

# Third Angel's Message Series

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## LESSON # 5

"We are ambassadors for Christ. The whole attention of Christians is to be on the things of their own country, the affairs of their own kingdom, and to attend to these as they may arise in the country on the earth where they may be sojourning. For as certain as we are Christians, "we are strangers and sojourners"; our country is yonder, where we belong."

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ALONZO T. JONES, GENERAL CONFERENCE, 1895

After meeting had closed last night, a question was asked which requires notice in the same line of the last remarks we had, as to the influence of Christianity in civilizing people beyond the limit of those whom it Christianizes. That is a fact, and a good illustration is before us in Christianity in the Roman Empire, which will answer the question, and also illustrate the principle.

When Christianity started in the Roman Empire, there was no such thing known as rights of conscience. In fact, there was no such thing known as the rights of the individual, of any kind, and as the rights of conscience are the chief of all rights, of course this was the least known. Christianity means nothing if not the rights of conscience. That was its one claim that overtopped everything else, of course included everything else, as it entered the Roman Empire. The contest between Christianity and all the power of the Roman Empire was upon the Christian's claim of the right of conscience, the empire of Rome denying it, because the empire did not know anything about it.

Rome said, "*What the law says, is right.*" And what the law says, from law itself as it is in itself--from that alone do we get the idea of right and wrong. What the law says to be done, that is right, and what it prohibits, that is wrong, and that is the reason as to why it is right or wrong.

But the Christian said, What God says is right, that is right; and what God says is wrong, that is wrong.

To Rome, the State was god; and therefore the maxim, "*The voice of the people is the voice of God.*" And as the law was the voice of the people, so the law was the voice of the Roman god. Therefore when the Christian denied the Roman god and asserted the rights of conscience toward the true God, he himself became judge of the right or wrong of the law, which to the Roman mind was in itself the test of wrong or right.

That contest went on for 250 years before it was settled in favor of the rights of conscience. And by that time the principles of Christianity had so impressed the pagans, who made no profession of anything but paganism, that the rights of conscience were sacred. So that when the apostasy seized the civil power and began to use it in behalf of what they called the Christian religion, then pagans pleaded the rights of conscience!

There is the whole story. Christianity, the principles of Christianity, Christianized multitudes of people. The Christianizing of these people fixed in them, in its integrity, the rights of conscience, and there it was so fixed that they would die rather than yield. That was genuine Christianity. These were Christianized, and by their integrity, at the expense of every consideration in holding to that principle, pagans themselves were impressed by it, to the point to which they pled it when occasion offered. There is where Christianity Christianized one multitude and civilized another.

This illustrates the principles which we are studying: That Christianity, if held faithfully by those who profess it, will exert upon those who are not Christianized by it, upon those who make no pretensions to Christianity at all, an influence for good, that will elevate them above savagery and above the base principles and ways of civilized paganism.

Macaulay discovered the principle, too, and expressed it in a sentence that is one of the most powerful human statements there is in literature in favor of Christianity. In writing of India, in a certain place he makes this remark: "*A man needs not to be a Christian to desire that Christianity should be spread in India.*" That tells the whole story. Now a Christian wants Christianity spread in India for Christ's sake, for the sake of souls who will be Christianized. The man who is not a Christian can well wish for Christianity to be in India, for the sake of the poor heathen that would be elevated, even if they do not become Christians. That is the thought.

But the mischief has always been and it is yet that Christianity is not taken and held for what it is by those who profess it; God is not given large enough place in the profession of it by those who profess it, and by not being given large enough place, He does not have any chance to demonstrate the real power of Christianity in these people who do not give him the place that belongs to him in which He would demonstrate the divinity of Christianity with power that would convince.

Then men finding the loss of that divine power and influence they go about to do by themselves and by human power the things that would be done by the Lord if only they would give him the place that belongs to him in their profession. That is why professed Christians must put themselves forward and propose to legislate or get into office or manage and dictate to those who do legislate or are in office. And all to give things "*a Christian mold,*" and make it influential in elevating the people and bring cities, states and nations around to the right way. But that is putting themselves in the place of Jesus Christ; that is putting themselves in the place of God. And that is the papacy over again; that is the beast or his image one or the other, as the case may be, wherever you find it.

Let those who name the name of Christ do it in such integrity, in such absolute surrender to God, as will give to God all the place and Him alone all the place that belongs to him. Let the influence all be His; let the power all be His; let Him alone be looked to and depended upon to do all in all. Then Christians will see the power of God so manifest that they would be ashamed to put themselves forward to give mold or shape to the influence of Christianity.

When people do not give the Lord the place which belongs to Him and therefore do not see what they expect to see, it is very natural that they should begin to think that they are better than the Lord and could do better than He does and so they must take hold and do the thing their Christianity fails to do. But that, I say again, and you see it plain enough,

is only to leave God out, and put themselves in His place. And by leaving God out, they leave out His power, and by putting themselves in His place, they put into exercise their own power, and that is worldly, earthly, sensual, and at the last devilish.

Now we take another step in this study of our proclamation of the message against the beast and his image, we will take this step starting again with the principle of ambassadorship. **"We are ambassadors for Christ."**

And as we found in the other lesson, an ambassador is not sent to another country to pry into the affairs or attend to the political concerns of that country, but to attend to the affairs of his own country as they arise in that country. We are ambassadors for Christ. The whole attention of Christians is to be on the things of their own country, the affairs of their own kingdom, and to attend to these as they may arise in the country on the earth where they may be sojourning. For as certain as we are Christians, **"we are strangers and sojourners"**; our country is yonder, where we belong.

The particular study that we are taking up tonight is a study of the rights which we have as Seventh-day Adventists, as ambassadors of Christ, as citizens of the heavenly kingdom, in the nations and countries upon the earth where we may be sojourning--the rights that we have in opposing the things which we shall have to oppose, and which soon we are to meet.

The experiences which we have heard Brother Holser relate tonight cannot be studied any too carefully by Seventh-day Adventists in the United States. God is giving to us the principles and preparing us beforehand for what is as certain to come as that the sun shall rise. In his providence the Lord prepared the brethren and sisters in Switzerland for crises that have come since they were waked up on that thing, as Brother Holser has told us, and if we in this country do not

accept the principles and put our thoughts and our endeavors upon these principles to understand what God is teaching us in these times and by these things, the crisis will come upon us and find us unprepared, and the danger is that we will miss the point altogether and fail right in the place where God wants us to make a success. We cannot afford to do that.

An ambassador, then, in the country where he may be sojourning, is to attend to the affairs of his own kingdom as they may arise there and as they may affect the subjects of his own kingdom. Therefore if that kingdom or that government in which he may be sojourning undertakes to enact any laws or take a political course that will infringe the rights of the people of his own country, he has the right and it is his duty to protest. He has the right to call attention to the principles that will be violated by the government in passing such a law and taking such a course. Yet that government is independent and sovereign in its own realm and may enact such laws as to it seem expedient. And these laws may affect the citizens of his own country and may bring hardships upon them. But in the enforcement of these laws it is the place and the rights of the citizen or ambassador to see to it and insist that the procedure at every step in the case shall be strictly in accordance with its own jurisprudence and with all the principles upon which the laws are based.

Every Christian has the right to protest against any earthly government making any laws on the subject of religion! That is out of their jurisdiction. That invades the realm of the kingdom of God and infringes the rights of the people of the kingdom of God. Therefore every ambassador of Jesus Christ has the inalienable right to protest against any such thing by any government on the earth.

But upon their power and their asserted right to make laws, these governments do go ahead and make laws respecting religion and then they arrest us and bring us before their tribunals for violating these

laws. And when they do that, we have the right to insist that they shall strictly conform to their own laws and the constitutional principles upon which the governments rest. This the Christian, the heavenly citizen, has the right to do in addition to the right to protest against their right to make any such laws at all.

There is another thought we may look at before turning to the Scripture illustration of this principle. As for the governments of earth, on their own part they count us their citizens or subjects, even after we have become citizens of the heavenly country. That is, earthly governments do not recognize the transference of our citizenship from that government into the heavenly one; and this brings a conflict many times. If every government would recognize this transference of citizenship and every man that professes to be a Christian from its roll of citizens or subjects, there would not be so much difficulty on this point nor so many controversies arising.

But these governments do not do that; they propose to hold on to the man even after he has transferred his citizenship, and sometimes they will assert their right to hold him, just as we have learned in the lesson this evening already. They assert their right to control citizens of the heavenly kingdom as though they were still citizens of their former kingdom. We have transferred our citizenship to another country--I am talking now of Seventh-day Adventists--and are citizens of the heavenly country. But on the part of the United States we are still counted as citizens of the United States, because the Constitution says that all persons who are born here or are naturalized "*are citizens of the United States and the States in which they may reside.*" Though by our own choice we are citizens of heaven and not citizens of the United States any more, the United States still holds us as citizens.

Some of these days we are going to come in conflict with United States law as well as State law--not because we are doing wrong but because they are doing wrong. We shall be arrested, prosecuted, and required to

respect the law and to obey the law. When they do that, as ambassadors for Christ and citizens of the kingdom of God, we have this double right to protest against their right to make the law, because it infringes on the rights of the people of the kingdom of God, to which we belong, and we have the right also to insist that every step they take shall be strictly according to the fundamental, constitutional principles upon which the law is professedly based. Now I ask you to think of this when you get it in the Bulletin. Please read it over, because there is a great deal that concerns us in these principles.

For there we have an account that goes over this very ground and illustrates to us this principle of holding the government to its own principles, when once without our choice it has taken us under its jurisdiction and proposes to deal with us.

Now I will turn to the Scripture illustration.

Saul of Tarsus was born a citizen of the Roman Empire, as we are of the United States. When he met Christ, he was born again, and thus became a citizen of the kingdom of God. Then he was the Apostle Paul. His dependence was upon the king of his own country from that time on; his allegiance was to him; his trust was in him; he left everything to him to be managed. But there came a time when the Roman government took him under their jurisdiction and when she did, he required her to take every step according to the principles of Roman citizenship and Roman law.

In Acts 21:27 and on to 25:11 there is an interesting story which let us now take up and study. Out of deference to James, **"the brother of the Lord,"** and the others in Jerusalem who had been in the gospel before him, Paul allowed himself to be persuaded to take a course that was wrong (see Sketches from the Life of Paul) and which brought him into the place and position where the mob broke loose upon him as related in chapter 21:27. Read it.



Now who let loose that mob upon Paul: God did it? For the Spirit of Prophecy tells us that at the moment when he was talking with the high priest as to the offering that should be made, which was a blood offering, a sin offering which would be practically a denial of Jesus Christ if it had not been done, the mob broke loose and saved him from doing it. The Lord saved him from the consequences of the effort of the brethren to get him to compromise in principle, out of deference to whom he yielded that far.

But how did he get into the hands of the Roman authorities? When he saw that the mob desired to kill him, methinks I hear him calling loudly for the Roman governor to save him from the mob: "Call the Roman governor. Hurry up, and bring in the troops. They are going to kill me. I am a Roman citizen. I appeal unto Caesar. Hurry up, hurry up, call down the captain of the temple, the Roman officer. Don't, please don't, let them murder me."

Did I hear aright? Did he do that? No, no, no. And why not? The captain of the temple was right there and near enough to hear him call if he had done it. According to Roman law wasn't he a citizen? And therefore was it not his place to call on the Roman power to protect him? He didn't do it anyway.

No. He was the Lord's. He was in the hands of God, and he would let the Lord take care of him. So the Spirit of Prophecy tells us that God took him here and kept him from that day until the day of his death, nearly all the time in prison, so that the Church lost his loving personal ministry because of that compromising attitude into which the brethren had asked him to go.

Well, now he is in the hands of the Roman authorities. Did he ask for it? No. Did he start it? No. Did he assert his Roman citizenship as a claim on which he should be taken and protected by the Roman authorities? No.

He asked of the officer permission to speak to the multitude. It was granted, and taking his place on the stairs he made the speech in chapter 22:1-21 where he said that the Lord had said to him, **"Depart, for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles."** At the word, **"Gentiles,"** their fury broke out again and they yelled, Away with such a fellow from the earth, for it is not fit that he should live. And as they cast off their clothes and threw dust into the air the captain took him away and, thinking from the turmoil about him that he must be some desperate character, ordered him to be scourged. But this was forbidden by Roman law to be inflicted on Roman citizens. And now as he is in the hands of the Roman authorities, he has the right to insist that they shall proceed according to their own law, and therefore he said, **"Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman and uncondemned?"** This word stopped the proceeding.

The next day the captain, desiring to know what all the row was really about, had the Sanhedrin assemble and sent Paul before them; he had barely begun to speak, when the high priest commanded some to **"smite him on the mouth."** **"The Paul said unto him, God shall smite thee, thou whited wall: for sittest thou to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law?"** Thus, he holds these to the law which governed them in their procedure against him. He was not there from his own choice. They had brought him there without any of his effort. And he had the right to insist that they should conform to their own law and proceed according thereto, and this he did.

While he had said, **"I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee: of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question,"** this set the Pharisees and Sadducees against each other. And as with the Sadducees trying to kill him and the Pharisees trying to rescue him, he was about to be pulled to pieces, the captain sent down the soldiers to take him by force from them.

Next, certain ones entered into that curse upon themselves neither to eat nor drink till they had killed Paul. By Paul's nephew this was made known to him and to the captain. In consequence the captain ordered out four hundred and seventy soldiers and by them sent Paul away by night and had him brought to Caesarea and delivered to Felix the governor.

A few days afterward the high priest and the Sanhedrin went down to Caesarea to prosecute Paul and did do so, hiring Tertullus, an orator, for their spokesman. After the hearing, Felix deferred the case till Lysias might come down. With numerous hearings and delays, two years passed, and Festus succeeded Felix as governor, with Paul still in bonds to please the Jews.

Festus passing through Jerusalem, the Jews brought Paul's case up and asked to have him brought up to Jerusalem--intending to kill him as he came. Festus however refused, and told them to send down their prosecutions and accuse him at Caesarea. They sent their prosecutors down with Festus, and the next day after his arrival **"sitting on the judgment seat commanded Paul to be brought."** The Jews **"laid many and grievous complaints against Paul, which they could not prove [chap. 25:1-7], while he answered for himself, Neither against the law of the Jews, neither against the temple, nor yet against Caesar, have I offended anything at all."**

**"But Festus, willing to do the Jews a pleasure, answered Paul and said, Wilt thou go up to Jerusalem and there be judged of these things before me?"**

**"Then said Paul, I stand at Caesar's judgment seat, where I ought to be judged: to the Jews have I done no wrong, as thou very well knowest."**

He was not at **"Caesar's judgment seat"** by any choice or effort or desire of his own. Caesar had taken him and had kept him all this time without finding any fault in him. Against no one had he done any wrong,

and this the governor "**very well**" knew. The Roman governor therefore had no right to deliver him to the Jews merely to please them.

Therefore Paul continued and put a climax to the whole case in these words: "**For if I be an offender or have committed anything worthy of death, I refuse not to die; but if there be none of these things whereof these accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them. I APPEAL UNTO CAESAR.**"

The Roman governor as a Roman had no right to deliver a Roman to the judgment of the Jews. That Roman citizen, being in the hands of a Roman governor, under Roman jurisdiction, by their own choice, had the right to insist that the Roman authorities should obey their own law and confirm their own principles, and instead of delivering him to the Jews, they should keep him and try him and conduct the whole case according to Roman law.

There is the secret of Paul's appeal to Caesar. It is a divine example worked out on the principle of giving to the Christian a double right as ambassadors of God and citizens of the heavenly kingdom, first, to protest against any interference on the part of any earthly government with the laws of the people of the kingdom of God or the kingdom of God itself; and secondly, when they do interfere and without our choice or desire take us under their jurisdiction, then we have the divine right as ambassadors and citizens of another country to demand that they shall follow in strictness the law which governs them in their own realm.

God will take care of us under the law and in the realm of which we are citizens and in the kingdom to which we belong. He will attend to that, and he will conduct all these affairs according to his own righteous ways. And in the country where we may be sojourning when they do take us under their jurisdiction, we have the right to demand that they shall deal with us according to the principles of their law.

