galatian Christians, removing them from the true gospel, "unto another gospel,"—*righteousness by works*,—*righteousness by doing things*,—"which is not another," because it is not a gospel at all. For, of course, if *righteousness* is to come to me by my doing of things, then, in the nature of things, the more things I do, the more *righteousness* I shall have. But in all the doing I find not rest nor peace. And so the things that I must do in order to be *righteous* pile up, and up, until it is so much that I see with despair that I can not do them all. Then, all that I can say is, "Well, I know I have not the peace of God: I know that I am

not what I ought to be. but I have done my best, and that is the best that I can do. And if that is not enough, I can not help it; for I can not do any better." And *that* is precisely the Laodicean condition: "I know thy *works*, that thou art neither cold nor hot; I would that thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou *art lukewarm*, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth." "Because," in pride of self-righteousness, "thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." Rev. 3:15-17.

But that will never do. Therefore to the people to-day, in those Sabbath-school lessons in the book of Galatians, as really as in the book of Revelation, it is said: "I counsel thee to *buy of me* gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and *white raiment*, that thou mayest be clothed." Rev. 3:18. What is the white raiment?—"The righteousness of saints:" it is the righteousness of God by faith which *makes* saints. He says, Get it of me. You can not get it by your doing anything. It does not come that way. It is the righteousness of *God*, not of men. It is essence, quality; the *character*, the *nature*, of *God*. Get it of God by *receiving* it, the free gift of God. Get *this* righteousness, and it will impart its blessed quality, its character, to all that God calls upon you to do. Sweetness will impart its *quality* to whatsoever needs it. And so the righteousness of God, which is the very essence of righteousness, will impart its blessed quality of righteousness to whatsoever it touches in the heart and life of him who needs righteousness. Oh, let this righteousness touch your heart! Yea, let it *dwell* in your heart and life by faith. *Then* righteousness will be imparted to every action you perform, and to all the deeds that come from God to you to do; and thus the righteousness of the law of God will be fulfilled in you, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. [Voice: "Praise the Lord!"] Yes: let all the people say, Praise the Lord.

(To be continued.)

Alonzo T. Jones.

Advent Review and Sabbath Herald 77, 34 (August 21, 1900), pp. 531, 532.

[Verified by and from the original.]

To download the original source material [CLICK HERE](#).