

Chapter 6 - The Third Angel's Message in Verity

{from the book, Christ Our Righteousness
by AG Daniels

A serious question arose in the minds of some who heard the message of Righteousness by Faith presented at the Minneapolis Conference, as to the relation that message bore to the third angel's message. In their perplexity, a number wrote to Mrs. E. G. White for an expression of her views on this question.

Regarding this inquiry and her reply, we have her published statement, as follows:

"Several have written to me, inquiring if the message of justification by faith is the third angel's message, and I have answered, 'It is the third angel's message in verity.'"

-Review and Herald, April 1, 1890.

There is more in this statement than a brief, clear, positive answer to a question. It has a deep, vital meaning. It sounds a serious warning, and makes an intelligent, earnest appeal to every believer in the third angel's message. Let us give the statement careful study.

Justification by faith, it is affirmed, is "the third angel's message in verity." The words "in verity" mean, in fact, in reality, in very truth. That means that the message of justification by faith and the third angel's message are the same in purpose, in scope, and in results.

Justification by faith is God's way of saving sinners; His way of convicting sinners of their guilt, their condemnation, and their utterly undone and lost condition. It is also God's way of canceling their guilt, delivering them from the condemnation of His divine law, and giving them a new and right standing before Him and His holy law. Justification by faith is God's way of changing weak, sinful, defeated men and women into strong, righteous, victorious Christians.

Now if it be true that justification by faith is "the third angel's message in verity,"-in fact, in reality,-it must be that the genuine understanding and appropriation of the third angel's message is designed to do for and in those who receive it, the full work of justification by faith. That this is its purpose, is evident from the following considerations:

1. The great threefold message of Revelation 14, which we designate by the term "the third angel's message," is declared to be "the everlasting gospel." Rev. 14:6.
2. The message makes the solemn announcement that the "hour of His judgment is come."
3. It admonishes all who are to meet God at His great tribunal, to be judged by His righteous law, to "fear God, and give glory to Him,"-and to "worship Him that made heaven, and earth." Verse 7.
4. The result, or fruitage, of this message of warning and admonition is the development of a people of whom it is declared: "Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus." Verse 12.

In all this we have the facts of justification by faith. The message is the gospel of salvation from sin, condemnation, and death. The judgment brings men and women face to face with the law of righteousness, by which they are to be tried. Because of their guilt and condemnation, they are warned to fear and worship God. This involves conviction of guilt, repentance, confession, and renunciation. This is the ground of forgiveness, cleansing, and justification. Those who enter into this experience have had wrought into their characters the sweet, beautiful grace of patience, in an age of all-pervading irritability and fiery temper, which is destroying the peace, happiness, and safety of the human race. What is that but justification by faith? The word declares that, "being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Rom. 5: 1.

But more still, these believers "keep the commandments of God." They have experienced the marvelous change from hating and transgressing the law of God, to loving and keeping its righteous precepts. Their standing before the law has been changed. Their guilt has been canceled; their condemnation has been removed, and the death sentence has been annulled. Having accepted Christ as Saviour, they have received His righteousness and His life.

This wondrous transformation can be wrought only by the grace and power of God, and it is wrought for those only who lay hold of Christ as their substitute, their surety, their Redeemer. Therefore, it is said that they "keep the faith of Jesus." This reveals the secret of their rich, deep experience. They laid hold of the faith of Jesus, -that faith by which He triumphed over the powers of darkness.

"When the sinner believes that Christ is his personal Saviour, then, according to His unfailing promises, God pardons his sin, and justifies him freely. The repentant soul realizes that his justification comes because Christ, as his substitute and surety, has died for him, as his atonement and righteousness." -*Review and Herald*, Nov. 4, 1890.

As already pointed out, we find in the experiences of those who triumph in the third angel's message all the facts of justification by faith. For this reason, it is quite true that justification by faith is "the third angel's message in verity."

And here it may be well to call attention to the fact that both justification by faith and the third angel's message are the gospel of Christ in verity. This is made apparent by a statement from the apostle Paul, who declares that the "gospel of Christ ... is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth. . . . For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith." Rom. 1: 16, 17.

The facts here presented are these:

1. The gospel is a manifestation of God's power at work, delivering sinners from their sins and planting in them His own righteousness.
2. But this is done for those only who believe.

3. This is being made just, or righteous, by faith.
4. And this is the purpose of both the message of justification by faith and the third angel's message.

What, then, is the important lesson to be gained from the statement we have had under examination? What is the warning it sounds? Plainly the following:

That all who accept the third angel's message should enter into the experience of justification by faith. They should have Christ revealed to and in them. They should know by personal experience the work of regeneration. They should have the fullest assurance that they have been born anew, from above, and that they have passed from death unto life. They should know that their guilt has been canceled, that they have been delivered from the condemnation of the law, and are thus ready to appear before the judgment seat of Christ. They should know by victorious experience that they have laid hold of, and are being kept by, "the faith of Jesus," and that by this faith they are empowered to keep the commandments of God.

To fail to enter into this experience, will be to miss the real, vital, redeeming virtue of the third angel's message. Unless this experience is gained, the believer will have only the theory, the doctrines, the forms and activities, of the message. That will prove a fatal and awful mistake. The theory, the doctrines, even the most earnest activities of the message, cannot save from sin, nor prepare the heart to meet God in judgment.

It is regarding the danger of making this fatal mistake that we are warned. Formalism-having "the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law," without having a living experience in Christ-is the hidden rock that has wrecked untold thousands of professed followers of Christ. It is against this danger that we are seriously warned.

But there is more than warning in this statement. There is appeal also-an earnest, winsome appeal to enter into fellowship with Christ Jesus our Lord. There is a call to the highest tablelands of Christian experience. There is assurance that when justified by faith, we shall have peace with God, and shall be able continually to rejoice in hope of the glory of God. There is promise that we shall not be put to shame by defeat in our conflict with sin, because the love of God has been shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which has been given unto us. Rom. 5:1-5.

O that we had all listened as we should to both warning and appeal as they came to us in that seemingly strange, yet impressive, way at the Conference of 1888! * What uncertainty would have been removed, what wanderings and defeats and losses would have been prevented! What light and blessing and triumph and progress would have come to us! But thanks be unto Him who loves us with an everlasting love, it is not too late even now to respond with the whole heart to both warning and appeal, and receive the great benefits provided.

*The author, AG Daniells is speaking about the 1888 Conference in general. He and his wife Mary had taken a call to New Zealand in 1886 and was not present at Minneapolis. In 1891, the Australian Church elected him conference president, at the urging of Ellen White the year she arrived in Australia. He was also instrumental in founding the Avondale school. In 1901, back in the U.S, Elder Daniells would be elected General Conf President.