Our Firm Foundation

The 7th Day Sabbath | Immutable Law of God | The Everlasting Gospel
Non-Immortality of the Soul | Three Angels' Messages | The Sanctuary

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Special Issue: Righteousness By Faith

March 1988
Editorial

I was recently given a paper—written by a prominent person in the Seventh-day Adventist Church—which is entitled “Are You Saved?” The writer uses the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy to show that one can be saved while in the act of sinning, and misuses the inspired writings of Ellen White to prove his point. He describes a hypothetical scene in which he, as an ordained Seventh-day Adventist minister, while visiting an attractive married woman, is seduced, and in the act of adultery is shot dead by the woman's husband. He claims he would be saved because the direction of his life to that moment was toward salvation. In support of his position, he quotes from Steps to Christ, 57-58: “The character is revealed, not by occasional good deeds and occasional misdeeds, but by the tendency of the habitual words and acts.”

His words following this beautiful quotation are these: “It is the direction of my life that counts—not the individual acts.” With this reasoning God could save nearly everyone, since character development in preparation for eternity seems to be unimportant. If man can be saved in the act of adultery, he can be saved while he is stealing and lying. But inspired testimony disagrees. “But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; . . . for this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.” Ephesians 5:3, 5

Why was Zimri, a prince in Israel, run through by the sword of Phinehas for his adultery? Would this gentleman say that Zimri is saved because the direction of his soul was right with God? His position in the church would seemingly justify such rationalizations. Remember, Phinehas’ act of killing Zimri turned the wrath of God from the church. See Numbers 25:11.

The testimony of Paul is clear and to the point. “Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like.” Galatians 5:19-21

“They that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. . . . For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.” Romans 8:8-9, 13.

Surely all can see that the act of adultery is an act of the “flesh.” If we are practicing sin in the flesh, we are not Christ’s. If we crucify the flesh we shall live, and when led by the Holy Spirit we are then sons and daughters of the Most High—saved from sin, and not in sin. The Holy Spirit never abides in the sinner practicing known sin.

“Christ always separates the contrite soul from sin. He came to destroy the works of the devil, and He has made provision that the Holy Spirit shall be imparted to every repentant soul, to keep him from sinning.

“The tempter’s agency is not to be accounted an excuse for one wrong act. Satan is jubilant when he hears the professed followers of Christ making excuses for their deformity of character. It is these excuses that lead to sin. There is no excuse for sinning. A holy temper, a Christlike life, is accessible to every repenting, believing child of God.” The Desire of Ages, 311

The arguments presented by this well-known author describe a counterfeit righteousness by faith. He has grossly misused the Spirit of Prophecy and the Bible to say you can’t help sinning and God will save you as long as the direction of your life is good. But God does not save good people, He saves holy people.

After using the illustration of being saved when shot dead in the act of adultery, he makes this alarming statement: “Then, just as I am not saved by being good, I am not lost by being bad. The only way I will be lost is, once again, by making an intelligent, (rational) decision to no longer trust in Christ for my salvation. The moment I make that decision, I am lost.”

The author is perhaps unaware that Inspiration has already spoken on this point. “The strongest temptation is no excuse for sin. However great the pressure brought to bear upon the soul, transgression is our own act. It is not in the power of earth or hell to compel anyone to sin. The will must consent, the heart must yield, or passion cannot overbear reason, nor iniquity triumph over righteousness.” Signs of the Times, April 15, 1913

Unfortunately, confused thinking and confused theology of this nature are causing tremendous division within the church today. Many sheep of the Lord’s pasture are faltering for want of the simple truths of righteousness by faith. My prayer is that this special issue of Our Firm Foundation will prove a blessing to the thousands of our people seeking to live out the great principles of the third angel’s message—righteousness by faith in verity.

RON SPEAR—EDITOR
It is the mission of Hope International and the editors of Our Firm Foundation to give the
straight testimony and to present Christ and Him crucified. The days that yet remain of this world
are few, and what we do we must do quickly. We must boldly pro-
claim the truths that place us on so
firm a foundation in the midst of
this troubled world.—EDITORS

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HE WHO has genuine faith in Christ will have a knowledge of Christ. He will have a growing sense of the power and preciousness of redeeming love and grace, because Christ has been brought into his daily life. He believes in Christ as his Saviour, and hopes in the mercy of God. Although he knows that he is a sinner, and deserves the wrath of God, yet he looks to Calvary and sees the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. He knows that Christ has died for him, and that in Christ it is possible to keep the commandments of God. He has the witness in his own soul of the virtue and the love of Jesus, which his faith grasps, and appropriates to himself.

His faith is not of that fraudulent character which refuses to lift the cross, and follow Christ by yielding obedience to all the precepts of Jehovah. It is not of that presumptuous nature that lays claim to the promises of God without complying with the conditions upon which they are to be granted. His is a faith that understands what the Saviour meant when he said, “Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.” [John 6:53-54]

True faith takes the Word of God and weaves it into the life and character. Faith lives by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. Christ explained to His disciples the meaning of eating His flesh and drinking His blood. He said, “It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you they are spirit, and they are life.” [John 6:63]

Faith is that mysterious and mighty principle that attracts the soul of man to God. As the sapless branch is united to the living vine, so we must be connected with Christ. There are two kinds of connection between the branches and the vine stock. One is visible, but superficial. The other is invisible and vital. So there is an apparent union, a membership with the church, and a profession of religion, which, though in itself good, is too often unaccompanied by saving faith in Jesus or living obedience to the commandments of God. The branches that are connected with Christ, the living vine, will make it manifest by bearing much fruit in good works to the glory of God. But the branches which have nothing but an apparent union, will be fruitless. As the branch cannot possibly bring forth fruit without a vital connection with the parent stock, so the Christian can be fruitful in good works only as union with Christ is made and preserved. The ruin of those who are not connected with Christ, is as complete as though they had no name to live; for they are dead. Christ compares them to lifeless branches that are gathered and burned in the fire. “Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.” [John 15:2]

There can be no actual connection with Christ if the person who claims it has no practical knowledge of the sufficiency of the grace of God that is potent to elevate, ennoble, refine, and fit the Christian for the courts of heaven. Those who know Christ, will make manifest the desirableness of His love and peace. Every genuine believer will taste, and see that the Lord is good, and will show forth the praises of Him who called us out darkness into the marvelous light of the children of God. The true believer not only has faith, but he has also a knowledge of the efficacy of the blood of Christ to cleanse from the defilement of sin. Christ crucified is the subject of his thought and meditation. The Word of God to him is not a cunningly devised fable. Christ crucified, though unto the Jew a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness, is to him the power and wisdom of God. When assailed by skeptics, his living experience in the things of God will furnish him with arguments that cannot be gainsaid, and will enable him to resist every dart of the wicked one, so that even the uneducated believer may have
simple and genuine proofs of his position, that cannot be overborne by the doubts and cavils of infidels. He can relate that which he has himself experienced. He can say, "I know whom I have believed." [2 Timothy 1:12]

Those who connect with the school of Christ will be careful to obey the words of the Lord. Their faith will be founded upon knowledge, for they will be diligent students of the Scriptures. Like the humble fishermen who united with the Saviour to learn of Him, those who love Christ today will not only listen to His words, but also practice His precepts, and follow in His footsteps. The greatest Teacher the world has ever known, has opened their understanding, and has given them knowledge and judgment, that they may approve things that are excellent. The most educated, as well as the most ignorant, may become partakers of the knowledge of Christ's salvation. The great apostle himself learned in the school of Christ, and strengthened his faith by his experience in following Jesus, and by acquiring knowledge of Bible history. He convinced men that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God, and Christ shed His glory upon the apostle, and he could speak from what he had seen and known.

It is the very knowledge that we gain daily, in our conflicts with Satan, that will be valuable to us in the future. It is the experience that we acquire in the things that Jesus is doing for us, in guarding our souls and bodies from the cruel power of our enemy, that will increase our hope and add to our power to fight our way through. In Paul's experience of suffering for his Lord, he realized the consolation and support of his Redeemer. His trials did not dishearten him, for the rich grace of God served him for the conflict, and with fortitude and courage, he gloried in tribulation.

What are we doing with the light God has given to us? In temporal matters, many give thought and attention, and close application of mind, in order to make a business success. Should we not give our very best talent to the service of God? Should we not seek to gain a greater knowledge, and a more intelligent manner of doing the work of the Lord? Are we content to exalt the temporal above the eternal interests?

As the apostle prayed for the Philippian brethren, so pray for yourselves, and for each other, "that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God." [Philippians 1:9] We should not be satisfied with our present spiritual attainments. If the Lord should open before us our condition as it really is, and we should see the danger there is of losing our souls, even those who now profess to be Christians would fall upon their knees, and pray earnestly, "Lord, be merciful to me a sinner." The astonishing indifference and carelessness which many now feel, is that they are separated in their thoughts from God, and really ignorant of their own peril. If the truth does not have a sanctifying influence upon your life and character, you will be like the foolish virgins, whose lamps were gone out at the very time when the bridegroom came to go in to the marriage. A theory of the truth is not enough. There is a high standard for us to reach. Our conflict is a continual conflict with the powers of darkness, and we must put on the whole armor of God, fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold on eternal life. But how few are willing to urge their way heavenward against every opposing force of evil in the world!

The apostle prayed that love might abound more and more. There must be a living faith, before there can be a living experience. There are many who have a certain formal knowledge of Christ, and an indefinite faith that does not have an active influence upon the life and character. This faith is not a saving faith. Our love for Jesus must commence here, if we expect to love Him through the ages of eternity. All who love Christ will talk of Him. How shall the world know of the blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of your Lord and Saviour, unless you make it the theme of your thought and conversation? If our hearts are rejoicing in the hope of beholding our coming Saviour, shall we not speak of it to others? "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." [Matthew 12:34] We shall have the Spirit of Christ, if we are in union with Him; and with the same untiring love and patience, we shall seek that which is lost. One soul is worth the world. It is the purchase of the blood of Christ, and those who really love Christ will feel the value of the souls for whom He shed His precious blood.

The glory of the eternal world is just before us. Are you forwarding your treasure from this perishing earth to the land of safety? What care is taken to secure proper titles to your worldly possessions? Has your thought been exercised in regard to securing a title to the heavenly possessions? Your worldly estates will soon pass away, notwithstanding all your anxiety and toil. You must leave them all sometime. You may die before the coming of Jesus, or you may live till His appearing; however it is, the thoughts and ambitions of earth must be relinquished; but if your treasure is laid up on high, your riches will be incorruptible, undefiled, and will never pass away.

Make friendship with Christ today. Put your case in the hands of the great Advocate. He will plead your cause before the Father. Though you have transgressed the law, and must plead guilty before God, Christ will present His precious blood in your behalf; and through faith and obedience, and a vital union with Christ, you may stand acquitted before the Judge of all the earth, and He will be your Friend when the final trump shall sound, and the scenes of earth shall be no more.

We shall have the Spirit of Christ, if we are in union with Him

Signs of the Times, July 27, 1888
SEVERAL years ago I was alarmed when I heard a fellow minister proclaim from the pulpit that “to put justification and sanctification together in the gospel is to commit spiritual adultery.” My immediate impulse was to challenge such error right then and there in the church service. And perhaps I should have. I cannot deny that there must have been many people in that congregation that day who took this perverse error at face value.

After the service I did challenge the preacher: “What you said today would have been true, given your false understanding of sanctification.”

“What do you think I believe?”

“You believe that justification is God’s perfect work for man through His Son Jesus Christ.”

“What do you believe justification to be?”

“I too believe that justification is God’s perfect work for man through His Son, Jesus Christ. But it is your false concept of sanctification with which I have a serious problem.”

“What do I believe sanctification to be?”

“You believe sanctification to be man’s imperfect works to God.”

Without either confirming or denying what I had said, he asked for my definition of sanctification. I replied: “Like justification, I believe that sanctification is God’s perfect work for man through His Son, Jesus Christ.”

Somehow over the centuries large segments of Christians have been led to believe that justification is the free gift of grace, but that sanctification embodies merit from the works of man. Nothing could be further from the truth. Both justification and sanctification are free gifts from God through Christ. A true understanding of sanctification underlies a true understanding of the gospel. It is the faith that works by love and purifies the soul. Galatians 5:6; Acts 15:9

Unless we understand true sanctification, we cannot understand the gospel message

Those who believe in the fullness of the gospel believe it encompasses the total salvation acts of God through His Son, Jesus Christ. Such believers have been accused of being perfectionists and legalists, of having been oriented to a works-based salvation. This belief is due to the false presuppositions concerning sanctification of the accusers. As Ellen White has so wonderfully explained it: “While good works will not save even one soul, yet it is impossible for even one soul to be saved without good works.” Selected Messages, book 1, 377

I was talking some years ago to a friend who was deeply involved in the New Theology. When I explained to him the biblical concept of sanctification by faith (Acts 26:18), his immediate response was: “Well, that’s not the definition that modern theologians use today.” I urged him to come back to the only valid source of definition, that of the inspired Bible writers. Unless we have a true understanding of the nature of sanctification, we cannot understand the gospel message. Paul referred not only to the forgiveness of the gospel, but also to the power of the gospel: “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.” Romans 1:16

On one occasion, I talked to a prominent Adventist theologian, who quickly denied my affirmation that sanctification was indeed an integral part of the gospel. He said, “Sanctification is a very good principle, but it is not part of the gospel.” It was difficult to understand how this learned scholar could be unaware that the New Testament is replete with statement after statement linking justification and sanctification in a perfect whole:
"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins [justification], and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness [sanctification]." 1 John 1:9

"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus [justification], who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit [sanctification]." Romans 8:1

Justification and sanctification are characteristics of the final generation

"To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins [justification], and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me [sanctification]." Acts 26:18

Even in the Lord's prayer, the two are placed together. "And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors [justification]. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil [sanctification]." Matthew 6:12-13

Within the great challenge of Christ to Nicodemus, there is clearly implied the unity of justification and sanctification: "Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water [justification] and of the Spirit [sanctification], he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. John 3:5. In the Bible, the water clearly encompasses justification (Acts 19:4; Matthew 3:11), whereas being born of the Spirit encompasses sanctification (Acts 5:32; 1 Peter 1:22).

Of paramount importance is the fact that justification and sanctification are characteristics of the final generation who will be redeemed into the kingdom of God: "And he that is righteous [justified], let him be righteous still: and he that is holy [sanctified], let him be holy still." Revelation 22:11

When we clearly recognize that the gospel of Jesus Christ includes both pardon for sin and reclamation from sin, we understand the fullness of the gospel. Indeed, nothing that Christ did, is doing, or will do, is directed to anything else but the salvation of God's people. The whole energy of Heaven is concentrated upon the restoration of harmony within the universe in the redemption of all who will accept the wonderful gift of God through Jesus.

The gospel that teaches justification by faith alone sees salvation only in the light of forgiveness. But such is not scripturally valid. Those holding to this narrow concept of the gospel, see the cross alone as the essential element in the salvation of man rather than central to man's salvation. But if Christ had not been born a babe in Bethlehem, we could not be saved. If He had not lived a sinless life upon earth, we could not be saved. If He had not died on Calvary, we could not be saved. If He had not been resurrected, we could not be saved. If He had not ascended into the presence of His Father, we could not be saved. If He were not now ministering in the sanctuary above, we could not be saved. If He does not come with power and great glory to redeem His saints, we will not be saved.

There is no biblical basis for misunderstanding the totality of the ministry of Christ for the salvation of mankind. Indeed, Paul made these points very clear by frequently indicating that we are saved because of His resurrection: "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled we shall be saved by his life." Romans 5:10. "And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. . . . And if Christ be not raised, your faith is in vain; ye are yet in your sins." 1 Corinthians 15:14, 17

When the gospel is understood in the fullness of its biblical representation, there is no need to infer that the gospel does not include sanctification with justification. Nor can it be said that to place sanctification with justification in the gospel is to put our salvation partly in the area of human works. A full understanding of the gospel makes it clear that there is no human merit in our sanctification. Like justification, sanctification is the work of Christ through His sacrifice and ministry.

The word sanctification in both the Hebrew and the Greek is from the same root word as "holiness." God will have a sanctified, holy people to take with Him into the kingdom. When the biblical concepts of the gospel are rightly understood, they will bring rejoicing to the hearts of men and women who know that they do not need to remain in the bondage of continual, repetitive sin. They have faith that through the power of the sacrificed and risen One they may gain victory over every temptation of Satan. Their good works will in turn glorify their Father in heaven.

The understanding of the breadth and the spirit of the gospel is essential to the salvation of God's people. Not only, however, must we know the gospel, we must also ask the Holy Spirit to translate it into the fabric of our lives. Until we experience the fullness of God's power in our life, God's people will not be united. Jesus said in

The gospel makes it clear that there is no human merit in our sanctification

His prayer for unity, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." John 17:17

When that unity is achieved through a sanctifying truth, then the Lord will entrust His people with the Holy Spirit. Then the loud cry will be given in every corner of the earth, and Jesus will return. Preaching and practicing the full gospel of Jesus Christ is essential to the disposition of sin and the heralding of the age of eternal peace. Jesus is the center of every aspect of our salvation.
The Power of God

Though the sun shone as bright as ever, clouds of disappointment and confusion hung low over the little group of men. Thirteen in all, they stood there for a moment, each absorbed in his own private world of thought. On their faces remained the lingering traces of strong emotion. Here there was greed, there surprise. Another bore the look of consternation, of great opportunities lost, and dreams of greatness unfulfilled. And, yes, there was One whose rugged and manly features could in no way hide the silent expression of love, a love and a sorrow that none of this world could ever know.

Down the road, still only a stone's throw away from them, trudged a lone figure. Head down, he too felt sorrow. And yet he walked away from them all, away from the Master Himself, sorrowful, "for he was very rich."

He had sought the Teacher of his own free will. In sincerity he dogged His steps over the rutted roads of Palestine until finally the great longing question could be asked: "Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

Judas, the most sophisticated of the disciples, sized the situation up at once. Even the slowest and least cultured of the group could not long fail to realize that this young man of the ruling class represented a handsome addition to their sometimes lackluster image. True, the potential financial benefits escaped the comprehension of some of the more simple-minded, but Judas could attend to that without their help. A bit more weight in the bag at his waist would be a welcome change.

Routine comments about the merits of law-keeping did little to distract the disciples' attention from the rich attire and noble bearing of the questioner. And then their dreams collapsed. "Sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me."

Now he was walking down the road by himself, no longer following the Master, no longer seeking Him who seemed alone to be the answer to his soul's unrest. He longed for peace of mind and heart still, it is true, but only a fool would give up so much as was asked of him. Or so he reasoned.

The rich young ruler was by no means the only one who reasoned thus. As Jesus' sorrowful gaze turned from one who had walked away, His eye read easily the message written on the faces of those who stayed, and He knew that even they did not understand. The power of the world held too strong a grasp on their thinking. How could He make it plain to them?

"How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! For it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. And they that heard it said, Who then can be saved? And he said, The things which
are impossible with men are possible with God.” Luke 18:24-27
The lesson was not learned that day, but eleven of the twelve would yet come to know that the power of God far exceeds the power of wealth, fame, and position. Not that day, but one day they would proclaim the unlimited power of their Master, knowing without doubt its total superiority over

tion away from the requirements of the law, to cease from holding it up before the people. Only thus do they find hope for Adventism. And through it all they proclaim the marvelous power of the cross of Christ to save.
One would hardly contest the necessity of preaching the gospel. The futility of salvation by works is clear to all who respect God’s Word. Legalism

He proclaimed that to mistakenly purchase a product inferior in some regard to a similarly priced product would constitute violation of the law, high treason against the government of God all that the world offers. Even the proud Pharisee of Tarsus would exult, “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.” Romans 1:16
Well might we ponder the sacrifice made that day as the rich young ruler chose the power of his possessions over the power of God. The terrible results of underestimating the power of the gospel have come down to us in the timeless heartbreak of the well-known story. We’ve learned the story, but have we learned the lesson?
In recent years there has come into the very heart of Adventism a new class of teachers, bold exponents of the “gospel.” They are portrayed before us as the champions of the saving grace of Christ, taking as their rallying cry the once-legitimate lament that we as a church have preached the law until we are as dry as the hills of Gilboa. In concern for the sheep of the Lord’s pasture, they endeavor to present the “assurance of salvation,” not based on “works,” but solely on the merits of the sacrifice of Calvary. Expressing their consternation with the prevailing attitude of “legalism,” they decry the “subordination” of the gospel to the law.
It is time, say they, to “exalt the gospel,” to turn the focus of our atten-

deserves no more favor now than in the days of Christ, and surely the power of Christ to save from sin is cause for rejoicing. But a closer look reveals a difference. These pleasant-sounding clichés too often hide the rotten core of a powerless counterfeit. What’s more, the charges leveled against historic Adventism are found to fit with uncomfortable accuracy those who first pressed them.

Consider the accusation that the law has been unduly exalted. Some years ago, one of the foremost proponents of the New Theology—a man beloved of many for his heartwarming presentations of “justification”—proclaimed that the law of God demanded absolute perfection in every respect, that nothing less than the very actions of God Himself could meet its requirements. The law, he said, demanded that every single cent of one’s income be spent not only wisely, but also in the absolute best possible manner. That to mistakenly purchase a product inferior in some regard to a similarly priced product would constitute violation of the law, high treason against the government of God. He proclaimed that a single moment wasted in indecision would mark one as less than perfect and hence unfit for the companionship of holy beings.

So certain was he of the impossibility of fulfilling the law of God in his life that he could shamelessly proclaim from the pulpit that he had sinned a thousand times since standing up to preach. Perhaps he was right in that, considering the effect of his sermon.
Now I ask you, can you find such “exalted” views of the law of God anywhere in the pages of Sacred Writ? Who, in reality, is guilty of making too much of the law?
One might wish that the situation would improve with the presentation of the “remedy” for this discouraging state of affairs. Sadly, the great truth of righteousness by faith—stripped of its vitality—is made to serve in this devilish distortion of true doctrine. Since the law has been placed so illogically (and unbiblically) high, a way must be provided to avoid its claims rather than to meet them. The gospel, declared by Scripture to be the power of God, is reduced to a pleasant hope of what the Lord may someday accomplish. The obvious fact that no real change has occurred in the life is shielded from view by the constant assertion that the gospel concerns only the “finished work” of Christ on Calvary nearly 2000 years ago. All in all, the doctrine seems suspiciously akin to the exquisite “invisible suit” offered the monarch in the tale of “The Emperor’s New Clothes.”
I ask again, Who is guilty of minimizing the gospel? Who places the power of God in a position subordinate to the law?
To see such an emasculated perversion of the truth presented to the people of God as “the power of God” would be comical if it were not so incredibly serious. When it becomes apparent that the law was not set aside by the gospel, who will then offer to recompense those whose souls are lost due to such satanic sophistries?
Those who wish to preach a powerful gospel need to bear in mind that the only way to verify a source of power is to see it move something, to see its true force demonstrated in a practical way. The power of steam was never understood until the first steam engine puffed its way into usefulness. It is nothing less than ludicrous for the
gospel to be referred to as the power of God if we are to believe that it has no actual power to change the one who accepts it. To rejoice in the power of a "gospel" that is inadequate to produce obedience stagers the mind. Such rejoice not in the loving government of God, but in their supposed immunity to the perils awaiting the transgressor.

To rest satisfied at any level of development is a perilous undertaking, for we cannot long believe in the necessity of continual progress while standing still ourselves.

The counsel of God is clear. From all those "having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof," we are to "turn away." (2 Timothy 3:5) Not to turn away in self-righteous complacency, nor even to carelessly abandon them to the folly of their chosen course, but to turn from their deceptive doctrine which is spread as a snare for our soul and baited with the pleasant prospect of self-pleasing.

But now the question comes home to each one, Do I accept the power of godliness? Is the gospel of Christ being demonstrated in my life each day? Is it well to understand the historic truths of Adventism, to hold to proper doctrine, to share with others the blessed hope of a soon-coming Lord. But beyond all that, am I now gaining the practical, down-to-earth benefit of the ministry of Christ in my behalf? Am I learning from the Lord I profess to love how to solve problems in everyday life? Does my love for Him reflect in my love for others? Is the gospel—the power of God unto salvation—molding my life after the likeness of Christ?

If our fond hope of eternal communion with Christ, and eternal growth in mind and character, is to be fulfilled throughout the ceaseless ages of eternity, it must begin to be fulfilled here and now. To rest satisfied at any level of development is a perilous undertak-

A Corner to Brighten

Six months ago our Steps to New Life Bible School began with one student. Now we have over 200. Requests are coming in for a Bible course for Junior-age children, and I have nothing to offer. What I wish to have is a course with real meat—Present Truth—which non-Adventist children can digest. It should deal with relationship and commitment to Christ, introduce doctrinal subjects, and then deal with standards. If anyone knows of such a course or has a burden from the Lord to develop one, please let me know.

Patti Heinrich, director
Phone (405) 822-4848

Steps to New Life
P.O. Box 527
Okeene, OK 73763
In 1888 there came to the Seventh-day Adventist Church a very definite awakening message. It was designated at the time as "the message of Righteousness by Faith." Both the message itself and the manner of its coming made a deep and lasting impression upon the minds of ministers and people, and the lapse of time has not erased that impression from memory.

To this day, many of those who heard the message when it came are deeply interested in it and concerned regarding it. All these long years they have held a firm conviction, and cherished a fond hope, that someday this message would be given great prominence among us, and that it would do the cleansing, regenerating work in the church which they believed it was sent by the Lord to accomplish.

Among the influences which have led to this conviction is the divine witness borne to the proclamation of the message of Righteousness by Faith as it was set forth at the time of the General Conference held in the city of Minneapolis, Minnesota, in the year 1888. From the very first, the Spirit of Prophecy placed the seal of approval upon the message and its presentation at that time. In the plainest and most positive language we were told that the Lord was leading and impelling men to proclaim this definite message of Righteousness by Faith. Of that epochal Conference, and the men who gave the specific message, it is declared:

"The Lord in His great mercy sent a most precious message to His people. ... This message was to bring more prominently before the world the uplifted Saviour, the sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. It presented justification through faith in the Surety; it invited the people to receive the righteousness of Christ, which is made manifest in obedience to all the commandments of God. Many had lost sight of Jesus. They needed to have their eyes directed to His divine person, His merits, and His changeless love for the human family. All power is given into His hands, that He may dispense rich gifts unto men, imparting the priceless gift of His own righteousness to the helpless human agent. This is the message that God commanded to be given to the world. It is the third angel's message, which is to be proclaimed with a loud voice, and attended with the outpouring of His Spirit in a large measure."

It is difficult to conceive how there could be any misunderstanding or uncertainty regarding the heavenly endorsement of this message. It clearly stated that the Lord sent the message, and that He led the minds of the men who were so deeply engrossed by it and who proclaimed it with such earnestness.

It should be borne in mind at this time that the course taken by the messengers in subsequent years has nothing to do with the positive statement, oft repeated, that they were led by the Lord to declare this fundamental truth of the gospel to His people at that particular time. ...

It is evident that the application of this message was not limited to the time of the Minneapolis Conference, but that its application extends to the close of time; and consequently it is of greater significance to the church at the present time than it could have been in 1888. The nearer we approach the great day of God, the more imperative will be the need of the soul-cleansing work which that message was sent to do. Surely we have every reason for a new, more wholehearted study and proclamation of that message. ...

God's messages and providences cannot be set aside. They cannot fail. Sooner or later they will be understood, accepted, and given their proper place. Therefore it must be expected that the message of Righteousness by Faith, which came so definitely to the church in 1888, will be accorded a dominant place in the closing period of the great movement with which we are connected.

A.G. Daniells, Christ Our Righteousness, 23-26 (1926)
MANY Christians in every generation have sought after peace of the soul. Luther, as well as many like him, thought climbing the stairs in Rome on their knees, and punishing their bodies in a lonely monk’s cell, would bring peace to the soul.

“Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.” Isaiah 26:3. “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Romans 5:1

God’s Word says that only justification by faith in God will bring peace to the soul. “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” Romans 10:17. Then how is one justified? When he is so sorry for sin that he is willing to be made willing to stop sinning by the power of the Holy Spirit.

“Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing. For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death.” 2 Corinthians 7:9-10

In man’s sorrow for sin he gives his will to God, and God justifies him. The Holy Spirit now has control of his mind, thoughts, and life and holds him fast in that relationship as long as he is willing to surrender.

"It is for you to yield up your will to the will of Jesus Christ; and as you do this, God will immediately take possession and work in you to will and to do of His good pleasure. Your whole nature will then be brought under the control of the Spirit of Christ, and even your thoughts will be subject to Him. You cannot control your impulses, your emotions, as you may desire; but you can control the will, and you can make an entire change in your life. By yielding up your will to Christ, your life will be hid with Christ in God and allied to the power which is above all principalities and powers. You will have strength from God that will hold you fast to His strength; and a new life, even the life of living faith, will be possible to you. But your will must co-operate with God’s will, not with the will of associates through whom Satan is constantly working to ensnare and destroy you.

"Will you not without delay place yourself in right relation to God? Will you not say, ‘I will give my will to Jesus, and I will do it now,’ and from this moment be wholly on the Lord’s side?” Testimonies, vol. 5, 514

Immediately God places His hedge about us. It is an impregnable shield which Satan can never penetrate, and, as long as we stay in this wonderful protection, we will not sin. "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.” 1 John 3:9

Let us read from inspiration: “So far from making arbitrary requirements, God’s law is given to men as a hedge, a shield. Whoever accepts its principles is preserved from evil. Fidelity to God involves fidelity to man. Thus the law guards the rights, the individuality, of every human being. It restrains the superior from oppression,
and the subordinate from disobedience. It insures man's well-being, both for this world and for the world to come. To the obedient it is the pledge of eternal life; for it expresses the principles that endure forever.

"Christ came to demonstrate the value of the divine principles by revealing their power for the regeneration of humanity. He came to teach how these principles are to be developed and applied." Education, 76-77

"What a God is our God! He rules over His kingdom with diligence and care; and He has built a hedge—the ten commandments—about His subjects, to preserve them from the results of transgression. In requiring obedience to the laws of His kingdom, God gives His people health and happiness, peace and joy. He teaches them that the perfection of character He requires can be attained only by becoming familiar with His Word." Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students, 454

Then by continuously giving our will to God moment by moment, we can never be tempted above our ability to resist. "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." 1 Corinthians 10:13

In this beautiful relationship God's righteous law becomes our impregnable shield and Satan can never defeat us. Praise the Lord!

"When the soul surrenders itself to Christ, a new power takes possession of the new heart. A change is wrought which man can never accomplish for himself. It is a supernatural work, bringing a supernatural element into human nature. The soul that is yielded to Christ becomes His own fortress, which He holds in a revoluted world, and He intends that no authority shall be known in it but His own. A soul thus kept in possession by the heavenly agencies is impregnable to the assaults of Satan." The Desire of Ages, 324

What is God's standard of righteousness, and what is our part in God's plan of saving our souls from sin? Some say we are not to strive to keep His law. Let us remember there are only two groups of people in the world: those who follow the narrow way to eternal life and those who follow the broad way to damnation. "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." Matthew 7:13-14.

"Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able." Luke 13:24

Those who are depending on Jesus to do it all and are sitting complacently in the other seat to let Jesus drive them through the pearly gates will be disappointed. "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." Matthew 7:22-23

"Christ presents before us the highest perfection of Christian character, which throughout our lifetime we should aim to reach. . . . Concerning this perfection Paul writes: 'Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after. . . . I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.' Philippians 3:12-15. . . . "How can we reach the perfection specified by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ—our Great Teacher? Can we meet His requirement and attain to so lofty a standard? We can, else Christ would not have enjoined us to do so. He is our righteousness. In His humanity He has gone before us and wrought willing to give them grace and strength to perform. He would not call upon them to be perfect if He had not at His command every perfection of grace to bestow on the ones upon whom He would confer so high and holy a privilege. He has assured us that He is more willing to give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him than parents are to give good gifts to their children.

"Our work is to strive to attain in our sphere of action the perfection that Christ in His life on the earth attained in every phase of character. He is our example. In all things we are to strive to honor God in character. In falling day by day so far short of the divine requirements, we are endangering our soul’s salvation. We need to understand and appreciate the privilege with which Christ invests us, and to show our determination to reach the highest standard. We are to be wholly dependent on the power that He has promised to give us." That I May Know Him, 130

Inspiration says: "With the great truth we have been privileged to receive, we should, and under the Holy Spirit's power we could, become living channels of light. We could then approach the mercy seat; and seeing the bow of promise, kneel with contrite hearts, and seek the kingdom of heaven out for us perfection of character. We are to have the faith in Him that works by love and purifies the soul. Perfection of character is based upon that which Christ is to us. If we have constant dependence on the merits of our Saviour, and walk in His footsteps, we shall be like Him, pure and undefiled.

"Our Saviour does not require impossibilities of any soul. He expects nothing of His disciples that He is not willing to give them strength to perform."
Those who become followers of Christ find that new motives of action are supplied, new thoughts arise, and new actions must result.

"Will man take hold of divine power, and with determination and perseverance resist Satan, as Christ has given him example in His conflict with the foe in the wilderness of temptation? God cannot save man against his will from the power of Satan's artifices. Man must work with his human power, aided by the divine power of Christ, to resist and to conquer at any cost to himself. In short, man must overcome as Christ overcame. And then, through the victory that it is his privilege to gain by the all-powerful name of Jesus, he may become an heir of God and joint-heir with Jesus Christ. This could not be the case if Christ alone did all the overcoming. Man must do his part; he must be victor on his own account, through the strength and grace that Christ gives him. Man must be a co-worker with Christ in the labor of overcoming, and then he will be partaker with Christ in His glory.

"The Saviour overcame to show man how he may overcome. All the temptations of Satan, Christ met with the Word of God. By trusting in God's promises, He received power to obey God's commandments, and the tempter could gain no advantage." Ibid., 156

We have something to do if we are to be saved in God's kingdom. What is it? To strive with mind and body to reach the great goal of righteousness. In our intensive search for it we must express the same spiritual violence as Jacob did. He clung to Christ as the day was breaking, with the cry from his soul wearied by the night's wrestling, "I will not let you go until you bless me."

Let us not forget that righteousness by faith is the science of holiness. Ellen White beautifully portrays this truth in counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students page 20:

"There is a science of Christianity to be mastered—a science as much deeper, broader, higher, than any human science as the heavens are higher than the earth. The mind is to be disciplined, educated, trained; for men are to do service for God in ways that are not in harmony with inborn inclination. Often the training and education of a lifetime must be discarded, that one may become a learner in the school of Christ. The heart must be educated to become steadfast in God. Old and young are to form habits of thought that will enable them to resist temptation. They must learn to look upward. The principles of the Word of God—principles that are as high as heaven and that compass eternity—are to be understood in their bearing on the daily life. Every act, every word, every thought, is to be in accord with these principles.

"No other science is equal to that which develops in the life of the student the character of God. Those who be-
the garments of Christ’s righteousness while practicing known sins, or neglecting known duties. God requires the entire surrender of the heart, before justification can take place; and in order for man to retain justification, there must be continual obedience, through active, living faith that works by love and purifies the soul.” Selected Messages, book 1, 366

“We are preparing to meet Him who, escorted by a retinue of holy angels, is to appear in the clouds of heaven to give the faithful and the just the finishing touch of immortality. When He comes He is not to cleanse us of our sins, to remove from us the defects in our characters, or to cure us of the infirmities of our tempers and dispositions. If wrought for us at all, this work will all be accomplished before that time. When the Lord comes, those who are holy will be holy still. Those who have preserved their bodies and spirits in holiness, in sanctification and honor, will then receive the finishing touch of immortality. But those who are unjust, unsanctified, and filthy will remain so forever. No work will then be done for them to remove their defects and give them holy characters. The Refiner does not then sit to pursue His refining process and remove their sins and their corruption. This is all to be done in these hours of probation. It is now that this work is to be accomplished for us.” Testimonies, vol. 2, 355

By practicing the presence of Jesus moment by moment, by continual submission to God’s will, by faithful daily obedience to God’s law, we are clothed with righteousness, we are surrounded by His impregnable fortress, His righteous law. This relationship produces the character of Jesus and the keys to the kingdom.

“When the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come.” Christ is waiting with longing desire for the manifestation of Himself in His church. When the character of Christ shall be perfectly reproduced in His people, then He will come to claim them as His own.

“It is the privilege of every Christian not only to look for but to hasten the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, (2 Peter 3:12, margin). Were all who profess His name bearing fruit to His glory, how quickly the whole world would be sown with the seed of the gospel. Quickly the last great harvest would be ripened, and Christ would come to gather the precious grain.” Christ’s Object Lessons, 69

Perfect peace can only be found in full surrender of the life each moment of the day, and, in this relationship, perfect love casteth out all fear. 1 John 4:18.

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MT 11:29 MINISTRY OF HEALING 150

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The Danger of Self-Exaltation

It was a quiet spring evening. From their place on the calm waters of the lake, the disciples watched the last rays of the sinking sun fade from the sky. As pastel colors faded into deeper shades of night, they recounted the day's events. The darkness of the night setting in was exceeded only by the darkness within themselves.

The day had been one of contrasts. They had seen thousands of listeners deeply moved by the words of Jesus. They had listened spellbound by words that had come to them as the voice of God. Hosts of sick had been healed, the joy on their faces speaking more eloquently than words of the power of God. The capstone of events had come when the Master had, from those few small loaves and fishes, fed the thronging thousands. This miracle could not help but appeal to all in a most powerful way, and the hopes of the disciples soared as the tide of popular opinion rose.

And then, incredibly, there was Jesus dismissing the people. What a disappointment! Would Jesus never take the throne of His father David, assuming His rightful position?

Obedient to His command but unreconciled to this change of events, the disciples reluctantly set out by boat for the distant shore, wrapped in their thoughts of dissatisfaction with the Master's handling of the situation and the bitterness of frustrated ambition. Their unbelief grew. They were totally unprepared for the change of circumstances rapidly overtaking them.

In all its fury the storm was upon them. Thoughts of dissatisfaction and impatience were dismissed as all joined in the unequal struggle with the elements. To keep their small boat afloat seemed impossible.

Hours pass. With all their strength the men wrestle with the relentless wind and waters, fighting heroically against the power of the elements seemingly bent on their destruction. When all hope is lost, and it seems they must surely perish, a gleam of light appears over the waters. The muscles, so recently stretched to their limit in the life and death struggle, suddenly relax. As nerveless hands drop from the oars, the men view what must certainly be an omen of their imminent destruction.

Their straining eyes make out the form; they recognize at last the approaching figure to be Jesus, their Master, and in desperation mingled...
with nearly hysterical relief they cry out. Peter, seldom at a loss for words, grasps the situation quickly and requests that Jesus bid him also walk on the water. And across the waves floats the response: “Come.” Eyes fixed on Jesus, Peter steps from the boat, and those waves threatening death can now be trodden under foot with ease.

Suddenly, however, the magnitude of the situation sinks in and Peter is overwhelmed with the significance of it all. After all, it is not possible for men to walk on water, but by virtue of his relationship with the Master, he was. There was a certain amount of self-satisfaction in the knowledge of that fact, (too bad, about the others, if they'd only had more faith, they too could be water-walking), and for a single gratifying moment Peter turns to assure himself that the other disciples are taking proper notice of all that was taking place.

Ah, but in that short moment, Peter was no longer walking on water, but sinkingn. Suddenly he appreciated that his position was less favorable than the boat together. But Peter was now subdued and silent. He had no reason to boast over his fellows, for through unbelief and self-exaltation he had very nearly lost his life. When he turned his eyes from Jesus, his footing was lost, and he sank amid the waves.” The Desire of Ages, 381-382

It's a beautiful story, but let's not miss the application.

There is no question that Christ holds out before us the possibility of perfection in our lives. Peter is very explicit when he says: “For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth.” 1 Peter 2:21-22

The apostle John is even more direct, if that is possible: “Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.” 1 John 3:9.

Within the writings of God's messenger to the remnant people we have a plethora of such statements, too numerous to review, but let us look at just a few.

“You may say that you believe in Jesus, when you have an appreciation of the cost of salvation. You may make this claim, when you feel that Jesus died for you on the cruel cross of Calvary; when you have an intelligent, understanding faith that His death makes it possible for you to cease from sin, and to perfect a righteous character through the grace of God, bestowed upon you as the purchase of Christ's blood.” Review and Herald, July 24, 1888

“The Lord requires no less of the soul now, than He required of Adam in Paradise before he fell—perfect obedience, unblemished righteousness. The requirement of God under the covenant of grace is just as broad as the requirement He made in Paradise—harmony with His law, which is holy, and just, and good. . . . Let no one take up with the delusion so pleasant to the natural heart, that God will accept of sincerity, no matter what may be the faith, no matter how imperfect may be the life. God requires of His child perfect obedience.” Review and Herald, November 1, 1892

“God cannot approve of a marred, imperfect character. We cannot excuse ourselves before Him for our defects and errors, because He has provided help in His Son. He has given us a loving, pitying, all-powerful Saviour, who is able to give us grace that we may overcome every defect of our characters. If we will only submit to God, He will take our minds, and fashion them after His divine mind.” Review and Herald, March 26, 1889.

The statements are too clear in both the inspired writings of the Scripture and the Spirit of Prophecy, to allow for any other interpretation; it is possible, by the power of the indwelling Spirit of Christ, to live a life free of every sin.

Not only is a life of obedience required, but we are also given to understand that there are those who have attained to this level of obedience through a relationship with Christ.

“In the midst of a world by its iniquity doomed to destruction, Enoch lived a life of such close communion with God that he was not permitted to fall under the power of death. The godly character of this prophet represents the state of holiness which must be attained by those who shall be redeemed from the earth” (Revelation 14:3) at the time of Christ's second advent.” Patriarchs and Prophets, 88-89

Not only has this obedience been a reality in the lives of some in the past, but even in our day some have experienced this reality in their lives.

“In every phase of your character building you are to please God. This

He had accomplished something they seemed to lack the faith to do

that of the other disciples. While by faith he had been able to accomplish something that they seemed to lack the faith to do, by becoming aware of that accomplishment, he was in danger of being completely overwhelmed by the waves which he had so shortly before been standing upon.

Thankful we may be that the story doesn’t end there, for Peter in his distress cried out and Jesus immediately rescued him. Let us notice the conclusion of this story.

“Walking side by side, Peter's hand in that of his Master, they stepped into

The Lord requires no less of the soul now, than He required of Adam

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you may do; for Enoch pleased Him though living in a degenerate age. And there are Enochs in this our day.”

Christ’s Object Lessons, 332

There can be no question that there are some very close parallels between our experience and that of Peter, and not to elaborate too long on the obvious, I believe that we need to appreciate some aspects of this parallel that may have escaped our attention. Just as Jesus bade Peter walk to Him on the water, Jesus has given us His commandments, the keeping of which is an expression of our love for Him, a demonstration of our relationship with Him. As with Peter, this can be accomplished in us only by a moment-by-moment faith relationship, with our eyes fixed on Jesus.

While we are looking at these parallels, we need to consider why Peter sank, for this is the most significant aspect of his experience.

When Ellen White speaks of “self-satisfaction,” I don’t believe for a moment that the feeling arose in Peter that he was accomplishing this feat and of himself. No, Peter had not a doubt in his mind as to his water-walking ability outside of his relationship with Jesus, and that is the key. All the disciples were seeking to be on the inside track. Each wanted to be assured of a place of highest prestige and authority in the new kingdom, and the fact wasn’t lost on Peter that he was at that moment in a very close relationship with the Master. Also don’t miss the point that with this self-satisfaction came the removing of his eyes from Jesus.

Recognizing that all these things are written for our admonition, let us gain all that is here for us to learn, as we seek to be fully conformed to the likeness of Jesus.

“This conformity to Jesus will not be unobserved by the world. It is a subject of notice and comment. The Christian may not be conscious of the great change; for the more closely he resembles Christ in character the more humble will be his opinion of himself; but it will be seen and felt by all around him. Those who have had the deepest experience in the things of God are the farthest removed from pride or self-exaltation. They have the humblest thoughts of self, and the most exalted conception of the glory and excellence of Christ. They feel that the lowest place in His service is too honorable for them.

“Moses did not know that his face shone with a brightness painful and terrifying to those who had not, like himself, communed with God. Paul had a very humble opinion of his own advancement in the Christian life. He says: ‘Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect.’ He speaks of himself as the ‘chief’ of sinners. Yet Paul had been highly honored of the Lord. He had been taken in holy vision to the third heaven and had there received revelations of divine glory which he could not be permitted to make known.” Testimonies, vol. 5, 223-224

“There can be no self-exaltation, no boastful claim to freedom from sin, on the part of those who walk in the shadow of Calvary’s cross.” The Great Controversy, 471

There are those today who profess to have come to this place in their relationship with Jesus. They say with confidence that they are no longer committing known sins. Even more, they state with conviction that they know of a certainty that they never will do so in the future. Very carefully they admit that they are not sinless. But this is only because they acknowledge the fact that they have sinful flesh. But here we have a problem. If the fact that they still have sinful flesh is the only thing which prevents them from claiming to be sinless, logic tells us that either Jesus had a different kind of flesh from yours and mine, or He was not sinless. Do you see the problem?

They are in a rather unusual manner making the same claim as do so many who refuse the biblical and Spirit of Prophecy testimony that Christ in the incarnation accepted fallen human nature. They say that sinfulness is a matter of sinfulness is a

They say that sinfulness is a matter of the flesh, rather than of obedience

mater of the flesh, rather than a matter of obedience to the law of God.

“But if there was anyone who could hope to be justified in claiming perfection of character, it was Paul; but we hear from his lips no presumptuous boasting. He says rather that he does not count himself as one that has attained, but only as one who is following after, pressing on toward the mark for the prize of his high calling in God through Christ Jesus. . . .

“The attitude of Paul is the attitude to be take by every one of the followers of Christ; for we are ever to be urging our way, striving lawfully for the crown of immortality. Not one may claim to be perfect. Let the recording angels write the history of the holy struggles and conflicts of the people of God, let them record their prayers and tears; but let not God be dishonored by the proclamation from human lips, declaring, ‘I am sinless. I am holy.’ Sanctified lips will never give utterance to such presumptuous words. Paul had been caught up to the third heaven, and had seen and heard things that could not be uttered, and yet his modest statement is, ‘Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after.’ Let the angels of...
heaven write of Paul's victories in fighting the good fight of faith. Let Heaven rejoice in his steadfast tread heavenward, keeping the prize in view for which he counts every other consideration as dross. Let the angels of heaven rejoice to tell his triumphs, but let Paul utter no vain praise of himself in making a boast of his attainments.

"Let those who feel inclined to make a high profession of holiness, look into the mirror of God's law, which discloses to us the defects of our character. Those who see the far-reaching claims of the law of God, those who realize that it is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart, will not presume to make the boast of sinlessness, and venture to declare, 'I am perfect, I am holy.'" *Signs of the Times*, May 23, 1895

"Those who are really seeking to perfect Christian character will never indulge the thought that they are sinless. Their lives may be irreproachable, they may be living representatives of the truth which they have accepted; but the more they discipline their minds to dwell upon the character of Christ, and the nearer they approach to His divine image, the more clearly will they discern its spotless perfection, and the more deeply they will feel their own defects.

"When persons claim that they are sanctified, they give sufficient evidence that they are far from being holy. They fail to see their own weakness and destitution. They look upon themselves as reflecting the image of Christ, because they have no true knowledge of Him. The greater the distance between them and their Saviour, the more righteously they appear in their own eyes." *The Sanctified Life*, 7-8

Here we see that even those whose lives are "irreproachable," whose lives are "representative" of the truths they profess to believe, will never profess that they are sanctified or sinless. More than that, those who do this do so because of their failure to really appreciate the character of Him whom they profess to reflect.

For persons to profess that they no longer commit sin, and then to deny that they claim for themselves sinlessness, or sanctification, is to play a game with words. In one breath they proclaim to be a fact which in the next breath they profess to deny, when in reality, both they, and those to whom they are speaking, correctly appreciate the import of what they have just stated, all denials to the contrary.

"Those who take pains to call attention to their good works, constantly talking of their sinless state and endeavoring to make their religious attainments prominent, are only deceiving their own souls by so doing. A healthy man, who is able to attend to the vocations of life and who goes forth day after day to his labor with buoyant spirits and with a healthy current of blood flowing through his veins, does not call the attention of every one he meets to his soundness of body. Health and vigor are the natural conditions of his life, and therefore he is scarcely conscious that he is in the enjoyment of so right a boon.

"Thus it is with the truly righteous man. He is unconscious of his goodness and piety. Religious principle has become the spring of his life and conduct, and it is just as natural for him to bear the fruits of the Spirit as for the fig tree to bear figs or for the rosebush to yield roses. His nature is so thoroughly imbued with love for God and his fellow men that he works the works of Christ with a willing heart." *Ibid.*, 12-13

Inspiration is clear. Perfect conformity to the image of Christ is not only possible, but also necessary to our salvation. Equally clear, however, is the fact that the truly sanctified will be unaware of this fact. With Paul they will confess that they do not consider that they have attained, but that they press forward to the mark of their high calling in Christ Jesus.

What greater delusion can take hold of a man's mind than to sincerely believe that he has achieved, when the facts of the matter are, he has, as of yet,

If we could see its perfect fulfillment, it would no longer be by faith

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no real knowledge of the reality of his profession!

"We must study the example Christ has left us, as revealed in His character; and then, all unconsciously to ourselves, we shall do the works He did." *Review and Herald*, November 16, 1886

We have been promised that, as we look in faith to Jesus, we will be changed into His divine likeness. (2 Corinthians 3:18) It is only in continually beholding Him that the perfect fulfillment of this promise is possible, and we must accept by faith that He is accomplishing it in us. If we could with our own sight see its perfect accomplishment, it would no longer be by faith, but by sight that we believed, and whatsoever is not of faith, is sin. Here we are faced with the solemn reality that even if we have by faith been walking as did Peter, the moment that we turn our attention towards ourselves, proclaiming this to be so, we, like Peter, are no longer walking but sinking. ___

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I Am
The Door

THE DOOR OF salvation which was shut in the time of Christ and the apostles upon the Jews of that generation should cause Christians today serious and sober reflection. “Had God’s chosen people stood in their appointed place, as the repositories of sacred, eternal truth, which was to come to the heathen world, Jerusalem would have stood to this day.” Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, vol. 4, 1156. She would have been “the mighty metropolis of the earth. From her walls the dove of peace would have gone forth to all nations.” The Desire of Ages, 577. Millions of violent deaths and an incomprehensible amount of suffering would have been avoided.

The shut door of that time and the destruction of Jerusalem which resulted was to the mind of Jesus a symbol of the destruction of the world at the end of time. Just as the Jewish nation rejected Jesus, according to Bible prophecy the world at the end of time will reject His law. In differentiating the saved from the lost of the last generation in Revelation 14:9-12, the prophet specifies that the saved will be Christians which have as a prominent characteristic the keeping of the commandments of God. Jesus indicated that this characteristic would distinguish between those Christians who were saved and those calling themselves Christians but who were lost. The Christians who were saved would be doing the will of God, but those who were lost would be practicing “lawlessness.” Matthew 7:21-23

The doctrine of the shut door in Christ’s day has serious implications for all the world, especially for the Christian world. But above all people upon the face of the earth, the “shut door” has ominous meaning for Seventh-day Adventists for the following reasons. First of all, the Jewish nation was God’s chosen people (Deuteronomy 7:6; John 1:11). The Seventh-day Adventist Church claims to be God’s chosen remnant spoken of in Revelation 12:17 and 14:12. Second and more important, Ellen G. White, who Adventists believe had the spiritual gift of prophecy, has warned us that we are in danger of repeating their experience. “By rejecting God’s warnings in this our day, men are repeating the sin of Jerusalem. The Lord sees what the human agent does not see and will not see—the outcome of all the

The Lord sees what the human agent does not and will not see

John Grosboll

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human devising. But by a long process of departure from just and righteous principles, men have placed themselves where light and truth, justice and mercy, are not discerned. This course has become part of their very nature. These are no idle tales, but truth.” Testimonies, vol. 8, 68

Jesus predicted that, just before He came the second time, the door of salvation would again be shut. Matthew 25:1-10. Judgment begins at the house of God. Ezekiel 9; 1 Peter 4:7. The door of salvation does not close for everybody in the world at the same time—it closes for the church first: “The time of God’s destructive judgments is the time of mercy for those who have had no opportunity to learn what is truth. Tenderly will the Lord look upon them. His heart of mercy is touched; His hand is still stretched out to save, while the door is closed to those who would not enter.” Testimonies, vol. 9, 97. Within the church (according to Ezekiel 9) the door closes first for the leaders. This is a parallel to the Jewish experience—the door of salvation closed at that time for the leaders who crucified Jesus. The door of salvation did not close for the rest of the nation until they had rejected the preaching of the apostles.

The Shaking

The time at which the door will close for the church has also been specified by the Spirit of Prophecy. The door of salvation closes during the period called “the shaking.” A brief summary of the shaking, derived mostly from Early Writings, pages 269-271, follows:

1. When Ellen White saw the shaking in vision, she first saw a time of great soul searching and agonizing prayer going on among some of God’s people. It is a time of great temptation and spiritual darkness.

2. The shaking has at least two distinct causes: It comes by the introduction of false theories, and by the giving of the straight testimony to the Laodiceans.

3. Some will not endure this straight testimony.

4. Those who do not endure the straight testimony will rise up against it—that is, they will oppose it. (Historically the way God’s people have opposed unpopular truth is by opposing the messenger God sends with that truth. See Patriarchs and Prophets, 404-405)

5. The one who accepts the straight testimony will exalt the standard and pour forth the straight truth.

When a person does not receive the straight testimony, he rejects it

6. The opposition to the straight testimony will cause a shaking among God’s people.

7. When a person does not receive the straight testimony, he rejects it. During this time of shaking such persons are shaken out from the number of God’s people.

8. When a person is shaken out, the door of salvation is closed for him. “Some, I saw, did not participate in this work of agonizing and pleading. They seemed indifferent and careless. They were not resisting the darkness around them, and it shut them in like a thick cloud. The angels of God left these, and went to the aid of the earnest, praying ones. I saw angels of God hasten to the assistance of all who were struggling with all their power to resist the evil angels, and trying to help themselves by calling upon God with perseverance. But His angels left those who made no effort to help themselves, and I lost sight of them. . . . Some had been shaken out and left by the way. The careless and indifferent, who did not join with those who prized victory and salvation enough to perseveringly plead and agonize for it, did not obtain it, and they were left behind in darkness.” Early Writings, 270-271

9. The result of the shaking will be a purified church which will receive the latter rain and the loud cry and finish the gospel commission.

10. During this time “there will be those among us who will always want to control the work of God, to dictate.” Evangelism, 118

The Straight Testimony

Even from a casual study of the shaking it becomes immediately apparent that the critical factor for each one of us is whether or not we receive the “straight testimony” to Laodicea in a wholehearted manner and act on it. Our response to the straight testimony is of such paramount importance that Ellen White described the destiny of the church as hanging on its reception of this message.

The straight testimony is found in Revelation 3:14-22. Do you know what the testimony says and what it means? We must listen to the counsel and follow it if we do not want to find the door of salvation shut against us someday.

One of the counsels is to receive from Jesus eyesalve so that we might no longer be spiritually blind, but be able to see spiritual things. (We know that the counsel has to do with spiritual eyesight because these people think they can see—they have physical eyesight.) Who is it that enables a person to see spiritually? The person is the Holy Spirit.

Do you know what the straight testimony says and what it means?

(1 Corinthians 2:9-10). How does He impart spiritual eyesight to a person? There are several ways, including mental impressions, but the main way is through the gift of prophecy. It is the Holy Spirit who gives to certain people within the church the gift of prophecy (1 Corinthians 12). The way a person gains spiritual eyesight is by asking for the Holy Spirit (Luke 11:13) and then studying the writings of the prophets.

Continued on 31
The Law and the Gospel

THE LAW AND the gospel cannot be separated. In Christ mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other. The gospel has not ignored the obligations due to God by man. The gospel is the law unfolded, nothing more nor less. It gives no more latitude to sin than does the law. The law points to Christ; Christ points to the law. The gospel calls men to repentance. Repentance of what? — Of sin. And what is sin? — It is the transgression of the law. Therefore the gospel calls men from their transgression back to obedience to the law of God. Jesus in His life and death taught the strictest obedience. He died, the just for the unjust, the innocent for the guilty, that the honor of God’s law might be preserved, and yet man not utterly perish.

The work of salvation in both the Old and the New Testament dispensation is the same. Christ was the foundation of the whole Jewish economy. The types and shadows under which the Jews worshiped, all pointed forward to the world’s Redeemer. It was by faith in a coming Saviour that sinners were saved then. It is through faith in Christ that they are justified today.

In giving His Son, God gave Himself, that man might have another trial. If God could have changed His law to meet man in his fallen condition, would He not have done this, and retained His only-begotten Son in heaven? — He certainly would. But because His law was as changeless as His character, He gave His beloved Son, who was above law, and one with Himself, to meet the penalty which His justice demanded.

Satan is working with all his deceptive power to ensnare the world. He would have them believe that this great sacrifice was made in order to abolish God’s law. He represents Christ as opposed to the law of God’s government in heaven and in earth. But the Sovereign of the world has a law by which to govern His heavenly intelligences and His human family, and the death of His Son fixes the immutability of that law beyond any question. God has no intention of doing away with His great standard of righteousness. By this standard He can define what a correct character is.

Christ consented to die in the sinner’s stead, that man, by a life of obedience, might escape the penalty of the law of God. His death did not make the law of God of none effect; it did not slay the law, lessen its claims, or detract from its sacred dignity. The death of Christ proclaimed the justice of His Father’s law in punishing the transgres-

Ellen G. White

sor, in that He Himself consented to suffer the penalty of the law transgressed, in order to save fallen man from its curse. The death of God’s beloved Son on the cross shows the immutability of the law of God. His death magnifies the law and makes it honorable, and gives evidence to man of its changeless character. From His own divine lips are heard the words, “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.” [Matthew 5:17] The death of Christ justified the claims of the law.

But the doctrine is now largely taught that the gospel of Christ has made the law of God of no effect; that by “believing” we are released from the necessity of being doers of the Word. But this is the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which Christ so unsparingly condemned. To the church of Ephesus He says: “I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: and hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name’s sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted. Never-
Christ becomes to these persons a stumbling block as He did to the Jews

to faith and the righteousness of Christ; but they pervert the truth, and make it serve the cause of error. They declare that we have only to believe on Jesus Christ, and that faith is all-sufficient; that the righteousness of Christ is to be the sinner's credentials; that this imputed righteousness fulfills the law for us, and that we are under no obligation to obey the law of God. This class claim that Christ came to save sinners, and that He has saved them. "I am saved," they will repeat over and over again. But are they saved while transgressing the law of Jehovah? — No; for the garments of Christ's righteousness are not a cloak for iniquity. Such teaching is a gross deception, and Christ becomes to these persons a stumbling block as He did to the Jews—to the Jews because they would not receive Him as their personal Saviour; to these professed believers in Christ, because they separate Christ and the law, and regard faith as a substitute for obedience. They separate the Father and the Son, the Saviour of the world. Virtually they teach, both by precept and example, that Christ, by His death, saves men in their transgression.

It is necessary that every intelligent being shall understand the principles of the law of God. Christ through the apostle James declares, "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." [James 2:10] These words were spoken this side of the death of Christ; therefore the law was binding upon all at that time.

The Saviour raised His voice in protest against those who regard the divine commandments with indifference and carelessness. He said, "Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven." [Matthew 5:19] And He also declared, "Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." [5:18]

Men may talk of freedom, of gospel liberty. They may assert that they are not in bondage to the law. But the influence of a gospel hope will not lead the sinner to look upon the salvation of Christ as a matter of free grace, while he continues to live in transgression of the law of God. When the light of truth dawns upon his mind, and he fully understands the requirements of God, and realizes the extent of his transgressions, he will reform his ways, become loyal to God through the strength obtained from His Saviour, and lead a new and purer life. "Whosoever abideth in him," says John, "sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him." [1 John 3:6]

Signs of the Times, February 25, 1897
How to Be Saved One Day at a Time

TO BE SAVED means to learn to love God and one another as Jesus did in His life on earth. This is a day-by-day process. It is not a natural process but is made possible only through the power of the Holy Spirit supplied to us, moment by moment, when we are abiding in Christ. Although it is undeserved and totally outside of our natural power to secure, God offers this transforming grace to each and every person on earth. Transforming grace—so essential to salvation—and yet what is it, and how do we get it?

Transforming grace is the day-by-day process of God delivering us from sin and making us more loving like Himself. “And now abide faith, hope, and love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.” 1 Corinthians 13:13[1]

More important than the understanding of prophecy is love. The apostle Paul said that we could even have the gift of prophecy, but if we did not have love, we would be “nothing.” Love is more important than good works. Paul said that we could give our bodies to be burned, but if we did not have love, it would do us no good. Love is more important than any theology. For again Paul says that we can “understand all mysteries,” but without love, we are nothing. Love is even more important than faith itself, for we can “have all faith,” and yet without love, we are still “nothing.” 1 Corinthians 13:2-3

The Conditions of Salvation

We are saved by faith in Jesus. It is through faith that we receive the forgiveness of sin and our title to heaven. Our works have nothing to do with earning salvation. It was purchased by Jesus alone, and it is offered to us as a free gift.

But although the gift is absolutely free, it is not unconditional. Not everyone is going to be saved—only those who meet the conditions. Meeting the conditions does not earn our salvation in any way, but it does determine who will receive the free gift. The condition for receiving the free gift is twofold: We must first accept Jesus as our Saviour, and we must then learn to love God and one another as Jesus did. Paul is very clear that unless we obtain this love, our faith is absolutely worthless.

Satisfying a condition is far different from earning salvation. Suppose I was very rich and you were very poor, and, because I really loved you, I gave you a ten-million dollar check. Now there would be nothing that most of us could do to earn that money, but there would be at least one condition: You would have to go to the bank and cash the check. Is that a condition? Yes, it is. The gift is good only if it is cashed.
Could you imagine someone saying, “You mean I have to go all the way to the bank to get this money? Well then, it is not a gift. If I have to go to the bank, I’ve earned it.” How preposterous! Yet some people think that way about the gift of salvation. They illogically overthrow all the conditions of salvation, assuming that such parameters constitute sinful works. Thus they delude themselves into thinking that they are saved unconditionally, when they are most assuredly lost.

There is nothing we can do to earn even temporary life on this earth, and it is even more impossible to do anything to earn eternal life

Jesus plainly stated that at the Second Coming, many would say to Him, “Lord, Lord, we are saved! We have done everything in Your name.” But then He will sadly declare to them, “I never knew you: depart from me, you workers of iniquity.” Matthew 7:21-23. Somehow, although they believed in Christ and claimed to be saved, they did not meet the conditions. The proof offered was that they were “workers of iniquity,” or, as the literal Greek says, “They practiced lawlessness.”

There are conditions to salvation which we must all meet, day by day. And these conditions are more involved than just cashing a check at a bank. Suppose, in the previous example of giving you a ten-million dollar check, I stated to you that this was a gift of love, totally free and unmerited—it was my inheritance which I purchased with my own life and which I am now giving to you. But I also stipulated that if you accepted the gift, you must promise me that you will never say anything bad about my kind and loving Father, from whom I inherited the money, or about any of His children whom He loved. Even in this, however, if you should fail at some time, the gift will still be yours if you will but repent and ask forgiveness. Those would be very fair conditions. The gift is still a free gift, which you did not earn, but you must meet the just and fair requirements.

Jesus died on the cross in order to earn eternal life for us. He “was treated as we deserved, that we might be treated as He deserves. He was condemned for our sins, in which He had no share, that we might be justified by His righteousness, in which we had no exception—“no one can see the kingdom of God without this new birth,” which means that our characters must be changed from characters of selfishness to characters of love.

When a rich man once asked Jesus what he could do to “have eternal life,” Jesus did not tell him to do nothing, but rather He said, “If you want to enter into life, keep the commandments.”

When a lawyer later asked Him what the commandments were, Jesus said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.” Matthew 19:16-17; 22:35-40

There is no salvation without learning to love. Jesus paid for our salvation, but He is not going to give it to anyone who is unwilling to develop a character that will allow him to fit into the loving and unselfish society of heaven. Love to God means that we willingly and lovingly obey Him. Jesus said, “If you love Me, keep My commandments.” John 14:15. Love to our fellow men means that we treat them just as we would wish to be treated in their place. This is the kind of love that is manifested in heaven. The standard of love, by which we will be judged as to whether we have met the conditions of salvation, is the Ten Commandments as lived out in the life of Jesus. “Love is the fulfillment of the law.” Romans 13:10. “He who says, ‘I know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him.” 1 John 2:4. “For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” Romans 13:9

In Luke 11 Jesus tells of a man who was once delivered from the slavery of sin. He was delivered from his addictions and bad habits. But he did not go on from there to develop his character into the image of Jesus. Some time later
the evil spirit that had once controlled
his life came back to see how his old
friend was doing. Lo and behold, he
found that the man was the same as
when he had left him—free from sin
but destitute of the grace of Christ. The
evil spirit leaped with joy, and went and
found seven other spirits more evil than
himself, and came back and took abso-
late control of this poor man. So the
last state of that man, who had once
been saved, was worse than the first.

How to Stay Saved

Thus we can see that salvation is not
a process that merely happens once,
after which eternal life is forever se-
cure. "People, if saved at all, must be
saved day by day, hour by hour." Funda-
mentals of Christian Education, 240.
Thus we are told that "Those who ac-
cept the Saviour, however sincere their
conversion, should never be taught to
say or to feel that they are saved." Chri-
t's Object Lessons, 155. Salvation is a
day-by-day process of becoming more
and more like God in love. Salva-
tion is much more than a good begin-
ning. It is a state of being in which we
must choose to remain by the grace of
God. But, note this, it is not a static
state of being. The requirement of sal-
vation is not just that we do not sin—
that is what the Jews thought in Jesus'
day. That is what the hermit monks
thought during the Dark Ages. But the
requirement of salvation is that we
must continually become more and
more like God in character. If my
character is no more like God's next
year than it is this year, I am not avail-
ing myself of the grace of Christ and I
am not being saved.

"It is our privilege to grow more
and more like Him every day.... We
are to learn in the school of Christ; yet
it is manifest that many are satisfied
with very limited experience in spiritual
things.... Christians are to be faithful
students in the school of Christ, ever
learning more of Heaven, more of the
words and will of God." Sons and Daugh-
ters of God, 72

"God designs that Christians shall
grow continually, grow up unto the full
stature of men and women in Christ.
All who do not grow stronger, and
become more firmly rooted and
grounded in the truth, are continually
retrograding." Testimonies, vol. 4, 556.

"Man may grow up into Christ, his
living head. It is not the work of a mo-
ment, but that of a lifetime.... The
growing is a continuous work." Tes-
timonies, vol. 4, 367

"The want of spiritual growth
shuts the door to the rich rays of light
that shine from Christ. We shall never
reach a period when there is no in-
creased light for us." Selected Mes-
sages, book 1, 403-404

Jesus said that "For everyone to
whom much is given, from him much
will be required; and to whom much
has been committed, of him they will
ask the more." Luke 12:48. If we have
been given ten years to develop a
character, God requires of us more
than if He has given to us just five years
to develop a character.

In the parable of the talents, those
who had the talents were strictly re-
quired to add unto their resources. The
one who failed to do so was considered
already have. And the ultimate goal is
to become more loving like God. If this
character of love is not being daily
developed within us, we are not in a
safe relationship with the Lord. We
cannot be satisfied with yesterday's re-
results or yesterday's characteristics.

That is why Paul said, "Brethren, I
do not count myself to have appre-
hended; but one thing I do, forgetting
those things which are behind and
reaching forward to those things which
are ahead, I press toward the prize of
the upward call of God in Christ
Jesus." Philippians 3:13-14

Many have wondered why God was
so exacting with Moses when he failed
at the end of a long and faithful life. It
was for the very reason that it was at
the end of a long and faithful life that
made it so serious. God required more
from him at the end of his life than at
the beginning. "The fact that Moses
had enjoyed so great light and knowl-
edge made his sin more grievous. Past
faithfulness will not atone for one
wrong act. The greater the light and
privileges granted to man, the greater

To be saved means that we must
continue, on a day-by-day basis, to
cultivate more of the character of
Jesus within our lives

an unfaithful steward and was con-
sidered "wicked and lazy." The serv-
ants of the king were commanded to
"cast the unprofitable servant into the
outer darkness" where there was
"weeping and gnashing of teeth." Mat-
thew 25:26-30

Peter counsels us, saying, "giving all
diligence, add to your faith virtue, to
to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-
control, to self-control perseverance,
to perseverance godliness, to godliness
brotherly kindness, and to brotherly
kindness love." 2 Peter 1:5-7

Thus the Christian life is a constant
growth, a constant adding to what we
is his responsibility, the more aggra-
vated his failure, and the heavier his
punishment." Patriarchs and Prophets,
420

Thus, to be saved means that we
must continue, on a day by day basis, to
cultivate more of the character of Jesus
within our lives. We are to become
more like Jesus every day—we must
become more earnest and anxious to
serve God because we love Him more
every day, and we must become more
kind, courteous, and patient toward
our spouses and family members,
toward our church members, and
toward our fellow men and women.
This growth in grace is accomplished only by spending time with Jesus every day, and by allowing His Spirit to come into our lives to fashion us into the image of Jesus. This is the true purpose of devotions. We need to know more about true theology and prophecy, but the first and most important purpose of prayer and Bible study is to become more like Jesus.

We are not only to be intelligent Christians, but loving Christians

As we kneel each morning to devote our lives to God for that day, and as we open the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy to feed upon His Word, our first and primary objective must be to have our lives and characters changed. The purpose of our Bible study and prayer must be to develop characters like Jesus. We are not only to be intelligent Christians, but loving Christians. This comes by daily spending time with Jesus at the foot of the cross, and then, out of love for Christ utilizing the divine power that He imparts to us to "refuse the evil and choose the good." Isaiah 7:15

"It would be well for us to spend a thoughtful hour each day in contemplation of the life of Christ. We should take it point by point, and let the imagination grasp each scene, especially the closing ones. As we thus dwell upon His great sacrifice for us, our confidence in Him will be more constant, our love will be quickened, and we shall be more deeply imbued with His spirit. If we would be saved at last, we must learn the lesson of penitence and humiliation at the foot of the cross. The Desire of Ages, 83\(^1\)

\(^1\)Bible quotations are from either the King James or the New King James Version.

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**LETTERS TO THE EDITOR**

Thank you all deeply for sending me *Our Firm Foundation* during the past year, knowing that I didn't get to pay you the subscription price due to personal struggles. I'm grateful for the straight testimony that's badly needed in the church, especially as it gets my mind back to God. I'm especially grateful for the subscription assistance program that allows others with financial problems to receive *Our Firm Foundation*. Therefore I am sending the enclosed check for my subscription for this past year, and for others to be able to partake of the divine truth to share with all the world.

William Reinwald
West Haven

I have a special request to make of your ministry. I received a letter from Pastor—— and in his letter he mentioned your work of the Lord. I am in the North Carolina prison system where I've studied the Bible for six years nonstop. I learned the truth during my two years in the hole where I asked to be put so I could have peace and quiet so I could find the reason why—with the world full of Christians, and gaining more every day, why is the world in the bad shape it's in, and getting worse? I found out all this, and how to have good health and peace of mind. I would like to receive your monthly magazine and cassette. I have no funds right now, but I'm on my way out of this system, going on what we call work release sometime in March or April 1988. Then I should be able to support your ministry. Thank you.

Keeping the faith of our Lord and Saviour Jesus,

John Leffingwell
Elizabethtown, North Carolina

I am sorry that I do not have any money to send you, but I would very much like you to keep me on your mailing list to receive *Our Firm Foundation*. I have received other letters from you too, like your Focus on Lay Ministry, that have helped me to keep my priorities straight and to grow stronger in my faith in my daily problems, and to develop the strength I need for the coming crisis. You keep me from feeling so alone.

Beverly Baggs
Canton, Ohio

I'm writing first of all to salute you in your work of bringing forth the straight testimony, last-day events and the preparation, and putting a magnifying glass to the pillars of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

There are many obstacles in the way of those who would bring the reform messages, namely the offshoots that give rebukes without remedy, which tend to tear down instead of build up. I appreciate the "whole" message of hope that you present.

I've read a number of your books and all I can say is amen and hallelujah, the truth marches on!

Darryl Turner
Richmond, California

I truly feel you are friends, for your monthly visits via *Our Firm Foundation* mean so much. I can hardly wait for the arrival of the next issue and then I try to restrain myself so I won't read it through immediately—I want to spread out the enjoyment and the blessing. Thank you so very much.

Violet M. Bates
Fortuna, California
Ellen White's Concept of Righteousness by Faith

Do not allow your minds to be diverted from the all-important theme of the righteousness of Christ by the study of theories. Review and Herald, April 5, 1892

The thought that the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us, not because of any merit on our part, but as a free gift from God, is a precious thought. The enemy of God and man is not willing that this truth should be clearly presented; for he knows that if the people receive it fully, his power will be broken. Gospel Workers, 161

What Is Righteousness?

What is righteousness? . . . Righteousness means being good and doing good. Manuscript 68, 1894

Righteousness is obedience to the law. Selected Messages, book 1, 367

Righteousness is right doing, and it is by their deeds that all will be judged. Christ's Object Lessons, 312

Righteousness is holiness, likeness to God, and "God is love." 1 John 4:16. It is conformity to the law of God, for "all thy commandments are righteousness" (Psalm 119:172), and "love is the fulfilling of the law." Romans 13:10. Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing, 18

He who enters heaven must have a character that is without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. Naught that defileth can ever enter there. In all the redeemed host not one defect will be seen. Messages to Young People, 144

The Ground Rules of Salvation

Repentance has in it nothing of the nature of merit, but it prepares the heart for the acceptance of Christ as the only Saviour, the only hope of the lost sinner. Selected Messages, book 1, 365

God has made the first advance. While you were in rebellion against Him, He went forth to seek you. With the tender heart of the shepherd He left the ninety and nine and went out into the wilderness to find that which was lost . . .

In the parable of the lost sheep, Christ teaches that salvation does not come through our seeking after God but through God's seeking after us. Christ's Object Lessons, 189

Coming to Christ does not require severe mental effort and agony; it is simply accepting the terms of salvation that God has made plain in His Word. The blessing is free to all. Selected Messages, book 1, 333

Jesus said unto him [the rich young ruler], "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me." Here are conditions, and the Bible is full of conditions. Selected Messages, book 1, 378

From a sense of thorough conviction, you can . . . testify to men of the immutable character of the law manifested by the death of Christ on the cross, the malignant nature of sin, and the righteousness of God in justifying the believer in Jesus, on condition of his future obedience to the statutes of God's government in heaven and earth. Review and Herald, April 24, 1888

No man can cover his soul with the garments of Christ's righteousness while practicing known sins, or neglecting known duties. God requires the entire surrender of the heart, before justification can take place . . . In order for man to be justified by faith, faith must reach a point where it will control the affections and impulses of the heart. Selected Messages, book 1, 366

Salvation is a gift offered to you free; on no other condition can you obtain it, only as a free gift. But co-operation on your part is essential for your salvation. Letter 9a, 1891

Saving Faith

Faith is trusting in God—believing that He loves us, and knows what is for our best good. Thus, instead of our own way, it leads us to choose His way. In place of our ignorance, it accepts His wisdom; in place of our weakness, His strength; in place of our sinfulness, His righteousness. Our lives, ourselves, are already His; faith acknowledges His ownership, and accepts its blessing. Gospel Workers, 259

Faith looks beyond the difficulties, and lays hold of the unseen, even Omnipotence; therefore it cannot be baffled. Faith is the claspmg of the hand of Christ in every emergency. Ibid., 262

Where there is not only a belief in God's Word, but also a submission of the will to Him; where the heart is yielded to Him, the affections fixed upon Him, there is faith—faith that works by love and purifies the soul. Steps to Christ, 63

Justification by Faith

What is justification by faith? It is the work of God in laying the glory of man in the dust, and doing for man that which it is
not in his power to do for himself. When men see their own nothingness they are prepared to be clothed with the righteousness of Christ. The Faith I Live By, 111

As the penitent sinner, contrite before God, discerns Christ's atonement in his behalf, and accepts this atonement as his only hope in this life and the future life, his sins are pardoned. This is justification by faith. Ibid., 116

The grace of Christ is freely to justify the sinner without merit or claim on his part. Justification is a full, complete pardon of sin. The moment a sinner accepts Christ by faith, that moment he is pardoned. The righteousness of Christ is imputed to him, and he is no more to doubt God's forgiving grace. Ibid., 107

It is not God's will that you should be distrustful, and torture your soul with the fear that God will not accept you because you are sinful and unworthy. Ibid., 102

But, you say, if I could only know that He is my Saviour! Well, what kind of evidence do you want? Do you want a special feeling or emotion to prove that Christ is yours? Is this more reliable than pure faith in God's promises? ...

There is not a friend in the world of whom you would require one-half the assurance that our heavenly Father has given you in His promises. Review and Herald, July 29, 1890

Those who accept Christ, and in their first confidence say, I am saved, are in danger of trusting to themselves. They lose sight of their own weakness and their constant need of divine strength. They are unprepared for Satan's devices, and under temptation many, like Peter, fall into the very depths of sin. We are admonished, "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." 1 Corinthians 10:12. Our only safety is in constant distrust of self, and dependence on Christ. Christ's Object Lessons, 155

In order that we may have the righteousness of Christ, we need daily to be transformed by the influence of the Spirit, to be a partaker of the divine nature. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to elevate the taste, to sanctify the heart, to ennoble the whole man. Selected Messages, book 1, 374

In order for man to retain justification, there must be continual obedience, through active, living faith that works by love and purifies the soul. Ibid., 366

It is by continual surrender of the will, by continual obedience, that the blessing of justification is retained. Ibid., 397

Sanctification by Faith

Our only ground of hope is in the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and in that wrought by His Spirit working in and through us. Steps to Christ, 63

The righteousness by which we are justified is imputed; the righteousness by which we are sanctified is imparted. The first is our title to heaven, the second is our fitness for heaven. Messages to Young People, 35

Both our title to heaven and our fitness for it are found in the righteousness of Christ. The Desire of Ages, 300

When through repentance and faith we accept Christ as our Saviour, the Lord pardons our sins, and remits the penalty prescribed for the transgression of the law. The sinner then stands before God as a just person; he is taken into favor with Heaven, and through the Spirit has fellowship with the Father and the Son. Then there is yet another work to be accomplished, and this is of a progressive nature. The soul is to be sanctified through the truth. And this also is accomplished through faith. For it is only by the grace of Christ, which we receive through faith, that the character can be transformed. Signs of the Times, November 3, 1890

Those who would be saints in heaven, must first be saints upon the earth; for when we leave this earth, we shall take our

The completeness of Christian character is attained when the impulse to bless others springs constantly from within

character with us, and this will be simply taking with us some of the elements of heaven imparted to us through the righteousness of Christ. Review and Herald, August 19, 1890

The newly converted soul often has fierce conflicts with established habits or with some special form of temptation, and, being overcome by some master passion or tendency, he is guilty of indiscretion or actual wrong. ... We must expect to meet with great imperfections in those who are young and inexperienced. Testimonies, vol. 5, 604-605

We have a correct record of the religious experiences of marked characters in Bible history. Men whom God favored, and to whom He entrusted great responsibilities, were sometimes overcome by temptation and committed sins, even as we of the present day strive, waver, and frequently fall into error. But it is encouraging to our desponding hearts to know that through God's grace they could gain fresh vigor to again rise above their evil natures; and, remembering this, we are ready to renew the conflict ourselves. Testimonies, vol. 4, 10-11

Sanctification's Goal: A Christlike Character

True sanctification is nothing more or less than to love God with all the heart, to walk in His commandments and ordinances blameless. Sanctification is not an emotion, but a heaven-born principle that brings all the passions and desires under the control of the Spirit of God; and this work is done through our Lord and Saviour. Signs of the Times, May 19, 1890

When self is merged in Christ, love springs forth spontaneously. The completeness of Christian character is attained when the impulse to help and bless others springs constantly from within. Christ's Object Lessons, 384

When we submit ourselves to Christ, the heart is united with His heart, the will is merged in His will, the mind becomes one with His mind, the thoughts are brought into captivity to Him; we live His life. This is what it means to be clothed with the garment of His righteousness. Ibid., 312
Total Victory a Reality

We can overcome. Yes; fully, entirely. Jesus died to make a way of escape for us, that we might overcome every evil temper, every sin, every temptation, and sit down at last with Him. Testimonies, vol. 1, 144

If you will stand under the bloodstained banner of Prince Emmanuel, faithfully doing His service, you need never yield to temptation; for One stands by your side who is able to keep you from falling. Our High Calling, 19

The strongest temptation is no excuse for sin. However great the pressure brought to bear upon the soul, transgression is our own act. It is not in the power of earth or hell to compel anyone to sin. The will must consent, the heart must yield, or passion can not overbear reason, nor iniquity triumph over righteousness. Signs of the Times, April 15, 1913

The illiterate as well as the educated can bear the testimony of our faith, saying “I know in whom I have believed”

If we consent, He will so identify Himself with our thoughts and aims, so blend our hearts and minds into conformity to His will, that when obeying Him we shall be but carrying out our own impulses. The Desire of Ages, 668

Not even by a thought did He yield to temptation. So it may be with us. Ibid., 123

Those only who through faith in Christ obey all of God’s commandments will reach the condition of sinlessness in which Adam lived before his transgression. They testify to their love of Christ by obeying all His precepts. Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, vol. 6, 1118

In every phase of your character-building you are to please God. This you may do; for Enoch pleased Him, though living in a degenerate age. And there are Enos in this our day. Christ’s Object Lessons, 332

When the character of Christ shall be perfectly reproduced in His people, then He will come to claim them as His own. Ibid., 69

We Need Not See All Points Alike

Many commit the error of trying to define minutely the fine points of distinction between justification and sanctification. Into the definitions of these two terms they often bring their own ideas and speculations. Why try to be more minute than is Inspiration on the vital question of righteousness by faith? Why try to work out every minute point, as if the salvation of the soul depended upon all having exactly your understanding of this matter? All cannot see in the same line of vision. Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, vol. 6, 1072

It is not essential for you to know and tell others all the whys and wherefores as to what constitutes the new heart, or as to the position they can and must reach so as never to sin. You have no such work to do. All are not constituted alike. Conversions are not all alike. Selected Messages, book 1, 177

A Perfect Heart Is More Essential Than a Perfect Theology

There is to be no dread of anyone being borne down even in a widespread apostasy, who has a living experience in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. If Jesus be formed within, the hope of glory, the illiterate as well as the educated can bear the testimony of our faith, saying, “I know in whom I have believed.” Some will not, in argument, be able to show wherein their adversary is wrong, having never had any advantages that others have had, yet these are not overborne by the apostasy because they have the evidence in their own heart that they have the truth, and the most subtle reasoning and assaults of Satan cannot move them from their knowledge of the truth, and they have not a doubt or fear that they are themselves in error. Manuscript 6, 1889

I want, says one, to reason out this matter. Well, reason it out if you can. The wind bloweth where it listeth and thou heardest the sound thereof but you cannot explain it. And no more can you explain this faith which lays right hold upon the merits of the blood of a crucified and risen Saviour to bring Christ’s righteousness into your life, and be clothed with the righteousness of Christ and not your own righteousness, not depending upon what you can do, or what you will do. Review and Herald, January 30, 1975, 6; Manuscript 1, 1889

He is our Saviour: He saves us because He said He would. Are you going to go into all the explanation how He can save us? Unless we have the goodness in ourselves, and we will make ourselves better and cleanse ourselves from the spots and stains of sin, and then come to God—You simply cannot do it. Review and Herald, January 30, 1975, 8; Manuscript 1, 1889

Christ crucified, Christ risen, Christ ascended into the heavens, Christ coming again, should so soften, gladden, and fill the mind of the minister that he will present these truths to the people in love and deep earnestness. Gospel Workers, 159

I love Him! I love Him! I see in Jesus matchless charms. I see in Him everything to be desired by the children of men. Let us come to the “Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world.” Let us, through His merits and righteousness, obtain a fitting up for heaven. Review and Herald, April 2, 1889

The quotations above are drawn from a very helpful 20-page document of the same name, prepared by the staff of the Ellen G. White Estate — Editors
I Am the Door
Continued from 21

The prophets were originally called seers (1 Samuel 9:9). They are the eyes of the church. They are given visions and dreams for God’s people (Numbers 12:6). The Bible has divine authority, not because of what a theologian, church council, or church organization has said about it, but because it was received through the Spirit of Prophecy. Are you reading, studying and carefully following all the counsels of the Spirit of Prophecy as recorded in the Bible and in the writings of God’s special messenger to the remnant church?

It does not matter what position, wealth or other assets you may have. If you are not obtaining the eyesalve for your case, your eternal destiny is in jeopardy. We have come to a time.

Many who claim to believe in the testimonies are not studying them

when the testimonies of God’s Spirit are being made of none effect. Many who claim to believe in them are not studying the testimony of Jesus. What is the result? “Many are going directly contrary to the light which God has given to His people, because they do not read the books which contain the light and knowledge in cautions, reproofs, and warnings. . . . Gospel truth hardens when it does not save. . . . Those who despise the warning will be left in blindness to become self-deceived; but those who heed it, and zealously go about the work of separating their sins from them in order to have the needed graces, will be opening the door of their hearts that the dear Saviour may come in and dwell with them.” Testimonies, vol. 5, 681-682

Those who do not feel grieved over their own spiritual declension, and say that times have changed, are characterized by God’s Spirit as “men who will never again lift up their voice like a trumpet to show God’s people their transgressions and the house of Jacob their sins. These dumb dogs that would not bark are the ones who feel the just vengeance of an offended God. Men, maidens, and little children all perish together.” Ibid., 211. This warning was written especially for ministers. Pastor, are you preaching the straight testimony? Will there be no blood from any soul on your garment in the day of judgment?

A second area of corrective counsel in the straight testimony to Laodicea has to do with obtaining the righteousness of Christ. “When we submit ourselves to Christ, the heart is united with Christ, the will is merged in His will, the mind becomes one with His mind, the thoughts are brought into captivity to Him; we live His life. This is what it means to be clothed with the garment of His righteousness. Then as the Lord looks upon us He sees. . . . His own robe of righteousness, which is perfect obedience to the law of Jehovah.” Christ’s Object Lessons, 312. Are you heart to heart with Jesus? Is your life right now one of perfect obedience? Those who receive the straight testimony and fast and pray in response to it were seen in vision to have “obtained the victory.” Will you be one of them?

A third area of corrective counsel in the straight testimony has to do with spiritual wealth. The most costly spiritual possession is Godlike love. Paul said it was better than any other spiritual gift that could be desired (1 Corinthians 12:31). It is the bond of perfection (Colossians 3:14). So indispensable is this gift that every other attainment is worthless without it (1 Corinthians 13:1-3). It is the top rung of Peter’s ladder (2 Peter 1:7). Peter shows in 2 Peter 1:5-7 that the person who has faith, although he might be lacking many other things, is in a position to acquire everything else. The counsel about spiritual wealth then is an invitation from Jesus to obtain character perfection. “Let no one say, I cannot remedy my defects of character. If you come to this decision, you will certainly fail of obtaining everlasting life.” Christ’s Object Lessons, 331

Have you seen anywhere in the remnant church in recent years a rising up against the Spirit of Prophecy? Have you seen opposition to Christ’s requirement for victory over sin and perfect obedience? Have you seen the doctrine of character perfection described as an impossibility? Is the Holy Spirit telling you that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is being shaken?

In the last generation, during the shaking, the door of salvation is closed for those who resist the straight testimony. But for those who accept it, this trying experience opens a door into the great beyond. “‘God is weighing His people.’. . . [He] proves them to see if they will obey the counsel of the True Witness. God leads His people on, step by step. He brings them up to different points calculated to manifest what is in the heart. Some endure at one point, but fall off at the next. At every advanced point the heart is tested and tried a little closer. . . . Individuals are tested and proved a length of time to see if they will sacrifice their idols and heed the counsel of the True Witness. If any will not be purified through obeying the truth, and overcome their selfishness, their pride, and evil passions, the angels of God have the charge: ‘They are joined to their idols, let them alone,’ and they pass on to their work, leaving these with their sinful traits unsubdued, to the control of evil angels. Those who come up to every point, and stand every test, and overcome, be the price what it may, have heeded the counsel of the True Witness, and they will receive the latter rain, and thus be fitted for translation.”

Testimonies, vol. 1, 186-187

At every advanced point the heart is tested and tried a little closer

March 1988 Our Firm Foundation 31
We hope you will remember our Bible Correspondence Course when you have the opportunity to sow some seed for the kingdom. The program has been in operation for over a year, and currently has more than three hundred active students. This is a full correspondence course, and includes the correction of the lessons. In addition, our instructors make a point of providing answers to questions of interest to the students. The Study Guides are free to those enrolling in the course. Complete sets of Study Guides, and attractive Enrollment Cards are also available.

"To be totally honest, I was a bit skeptical about doing this study, as I am on all spiritual studies. But I was a bit more so concerning this one. Yet I have found that not only was my concern unnecessary, but that this study set is excellent in every aspect. By the way, I hope you don’t mind, but these lessons (after you send them back) will be the foundation for our Bible study on our tier (3-West) [in a state penitentiary]. They lay out a simple, easy to understand but important message. You’ve been added to my prayer list.

"I’ve been doing a lot of Bible studies, and this one is the most challenging one I’ve been involved in, and I look forward to completing the course.

"Thanks for the book, The Greatest Love [Steps to Christ]. And the letter you wrote was the longest I have ever received from any ministry. This show me a great deal of your concern for your students.”

- James

Study Guide Sets — $1.50  Enrollment Cards — $1.00/100