

Lesson 5

"Old Testament Faith"

It is one thing for Muslims to humiliate, taunt, and murder another Muslim. It is quite another thing for *you* to murder the Son of God. A Muslim can die crying out, "Allah is great," and go to heaven. The Son of God died crying, "My God, why have you forsaken Me?"

There are no plays or skits of the crucifixion in churches that can portray the crucifixion of Jesus. Observers of passion plays depicting the trial and death of Jesus say they are tearjerkers. But all the visuals of physical torture do not graphically reenact the meaning of the cross.

In 1888 God sent "a most precious message" to His church which honored and uplifted the cross of Jesus. Christ bore the "curse of the law" in His body for every man on the tree (Gal. 3:13). Disobedience to the law exacts its own wages which is death,--the real thing,--goodbye to life forever.

Moses had written: Whoever is hung on a "tree" "is accursed of God" (Deut. 21:22, 23). If one were convicted of a capital crime and sentenced to decapitation, he could be so thankful. Then he could ask God to forgive him with the assurance of pardon. But if one were convicted of a capital crime and sentenced to be hung, he could not ask for divine pardon. He died a God-forsaken death.

Jesus died the sinner's second death with no hope of a resurrection. God "made Him to be sin for us" (2 Cor. 5:21). He bore our guilt and self-condemnation in His nerve center on a tree. Jesus "taste[d] death for every man" (Heb. 2:9). He died your death. Your sin murdered the Son of God.

When the Galatians heard Paul proclaim the death of Jesus they were never the same. Paul preached the cross so openly and graphically before their "eyes" (Gal. 3:1) that they forgot who they were and where they were. Their "eyes" became "ears" to "obey [*hupokeo*, means to bend down low to hear every syllable] the truth." It was "by the hearing [listen with faith] of faith" (Gal. 3:2) that the Galatians received the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit convicted the Galatians' hearts of sin with the truth that they had murdered "the Just" [righteous] One (Acts 7:52). "The Just shall live by faith" (Gal. 3:11,

quoted from Hab. 2:4). Habakkuk's messianic prophecy predicted Jesus' life and death as the singular righteousness by faith.

When the Galatians "saw" Jesus "gave Himself for them," they listened with "the hearing of faith." They identified with the crucified One. He had first loved them. He was their substitute who fully identified with their fallen humanity. Thus the Galatians experienced justification by faith being legally straightened out with the universal Law. The forgiveness of sins also melted their hearts with divine love so that they became at-one-with God.

Ellen G. White, a wise writer, has said: "The theme that attracts the heart of the sinner is Christ, and Him crucified. ... Present Him thus to the hungering multitudes, and the light of His love will win people from darkness to light, from transgression to obedience and true holiness. Beholding Jesus upon the cross ... arouses the conscience ... as nothing else can do" (*Maranatha*, p. 99).

Why were the Galatians "foolish" (Gal. 3:1, 3)? Because they were "bewitched" by spiritualism (vs. 1). Spiritualism is the man-made belief that god resides in idols of wood and stone. Spiritualism is any man-centered doctrine of righteousness. There are any number of false "gospels" and false christs with the common denominator of "I," which is the religion invented by Lucifer (Isa. 14:12-14). Doctrines of righteousness by faith which are motivated by *self*-love as opposed to faith motivated by *agape* are forms of spiritualism.

The "foolish" Galatians turned from a cross-motivated faith to a faith motivated by "the flesh" (Gal. 3:3). The Judaizers taught them that believing in the Messiah was fine, but man must also be circumcised in order to be saved, and that "the works of the law" ("flesh") obtains holiness. It was a "holy flesh" movement.

Does this mean the law is bad? No. The universal Law of God as written on tables of stone are a perfect description of righteousness, but sinful "flesh" sees only a form of righteousness in the Law which is pleasing to self. Therefore "the flesh" cannot attain the "righteousness of God" by "the works of the law." Neither can the Law of God impart the "righteousness of God" to "the flesh."

"And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them" (Gal. 3:12). The law written on stone says "do" them and you shall live. The only condition on which the law as written can offer life is to "the doers of the law." Obey and live, disobey and die. But for sinners this is impossible and therefore the only remedy is "faith."

Since *the faith of Jesus* gives to the believer in Jesus, the perfect keeping of the law of God, the perfect righteousness of God, there is "no necessity for the ordinance of circumcision" (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 364).

Another time in history when the same "gospel preached" was "mixed with faith" was Abraham's experience (Gal. 3:6, 8). All that God did was simply proclaim to him His marvelous promises known as the New Covenant, no threatened "curses" mixed in on pain of disobedience. Abraham simply "listened with faith" to this incredible Good News (just what Paul told the Galatians was "the hearing of faith"). Abraham too, like the Galatians, "received the Spirit." His faith was counted to him for righteousness (Gen. 15:6).

The Judaizers said to the Galatians, Paul is trying to cheat you out of the inheritance promised to Abraham by not teaching you circumcision for salvation. You are not the children of Abraham unless you are circumcised.

Paul said Abraham was justified by faith while yet a heathen before he was circumcised (Gal. 3:8). Circumcision was never a part of God's original plan. It came in after Abraham's unbelief of God's promise in taking Hagar and siring Ishmael in order to "help" God out with the promised heir. Circumcision came in after Mount Moriah as a reminder to Abraham and his descendants of the mistaken idea that the promised inheritance comes by old covenant unbelief--faith and works.

"The blessing of Abraham" is for "the Gentiles." The blessing is Jesus Christ (Gal. 3:14). He is "the righteousness of God[']s" law (Rom. 3:22). "The promise of the Spirit" is the promised inheritance of the future life in righteousness dwelling on the earth made new. "We, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 Peter 3:13).

The Holy Spirit now is the down payment so the future inheritance is a present reality. "Ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our *inheritance* until the redemption of the purchased possession" (Eph. 1:13, 14).

--*Paul E. Penno*