

NEW ENGLAND PASTOR

"One interest will prevail . . . Christ our righteousness."

January/February 2008



YOU ARE THERE!

Experiencing the Exodus for Yourself

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NEW ENGLAND PASTOR

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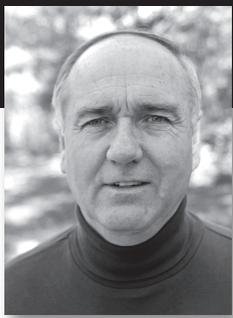
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New England Pastor is a bi-monthly magazine for pastors in New England, carrying forth the vision that Ellen White had for the area over a century ago: "I saw that when the message shall increase greatly in power, then the providence of God will open and prepare the way in the East for much more to be accomplished than can be at the present time" (Testimonies for the Church, vol. 1, p. 149,). It is free of charge to those who pastor in New England. For all those living outside of New England who would like to subscribe, please call or email us.



Just a Beginning

by Bill Brace

You hold in your hands the first issue (and, hopefully, not the last) of a modest instrument we pray will assist the Lord's cause in this area of His vineyard—here in New England, the birthplace and cradle of Seventh-day Adventism.

It is our objective, Shawn's and mine, as pastors who reflect both recent vintage and decades of ministry, to provide you with another "voice" with which to proclaim the uniqueness of an everlasting gospel as it has been bestowed through the Third Angel's Message to this Church, which we love so dearly. This magazine is a testimony to our belief that God has given our denomination a message designed to lighten the world with His glory as promised in Revelation 18:1.

You many wonder why yet another magazine. No doubt you already feel somewhat inundated with that which arrives in your mailbox on a regular basis. Certainly, most are helpful. However, we believe there is a need for one that gives emphasis to the wonderful theme of Christ Our Righteousness. In fact, we are convicted, the times beg for it! Hence, this humble, yet in our opinion, much needed journal.

Let us be honest. New England does have its challenges. Secularism, humanism, the postmodern mind, disregard for anything of a spiritual nature—they all are evident and, at

times, dominant in this culture of ours. There seems to be little interest in scripture. (The Bible Belt we are not!) Sin (unbelief) abounds. It all can create an atmosphere that can tend to discouragement for any pastor. And, consequently, we are tempted to wonder if God's work will ever be completed in this generation, especially here in New England.

But no matter how gargantuan the challenges, we take comfort in the knowledge of a "much, more abounding grace." The gospel does have a power within it. Two millennia ago Jesus Himself assured, "And I, as I am lifted up from the earth, will attract everyone to Me and gather them around Me" (John 12:32, author's paraphrase). That promise is for us to claim in our day.

My entire pastoral ministry has been spent in New England. It has been so because I am convicted that God laid upon me, soon after I graduated from seminary, a deep burden for this specific locale of the world.

Along with that conviction, I have relished for decades the inspired quote, given elsewhere in this magazine, from the humble instrument of God, Ellen White, "I saw that when the *message* shall increase greatly in power that God will open the way for much more to be accomplished in the East than can

presently be accomplished." May you well note that it is a *message* and not a method which brings great results.

However, methods (and they are needed) do change. While we do not wish to depreciate methodologies, we want to remind ourselves that the gospel is a timeless message. And it can still change hearts and lives and bring about a promised revival. Why can't that time be now? Why can't that be for us who labor here in this environ today? Yes, take heart—there is a message designated by God which overcomes all challenges, both personally and corporately.

Each issue of this bi-monthly journal, edited by New Englanders and for New Englanders, (of course, others outside this region are welcome to subscribe if they would like) will feature articles imbued with the theme of righteousness by faith. That will ever be our focus.

We are grateful to those who consented to write for our inaugural issue. We thank in advance those who have committed to do likewise for future issues. Although our objective is primarily to assist pastors who fight the good fight of faith here in New England, our contributors will come from various locales throughout the land and from a multitude of positions and ministries within the church structure, including clergy and laypersons alike.

So, enjoy! And take courage. Remember, by God's direction and grace, "the best is yet to come" here in New England! This is what God meant when He promised that He would "do better for [us] than at [our] beginnings."

Simply Agape

by Jerry Finneman



Scripture explicitly states twice, “God is love” (1 John 4:8, 16). John also wrote,

“We love Him, because He first loved us” (1John 4:19). There are those who present an argument attempting to define God by love. This line of reasoning is as follows: God is love; therefore, love is God. Although this is a valid Grecian logical argument, Scripturally, it is not true. It is like the pantheistic argument: since God is life, it follows that all life is God. Both life and love are defined by God; never is God defined the other way around.

Various religious systems teach us nothing but facts about God, which leads to an intellectual religion that shuns any kind of feeling for God. Other systems of religion lead us to believe that in our love we should always feel something, such as a warm glow, a tingle, or some other mystical experience. This is nothing more than facts, feelings, and fiction. We may, or we may not, have factual knowledge and/or experiences and at the same time know nothing of God’s love.

How, Then, Do We Define Love?

The Oxford Dictionary defines love in

various ways: “an intense feeling of deep affection such as babies fill parents with intense feelings of love; a deep romantic or sexual attachment to someone; ... a great interest and pleasure in something.” Every part of this definition deals only with one’s emotions. Love may have emotions; but not always, and never is *agape* defined as mere emotion.

The American Heritage Dictionary defines love as “an intense affection for another person based on familial or personal ties.” This “intense affection” often stems from a sexual attraction for that other person.

We love, or we say we love other people when we are attracted to them and when they make us feel good. The key phrase in the dictionary definition of love is the phrase “based on.” The implication, here, is that we love conditionally. We love someone because he/she fulfills some condition that we require before we can love that person. This condition may come about because of how attractive a person is, or because of good care given to us, or because someone is “fun” to be with.

In the Greek language there are three words used to define different kinds of love. These are

philos, *eros*, and *agape*. *Philos* (*Philia*: fondness) is a friendship kind of love. *Eros* is based on the attractiveness and the desirability of the one loved, based on self-interest. The term chosen by the New Testament writers to describe God’s love is *agape*. In Scripture, *agape* expresses God’s universal, unilateral, unlimited, and unconditional divine love. *Agape* is distinct from both erotic love and emotional affection shown toward loved ones and friends.

Both *philia* and *eros* are expressions of natural human love. These kinds of love are particular, bilateral, limited, and conditional. Human love is mercurial, as well as the other stated adjectives. It is based on feelings and emotions. Just as the temperature can change quite rapidly at times, so our love can change from one moment to the next. This is illustrated for us in the explosive divorce rate in today’s society. Supposedly, the husband or wife stops loving the other. When they no longer “feel” love for their spouse they make a decision to divorce. They go their separate ways when their love dies rather than sticking it out until “death do us part.”

Can we really comprehend “unconditional” love? Even without God’s love in our lives we may observe human love as close to unconditional love that we can perceive. It appears that the love of a mother and a father for their children is as close to unconditional love as we can get. Loving

parents do not stop loving their children when they don't meet expectations they may have for them. The choice is made to love our children even when we think them to be very unlovable. Our love does not stop when we do not "feel" love for them, does it? It is similar to God's love for us. To illustrate this concept further, consider the following: A man professing a Christian experience came down with a serious illness. He became troubled about the little love he felt in his heart for God, and so He spoke of his experience to a friend. This is how the friend replied: "When I go home from here, I expect to take my baby on my knee, look into her sweet eyes, listen to her charming prattle, and tired as I am, her presence will rest me; for I love that child with unutterable tenderness. But she loves me little. If my heart were breaking, it would not disturb her sleep. If my body were racked with pain, it would not interrupt her play. If I were dead, she would forget me in a few days. Besides this, she has never brought me a penny, but was a constant expense to me. I am not rich, but there is not money enough in the world to buy my baby. How is it? Does she love me, or do I love her? Do I withhold my love until I know she loves me? Am I waiting for her to do something worthy of my love before extending it?" This practical illustration of the love of God for His children caused tears to roll down the sick man's face. "Oh, I

"it is not my love to God, but God's love for me that I should be thinking of. And I do love Him now as I never loved Him before."

see," he exclaimed, "it is not my love to God, but God's love for me that I should be thinking of. And I do love Him now as I never loved Him before."

This concept is understood by those who get to know Jesus. When Lazarus became ill, his sisters, Mary and Martha, sent a message to Jesus. The message was not "Lord, Lazarus loves You and is sick," but, "Lord, behold, him whom You love is sick" (John 11:3). It is God's perfect love to us that comforts us, and not our imperfect love for Him.

God's love transcends our human definition of love to a point that is beyond our ability to fully comprehend. While we cannot comprehend it, we can "behold" it (1 John 3:1).

God is Love: How Does God Define Love?

As stated above, we dare not translate Love is God. God is fundamentally and essentially LOVE, not the other way. When the Scriptures say, "God is love," it

is not telling us that God is some nebulous, warm fuzzy feeling of love. The Scripture writers weren't saying that in our limited form of human love we will find God. Not at all—in fact, when we read that God is love in the Bible, it means that God defines love. And when we say that God defines love, we don't mean that He defines it as dictionaries define something—we mean that God is the very definition of love itself.

There is no such thing as love without God. As hard as we might try, we cannot define *agape* outside of knowing God. This essentially means that our human definition of love is false. God is the Creator of all things, and by His very nature, He is love. God demonstrates that *agape* is unconditional and sacrificial, and it's not based on feelings; therefore, love is not an "intense affection... based on familial or personal ties." To understand what true love is and to be able to truly love others, we must know God. We can do this only through a close personal relationship with Him. We can have this closeness with God by putting our faith in Jesus, who was God's sacrifice of love for us.

Again, the Bible tells us "God is love" (1 John 4:8). But how can we even begin to understand this truth? There are many passages in the Bible that give us God's definition of love. God defines by demonstration. The most well-known verse is John 3:16, "For God so loved the world, that he

gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” One way God defines love is in the act of giving. However, what God gave was not a mere gift-wrapped present; God sacrificed His Son so that as we put faith in Jesus, we will not spend eternity separated from Him. His love is an amazing and unfathomable love, because while we choose to be separated from God through our own sin, it is God who mends the separation through His intense personal sacrifice, and all we do is accept His gift. Another great verse defining God’s love is found in Romans 5:8, “God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” Here, as in John 3:16, we find no conditions placed on God’s love for us. God doesn’t say, “as soon as you clean up your act, I’ll love you,” nor does He say, “I’ll sacrifice my Son if you promise to love Me.”

The fact of the matter is, in Romans 5:8, we find just the opposite. God wants us to know that His love is unconditional, universal, unilateral, and unlimited in that He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to die for us while we were still unlovable sinners. We don’t have to get cleaned up, neither do we make promises to God before we can receive and experience His love. His love for us has always existed, and because of this, He did all the giving and sacrificing long

before we were even aware that we needed His love.

As we have observed, God’s love is very different from human love. It is not based on God’s feelings or emotions. He doesn’t love us because we’re lovable or because we make Him feel good; He loves us because He is love. He created us to have a loving relationship with Him, and He sacrificed His own Son (who also willingly died for us) to restore that relationship. In St. Paul’s Cathedral, London, is a life-size, marble statue of Christ writhing in anguish on the cross. The statue is subscribed: “This is how God loved the world!”

In John 3:16, there are two outstanding concepts. One is a statement, the other a demonstration. When God loves, it is this fallen world of sinners that He loves; when He loves, He gives His Son. This is God’s love! “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16). Both the Father and the Son loved the world so much that They gave everything for it. Everything. From Christ’s rights and privileges as the unique Son of God to His very life! If you want to see the love of God, behold the cross. “This is how God showed His love among us: He sent His one and only Son into the world that we might live through Him. This is love: not that we loved God, but

that He loved us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins” (1 John 4:9-10).

“All this is from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ... God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them... God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Corinthians 5:18-19, 21).

Will you receive God’s *agape* today?

Jerry Finneman serves as a chaplain for the Michigan Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. He lives in Marshall, Michigan.

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

You Are There!

by Richard M. Davidson



Often when I introduce the book of Exodus in my Seminary Pentateuch class, I ask students the

following “Bible trivia” question: “Are there any human beings alive today who personally witnessed the Exodus from Egypt with their own eyes?” Students are eager to mention the name of Moses, who led Israel’s Exodus and according to Jude 9 was resurrected and is thus alive today. Eventually other names are identified: Enoch, who was translated long before Israel’s Exodus, and may well have observed the Exodus from heaven. And Jesus, who as the pre-incarnate Christ was personally present at the Exodus, and ever since the incarnation has been a human being. Then the students fall silent, unable to think of any more names. . . and I explain a powerful biblical principle that has made the Bible come alive for me in a marvelous way. A principle that allows each of us to add *our own names* to that list of human beings who witnessed, yes, even experienced, the Exodus!

This principle is implied

already in Moses’ instructions concerning what parents should tell their children when they would keep the Passover after they had entered into Canaan: “And you shall tell your son in that day saying, ‘This is done because of what the Lord did for *me* when I came up from Egypt’ ” (Exod 13:8). The same principle is underscored repeatedly in the Pentateuch in connection with the whole Exodus experience. In the various references to Passover observance, God consistently instructs future generations to consider that they personally experienced the Exodus: He “delivered *our* households” (Exod 12:27); “By strength of hand the Lord brought *us* out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage” (Exod 13:14); “*We* were slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt, and the Lord brought *us* out of Egypt with a mighty hand; and the Lord showed signs and wonders before *our eyes*” (Deut 6:21-22).

Some forty years after the covenant-making service at

Mt. Sinai, and after the whole generation of adults who actually witnessed the events had died in the wilderness, Moses calls upon the new generation born in the desert to consider that they themselves had been there. With five strong Hebrew constructions, Moses presses the point home: “The Lord did not make this covenant [only] with our fathers, but with *us, we—these here today—all of us who are alive. Face to face the Lord spoke with you* at the mountain from the midst of the fire’ ” (Deut 5:3-4, author’s translation). Later in his farewell address, Moses instructs that those who in Canaan would bring their offerings of firstfruits to the central place of worship should repeat a personalized credo before the Lord: “So the Lord brought *us* out of Egypt with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm, with great terror and with signs and wonders. He has brought *us* to this place and has given *us* this land, ‘a land flowing with milk and honey’ ” (Deut 26:5-9).

In Joshua’s last charge and covenant renewal service before he dies—as the last of the adult generation who actually witnessed the Exodus—the

“The history of Israel’s forefathers is the personal history of every subsequent generation.”

Lord Himself retells the Exodus story, alternating between the expressions “your fathers” and “you”: “Then I brought *your fathers* out of Egypt, and *you* came to the sea; and the Egyptians pursued *your fathers* . . . So they cried out to the Lord; and He put darkness between *you* and the Egyptians . . . And *your eyes saw* what I did in Egypt” (Josh 24:6-8). Even though that whole generation who physically experienced the Exodus is dead, the Lord insists that the succeeding generation of Israel reckon that they personally came out of Egypt.

happens to one or some, happens to all. The history of Israel’s forefathers is the personal history of every subsequent generation.¹

A modern society of Western individualists—especially Gentiles who have never participated in the Passover *seder*—find this concept of corporate solidarity difficult to grasp or internalize. The closest I came as a child to assimilating this principle was the Sunday night “ritual” of watching that classic TV documentary hosted by Walter Cronkite. Every week I personally entered into history; I experienced the signing of the *Declaration*

a story of our Hebrew ancestors. For all of us sharing the Judeo-Christian heritage, *we were there*. The account of the Exodus is our personal diary!

Each of the central themes of the Exodus—redemption (by the Passover lamb), liberation (from Egyptian bondage), rebirth (new life at Springtime), and removal of leaven (symbolic of the fermentation of sin)—has a spiritual counterpart in the individual who relives the story. The retelling invites us to identify the Pharaoh’s in our lives that have enslaved us, to remember the

“Simply stated, the Passover principle is - “You are there!”

Jews today still recognize this principle, as yearly they recite in their Passover *seder* (the home service which includes the *Hagaddah* or “retelling” of the Exodus story): “Let every person, in every generation, think of himself as one of those who came out of Egypt.”

This Passover principle is rooted in the biblical understanding of corporate solidarity. Israel is a single, unified corporate entity; what

of *Independence*, I fought in the famous battles of the Civil War, I witnessed the delivery of the *Gettysburg Address*, I was onboard the *Titanic* as it sank. And always, Walter Cronkite would intone the title of the show as we came to the climax of the historical reenactment: “You Are There!”

Simply stated, the Passover principle is—“You are there!” The book of Exodus tells the narrative, not just of a people far away and long ago, not even just

ways that God has redeemed us and liberated us from bondage, to focus upon the ongoing experience of spiritual rebirth, and remove the leaven of sinful pride from our lives.

Already in the Old Testament there is abundant evidence, especially in the Prophets, that Israel’s Exodus from Egypt occurred typologically, prefiguring the coming of the Messiah in the eschatological New Exodus.² In fact, the typological

interconnection between ancient Israel's Exodus and the Messiah's Exodus from Egypt is already indicated in the Pentateuch. In the oracles of Balaam in Numbers 23-24, there is an explicit shift from the historical Exodus to the Messianic Exodus. In Num 23:22, Balaam proclaims, "God brings *them* out of Egypt; He [God] has strength like a wild ox." In the next oracle, Balaam shifts to the singular, "God brings *him* out of Egypt" (Num 24:8), and in the next and final oracle, referring to the "latter days" (24:14), Balaam indicates the Messianic identification of the "him": "I see Him, but not now; I behold Him, but not near; a Star shall come out of Jacob; a scepter shall arise out of Israel, and batter the brow of Moab, and destroy all the sons of tumult" (24:17).³

When we come to the New Testament Gospels, Jesus' whole life and ministry is recognized to be a fulfillment of the Old Testament Exodus typology. For example, Matthew depicts Jesus as the Representative Israel, recapitulating in His life the experience of ancient Israel, but succeeding where the first Israel failed. The first five chapters of Matthew describe in detail Jesus as the Representative Israel experiencing a New Exodus: coming out of Egypt after a death decree (Matt 2:15), and going through His antitypical Red Sea experience in His baptism (Matt 3:13-17; cf. 1 Cor 10:1, 2). This

"The good news of the Gospel is that we were there when Jesus died."

is followed by His wilderness experience of 40 days paralleling the 40 years of ancient Israel in the wilderness (Matt 4). During this time Jesus indicates His own awareness of His role as the Representative Israel in the New Exodus by consistently meeting the devil's temptations with quotations from Deut 6-8 (where ancient Israel's temptations in the wilderness are summarized). Finally, Jesus appears on the Mount as a new Moses, with His 12 disciples representing the tribes of Israel, and He repeats the Law as Moses did at the end of the wilderness sojourn (Matt 5-7).

Matthew and the other Synoptic Gospels also depict the death and resurrection of Jesus as a New Exodus.⁴ Note, for example, how on the Mount of Transfiguration, the first (resurrected) Moses spoke to the New Moses about His approaching "Exodus [Greek *exodos*] which He was to accomplish at Jerusalem" (Luke 9:31). Jesus' death is His ultimate Exodus experience. Just as ancient Israel had been delivered from bondage by the blood of the Passover lamb, so Christ on the cross as the Lamb

of God works out an even greater deliverance—from the bondage of sin. After His resurrection, He remains in the wilderness of this earth 40 days (Acts 1:3) like Israel's 40 years in the wilderness and then as the New Joshua enters heavenly Canaan as the pioneer and perfecter of our faith (Heb 12:2 NRSV).

The good news of the Gospel is that *we were there* when Jesus died. Christ's "Exodus" at Calvary is our history. The Negro spiritual asks: "Were you there when they crucified my Lord? And the answer of the gospel is, "Yes, we all were there!" When He died and rose again, we were there. His death was our death, His resurrection ours! That is the meaning of 2 Cor 5:14, 15: when Christ died, we all died; we were there! In harmony with the Passover principle, we can reckon that we were there. By faith we can claim the truth of the Passover principle: His death is ours, His resurrection is ours, His righteousness is ours.

What is our response to this powerful gospel principle? In the Passover Haggadah, the "You are there" principle leads

spontaneously and ultimately to doxology. Since God brought us out of Egypt, “therefore it is our duty to thank, to praise, to pay tribute, to glorify, to exalt, to acclaim, to bless, to esteem, and to honor that one who did all these miracles for our fathers and for us . . . and therefore let us sing before him a new song, Halleluya!” The singing of the Hallel (“praise”) psalms (Ps 113-118) and the Great Hallel (Ps 136) are the climax of the Passover *seder*.

Soon, the Exodus typology will move into its final phase. Soon another death decree like the one in Egypt of old will take place; soon another set of plagues. Just as the last seven of the ten plagues fell on the Egyptians but not Israel, so the seven last plagues will fall on the wicked and not God’s people. Soon, praise God, will come the mighty glorious final Exodus. Not just the redemption from the penalty of sin (which Christ accomplished at the cross); not just deliverance from the power of sin (which the Holy Spirit is working out in our hearts), but deliverance from the very presence of sin.

We will stand, not beside the Red Sea, but in victory upon the Sea of Glass, celebrating our ultimate Exodus experience (Rev 15:2). We will stand in a hollow square around the Lamb, and strike our harps and lift our voices. We will sing the climactic Exodus anthem, “the song of Moses, the servant of God, and

the song of the Lamb” (Rev 15:3). We will have experienced the Old Testament Exodus (stanza one, the Song of Moses) and the New Exodus (the second stanza, the song of the Lamb). Here in the glorious melodic “retelling” of the Exodus, the “You are there” principle of Scripture will find its loftiest expression!

1. For many more biblical examples of the “You are there” principle in Scripture, see my unpublished forty-page paper, “Corporative Solidarity in the Old Testament,” available from my administrative assistant, Dorothy Show, at showd@andrews.edu.

2. Major biblical passages announcing the Messianic New Exodus include, e.g., Isa 11:6-9, 15-16; 35; 40:3-5; 41:17-20; 42:14-16; 43:1-3, 14-21; 48:20-21; 49:3-5, 8-12; 51:9-11; 52:3-7, 11-12; 54:10,13; 55:12-13; Jer 23:4-8; 16:14-15; 31:32; Ezekiel 34:25; 37:26; Hos 2:14-15; 12:9, 13; 13:4-5; Amos 9:7-15; Mic 7:8-20. For comprehensive treatment of these and other passages, see especially Friedbert Ninow, *Indicators of Typology within the Old Testament: The Exodus Motif* (Frankfurt am Main, New York: Peter Lang, 2001).

3. See John H. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), pp. 407-409, for further discussion.

4. See George Balentine, “Death of Christ as a New Exodus,” *Review and Expositor* 59 (1962): 27-41; and idem, “The Concept of the New Exodus in the Gospels,” (Th.D. diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1961).

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Thoughts from the Pew

by Kristin McGuire



Someone once said, “Faith is the expecting the word of God to do what it says, and then depending upon that word to do what it says.”¹

When I was a baby Christian, attending a secular university, I was always under the pressure of academic and athletic competition, which conflicted with my values. One day, as I was bungling along to tennis practice with just such thoughts on my mind, I plunked down in the middle of a field just before getting to the courts. My heart cried out to God because I could not put my grief into words. I will never forget how He answered—at that very moment a Christian friend was walking in my direction. After I struggled to express my feelings when she asked what was wrong, she simply replied, “Kris, ‘we have this treasure in earthen vessels that the

excellency of the power may be of God and not of us’ ” (2 Corinthians 4:7).² Well, “the word . . . (was) quick and powerful . . . piercing (my) . . . soul” (Hebrews 4:12), and I can honestly say that I am a different person today because I received that word into my soul over 20 years ago. Ellen White also said it well: “Your hope is not in yourself, it is in Christ . . . You are not to look to yourself, not to let your mind dwell upon self, but look to Christ.”³

The reason there are so many bungling Christians in the world is because we try to walk with God without the motivation of the cross. We need to hear more sermons on the “matchless love”⁴ of Christ; otherwise, we will grow weary of all the advice. (The Gospel is Good News—not good advice!) “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.”⁵

This is the motivation we

need in order to live for God. As I picture Jesus standing before the Sanhedrin, unrelenting in His decision to save my soul at any cost to Himself, my heart is humbled that He would do so, even while I was misrepresenting Him by not caring for anyone but myself. The song of my heart becomes, “Jesus paid it all, all to Him I owe.”⁶ He “thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation and took upon Him the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men, and, being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Philippians 2:6-8).

At the same time that beholding the matchless love of Christ is important, we also need to understand current events in their prophetic context. Not only is it a must for reaching a good portion of the world’s population, which is about 22% Muslim,⁷ but also to strengthen our own faith as Seventh-day Adventists.⁸ It is these distinct beliefs that have brought us to where we are now in earth’s history as the “remnant” church of Bible prophecy, Spiritual “Israel.”⁹

The issue of praying for the Holy Spirit is also important. In a church we were attending a few

***“Your hope is not in yourself, it is in Christ . . .
You are not to look to yourself, not to let your
mind dwell upon self, but look to Christ.”***

years ago, several members were praying for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Simultaneous to our seasons of prayer, some discussions of the cleansing of the “heavenly sanctuary,”¹⁰ came about. This was consistent with what we were asking because the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary is truth, and the Holy Spirit is given to “guide [us] into all truth” (John 16:13). Evidently, there were some in our group who did not understand what it meant to us for Jesus to have begun His High Priestly Ministry in 1844. Sadly, these rose up against the Sanctuary Truth and left the church! The lesson was, that in praying for the Holy Spirit, we need to be prepared ahead of time for testing truths to arise.

We all need our walls of Jericho to fall before we get to Canaan. The power that attends the “preaching of the cross” will topple even the most formidable of walls.¹¹ As we, expecting the word of God to do what it says, depend on it to do so, the “ointment” of the Holy Spirit will be given to us. If we do not resist, we will be empowered

to reflect the character of Christ perfectly,¹² so that the ointment will descend as the “dew of Hermon”¹³ upon all with whom we connect. Then the harvest will be ready for reaping, and Jesus will come!¹⁴

¹ A. T. Jones and E. J. Waggoner, *Lessons on Faith* (Brushton, New York: TEACH Services, Inc., 1995), 8.

² All scriptures, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the *King James Version*.

³ Ellen White, *Steps to Christ* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1956), 70.

⁴ Ellen White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1940), 480.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 83.

⁶ Elvina M. Hall, “Jesus Paid It All” (1865).

⁷ Stephen Dickie, *Islam: God’s Forgotten Blessing* (Kasson, Minn.: Strawberry Meadow Association, 2006), 88.

⁸ See 2 Peter 1:19.

⁹ See Revelation 12:17;

Galatians 3:29.

¹⁰ Ellen White, *Evangelism* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1970), 223.

¹¹ See 1 Corinthians 1:18.

¹² Ellen White, *Christ’s Object Lessons* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1941), 69.

¹³ See Psalm 133.

¹⁴ See Mark 4:29.

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The Good News of the Wedding Garment

by Frank Tochterman



“Read the words in red first,” was the advice a mature Christian gave to a new believer.

“They are the most important.”

I have fallen in love with the Gospels. How about you? While all of the Bible is inspired, I have found that not all of the Bible is equal. There is something special about the Gospels. They are the four books of the Bible where we find the life story of Jesus. They are also the place where we read the very words that Jesus spoke! It seems to me that in the “words” of Jesus I can hear the “Word” of God so clearly.

In recent years the good news of the Gospel has been proclaimed in two dominant motifs – the proclamation of God’s amazing grace and the proclamation of righteousness by faith. Both motifs have as their basis “Christ our Righteousness.” We might think of the first (God’s amazing grace) as God’s part, and the second (righteousness by faith) as man’s part, but both are parts of the same salvation act which originates and derives from God. He is the Savior; we are the saved. In short, we are saved by the free, unmerited, and undeserved grace of God through faith in the all-suffi-

cient righteousness of Jesus Christ.

I was recently blessed again as I read the parable Jesus told of the wedding feast found in Matthew 22:2-14. In short, the story is this: a king prepares a wedding feast for his son; the selected guests refuse to come, so the invitation is extended far and wide. The wedding hall is filled with guests, but one guest comes without a wedding garment. Wedding garments are provided by the king, but the guest has no regard for the king and comes to the feast without the wedding garment. When he is found, he is cast out.

The parallel, of course, is the second coming of Jesus. We find this explanation of the parable in *Christ’s Object Lessons*, “The wedding garment represents the character which all must possess who shall be accounted fit guests for the wedding.”¹ Ellen White continues, “Only the covering which Christ Himself has provided can make us meet to appear in God’s presence. This covering, the robe of His righteousness, Christ will put upon every repenting, believing soul.”²

Sometimes people think that God’s grace only provides forgiveness. But God’s grace is much greater than that. As we discover the meaning of grace in the Bible, we realize that grace is also the presence and power of God in the life. The apostle Paul wrote to Titus telling him that it is

the grace of God that teaches to “live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age” (Titus 2:11-13). Ellen White affirms this function of grace in *Steps to Christ* when she writes, “It is the grace of Christ alone, through faith, that can make us holy.”³

I want to be clothed with the wedding garment, don’t you? How do we experience the wedding garment in our lives today? Consider this thought from Ellen White: “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.”⁴

¹ Ellen White, *Christ’s Object Lessons* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1941), 307.

² *Ibid.*, 311.

³ Ellen White, *Steps to Christ* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1956), 60.

⁴ *Christ’s Object Lessons*, 312.

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Not Better Methods

by Shawn Brace

About a year ago, I had the distinct privilege of taking a preaching class from Dwight Nelson while I was still in the seminary at Andrews University. The best preaching class I have ever taken, he had us read a small little book called, *Power Through Prayer*, by E. M. Bounds—that Methodist monster of prayer who died almost a hundred years ago. Something on the very first page jumped right out at me that has left a great impression, even to this day. With amazing poignancy, Bounds writes, “The church is looking for better methods; God is looking for better men.”¹

Though written nearly a century ago, Bounds’ quote is as relevant today as it ever was. As we in the church get bogged down with methodology—whether a certain type of music is most effective in reaching the lost, or if Small Groups are the model that will finish the work—God’s greatest desire is to have a group of people who have been touched by His cross. He’s not looking for better methods, more clever marketing, or more efficient organizational structures—as helpful as these things may be. He’s looking for better men and women.

This can only happen when we, ourselves, experience Christ crucified in our daily lives. This can only happen when our conversations, our visiting, our preaching, are saturated with the message of Christ’s great condescension of *agape* love.

The concept is nothing new, of course. Long ago, another great warrior wrote to a flock he shepherded, saying, “For I determined not to know anything among you, except Jesus Christ and Him crucified” (1 Cor 2:2, NKJV). Paul tried different methods to reach the lost. He tried to use wisdom and philosophy when dealing with the Greeks on Mars Hill in Athens. But the methods were found wanting, and only the message of Christ’s cross proved to be fruitful.

That is why, in this magazine, we are focusing on message, rather than methods. We believe that when Christ and Him crucified is properly understood, when we comprehend “what is the width and length and depth and height—to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge” (Eph 3:18, 10) then God will have His better men and women. He will have His better pastors—and God’s end-time message will spread like wildfire,

no matter the method.

Another wise writer also caught this vision a century ago. With pen ablaze, the author, who grew up in this cold, lifeless region of the country, wrote, “I saw that when the *message* shall increase greatly in power, then the providence of God will open and prepare the way in the East for much more to be accomplished than can be at the present time.”² Obviously, what she saw long ago hasn’t happened yet. God is still waiting longingly for such a revival to take place. But it can become a reality through us—when the “message” increases greatly in power.

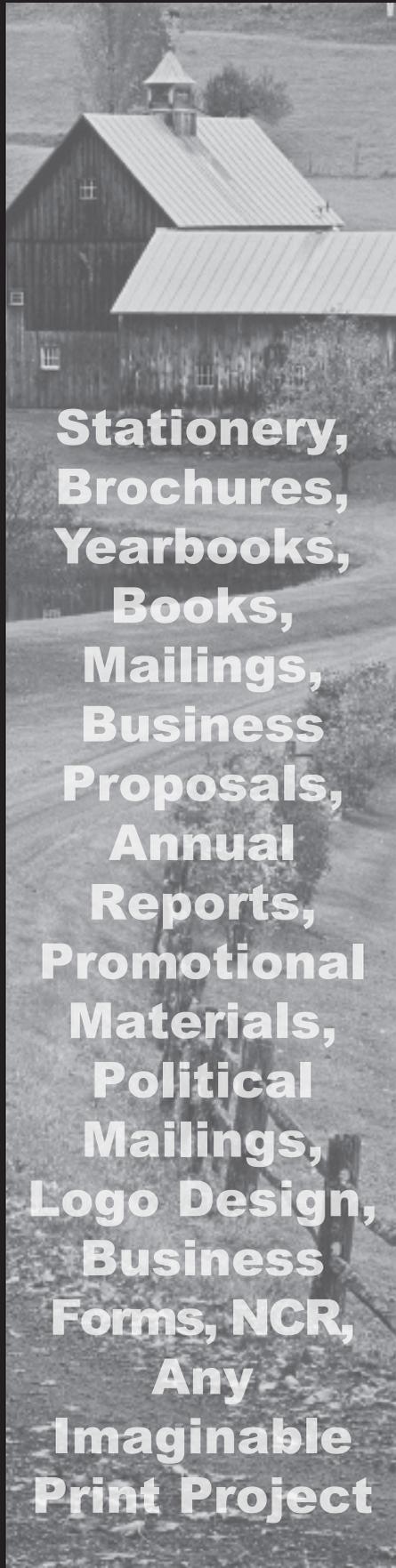
So I would invite you to see what she saw. I would invite you to determine to know nothing except for Jesus Christ and Him crucified. As that same author wrote, “One interest will prevail, one subject will swallow up every other,—Christ our righteousness.”³ There is no need to look any further than Christ our righteousness. He is our everything. He is our all. In our personal lives, in our public ministry, let the message of Christ’s righteousness be the foundation of all that we do.

¹ E. M. Bounds, *Power Through Prayer* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1979), p. 9.

² Ellen White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 149, emphasis added.

³ Ellen White, *Review and Herald*, Dec. 23, 1890.

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