

Paying for Sins
My thoughts on query nineteen August 2016

The query:

The Roman Catholic system of indulgences states that when money is paid to the church, the “past, present, and FUTURE” sins of the donor (or those of another if it is a gift from him), are forgiven. (GC 59.1 and 127.3)

The Protestant system of forgiveness is that Christ PAID for the sins of all men, past, present and future, when He died on the cross, and gives it to us as a gift.

Where is the difference? Is there a difference?

My response:

In a quote I used last month we had the words:

*****(Begin Quote)

<http://twelvetribe.org/articles/epistle-of-straw>

Understanding their [the reformers] reasoning will give you a key to what is going on in much of the *religious fluff* you see today across the denominational landscape. [This is their emphasis.]

Believers have been handed a “gospel” that teaches a way to read the book of James and other equally pointed truths and yet mentally disconnect when thinking through (or taking) those truths to their proper conclusions.

This is what James meant by “deceives his own heart.” [James 1:26.]

It is like saying, “Two plus two is four.” Everyone knows that is right, unless you have come under a delusion. Under a delusion you can see “two plus two” and somehow know it equals four, but still go ahead and say with confidence that it equals five. You have no apologies. You can quote, “Faith without works is dead,” and at the same time say, “You do not need to do anything.”

You can justify every contradiction to the commands of the Scriptures by saying to those who would want to obey, “That is legalism; salvation is a free gift.”

Useless Religion

So, we see a religion full of gluttony, drunkenness, and even murder in the name of God, by people (including Martin Luther himself) who will justify their actions with the thought that they are “saved by faith alone.”

But James boldly says, “*Can that faith save him?*” [In the case of another person, we can leave it in the LORD’s hands, but in our own case, we need to know.]

*****(End Quote)

The original deception is plainly exposed in the following quotes:

{GC 59.1}[This was published in 1911, but an earlier edition in 1884 (4SP102) said the same.]

Still another fabrication was needed to enable Rome to profit by the fears and the vices of her adherents. This was supplied by the doctrine of indulgences.

Full remission of sins, past, present, and future, and release from all the pains and penalties incurred, were promised to all who would enlist in the pontiff’s wars to extend his temporal dominion, to punish his enemies, or to exterminate those who dared deny his spiritual supremacy.

The people were also taught that by the payment of money to the church they might free themselves from sin, and also release the souls of their deceased friends who were confined in the tormenting flames. By such means did Rome fill her coffers and sustain the magnificence, luxury, and vice of the pretended representatives of Him who had not where to lay His head.

{GC 127.3 - 128.1}

As Tetzel entered a town, a messenger went before him, announcing: “The grace of God and of the holy father is at your gates.” -- D’Aubigne, b. 3, ch. 1. And the people welcomed the blasphemous pretender as if he were God Himself come down from heaven to them.

The infamous traffic was set up in the church, and Tetzel, ascending the pulpit, extolled the indulgences as the most precious gift of God. He declared that by virtue of his certificates of pardon all the sins which the purchaser should afterward desire to commit would be forgiven him, and that “not even repentance is necessary.” -- Ibid., b. 3, ch. 1.

More than this, he assured his hearers that the indulgences had power to save not only the living but the dead; that the very moment the money should clink against the bottom of his chest, the soul in whose behalf it had been paid would escape from purgatory and make its way to heaven. (See K. R. Hagenbach, History of the Reformation, vol. 1, p. 96.) {GC 127.3}

When Simon Magus offered to purchase of the apostles the power to work miracles, Peter answered him: “Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money.” Acts 8:20.

But Tetzal's offer was grasped by eager thousands. Gold and silver flowed into his treasury. A salvation that could be bought with money was more easily obtained than that which requires repentance, faith, and diligent effort to resist and overcome sin. {GC 128.1}

It was simple step for the devil to “spin” the thought that was behind the doctrine of indulgences and apply it to the whole gospel and then put it before the Reformers who were opposing the gospel of indulgences! Engrossed as they were with the thought that we are saved by grace and not by works, they soon condemned any kind of works as not necessary (but possibly acceptable).

That also allowed them to throw out the LORD’s Sabbath when that doctrine was shown to them, as it still does today.

It is this “fluffing” of the gospel that allows the attitude shown in the query. Expressed in one set of words it is abhorrent, while in another set it is OK!!

Not until we understand that “righteousness by faith” means “doing right” by faith *in the power of the Son of God* can we get out from under this quagmire, for this false gospel is like quicksand and will drag us down into the second death.

We have among us the doctrine that “Christ does it all” which is soon fluffed into “Christ *has done* it all” in the words, “The atonement was complete on the cross”.

But the opposite truth was part of the 1888 message:

******(Begin Quote)*

{June 15, 1888 EJW, SITI 362.5 - 362.6}

Signs of the Times, by E J Waggoner [Emphasis added by me]

From these verses we learn that the atonement for the people was made in the sanctuary with the blood of the goat that had been slain outside the sanctuary [building]. *The atonement was not made when the victim was slain*, but was made afterwards with its blood, which was taken into the sanctuary for that purpose.

Now those priests served "unto the example and shadow of heavenly things" (Heb. 8:5), and, therefore, from the figurative atonement we must be able to

trace the real. In the one sacrifice of Christ, all the daily sacrifices, and the sacrifices of all the yearly atonement days, found their complete fulfillment. Christ was offered "once for all."

But since in the figure the atonement was not made when the offering was slain, but was made with his blood afterwards, so it must be in the reality.

The death of the offered victim was only the preparation for the atonement; it furnished the means by which the atonement could be made; and as in the figure the blood was taken into the sanctuary, in order to make the atonement, so Christ has entered into the holy places in Heaven, with his own blood to make an atonement for his people. We cannot here go into the particulars of the atonement, but can merely show that the atonement was only begun and was not completed on the cross. {June 15, 1888 EJW, SITI 362.5}

If it were true that the atonement was completed on the cross, then the doctrine of election and foreordination as taught by the ultra-Calvinists, or else universal salvation, would necessarily be true. There would be no escape from one or the other. For if the atonement were made and completed on the cross, then nothing that anybody can do can change his condition as there fixed. It must necessarily follow that those for whom the atonement was made cannot fail of salvation, and that those for whom it was not made cannot obtain salvation, no matter what course they pursue.

But nobody can really believe this doctrine, no matter what his printed creed may say; and so many have gone over to the other logical extreme, namely, that everybody will be saved.

We say that this is a logical conclusion from the premise that the atonement was made on the cross; for since Christ died for all, it necessarily follows that if the atonement was made when he died, all must be saved.

But we need not adopt either of these conclusions.

Christ died in order that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. Whosoever will may come and find pardon for his sins, and have them finally blotted out. {June 15, 1888 EJW, SITI 362.6}

***** (End Quote)

Here too, is more on that fluff:

Acts 8:20:18-20

¹⁸ And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, ¹⁹ saying, "Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost".
²⁰ But Peter said to him, "Your money perish with you, because you have thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money".

But we have no qualms about accepting it as a gift that Christ has "paid" for!

Who has He paid? And what did He use for currency? When we look carefully at our standard answers in the light of the Spirit we can soon see that they do not add up, but are $2 + 2 = 5$ again.

Paul wrote; "The gospel is the POWER OF GOD unto salvation to those who believe" in the words spoken by God, and we need to read and re-read them until we are sure of what He means in that verse. (See Romans 1:16-17.)

When Noah walked to the site where the LORD had told him to build the ark, he did not sit down and wait on the LORD. He took a spade and a hammer and a saw etc. and set to work, he and his fellows with him, carefully following the plan given him, and not adding to it.

When Abraham and Sarah believed God regarding the promised son, what did they do? They asked Him what was their part in transaction, and then they did it believing that His power was with them. But it was they who did it! There was no pious waiting around for the LORD to do for them that which they could do themselves. But He only did what they could not do. He gave them the power to have a baby!

When it comes to being cleansed from a particular hitherto unknown sin, what did the Israelite of old do? He walked into the courtyard with his female goat and laid his hands on her head, then he killed her. He watched as the priest applied the blood on the horns of the altar and ate the portion of the flesh, and then he knew that the guilt and power of the sin was gone from him and was now borne by Another, for the true Israelite knew that the ceremony did nothing, but his faith in God's word allowed him to know that the Son of God had done it as typified by the priest's actions.

There is no provision made in the law for continual sinning and confessing.

I repeat, there is no provision made in the law for continual sinning and confessing. That is a fluff added by Satan and accepted by most professed Christians today. They don't even expect to be free from habitual sin till the Second Coming.

So what is different from the Roman Catholic way? Nothing at all! The true gospel has an entirely different approach.

It is that in the true way of righteousness we ask the LORD *what He wants us to do* and then step out in faith to do it. It's like walking on water!!!

Matthew 14:

²⁵ And in the fourth watch of the night [just before dawn] Jesus went to them, walking on the sea. ²⁶ And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, "It is a spirit"; and they cried out for fear. ²⁷ But straightway Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid".

²⁸ And Peter answered Him and said, "LORD, if it be You, bid me come to You on the water". ²⁹ And He said, "Come" [just one word!] And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus.

³⁰ But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, "LORD, save me". ³¹ And immediately Jesus stretched forth His hand [He was so close to him], and caught him, and said to him, "O you of little faith, wherefore did you doubt?"

But if we lose faith in that word, then, like Peter, we will need the hand of the LORD again. Not for salvation from the sin-master, but from the sin of disbelief at the moment.

So Luther and James are both right – but in different areas. We can do nothing to help in being reborn, any more than we can in the first birth, for that's up to our parents. But we do have things to do after that as we grow up in the LORD, for there we need to show that we are indeed the children of God and that His power works in our lives.

I am NOT saying that we should search out and copy the actions of the saints of old (like the Maccabees), but that we should expect, and indeed ask, the LORD for instructions on what He wants us to do today in our situation. Jesus said, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to

you: for every one that asks receives; and he that seeks finds; and to him that knocks it shall be opened". Matthew 7:7-8. [And in another place] "And all things, whatsoever you shall ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive", [Matthew 21:22, with this proviso] "You ask, and receive not, because you ask amiss, that you may consume it upon your lusts [desires]". James 4:3.

The Son of God also said in Matthew 11:28-30,

Come to Me, all you that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me [and how I did it]; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and you shall find rest to your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light [on you].

If we ask properly, it will be no harder than walking on water!

So where is the struggle then?

It is with ourselves, *with our choice to take Him at His word*, or qualify it by our interpretation. And in the face of a temptation to sin, that struggle can be intense and we may even begin to sink, but He is there to keep us in the strait and narrow – in the difficult and constricted way.

Regarding that, it is written:

Jude 1:

²⁴ Now unto Him that *is able to keep you from falling* [into temptation], and to present you faultless before [or into] the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, ²⁵ to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and for ever. Amen.

We should understand that temptation is the desire to do something which is usually normal and natural and legal, but we are tempted when it is an illegal and/or out of time or place situation. It is the illegality which needs to be overcome, not the normal!! For example: to eat is normal, but gluttony (overeating) is not.

And there is a final depth to the fluff:

The Protestant world, including the SDA's, continually trumpet "Sola Scriptura" which means "The Bible and the Bible Only", but then ignore the plain statements that it contains and stick with old explanations given many years ago by the fathers or the pioneers.

We are also bombarded with commentaries and explanations by more modern writers, but few are urged to stop to read and re-read the actual scripture and exercise a belief (faith) and understanding in what is written there. Again, we are taught to see $2+2=5$ in that the plain words are to be held against our own experiences, and they (which are actually traditions) then take the precedence.

Instead of being told to change our behaviour to fit the words, we are exhorted to conform to our own or our teacher's manner of sanctification. Many among us take pride in telling us that they are sinners and don't expect to stop sinning till the Second Coming, but this is not what the New Testament teaches. It is written,

Psalm 4:4-5

Stand in awe [of God's power], and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still. Selah [which means: think prayerfully on what you have just read]. Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the LORD.

Remember, there is no provision made in the law for forgiveness for continuous sinning and confessing, although there is a period allowed while we realise that it is a sin. Sinning and confessing the same sin over and over again means that we are not accepting the power of the Son of God to put an end to it. But we are forgiven and cleansed when we confess a previously unknown sin, or one which we are now aware of as a sin.

1 John 1:9-10

If we confess our sins [of ignorance], He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.

Leviticus 4:27-28

And if any one of the common people sin through ignorance, while he does somewhat against any of the commandments of the LORD concerning things which ought not to be done, and be guilty; or if his sin, which he has sinned, come to his knowledge: then he shall bring his offering, a kid of the goats, a female without blemish, for his sin which he has sinned.

1 Corinthians 15:34

Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God [and His power]: I speak this to your shame.

John 8:10-12

When Jesus had lifted up Himself, and saw none but the woman, He said to her, “Woman, where are those your accusers? Has no man condemned you?” She said, “No man, LORD”. And Jesus said to her, “Neither do I condemn you: go, **and sin no more**. Then spoke Jesus again to them, saying, “I am the light of the world: he that follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of Life”.

Conclusion:

The difference between the true and the false gospel is in **the method** of payment! Is it just a legal transaction done on the cross, or is a practical experience which must happen to each one of us individually while we are alive?

In the true gospel it is taught that Christ “pays” for the **removal** of our sinmaster by taking it into Himself and replacing it with a portion of His Life at the moment we accept salvation.

His “currency” is “a Life for a life”.

The false system accepts human works, money, or explanations and then says that the sinmaster is **covered and we remain sinners**, because it is **not** removed.



Next query:

Do the feet and toes of the image in Daniel chapter two represent the divided nations of Europe after the fall of the Pagan Roman Empire in 476AD, and as such, do they represent the European Community today?