

**COME
TO THE
MARRIAGE**

Catholicism does not teach that man's own natural works have merit. It teaches that the Holy Spirit working in them produces a work that fully satisfies the divine law. Therefore the work has merit or value. But they teach that the merit is Christ's merit, not the individual's merit, because Christ produced the work in them by the Holy Spirit.

Chapter 15

FAITH AND WORKS

The third angel's message is the message of justification by faith. The third angel is pointing to the most holy place where Jesus is making His final intercession or atonement. (see EW 254) Therefore the final intercessory work of Christ, which was called the marriage, should reveal the message of justification by faith. A person goes to the marriage by understanding. The message of justification by faith would be understood when a person understands the work of Christ in the most holy place. The group in the holy place did not understand the marriage. As a result, they trusted to their own works. The following quotation makes it clear why an understanding of faith and works is of vital importance.

"Let no one take the limited, narrow position that any of the works of man can help in the least possible way to liquidate the debt of his transgression. This is a fatal deception. If you would understand it, you must cease haggling over your pet ideas, and with humble hearts survey the atonement. This matter is so dimly comprehended that thousands upon thousands claiming to be sons of God are children of the wicked one, because they will depend on their own works. God always demanded good works, the law demands it, but because man placed himself in sin where his good works were valueless, Jesus' righteousness alone can avail." 1SM 343

"The principle that man can save himself by his own works lay at the foundation of every heathen religion;. . . Wherever it is held, men have no barrier against sin." DA 35, 36

We must understand the principle involved in saving yourself by your own works. I have never met a Christian that ever claimed to believe that he is saved by his own works. Yet, it is obvious from the statements above that many Christians do.

"The present message -justification by faith -is a message from God; it bears the divine credentials, for its fruit is unto holiness. . . There is not one in one hundred who understands for himself the Bible truth on this subject that is so necessary to our present and eternal welfare." 1 SM 359,360

Understanding the message of justification by faith gives victory over sin. A person that believes in righteousness by work has no barrier against sin. That is fatal. This helps to see the great importance of understanding this area.

What is it that is so attractive about the papacy? What is the secret of her power?

"The papacy is well adapted to meet the wants of all these. It is prepared for two classes of mankind, embracing nearly the whole world -those who would be saved by their

merits, and those who would be saved in their sins. Here is the secret of its power." GC 572

The company in the holy place, who are bowed before the throne, are religious people who trust in their own merit. Since this is our danger, we should study that group.

People who are trusting in their own merit would not believe they are doing that. All Christian groups know about faith in Christ's merit, so a group that believes in their own merit would actually claim that they are saved by faith. The mother of harlots is the Catholic church, and we know for a certainty that they believe they are saved by their merit. Are they deceived, or do they actually claim that they are saved by their merit?

"Protestants frequently believe that Catholics ascribe the merit of their good works to themselves and not to Jesus Christ, the Saviour. This is not the fact. Catholics believe that no natural act can merit eternal salvation; that we can do nothing for heaven without the merits of Jesus Christ, the one Mediator, and the grace of God won for us all by His redemption. "Our sufficiency is from God" (II Cor. 3:5) "Without Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5) Every good work we do is the effect of the Holy Ghost, and our free will co-operating with Him. "By the grace of God I am what I am; . . ." The Question Box; The Handy Catholic Dictionary 332 (A Work of Reference on the doctrine, discipline, and history of the Catholic Church)

If the Catholic church denies that they are saved by their works or merit, then the protestants that joined them would logically take the same position. This tells us that people who are trusting in their merit can be deceived as to what they are actually believing. Therefore, a person doesn't actually make the claim that he believes that way but he has an understanding of justification by faith that is actually justification by works. He thinks he is being saved by faith. Since the Catholic church is the mother let us analyze her characteristics. This will give us an understanding of apostate protestantism because apostate protestantism is an image of the beast or papacy.

The papacy was developed in the following manner.

"This compromise between paganism and Christianity resulted in the development of "the man of sin" foretold in prophecy as opposing and exalting himself above God. That gigantic system of false religion is a masterpiece of Satan's power -a monument of his efforts to seat himself upon the throne to rule the earth according to his will." GC 50

A compromise would be a blending of two systems of religion. Let's take a look at each of the systems separately before examining the way they are combined.

"Through heathenism, Satan had for ages turned men away from God; but he won his great triumph in perverting the

faith of Israel. By contemplating and worshiping their own conceptions, the heathen had lost a knowledge of God, and had become more and more corrupt. So it was with Israel. The principle that man can save himself by his own works lay at the foundation of every heathen religion; it had now become the principle of the Jewish religion. Satan had implanted this principle. Wherever it is held, men have no barrier against sin." DA 35, 36

The foundation principle of paganism is that man can save himself by his own works. The foundation principle of Christianity is found in the book of *Romans*.

"The just shall live by faith." Romans 1:17

The papacy took these two foundation principles and blended them together.

The pagans believed that their works had merit. The papacy blended that belief with the foundation principle of Christianity - "The just shall live by faith." The result is a doctrine that claims that man's work has merit but now the merit is not his but Christ's. In other words Christ working through the human being produces a work that has merit. But it is not considered to have merit because of anything the human has done. It is a good work because Christ produced it through the individual.

But the work has merit. Having merit means it has value. For a work to have merit or value it must be a perfect work. So if a person believes that the Holy Spirit working through him produces, or can produce, a perfect work this side of the final atonement, then he believes in merit. He is exalting himself.

Below is the Catholic doctrine of merit.

"For since Christ Jesus Himself constantly communicates His virtues to those who are justified, as the head to the members, and as the vine to the branches (John 15:4); -which virtue always precedes, accompanies, and follows their good works, and without which they could be nowise agreeable to God and meritorious, -we must believe that nothing more is wanting to the justified, nor is there any reason why they should not be considered as having fully satisfied the divine law, as far as the condition of this life admits, by such works as are done in God, and truly merited the attainment of eternal life in due time, if they die in the state of grace. . ."

"Catholics believe that eternal life is indeed a free gift of God's mercy and love, won for us by Christ's death; but God having promised it as a reward to those who love and serve Him, we can by performing good works through God's grace really merit the glory in heaven. . ."

"Protestants frequently believe that Catholics ascribe the merit of their good works to themselves and not to Jesus

Christ, the Saviour. This is not the fact. Catholics believe that no natural act can merit eternal salvation; that we can do nothing for heaven without the merits of Jesus Christ, the one Mediator, and the grace of God won for us all by His redemption. "Our sufficiency is from God"(II Cor. 3:5) "Without Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5) Every good work we do is the effect of the Holy Ghost, and our free will co-operating with Him. "By the grace of God I am what I am;" The Question Box The Handy Catholic Dictionary (Explains Catholic Doctrine) 331, 332, 333

Carefully note that the above makes it very clear that the good works that a person does is the result of the Holy Spirit working in the heart. As a result of the Spirit's work in the heart, the works "fully satisfied the divine law." Since they fully satisfy the divine law, the works have merit or value. But the merit is not ascribed to the individual. The merit is Christ's merit. All the glory is given to God - not to the person.

The error of this teaching becomes clear when we contrast it with the truth.

"Christ, our Mediator, and the Holy Spirit are constantly interceding in man's behalf, but the Spirit pleads not for us as does Christ, who presents His blood, shed from the foundation of the world; the Spirit works upon our hearts, drawing out prayers and penitence, praise and thanksgiving. The gratitude which flows from our lips is the result of the Spirit's striking the cords of the soul in holy memories, awakening the music of the heart.

The religious services, the prayers, the praise, the penitent confession of sin ascend from true believers as incense to the heavenly sanctuary, but passing through the corrupt channels of humanity, they are so defiled that unless purified by blood, they can never be of value with God. They ascend not in spotless purity, and unless the Intercessor, who is at God's right hand, presents and purifies all by His righteousness, it is not acceptable to God. All incense from earthly tabernacles must be moist with the cleansing drops of the blood of Christ. He holds before the Father the censer of His own merits, in which there is no taint of earthly corruption. He gathers into this censer the prayers, the praise, and the confessions of His people, and with these He puts His own spotless righteousness. Then, perfumed with the merits of Christ's propitiation, the incense comes up before God wholly and entirely acceptable. Then gracious answers are returned.

"Oh, that all may see that everything in obedience, in penitence, in praise and thanksgiving, must be placed upon the glowing fire of the righteousness of Christ. The fragrance of this righteousness ascends like a cloud around the mercy seat."
ISM 344

The Holy Spirit inspires the individual to do good works. But notice that "passing through the corrupt channels of humanity, they are so defiled that . . . they can never be of value with God." Notice also that they are made acceptable in heaven, not on this earth. "They ascend not in spotless purity."

Let us picture these two views:

Papal View

Holy Spirit + Me = Produces Good Works (Merit)

Protestant View

Holy Spirit + Me = Produces Good Works (No Merit)

Both views have the Holy Spirit working through the human agent. Both views talk about good works. Yet the Papal view says your works are perfect and therefore have merit. The Protestant view as given by E.G. White in 1S.M. 344 says that the good works that man does are imperfect and therefore do not have merit. But why are they imperfect? The key to understanding this very important doctrine is the nature of the "me" in the above picture. The Protestant view calls "me" a corrupt channel which defiles the work and makes it imperfect. The papal view would obviously not consider "me" a corrupt channel. Therefore, the work can be perfect and have merit. The doctrine of merit is dangerous. It is not dangerous just because they say their works have merit. It is dangerous because of why they say their works have merit. Therefore the doctrine of justification by faith must start with the premise about the nature of man.

The nature of man and the nature of sin have been discussed in our previous studies. It would be well to review these areas. The next study will relate the areas of faith and works to the nature of man.