

THE TRUTH OF THE GOSPEL

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In Galatians 2:5 and 14 Paul speaks of the truth of the gospel. The word *truth* in these verses does not mean the doctrine or teaching of the gospel; it denotes the reality of the gospel. Although Galatians is a short book, it affords us a complete revelation of the reality of the gospel. This revelation, however, is given not in detail but in certain basic principles. Therefore, we shall cover the truth of the gospel revealed in these basic principles.

Man Not Justified by Works of Law

The first aspect of the truth of the gospel is that fallen man cannot be justified by works of law. In 2:16 Paul says, "Knowing that a man is not justified out of works of law." At the end of this verse Paul declares, "Out of the works of law no flesh will be justified." The word *flesh* in 2:16 means fallen man who has become flesh (Gen. 6:3). No such man will be justified out of works of law. Furthermore, in Galatians 3:11 Paul goes on to say, "That by law no one is justified before God is evident." In these verses Paul tells us clearly that no one is justified by works of law.

The Seventh-day Adventists insist on strict observance of the Sabbath. However, they seem to forget that by endeavoring to keep the law with respect to the Sabbath, they make themselves debtors to keep all the commandments. The New Testament says that if we keep all the commandments except one, we transgress the whole law (James 2:10). Romans 7 proves that we cannot keep all the commandments. In verse 7 Paul refers to the commandment about coveting: "Neither did I know coveting, except the law had said, 'You shall not covet.'" Then in verse 8 he goes on to say, "But sin, seizing the opportunity through the commandment, worked out in me coveting of every kind." The more Paul tried to keep this commandment, the more he failed. This indicates that it is impossible for fallen man to keep all of God's commandments. How ridiculous it is to go back to the law and try to keep it! We simply do not have the ability to keep the law. As Paul says in Romans 7:14, the law is spiritual, but we are fleshy, sold under sin. Therefore, by works of law will no flesh be justified.

Law Being the Custodian to Keep God's Chosen People until Christ Came

Since it is not possible for fallen man to keep the law, we may ask why the law was given. It was not God's intention in giving the law that man should keep it. When God gave the law, He knew that man would not be able to keep it. God's purpose in giving the law was to use it as a custodian to keep His people until Christ came (Gal. 3:23-24; 4:2). God's intention was to use the law as a fold in which to keep His sheep.