

WHICH
GOSPEL?

JOE GRESHAM

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Joe W. Gresham

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Chapter 1

Take Heed

Many centuries ago the apostle Paul declared: “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. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith” (Romans 1:16, 17). This gospel of which he was not ashamed contained power, revealed righteousness, established faith, and enabled the just to live righteous lives by faith. These lives stood in stark contrast to the lives of the people about them.

As we look at the Christian world today, however, we see faith is waning. Those who are not ashamed of the gospel, often tend to be a shame to the gospel. Righteousness is not only seldom seen, but is seldom even mentioned, and it is becoming increasingly more difficult to tell the Christian from the world. Often, aside from a profession and an occasional comment concerning Christ, the distinction between the professed followers of Jesus and the world is practically indiscernible. Is it perhaps possible, the reason so many of God’s professed people talk like the world, dress like the world, eat like the world, drink like the world, and act like the world is because they still think like the world? This principle is presented clearly in Scripture. “A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.” “For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he”(Luke 6:43; Proverbs 23:7). Therefore, until we begin to think differently, we will not be able to live differently.

What has brought about this drastic, yet ever so subtle,

change in the church of the living God? Could it be that the people of God have lost sight of the gospel and the power it has to change lives and enable them to live above the world? Historically, we find this is exactly what has happened. In the early centuries Christians began to “introduce new phases of doctrine, more pleasing to many minds, but not in harmony with the fundamental principles of the gospel.”¹ Early heretical groups such as the Judaizers, Nicolaitans, Gnostics, Docetists, etc. began teachings and practices that were totally foreign to “the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 1:3). Men such as Basilides, Valentinus, Marcion, Heracleon, Meander, Asclepiades, Theodotus, Hermophilus, Appollonides, and a host of others horribly mutilated the word of God and perverted the gospel to the extent it was hardly recognizable and was no longer “the power of God” (Romans 1:16).

Paul repeatedly warned the apostolic church of this corrupting influence and rebuked them for accepting a perverted gospel. “I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed” (Galatians 1:6-9).

“Open, unmasked error was supplanting the gospel message. Christ, the true foundation of the faith, was virtually renounced for the obsolete ceremonies of Judaism... most decisive measures must be taken, the sharpest warnings given.

¹ White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 580

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In writing to Corinth he manifests great caution and tenderness, but Galatia he reproves with abrupt severity.”²

This is the only place in all his letters where he expresses astonishment rather than love and joy. The true gospel is the “power of God unto salvation,” but they were believing in salvation by a power other than God. “The doctrines which the Galatians had received, could not in any sense be called the gospel; they were the teachings of men, and were directly opposed to the doctrines taught by Christ.”³

It is important to notice that accepting this perverted gospel resulted in a double defection. It was to remove themselves from both God and His grace. To accept any other gospel was an act of heresy; and heresy is a sin against God, against the soul, against the truth of God’s word, against the church of God, and against the world. Therefore, it is also extremely important to those of us today not to be so soon removed from the only hope we have and accept in its place a perverted gospel. Anytime we deviate from the gospel that Jesus has given us, we fall. We cannot leave the path that God has set for us without bringing destruction upon ourselves.

The controversy between the true and false gospel, Paul says was “because of false brethren,” but “we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you (Galatians 2:4, 5). Once we accept error, the “truth of the gospel” can no longer continue with us. We must always walk “uprightly according to the truth of the gospel” (Galatians 2:14).

Paul’s burden that the people not receive a perverted gospel was so great that he called together the elders of the

² White, *The Life of Paul*, p. 189

³ Ibid.

church of Ephesus and warned them: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them" (Acts 20:28-30). He warned the young preacher, Timothy, "some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils" (1 Timothy 4:1), and that "the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (2 Timothy 4:3, 4).

The end result of accepting a perverted gospel is that people will have "a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof" and will therefore be "Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." The word of God declares these people actually "resist the truth" being "of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith" and counsels believers "from such turn away." (See 2 Timothy 3:5-8.)

Peter also warned of these "false teachers" who would bring in "damnable heresies" and by "whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of" and cause "many" to reject the truth of the gospel. "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of" (2 Peter 2:1, 2).

As a result of the corruptions and perversions of the gospel over the centuries, God portrays His last day church as

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restoring the fullness of the “everlasting gospel” to the world. The truth of the gospel was to prevail and in the last days only one group is portrayed as preaching this “everlasting gospel.” This end time or “Remnant Church” was to arise in fulfillment of Bible prophecy and is clearly identified in Scripture. Several points of identification in God’s word make it simple to identify which church this is.

1. It is not an offspring of Babylon and has no connection with the “Mother Church.” It is not one of her “daughters,” does not bear her family name or heritage, and rejects her claim to power and authority (Revelation 17:1-5).
2. It was to arise after 1798, after the 1260 years of persecution, when the beast received its wound and the church was able to come out of hiding (Revelation 12:14).
3. It would arise as the judgment began in 1844 at the end of the 2300 year prophecy of Daniel 8:14 (Revelation 10:6-11).
4. It was to go through a bitter disappointment (Revelation 10:9-11).
5. It must keep all of God's commandments, including the fourth or seventh day Sabbath (Revelation 14:12; Exodus 20:11).
6. It is to have the “testimony of Jesus,” which is defined as the “spirit of prophecy” (Revelation 12:17; 19:10).
7. It is to proclaim the three angel’s messages of righteousness by faith (Revelation 14:6-11).
8. It will be a world-wide movement that will go to “every nation, kindred, tongue, and people” (Revelation 14:6).
9. It will have the “faith of Jesus” (Revelation 14:12).
10. It will help people prepare to receive the “seal of the living God” (Revelation 7:2).

11. It will be identical in its life, teachings, philosophy, and theology with the early church, inasmuch as a “remnant” does not differ from the first piece of cloth on a bolt (Revelation 12:17).
12. All of her teachings will come from the Bible rather than man-made tradition or devilish doctrines (Deuteronomy 4:2; Proverbs 30:5, 6; Matthew 28:19, 20; John 14:23, 24; Revelation 22:18).
13. It will reject all of the false teachings of Babylon (Revelation 18:4).
14. It will call God's people out of Babylon (Revelation 18:4).
15. It will proclaim the "everlasting gospel" (Revelation 14:6).
16. It will warn that the judgement is taking place (Revelation 14:7).
17. It will call the attention of the world to God as the Creator (Revelation 14:7).
18. It will declare the fall of Babylon (Revelation 14:8).
19. It identifies and opposes the antichrist (Revelation 13).
20. It will reveal the mark of the beast and warn against receiving the mark, which constitutes worshiping the beast and its image (Revelation 14:9-11).

Candid, unbiased investigation reveals there is only one church in all the world that meets all of these specifications and that is the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Now, does it not stand to reason that if this church is God's true “remnant” or last day church, that it would not only be the object of God's “supreme regard,” but also the object of Satan's greatest animosity and assault? As in any warfare, Satan would not only seek to overthrow this church by outward aggression, but also through infiltration and an internal weakening of its structure, doctrines, and standards. This, dear reader, is

exactly what has happened. As a result of the outward assaults of evangelicals and internal degeneration of doctrines, standards, and identity, compromise has occurred within the Remnant just as it did within early Christianity. Today there are various perversions of the gospel to be found within the Seventh-day Adventist Church just as there was in the Apostolic Church. When we see the false teachings, worldly ways, the “form of godliness” without its power, we must realize ever more fully the significance of the inspired words: “And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Revelation 12:17). Being fully aware of who we are and what is happening, we must “earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 1:3).

Sometime ago *Christianity Today* contained an article about the Seventh-day Adventist Church. This article has been reproduced and modified to appear in various places at different times, even including a computer floppy disk (that also contained other material) that a friend recently purchased at a Walmart in California. The original article, written by Kenneth Samples, was well done in a very honest and forthright manner and points out some of the doctrinal differences within God’s Remnant Church. Differences which many of the laity are unaware of and which much of the leadership have either denied, ignored, or downplayed. Biblical and historical truth that has been deliberately and diabolically withheld from the people of God can no longer be repressed. These issues must now be addressed openly, honestly, and aggressively. Following are some of the key thoughts from this prominent Christian publication with supplied emphasis.

“A problem in the past evangelical evaluations of Adventism has been the failure to recognize its theological

diversity... there is much debate in that denomination's circles concerning the meaning of such doctrines as the atonement, sin, Christ's nature, authority, and especially the meaning of righteousness by faith.

“The last three decades have brought much controversy to Seventh-day Adventism as key doctrinal distinctives were challenged from within the denomination. This in-house doctrinal debate has resulted in several distinct factions and strong disagreement as to which doctrinal perspective represents ‘true Adventism.’

“Seventh-day Adventism is experiencing an identity crisis. Ironically, the present confusion is in direct contrast to the confidence of Adventism's pioneers...

“The early Seventh-day Adventist knew exactly who they were. They were God's ‘remnant church.’ ‘A special people, with a special message, for a special time.’”⁴

The article continues with this interesting and alarming statement. “While they sometimes recognized members of other churches as genuine followers of Christ, they believed that they were God's special movement in Earth's final days. This exalted identity remained intact until Adventism's encounter with evangelicalism in the 1950s... Much of the doctrinal controversy that emerged in Adventism in the last several decades can be traced to their interaction with evangelicals in the 1950s.”⁵

Fearful of being included in Walter Martin's book on cults, some of our church leaders took it upon themselves to compromise many of our Bible beliefs, which we had held over the previous century, and published a book entitled *Questions on Doctrine*. Notice what even the evangelical world

⁴ *Christianity Today*, February 5, 1990

⁵ *Ibid.*

acknowledges as irrefutable fact.

“QOD (Questions on Doctrine) also repudiated such commonly held traditional Adventist doctrines as the notion that Christ had inherited a human nature affected by the Fall, and an understanding that last-days believers would achieve sinless perfection. QOD was a clear statement of what would later be known as evangelical Adventism. It reflected a sense of change in how Adventists viewed themselves - and others.”⁶

Undeniable documentation proves, beyond any shadow of doubt, that this book repudiated many of our traditional beliefs and reflected a change in our positions and how we viewed ourselves, as well as others. As a result of rejecting these Bible truths, we have seen a multitude of errors coming into the Remnant Church over the last several decades. The changes taking place within Adventism even amaze the rest of the Christian world, as is evidenced by the following: “At least six Adventist congregations have adopted the worship style and kingdom theology of John Wimber's Vineyard Fellowship. This is remarkable in a church that has steadfastly resisted the charismatic renewal, but it shows the adaptability of Adventism.”⁷ Even they marvel at the “celebration movement” found in the Seventh-day Adventist Church and use that as evidence of our “adaptability.”

These compromises have led to many issues within the church. However, notice what the evangelicals view as the main issue that we face. “The central issue: Adventism's uniqueness. Would it continue in the direction set in QOD? Or would Adventism return to more traditional

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

understandings?”⁸ This, I also believe, is the predominant issue with which we must come to grasp.

The evangelical world notes at least three divisions within the Seventh-day Adventist Church and have termed them “Evangelical,” “Liberal,” and “Traditional.” Notice how they define these.

“Evangelical Adventism: Evangelical Adventism can be traced to the Adventist scholars who dialogued with Martin and Barnhouse, and who produced the volume QOD... QOD had repudiated the long-standing Adventist belief that Jesus Christ had taken a sinful human nature at His incarnation.”⁹ The rest of the Christian world observed that the Evangelical movement in Adventism “continued to evolve throughout the 1970s, with two of the strongest advocates being Australian born scholars Robert Brimsmead and Desmond Ford.”¹⁰ According to evangelical scholars, these men’s understanding of righteousness by faith turned Seventh-day Adventists from the error that “had plagued Adventism throughout its history.”¹¹ What was that great error that had “plagued” us throughout our history? It was the belief that righteousness by faith encompassed both justification and sanctification and not the evangelical position of “justification only.”

“Liberal Adventism: In part, Liberal Adventism comes out of that churches attempt to achieve theological and cultural respectability. In the 1950s and 1960s, many Adventist students began receiving graduate degrees from non-Adventist universities. In many cases, the schools

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

attended by these Adventists were theologically liberal. Thus Adventist scholars were influenced by modern biblical criticism and liberal theology...

“Unlike other types of Adventism, Liberal Adventism is comfortable with diversity of practice and pluralism of thought. While it emphasizes Adventism's distinctiveness (Sabbath, health), it sometimes seems to ignore historic Christian orthodoxy. Liberal Adventism is not concerned at all with maintaining a 'remnant' identity like that of the nineteenth century pioneers.”¹²

“Traditional Adventism: QOD's evangelical emphasis had robbed Adventism of some of its distinctiveness... particularly... the sanctuary doctrine and the human nature of Christ... Traditional Adventism also has a distinct view concerning righteousness by faith.”¹³ This they acknowledge stands “in direct contrast” to the one held by the Evangelical Adventists. Traditional Adventists call for a return to the beliefs and practices held by the pioneers and supported by the Spirit of Prophecy prior to the compromises of the 1950s and onward.

Since they recognize “that there is a powerful traditionalist segment that desires to retain Adventism’s 1844 ‘remnant’ identity,” the evangelical world is watching closely to see whether the Seventh-day Adventist Church will return to their traditional beliefs and identity or succumb to the liberal or evangelical segments that have come into the church.

The editor of *Christianity Today* concluded his article by stating: “if Seventh-day Adventism is going to be blessed of the Lord, its identity must come from a fidelity to the

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

everlasting gospel.”¹⁴ To this I must respond with a most heart-felt amen. If we are indeed suffering from an “identity crisis,” then it must mean we have lost our “fidelity to the everlasting gospel” and have a variety of perverted gospels being proclaimed in our midst today. Therefore, we must begin by asking “What is the everlasting gospel?”

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

Chapter 2

What is the Gospel?

In the 1880s, God sent His people an awesome warning through His messenger. In vision she was shown the condition of God's remnant people and declared: "I have been shown that, as a people, we are departing from the simplicity of the faith and from the purity of the gospel. Many are in great peril. Unless they change their course, they will be severed from the True Vine as useless branches."¹⁵ Is it possible this is still true today?

A friend of mine said not long ago, "there is not much difference between us and the Baptists." To many this may seem to be a shocking statement, but I was not at all startled by her comment for I have heard such things numerous times in recent years. A minister friend once declared of all the various churches (including the "remnant"): "after all Joe, we all preach the same gospel." Many others are saying the same thing, but is this true? And if it is, then why is only one church portrayed in Scripture as having "the everlasting gospel" in contrast to the perverted gospel of all others? (See Revelation 14:6; 16:13; 17:1-5; 18:1-4).

The uniqueness of Seventh-day Adventists is their gospel. But which Gospel do you believe? What is meant by the gospel? Many have been educated to think of the gospel in a very limited sphere, but in reality it is older, broader, deeper, and involves more than many think. Following are a few examples to help illustrate this.

"If Adam had not transgressed the law of God, the ceremonial law would never have been instituted. The gospel of good news was first given to Adam in the declaration made

¹⁵ White, *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 5, p. 18

to him that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head; and it was handed down through successive generations to Noah, Abraham, and Moses. The knowledge of God's law, and the plan of salvation were imparted to Adam and Eve by Christ Himself. They carefully treasured the important lesson, and transmitted it by word of mouth, to their children, and children's children. Thus the knowledge of God's law was preserved.”¹⁶

Here we see that the gospel was first given to Adam in the Garden of Eden and that it contained the good news about the Messiah, God's law, and the plan of salvation. We are further informed that “The message proclaimed by the angel flying in the midst of heaven is the everlasting gospel, the same gospel that was declared in Eden when God said to the serpent, ‘I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel’ (Gen. 3:15). Here was the first promise of a Saviour who would stand on the field of battle to contest the power of Satan and prevail against him. Christ came to our world to represent the character of God as it is represented in His holy law; for His law is a transcript of His character. Christ was both the law and the gospel. The angel that proclaims the everlasting gospel proclaims the law of God; for the gospel of salvation brings men to obedience of the law, whereby their characters are formed after the divine similitude.”¹⁷

“The word of God includes the Scriptures of the Old Testament as well as of the New. One is not complete without the other. Christ declared that the truths of the Old Testament are as valuable as those of the New. Christ was as

¹⁶ White, *Selected Messages*, Vol. 1, p.230

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, p.106

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much man's Redeemer in the beginning of the world as He is today. Before He clothed His divinity with humanity and came to our world, the gospel message was given by Adam, Seth, Enoch, Methuselah, and Noah. Abraham in Canaan and Lot in Sodom bore the message, and from generation to generation faithful messengers proclaimed the Coming One."¹⁸

Notice the interwoven relationship of the law and gospel that has been lost sight of by so many today.

"There are those who profess to believe and to teach the truths of the Old Testament, while they reject the New. But in refusing to receive the teachings of Christ, they show that they do not believe that which patriarchs and prophets have spoken. "Had ye believed Moses," Christ said, "ye would have believed Me; for he wrote of Me." John 5:46. Hence there is no real power in their teaching of even the Old Testament.

"Many who claim to believe and to teach the gospel are in a similar error. They set aside the Old Testament Scriptures, of which Christ declared, 'They are they which testify of Me.' John 5:39. In rejecting the Old, they virtually reject the New; for both are parts of an inseparable whole. No man can rightly present the law of God without the gospel, or the gospel without the law. The law is the gospel embodied, and the gospel is the law unfolded. The law is the root, the gospel is the fragrant blossom and fruit which it bears."¹⁹

Not only is the law of God, the teachings of His word, and the gospel an inseparable whole, but many do not realize the gospel also includes health reform.

"The sanitariums which are established are to be closely and inseparably bound up with the gospel. The Lord has given instruction that the gospel is to be carried forward;

¹⁸ White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, p.126

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.128

and the gospel includes health reform in all its phases... It is the Lord's design that the restoring influence of health reform shall be a part of the last great effort to proclaim the gospel message."²⁰

"But God did not design that the medical missionary work should eclipse the work of the third angel's message. The arm is not to become the body. The third angel's message is the gospel message for these last days, and in no case is it to be overshadowed by other interests and made to appear an unessential consideration. When in our institutions anything is placed above the third angel's message, the gospel is not there the great leading power."²¹

As previously stated, but few realized the far reaching ramifications of the gospel into every doctrine and saving truth of God's word (*Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 6, p. 11; Vol. 9, p. 61), but there are some remnant preachers who even deny that the Sabbath is a part of the gospel. This position is held in distinct opposition to the clear declaration of the Apostle Paul in Hebrews. "Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it. For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works" (Hebrews 4:1-4).

That the gospel and the teachings of Jesus are the same

²⁰ White, *Counsels on Diet and Foods*, p.75

²¹ White, *Testimonies for the Church*, p.241

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become evident from a simple comparison of two Bible passages. "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen" (Matthew 28:19, 20). "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:15, 16). As can be seen here, the preaching of the gospel and teaching "all things" are one and the same. The Scriptures are clear that the gospel is not just something to be believed, but it is also something to be obeyed (Romans 10:16) and those who do not obey the gospel shall be lost (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9; 1 Peter 4:17).

The word "gospel" is found 100 times in the Bible. Of this number it is used: Fifty-five times as "the gospel." Ten times as "the gospel of Christ." Once as "the glorious gospel of Christ." Once as "Christ's gospel." Once as "the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." Once as "the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son." Once as "the gospel of his Son." Seven times as "the gospel of God." Once as "the gospel of the grace of God." Once as "the glorious gospel of the blessed God." Four times as "the gospel of the kingdom." Twice as "this gospel." Once as "that gospel." Three times as "my gospel." Three times as "our gospel." Twice as "any other gospel." Twice as "another gospel." Twice as "the gospel of peace." Once as "the gospel of your salvation." Once as "the everlasting gospel."

It is an irrefutable fact that the uniqueness of Seventh-day Adventists is their gospel. Even the evangelicals claim that we are preaching different gospels and yet we say, "Oh, no we're not." But we are! And as such only one can be truth. And when we try to mingle or intermix the two, we will still end up with a perverted gospel. We need to find out

what went wrong and how to right it. We need to discover what makes us unique and what it means to be a peculiar people.

Many errors, much falsehood, are being accepted as truth, and the light from heaven is being disregarded and called by various uncomplimentary names. What should we, as a people, do about it? What should each of us, individually, be doing? The word of God is clear concerning this matter and gives us an explicit example. "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so. Therefore many of them believed; also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few. But when the Jews of Thessalonica had knowledge that the word of God was preached of Paul at Berea, they came thither also, and stirred up the people" (Acts 17:11-13). Let us now begin to search God's word with an open mind.

Chapter 3

The Misconception of Sin

Inasmuch as “sin” is one of the doctrines mentioned in the *Christianity Today* article that contributes to the doctrinal diversity within Adventism, it is here I would like for us to focus our attention.

In the first chapter of Romans, Paul boldly declares: “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. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith” (Romans 1:16, 17). This stands in sharp contrast to those “who hold the truth in unrighteousness” (verse 18) and are therefore “without excuse” (verse 20). In verses 21 and 22 he gives four reasons they are “without excuse.” “Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations.” As a result of this “their foolish heart was darkened” and “Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools” (Romans 1:21, 22).

Because of their inexcusable actions, God “gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts” (verse 24). “For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections”(verse 26). “And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient” (verse 28).

In verses 29-31 Paul lists 22 different things, all of which can be classified under one word - sin. But exactly what is sin? How does the Bible define it and what is so bad about it? First of all, we find it is something we all need to be saved from. Speaking of Mary and her Child to be, Gabriel declared: “she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his

The Misconception of Sin ²³

name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21).

What is it about sin that makes it so bad that we need to be saved from it? (Please notice that sin is not something that we can be saved in, but rather something we must be saved “from.”) Isaiah clearly tells us what is so serious about sin. “But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear” (Isaiah 59:2). Sin separates from God and the natural result of that separation is death “For the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23). God informs us in His word that the decision to sin or not to sin, to live or to die, is a free choice given to each of us. “I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live” (Deuteronomy 30:19).

We are repulsed by the horrible perversion of predestination and once saved always saved. Teachings that pervert the gospel and deceive people into believing that God would remove from mankind the freedom of choice. But is it possible that God’s Remnant has accepted some aspect of this horrible heresy?

Consider closely the words of inspiration. “Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness” (Romans 6:16-18). Notice that we must choose one or the other and we cannot become “servants of righteousness” until we choose to be “made free from sin.” We cannot “serve two masters” (Matthew 6:24). But again, what is this sin we must be set free from?

There is much confusion on this subject. Many have a very limited and often perverted concept of what sin is. There are at least five false concepts that are circulating within the Christian community today.

1. "Sin is not an action, it is a broken relationship."
2. "It is possible for a converted Christian to continue in 'known,' 'habitual,' 'cherished,' 'persistent' sin and still be saved."
3. "Committing sin does not break our relationship, neither does it remove Christ's righteousness."
4. "Sin is not what we do, but what we are." "We are born into this world condemned because of sin."
5. "We must continue committing sin until Jesus returns."

These are deadly errors, horrible heresies. For example: if sin is not an action, but a broken relationship, then Jesus would have been guilty of sin, for He either experienced a broken relationship or staged a mighty convincing show when He cried out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46). Jesus did indeed experience a separation from the Father, yet he never sinned. It is most important to distinguish that sin is what causes the broken relationship; it is not the relationship itself and never does the Bible define sin as such. The word of God emphatically asserts that "sin is the transgression of the law"(1 John 3:4).

Why are so many so anxious to abandon the Biblical definition for sin and replace it with a man-made one? It takes but a little knowledge of what is transpiring in Adventism to figure this out. As Seventh-day Adventists we declare to the world that we are called upon, by God Himself, to keep all of His law, including the fourth commandment, and that through the power of the Holy Spirit we are enabled to do this. This message is in direct opposition to the

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evangelical world, who claim that we cannot keep the law of God nor do we need to.

Now, notice our dilemma when we declare to the world that we must and can keep God's law, but we cannot stop sinning, which is defined as "the transgression of the law." How is this wonderful inconsistency possible? If we continue to teach that we are to keep the law of God, we must also teach that we must not continue in sin, and if we refuse to teach victory over sin, then we should also teach that it is impossible to keep God's law. The only other possible option is to change the definition of sin.

We have placed ourselves in this dilemma, in part, due to a prevalent belief that we are born guilty and stand before God condemned before any action on our part. This perversion of the gospel comes to us directly from Roman Catholicism's devilish doctrine of original sin. Since a great portion of the Christian world have come to accept the historic Catholic doctrine, in one form or another, it is here that we shall now focus our attention. It is time we ask ourselves what we believe concerning this important subject, and why we believe it - and compare these positions with the word of God.

Simply defined, original sin means that we stand condemned and guilty before God solely because we are born into the human family and that we are guilty by nature before any choice of good or evil on our part. This is one of the reasons the Catholic Church practices infant baptism. Is this biblical? If not, can this teaching of original sin (in any form) be accepted within the Christian Church? And if it is, then a newborn baby should be baptized immediately for the remission of sin, lest it die in its sin and be forever damned. Do you see the horrendous error of such a teaching? The questions that cry out for answers are: Where do we stand? On truth or error? With Catholicism and Evangelicalism? On

tradition and denominational dogma, or on the Word of God?

Another aspect of the teaching of guilt by birth or nature is that when Adam sinned, he lost the ability not to sin. Therefore, he had, of necessity, to continue to sin for the rest of his life, and we, as his descendants, are only able to sin with no hope of overcoming. This, too, has become prevalent in the Remnant Church.

Now consider, if sin is by choice, then we are responsible for the choices we make, but if sin is by nature and it is inevitable that we must continue in sin regardless of our choices, then the inevitability, of necessity, rules out all responsibility. Therefore, the question that must first be answered is: "What is sin?" Is it the way we are or the way we choose? Does it occur when we are born or when we consent to wrong? If guilt comes from inheritance, then where does responsibility fit in? We shall now see that sin is always an action or lack of action.

The Bible defines sin as our willful choice to exercise our fallen nature in opposition to God's will. "For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins" (Hebrews 10:26). "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (James 4:17). Jesus shed further light on this when He said, "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin." "If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin" (John 15:22, 24). "If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth" (John 9:41).

Ellen White put it in the clearest language possible when she quoted the angel. "Said the angel: 'If light come, and that light is set aside or rejected, then comes condemnation and the frown of God; but before the light comes, there is no sin, for there is no light for them to

reject.”²²

Notice that sin is not something inherited. Guilt is not by nature, but is the result of knowing right and choosing wrong. It is willful rebellion against God. Keep in mind, we shall not be held accountable for the light that has not reached our perception, but for that which we have resisted and refused. “None will be condemned for not heeding light and knowledge that they never had.”²³

The book of Acts contains a passage that has puzzled many of God's people over the years. “And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now He commandeth all men everywhere to repent” (Acts 17:30). If we would, however, consider this passage in the light of what God's messenger has told us, we would find the meaning is very clear.

“Light makes manifest and reproves the errors that were concealed in darkness; and as light comes, the life and character of men must change correspondingly, to be in harmony with it. Sins that were once sins of ignorance, because of the blindness of the mind, can no more be indulged in without incurring guilt.”²⁴

One other aspect of sin that should be touched upon is whether there is guilt in bad thoughts or desires. The “New Theology” (which in reality is nothing more than basic evangelical theology, and that in turn is simply Augustinian Catholicism) teaches that there is guilt in the desire even when resisted by the will. One of the foremost proponents of this teaching within Adventism has clearly stated, “There is guilt in evil desires even when resisted by the will.” Is this

²² White, *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 1, p. 116

²³ *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Vol. 5, p. 1145

²⁴ White, *Gospel Workers*, p. 62

true? Is temptation sin? The word of God says “every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. (James 1:14, 15). Here we see a development from desire to actual sin, thus sin is the result of yielding to desire. Temptation begins in the heart, but God supplies the power to overcome the temptation. He knows the heart. He not only knows what is coming, but has provided an escape. It is in the heart where the battles are won and lost.

“There are thoughts and feelings suggested and aroused by Satan that annoy even the best of men; but if they are not cherished, if they are repulsed as hateful, the soul is not contaminated with guilt.”²⁵

If we believe that temptation is sin, we would, of necessity, have to believe that Jesus sinned for He was tempted. “For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:15).

Thus, it is not the birth, the nature, or the resisted thought that condemns us before the universe, but rather it is our willful disobedience to the known will of God that makes us guilty of sin. It is when we choose self over God that we become guilty. So, as we can see, when we speak of sin it is important that we understand what it is we are talking about. Is it the result of sin or the guilt of sin?

When placed under the magnificent magnification of God’s word, we find that sin, in its fullest sense, carries with it two separate consequences. First, the curse of sin, which leads to the first death, and second, the penalty of sin, which is the second death. The first is the result of sin; the latter is

²⁵ *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, March 27, 1888

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because of the guilt of sin.

It is primarily because of a lack of understanding of this principle that many people feel God's statement in Exodus 20:5 that He will visit "the iniquity of the fathers upon the children" is contradictory to His declaration in Ezekiel 18:20 that "the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father." However, when we realize that when God is speaking of sin in Ezekiel, He is referring to the guilt of sin, which brings with it the penalty ("The soul that sinneth it shall die" verse 20), whereas in Exodus, He is speaking of the result of sin with its ensuing consequences.

The Lord has given us a very clear understanding of this distinction between consequences and guilt in the book *Patriarchs and Prophets*.

"It is inevitable that children should suffer from the consequences of parental wrong doing, but they are not punished for the parents' guilt, except as they participate in their sins.... Wrong tendencies, perverted appetites, and debased morals, as well as physical disease and degeneracy, are transmitted as a legacy from father to son, to the third and fourth generation."²⁶

Thus, by birth, we all share the results, the consequences, of our parents' sins (with various physical, mental, and emotional conditions, i.e. prone to diabetes, cancer, alcoholism, HIV positive, addicted to drugs, etc.), but we do not share in their guilt until we have chosen to participate in their sin. In like manner we all suffer the consequences of Adam's sin: the wrong tendencies, the debased morals, the physical diseases and degeneracy, and eventually the first death. But we do not suffer the penalty for Adam's sin. Our condemnation comes through our willful choice to follow in Adam's footsteps.

²⁶ White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 306

“No man can be forced to transgress. His own consent must first be gained; the soul must first purpose the sinful act before passion can dominate over reason or iniquity can triumph over conscience. Temptation, however strong, is never an excuse for sin.”²⁷

As we have seen, sin is not something we are; it is something we do. We are not forced to do it; we choose to do it. Therefore, there is no excuse for it. It is a terrible thing to choose to sin, for each time we do, we crucify the Son of God afresh and put Him to an open shame. It was our sins that sent Him to the cross and when you behold Him in His matchless love bearing your sins, when you behold Him exercising His compassion and love for you, and fully realize it was for you that the innocent, holy, undefiled Lamb of God stood as one guilty to endure your punishment that you who are sinful and deserving of punishment might stand innocent, clothed with the garments of Christ's righteousness, your heart will be melted by His incomparable love, and you will accept Him as your sin-pardoning Savior. It is only then that you will choose not to sin and indulge in anything that brought such suffering and pain to the blessed Son of God.

God does not want some or even most of our choices; He wants all of them, the entire heart. Therefore, we must continually learn to be sensitive to the promptings of the Holy Spirit and willing to submit our wills to Him. The Lord is soon to come; make no delay. Come to Jesus every day and tell Him you want strength, you want heavenly wisdom to understand what is sin and how to forsake it.

“Satan and his confederate angels point to those who profess to be children of God, but who by their disposition and actions show that they are after the similitude of the apostate, and taunt Christ and the heavenly angels. How long shall we

²⁷ White, *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 5, p. 177

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thus crucify the Son of God afresh, so that God is ashamed to call us His sons and daughters?"²⁸

I would like to close this chapter with these inspired and insightful sentiments on the subject of sin. "We are not to continue in sin that grace may abound; we are to cease from transgression. The love of Christ manifested in the infinite sacrifice which he has made on Calvary, is without a parallel. It is sincere, devoted, measureless, and meets the emergency of the sinner's case, awakening in the heart of those who receive it, respect and reverence for the holy law of God. In the light reflected from Calvary, the law is seen to be holy, just, and good. It cost the life of the Son of God to pay the debt of transgression which the sinner had incurred. It is when the sinner has a realization of the offensive character of sin, a realization to some extent of what it cost the Son of God to redeem him, to give him another trial and probation, that his heart is filled with love and gratitude, and an earnest faith awakens that works by love and purifies the soul. This faith and love will be seen in the soul of him who is truly converted to God; and he who experiences the love of God, will ever feel humiliation and repentance for past transgression. If Christ had to make so great a sacrifice, if he had to endure such sufferings because of my sin, shall I not bow in humility, and regret that I have inflicted such grief upon his divine soul? Shall I not fear lest I shall crucify the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame? The soul who appreciates the precious gift of salvation will ever behold Christ dying upon the cross, and the language of that soul will be the language of unselfish sorrow that he has ever committed sin to so wound the Son of God. I shall always grieve that I have sinned, and have cost the Man of Calvary so great anguish. I look upon him whom I have pierced, and

²⁸ White, *This Day With God*, p. 98

I mourn that I have transgressed the law of God. When we have a proper appreciation of the sacrifice that has been made in our behalf, we shall not plead for the privilege of continuing in transgression. We shall put away sin, and our hard hearts will melt under the amazing love of Christ for our souls.”²⁹

Crown or Crucify

I stood alone at the bar of God,
 In the hush of the twilight dim,
 And faced the question that pierced my heart:
 “What will you do with Him?”
 “Crowned or crucified - which shall it be?”
 No other choice was offered to me.

I looked on the face so marred with tears
 That were shed in His agony.
 The look in His kind eyes broke my heart, -
 ‘Twas full of love for me.
 “The crown or the cross,” it seemed to say;
 “For or against Me - choose thou today.”

He held out His loving hands to me,
 While He pleadingly said, “Obey.
 Make Me thy choice, for I love thee so;”
 And I could not say Him nay.
 Crowned, not crucified, - this must it be;
 No other way was open to me.

I knelt in tears at the feet of Christ,
 In the hush of the twilight dim,
 And all that I was, or hoped, or thought,
 Surrendered unto Him.
 Crowned, not crucified, - my heart shall know
 No king but Christ, who loveth me so.

- Florence E. Johnson

²⁹ *Signs of the Times*, October 28, 1889

Chapter 4

"Made Like Unto His Brethren"

It is because of the great misunderstanding of the nature of sin of the previous chapter that we find such confusion on the subject of the nature of Christ. For if one believes that man is guilty and condemned because of the nature with which he was born, then it would be impossible for Jesus to have taken our nature, for He would have been guilty of sin simply by being born into the human family.

It is because of this erroneous understanding of sin that the Catholic Church invented the teaching of the immaculate conception. This doctrine teaches that Mary, not Jesus, was immaculately conceived without sin. For if Jesus had been born of a fallen, sinful woman, He would have inherited her fallen nature, and that nature would have made Him guilty of sin and unable to keep from sinning. Thus, the necessity of His having a mother with an unfallen nature, free from the taint of sin.

The vast majority of all Protestants totally reject this great error realizing that when carried to its logical conclusion, one would have to affirm that if Mary had an unfallen nature, the same would have had to be true of her mother, grandmother, great-grandmother, and so on back to the time of Eve. Then they would be forced to say there was never a fall.

However, because of their misunderstanding of the nature of sin, that same vast majority, including many Seventh-day Adventists, have also said that Jesus could not have taken upon Himself our fallen nature, for if He had, He, too, would have had to commit sin. Thus, while rejecting the immaculate conception, they nonetheless claim that Jesus could not have taken the fallen nature of His mother. And in

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order to find a solution to their dilemma, they have gone past His mother to His earliest earthly ancestor and triumphantly declare, “He inherited the unfallen nature of Adam.”

Now remember, if we believe that man bears the guilt of Adam's sin, then Jesus would have, of necessity, had to have Adam's nature before the fall, but if it is only the result of Adam's sin that we bear, then Jesus could have taken our fallen nature. So, as we can see, before one can begin to understand the human nature of Christ, it is first necessary to understand the nature of sin.

With the above thoughts in mind, there are several questions that have become issues and which demand answers.

1. Did Jesus become a real man or not?
2. Was He some sort of superman?
3. Did He have powers to live a righteous life that you and I do not have available to us?
4. Did He really take upon Himself “the likeness of sinful flesh”?

Our understanding of these questions is vital to our understanding of sanctification and the victory we can have through Jesus Christ to overcome sin in our lives. Ever since the fall, Satan has charged that human beings could not live without sin, and he still speaks to and through many today to make the same accusations.

It was nearly 2000 years ago that Jesus came to prove Satan a liar and a voice was heard in heaven declaring: “a body hast thou prepared me...Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God” (Hebrews 10:5, 9). The Apostle John declared: “the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us” (John1:14). Did he really mean what he said? Did Jesus really become flesh or was this merely a metaphorical musing? In the early centuries of the Christian church, there was a sect known as Docetists (derived from the Greek word meaning “to seem”)

who taught that it was not possible for Jesus to have actually become flesh, for if He had, He would have, as a natural consequence, been evil Himself and not a sinless person. Since they believed that the flesh itself was evil, they could not accept what John said, but rather attempted to make John say what they believed - that is, Jesus only appeared or seemed to have become flesh.

Do you believe the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy are trustworthy, accurate accounts from God, or should portions of it be re-written? Did God speak through the prophets to give us information that is reliable, or must we add or delete words in order to make inspiration fit our preconceived ideas?

What does it mean when it says He became flesh? What kind of baby was it that was born in that stable? Had He really come to set us an example? Was He really made like us? If not, could He truly be our example? These are questions we shall seek to find answers to and shall begin by exploring some very significant statements.

"Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people" (Hebrews 2:14-17). Jesus was, without question, "made of the seed of David according to the flesh" (Romans 1:3). He took part of the "same" flesh; it was not the "nature of angels," but the "seed of Abraham" (not Adam), and in "all things" He was "made like unto His brethren." Can we believe this or not? Does being in this flesh make us guilty of sin? It is not being born

of the flesh that condemns us, but rather it is walking after the flesh that brings condemnation.

“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Romans 8:1-4).

Never, ever, should we doubt the perfect sinlessness of our Saviour. Never once did He choose to transgress the will of God. Neither should we ever doubt the word of God when it says, Jesus came in the “likeness of sinful flesh.” To doubt or reject this Bible doctrine is to partake of the very spirit of antichrist. John warns believers: “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world” (1 John 4:3). The Greek word here translated “flesh” is “sarx” and never once is it used to refer to sinless flesh, but always refers to flesh that has been touched by the fall.

For years there have been two schools of thought as to what nature Christ took while in His human form. Was it the nature of Adam before the fall, or was it man's fallen nature? Now remember, if we believe that man bears the guilt of Adam's sin, then Jesus would have, of necessity, had to have taken Adam's nature before the fall, because He was guilty of

no sin. Yet, if it is only the results of Adam's sin we bear, then Jesus could have come with our fallen human nature.

Several years ago I heard a very dedicated and well respected minister speak on this subject at a camp-meeting in Oklahoma. This dear brother gave the clearest, most forthright and honest presentation I had ever heard from a General Conference leader. He clearly detailed how, when he was a young man, every minister in the Seventh-day Adventist Church preached that Jesus had taken upon Himself the fallen nature of Adam, that every school within the denomination had taught this doctrine, and that all of our publishing houses printed material advocating this position. He then went on to tell how in the 1950s we entered into dialogue with the evangelicals and this resulted in a "new teaching" within Adventism, so that today we have "two camps within the Adventist Church, prelapsarianism and postlapsarianism, those who believe that Jesus took the nature of Adam before the fall and those who believe He took man's nature after the fall." I was truly excited to hear this man so openly and honestly present this historical truth, but was sorely disappointed as he concluded his message by stating: "I want to tell you brethren today, it makes no difference which of these two beliefs you choose to accept." As soon as he left the platform, I went to him in the side chamber and asked: "My brother, how could you present such a powerful and forthright message on the history of the human nature of Christ, and then tell the people that it does not matter whether they believe the Bible doctrine held by this church for nearly 150 years or a new teaching which quietly crept into its midst through evangelical encounters." His startling response was: "Joe, you must understand that this is a peripheral truth and really doesn't matter." I still do not understand today how anyone can claim that what is declared to be the truth of God's word can be called "peripheral," and

thus, so valueless that it can be discarded as so much debris. And who is it that has either the audacity or authority to decide what truth is to be retained and what is to be rejected? Is this not what the mainline churches of today say about the Sabbath of the fourth commandment?

As far back as 1900, this question had arisen during the "Holy Flesh" movement. In a letter written to Ellen White in September of that year, Elder S. N. Haskell stated, "We believed that Christ was born in fallen humanity." He then went on to say that "They [the Holy Flesh movement] believe that Christ took Adam's nature before the fall." Which of them was right, the church or the faction within the church? Three years prior to this, the Lord had already informed His people that "The human nature of Christ was like unto ours."³⁰ Who was right, Elder Haskell and Ellen White or the false and fanatical movement within the church?

Notice what the position of the Prophet of the Lord and His Remnant Church have always been.

"It would have been an almost infinite humiliation for the Son of God to take man's nature, even when Adam stood in his innocence in Eden. But Jesus accepted humanity when the race had been weakened by four thousand years of sin. Like every child of Adam He accepted the results of the working of the great law of heredity. What these results were is shown in the history of His earthly ancestors. He came with such a heredity to share our sorrows and temptations, and to give us the example of a sinless life."³¹

"Notwithstanding that the sins of a guilty world were laid upon Christ, notwithstanding the humiliation of taking upon Himself our fallen nature, the voice from heaven

³⁰ *Signs of the Times*, December 9, 1897

³¹ White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 49

declared Him to be the Son of the Eternal."³²

"In taking upon Himself man's nature in its fallen condition, Christ did not in the least participate in its sin. He was subject to the infirmities and weaknesses by which man is encompassed, 'that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses' (Matt. 8:17). He was touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and was in all points tempted like as we are. And yet He knew no sin."³³

"In our humanity, Christ was to redeem Adam's failure. But when Adam was assailed by the tempter, none of the effects of sin were upon him. He stood in the strength of perfect manhood, possessing the full vigor of mind and body.... It was not thus with Jesus.... For four thousand years the race had been decreasing in physical strength, in mental power, and in moral worth; and Christ took upon Him the infirmities of degenerate humanity.... Our Saviour took humanity, with all its liabilities. He took the nature of man, with the possibility of yielding to temptation. We have nothing to bear which He has not endured."³⁴

When Jesus came to this earth "in the likeness of sinful flesh," He "made himself of no reputation [emptied Himself], and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men" (Philippians 2:7). What did Jesus have to empty Himself of, when He took upon His divine nature our fallen human nature?

The first thing Jesus had to lay aside was His omnipotence or His all powerfulness. Repeatedly, He

³² Ibid., p. 112

³³ White, *Selected Messages*, Vol. 1, p. 256

³⁴ White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 117

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declared: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself," "I can of mine own self do nothing," "I do nothing of myself" (John 5:19, 30; 8:28). Jesus was totally, wholly dependant upon the power of the Father working through Him to do what He did. "He rested not in the possession of almighty power. It was not as the 'Master of earth and sea and sky' that He reposed in quiet. That power He had laid down, and He says, 'I can of Mine own self do nothing.' John 5:30. He trusted in the Father's might."³⁵ He had laid aside His divine power and now rested solely in the keeping power of His Father.

In addition to laying aside His omnipotence when becoming man, Jesus also emptied Himself of His omniscience or the ability to know all things. This is why, when speaking of His second coming, He said, "of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father" (Mark 13:32). The only things Jesus knew of the future were those revealed to Him by the Father. Neither could Jesus, in the darkness of the cross, see beyond the tomb and cried out in agony, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

As an infant through manhood, Jesus had to learn as we do. He had to learn how to walk, talk, read, write, and everything else in life. Imagine Him as a toddler in the fields with Mary, learning at His mother's knee. Picture Him as He comes running to her with a small bunch of wildflowers in His chubby little fists and says, "Here Mommy these are for you. They sure are pretty, what are they?" He had made them; He was the Creator, yet He did not know. And perhaps as they were talking, an eagle soars overhead and as its shrill screech pierces the solitude, little Jesus grabs His mother's skirt and in surprise says, "Mommy, what is that?" He was the Creator,

³⁵ Ibid., p. 336

"all things were made by him" (John 1:3), and yet He had laid aside His divine powers, gave back the scepter into the Father's hand, and started as we start, knowing nothing and having to learn it all. And "since He gained knowledge as we may do, His intimate acquaintance with Scriptures shows how diligently His early years were given to the study of God's word."³⁶

While on this earth Jesus remained submissive to the Father's will, allowing Him to work out His will in Him. He openly proclaimed that He "came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me" (John 6:38). This is why, in Gethsemane, He cried out: "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt" and "O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done" (Matthew 26:39, 42). If we follow Jesus' example of "not my will," we can stay in the Spirit and choose right even when we don't feel like it. Jesus was able to live the life He did in "the likeness of sinful flesh," because He kept His will submissive to the will of the Father, allowing Him to work in and through Him.

The third thing Jesus emptied Himself of when He took our humanity was His omnipresence. He could not be everywhere at once while confined in a human body. This is why He said, "It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you" (John 16:7). Many do not realize the extent of the sacrifice of the Son of God in "emptying Himself" of His omnipresence, for this He has laid aside for all eternity. He carried back into heaven, in a glorified form, our humanity, never to be omnipresent again. "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son."

³⁶ Ibid., p. 70

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He gave Him not only to live among men, to bear their sins, and die their sacrifice. He gave Him to the fallen race. Christ was to identify Himself with the interests and needs of humanity. He who was one with God has linked Himself with the children of men by ties that are never to be broken. Jesus is 'not ashamed to call them brethren'; He is our Sacrifice, our Advocate, our Brother, bearing our human form before the Father's throne, and through eternal ages one with the race He has redeemed, - the Son of man."³⁷

Jesus became a real person. He bore the results of Adam's sin, but not the guilt. He also "was in all points tempted like as we are" (Hebrews 4:15). He was born of the flesh as we are born of the flesh, but it is not the flesh that condemns us, rather it is the walking "after the flesh" that brings condemnation (Romans 8:1-4). It is here that we find the secret of our success.

"In our conclusions, we make many mistakes because of our erroneous views of the human nature of our Lord. When we give to His human nature a power that is not possible for man to have in his conflicts with Satan, we destroy the completeness of His humanity."³⁸ Remember, the sinless nature of Adam is not a power that is possible for us to have in our conflict with Satan.

Notice the absolute clarity of these statements. "He exercised in His own behalf no power that is not freely offered to us. As man, He met temptation, and overcame in the strength given Him from God."³⁹ "He overcame in human

³⁷ White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 14

³⁸ Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, Vol. 7, p. 929

³⁹ White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 24

“Made Like Unto His Brethren” 43

nature relying upon God for power.”⁴⁰ “With the same facilities that man may obtain, (Jesus) withstood the temptations of Satan as man must withstand them.”⁴¹ “The obedience of Christ to His Father was the same obedience that is required of man... The Lord Jesus came to our world, not to reveal what a God could do, but what a man could do, through faith in God's power to help in every emergency... Jesus, the world's Redeemer, could only keep the commandments of God in the same way that humanity can keep them.”⁴² “Jesus revealed no qualities, and exercised no powers, that men may not have through faith in Him. His perfect humanity is that which all His followers may possess, if they will be in subjection to God as He was.”⁴³ Is this true? Can we demonstrate in our lives the perfect obedience of Christ? Dear reader, believe it, for God said it, and God cannot lie. If we believe that sin is by choice (and we have seen that this is true), then we must also believe that we can choose not to sin. If Jesus overcame the promptings of His human nature by being in subjection to the Father's will and controlled by the Holy Spirit, then this same method of victory is available to each of us by faith. However, the important thing to keep ever before us is that the issue is never what we can do, but rather what God can do in us. “For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure” (Philippians 2:13).

The reason Christ took upon Him our nature is that we might become partakers of His divine nature. His word

⁴⁰ *The Youth Instructor* April 25, 1901

⁴¹ White, *Selected Messages*, Vol. 2, p. 252

⁴² *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Vol. 7, p. 929

⁴³ White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 664

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declares: "According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (2 Peter 1:3, 4). "It is the privilege of every believer in Christ to possess Christ's nature, a nature far above that which Adam forfeited by transgression."⁴⁴

⁴⁴ White, *The Upward Look*, p. 170

Chapter 5

The Atonement

In addition to the doctrine of sin, which we have already covered, the *Christianity Today* article stated that the doctrinal diversity controversy within Adventism entails the doctrines of the atonement, justification, and sanctification. Therefore, we shall now turn our attention to what the inspiration has to say on these subjects.

I once asked a minister friend of mine to name one thing we held 100% in common with the Evangelicals. His answer was “the atonement.” Is this true?

The Spirit of the Lord has given two very pointed warnings concerning the doctrine of the atonement.

“The subject of the sanctuary and the investigative judgment should be clearly understood by the people of God. All need a knowledge for themselves of the position and work of their great High Priest. Otherwise it will be impossible for them to exercise the faith which is essential at this time or to occupy the position which God designs them to fill.”⁴⁵

“Satan is striving continually to bring in fanciful suppositions in regard to the sanctuary, degrading the wonderful representations of God and the ministry of Christ for our salvation into something that suits the carnal mind. He removes its presiding power from the hearts of believers, and supplies its place with fantastic theories invented to make void the truths of the atonement, and destroy our confidence in the doctrines which we have held sacred since the third angel's message was first given. Thus he would rob us of our faith in the very message that has made us a separate people,

⁴⁵ White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 488

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and has given character and power to our work.”⁴⁶ Friend, don’t you see that these words are being fulfilled before our very eyes today.

The word atonement is mentioned only once in the King James translation of the New Testament and reads: “Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. 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. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement (Romans 5:9-11). However, the word reconciliation or its derivative (translated from the same Greek word or its derivative) is found nine times, seven of which are found in 2 Corinthians 5:18-20 and two in Romans 5:10. The other two (1 Corinthians 7:11 and Romans 11:15) do not pertain to the cross of Christ.

Speaking of the reconciliation, Paul says, “And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation: To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (2 Corinthians 5:18-21). Paul says God has reconciled us and the world and given to us the ministry of reconciliation to go forth as ambassadors taking the word of reconciliation, which is a call to be reconciled. How can people who have been reconciled be called to be reconciled?

When we think of the atonement or reconciliation, we

⁴⁶ White, *Evangelism*, p. 225

usually limit our understanding to the cross. Yet we are told that Jesus is ministering as our High Priest, not the sacrifice, to make reconciliation. "Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people" (Hebrews 2:17). This word is primarily different from the previous word in that it does not carry the connotation of being restored to divine favor, but denotes the mercy received through Christ as our "propitiation."

"Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:14-16).

Although the word atonement is found only once in the New Testament, it is mentioned 80 times in the Old Testament (10 times in Exodus, 49 times in Leviticus, 17 times in Numbers, and once each in: 2 Samuel, 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles, and Nehemiah). Over half of these are found in the book of Leviticus and pertain to the sanctuary service. Therefore, to fully understand the atonement, we must also understand the biblical doctrine of the sanctuary. There is only one people in the whole wide world that even remotely understands this great Bible truth, and many of them have but clouded concepts of this glorious doctrine.

As previously stated most Christians have come to believe that the atonement is based solely upon the cross. But what good would the sacrifice of Jesus have been, if He had remained in the grave? You see, the atonement consists of much more than many are aware. "It was not alone Christ's

betrayal in the garden or His agony upon the cross that constituted the atonement. The humiliation and suffering which He endured throughout His life and ministry was included in His great sacrifice. The whole series of sorrows which compassed humanity Christ bore upon His divine soul.”⁴⁷ The atonement is as much an ongoing process as is salvation.

Under the Levitical law, when the animal was sacrificed, was not the person forgiven? Was not an atonement made? Why then did the blood have to be taken into the sanctuary? Why was it necessary that there be a yearly “cleansing of the sanctuary,” if a full and final atonement had already been made in the death of the sacrifice?

Notice what Scripture says: “And he shall take the two goats, and present them before the LORD at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. And Aaron shall cast lots upon the two goats; one lot for the LORD, and the other lot for the scapegoat. And Aaron shall bring the goat upon which the LORD’S lot fell, and offer him for a sin offering. But the goat, on which the lot fell to be the scapegoat, shall be presented alive before the LORD, to make an atonement with him, and to let him go for a scapegoat into the wilderness” (Leviticus 16:7-10).

If the death alone was sufficient, why did the blood have to be carried into the sanctuary? Why was an atonement made as much as a year after the sacrifice? Because it took more than the sacrifice. This is what Paul meant when he said, “if Christ be not raised your faith is vain” and “we are of all men most miserable” (1 Corinthians 15:17, 19).

On the surface the popular evangelical view of the atonement sounds so good, and thus we join in thought with

⁴⁷ Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, Vol. 6, p. 1103

the errors of evangelicalism and claim that it all happened 2000 years ago; that the atonement is finished, over, final, and complete. However, this presents a real problem, for where does that leave us? Where does it leave Jesus? Where is Jesus now? What is He doing? What are we to be doing? Why are we still here? Why hasn't Jesus come back? These are questions that find no satisfactory answer if one holds the common view conveyed to Christianity through Catholicism.

We find the parallel to the ministry of Jesus, our high priest, in the heavenly sanctuary in the services of the earthly sanctuary. God gave the following instruction for the earthly high priest on the day of atonement. "And when he hath made an end of reconciling the holy place, and the tabernacle of the congregation, and the altar, he shall bring the live goat: And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness: And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited: and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness" (Leviticus 16:20-22).

While here on this earth Jesus was declared to be "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world," and more than 700 years before His birth, the prophet Isaiah had declared that He was to be "brought as a lamb to the slaughter" (John 1:29; Isaiah 53:7). Beyond any doubt, the Son of the Living God became our Sacrifice to cleanse us from sin, for "while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). But the good news of the Gospel of Christ is that He was more than just a Sacrifice, He did more than just die for us, He now lives for us as well. He burst forth from that tomb victorious and He declares: "I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore"

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(Revelation 1:18). Death could not hold the Son of God, who is now “set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens” (Hebrews 8:1). “Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them” (Hebrews 7:25). Herein lies our hope, for there is but “one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave Himself a ransom for all” (1 Timothy 2:5, 6). Jesus died as our Sacrifice, but more than this, He ascended to heaven to minister as our Intercessor, our Mediator in the heavenly sanctuary. There He began the first apartment phase of His ministry, that of the forgiveness of our sins through the merits of His own shed blood. Without this ministry of Jesus where would we be? “For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God” and “the wages of sin is death” (Romans 3:23; 6:23). But praise God, Jesus is there, “and if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous,” and “if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 2:1; 1:9).

This ministry of Jesus had its parallel in the daily ministry of the priests in the holy place of the earthly sanctuary and “For eighteen centuries this work of ministration continued in the first apartment of the sanctuary. The blood of Christ, pleaded in behalf of penitent believers, secured their pardon and acceptance with the Father, yet their sins still remained upon the books of record. As in the typical service there was a work of atonement at the close of the year, so before Christ's work for the redemption of men is completed, there is a work of atonement for the removal of sin from the sanctuary. This is the service which began when the 2300 days ended. At that time, as foretold by Daniel the prophet, our High Priest entered the most holy, to perform the last division of his solemn work, -- to cleanse the sanctuary.

“As anciently the sins of the people were by faith placed upon the sin-offering, and through its blood transferred, in figure, to the earthly sanctuary, so in the new covenant the sins of the repentant are by faith placed upon Christ and transferred, in fact, to the heavenly sanctuary. And as the typical cleansing of the earthly was accomplished by the removal of the sins by which it had been polluted, so the actual cleansing of the heavenly is to be accomplished by the removal, or blotting out, of the sins which are there recorded. But, before this can be accomplished, there must be an examination of the books of record to determine who, through repentance of sin and faith in Christ, are entitled to the benefits of His atonement. The cleansing of the sanctuary therefore involves a work of investigation -- a work of judgment. This work must be performed prior to the coming of Christ to redeem His people; for when He comes, His reward is with Him to give to every man according to his works. Revelation 22:12.

“Thus those who followed in the light of the prophetic word saw that, instead of coming to the earth at the termination of the 2300 days Christ entered the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary to perform the closing work of atonement preparatory to His coming.”⁴⁸

This has always been the position of Seventh-day Adventists until recently. F.D. Nichol stated in his book *Answers to Objections*: “We believe that Christ's work of atonement was begun, rather than completed, at calvary.”⁴⁹

The cleansing of the sanctuary was the last service to be completed in the yearly round of ministration. It was the closing work of the atonement, the removal of and putting

⁴⁸ White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 421, 422

⁴⁹ Nichol, *Answers to Objections*, p. 408

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away of the sins of the people, and it prefigured the work of our High Priest in heaven in the removal or blotting out of the sins of His people, which are registered in the heavenly records, as well as the removal of sin from their lives. The atonement is not over, regardless of what Babylon may say.

Notice what God says is to take place when it is over. "Also on the tenth day of this seventh month there shall be a day of atonement: it shall be an holy convocation unto you; and ye shall afflict your souls, and offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD. And ye shall do no work in that same day: for it is a day of atonement, to make an atonement for you before the LORD your God. For whatsoever soul it be that shall not be afflicted in that same day, he shall be cut off from among his people. And whatsoever soul it be that doeth any work in that same day, the same soul will I destroy from among his people" (Leviticus 23:27-30). The word here translated "cut off" means to kill or destroy. (See Exodus 4:24; Hosea 4:6; Daniel 9:26).

"Those who are living upon the earth when the intercession of Christ shall cease in the sanctuary above are to stand in the sight of a holy God without a mediator. Their robes must be spotless, their characters must be purified from sin by the blood of sprinkling... While the investigative judgment is going forward in heaven, while the sins of penitent believers are being removed from the sanctuary, there is to be a special work of purification, of putting away of sin, among God's people upon earth. This work is more clearly presented in the messages of Revelation 14. When this work shall have been accomplished, the followers of Christ will be ready for His appearing... Then the church which our Lord at His coming is to receive to Himself will be a 'glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.' Ephesians

5:27.”⁵⁰

The passionate pleas of the prophet should awaken in our hearts and minds a riveting realization of who we are and the tremendous importance of the fact that we are living in the day of atonement.

“Shall we forget our holy calling, brethren? Shall the mournful deterioration of piety be seen among us, that caused the rejection of the Jewish nation? Shall we who have had so great light upon Bible truth let a dry, dead formalism take the place of zeal and faith?... We must arouse and take in the situation. We are in the day of atonement, and we are to work in harmony with Christ's work of cleansing the sanctuary from the sins of the people. Let no man who desires to be found with the wedding garment on, resist our Lord in his office work. As He is, so will his followers be in this world. We must now set before the people the work which by faith we see our great High-priest accomplishing in the heavenly sanctuary. Those who do not sympathize with Jesus in his work in the heavenly courts, who do not cleanse the soul temple of every defilement, but who engage in some enterprise not in harmony with this work, are joining with the enemy of God and man in leading minds away from the truth and work for this time.”⁵¹

“Christ is in the heavenly sanctuary, and he is there to make an atonement for the people. He is there to present his wounded side and pierced hands to his Father. He is there to plead for his Church that is upon the earth. He is cleansing the sanctuary from the sins of the people. What is our work?-- It is our work to be in harmony with the work of Christ. By

⁵⁰ White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 425

⁵¹ *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, January 21, 1890

faith we are to work with him, to be in union with him.”⁵²

If we accept the Evangelical position on the atonement, we must say there is no such thing as a cleansing of the sanctuary, the day of atonement, or an investigative judgment beginning in 1844. Yet the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy are very clear that we are today living in the great day of final atonement and investigative judgment. When this work of atonement in the heavenly sanctuary has been completed, Jesus will leave the heavenly sanctuary making the awesome pronouncement: “He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be” (Revelation 22:11, 12), and return to this earth to receive His people.

“As the priest entered the most holy once a year to cleanse the earthly sanctuary, so Jesus entered the most holy of the heavenly, at the end of the 2300 days of Daniel 8, to make a final atonement for all who could be benefitted by His mediation, and thus to cleanse the sanctuary.”⁵³

“Now, while our great High Priest is making the atonement for us, we should seek to become perfect in Christ. Not even by a thought could our Saviour be brought to yield to the power of temptation. Satan finds in human hearts some point where he can gain a foothold; some sinful desire is cherished, by means of which his temptations assert their power. But Christ declared of Himself: “The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me.” John 14:30. Satan could find nothing in the Son of God that would enable him to

⁵² Ibid., January 28, 1890

⁵³ White, *Early Writings*, p. 253

gain the victory. He had kept His Father's commandments, and there was no sin in Him that Satan could use to his advantage. This is the condition in which those must be found who shall stand in the time of trouble.

“It is in this life that we are to separate sin from us, through faith in the atoning blood of Christ.”⁵⁴

⁵⁴ White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 623

Chapter 6

Our Title to Heaven

In the second epistle of Paul to the Corinthians, we find a passage that presents what I call “the grammar of salvation.” “But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead: Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us” (2 Corinthians 1:9, 10). Notice that God “delivered us” (past tense), “doth [does] deliver” (present tense), and “he will yet deliver us” (future tense), thus we can see that salvation is an ongoing process consisting of three parts; what God has done in the past, what He is doing at the present, and what He will do in the future.

These three phases of salvation are called justification, sanctification, and glorification. Justification is what God has done for us in the past, which was to save us from the penalty of sin. This event was accomplished at the cross and was a judicial act, something that was done for us. This is our title to heaven. Sanctification is what God is presently doing, which is saving us from the power of sin. This is a daily, ongoing process and is experiential, something He is doing in us. “For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure” (Philippians 2:13). This is our fitness for heaven. Glorification is what He will yet do in the future when He “shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body” (Philippians 3:21). Through glorification we shall be saved from the very presence of sin. This is external and is what He will do to us. This will be our entrance into heaven. All three of these are essential to salvation.

Although many believe there is unanimity among

Christians concerning justification and sanctification, in reality there is much diversity. However, the great tragedy is diversity also exists with Adventism concerning who has been justified, as well as how and when justification takes place. This diversity also exists on the doctrine of sanctification as we shall see in the next chapter.

The Apostle Paul deals in depth with justification in the fifth chapter of Romans. "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. 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 5:6-10).

Notice, Paul refers to the fact that "Christ died for us" and then says "much more" than this; it doesn't end here, it keeps getting better. He not only died, He lives, and having been "justified by his blood" and "reconciled to God" by His death, we "shall be saved by His life." Therefore, "through our Lord Jesus Christ... we have now received the atonement" (Romans 6:11). In verses 12-21 the apostle proceeds to inform us exactly how, when, where, and who have received the atonement and been justified.

He begins by first explaining exactly what our situation is in Adam. "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: (For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come" (Romans 5:12-14).

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There are three important points to notice in this passage: 1. Sin entered the world through Adam. 2. Adam was condemned to death because of this sin. 3. This condemnation spread to all mankind “for all have sinned.” Does Paul mean that all die because “all have sinned” personally as Adam did? Or because “all have sinned” in Adam. Upon close examination it becomes clear that what Paul is saying is all mankind was in Adam when he sinned; therefore, the condemnation of death was automatically passed upon all mankind. Four things help clarify this position.

1. The Greek verb, sinned (vs. 12), is in the aorist tense. Thus it refers to an act that took place at a single point of time in the past. In other words, it was Adam's sin, not the continuing sins of his descendants.
2. Verses 13-14 explain what he meant in verse 12. That they had “not sinned after the similitude (likeness) of Adam's” sin. This stands in contradiction to the notion that all die because they have sinned as he did.
3. Four times in verses 15-18 Paul declares that it was Adam's sin (not ours) that brought judgment, condemnation, and death upon the whole human race.
4. Paul continues his argument by stating that all that has happened to us in Adam is undone for us in Christ.

“But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification. For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.) Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all

men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life” (Romans 5:15-18).

If we reject Paul’s position that all sinned in Adam and insist that all die because all have sinned as Adam sinned, then consistency demands we must also insist that all live and are justified because they have obeyed as Christ obeyed. Such a position is not only absurd, but heretical. Notice that verses 13-17 are in parenthesis indicating that Paul is interjecting a thought between verses 12 and 18 to illustrate the contrast between our condition in Adam and our condition in Christ. We can, therefore, read verses 12 and 18 in conjunction without deviating from the apostle’s main thought. “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned... Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.”

Here we see that as surely as condemnation came upon all men through Adam, just as surely justification also came upon all men. Can this be true? Did Paul really mean what he said? This statement has caused controversy within the Christian church for centuries and has been interpreted in at least four different ways.

1. *The Calvinist View* - The word “all” does not really mean all, but refers only to the “elect” or those whom God has “predestined” to be saved. Everyone else has been predestined to be lost, and as such, they never had nor ever will have any hope of eternal life.
2. *The Universalist View* - God will not permit anyone to be lost regardless if he or she rejects Him. Thus “all” will be saved, even if they do not want to be; they have no choice in the matter.

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3. *The Armenian View* - The “free gift” of justification did not truly come “upon all men,” only a provision was made whereby it might be possible to be justified, if they in turn would do something to activate it.
4. *The New Testament View* - All have been legally justified by the sacrifice of Jesus for “the sin of the world.”

Notice how consistent this position is throughout the New Testament. “The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29).

“But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man” (Hebrews 2:9).

“And he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world” (1 John 2:2).

“All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Isaiah 53:6).

“For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time” (1 Timothy 2:3-6).

“To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation” (2 Corinthians 5:19).

“For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose

again" (2 Corinthians 5:14, 15).

The sentence pronounced on Adam was the second death, and this was passed to all mankind in Adam. The entire race legally belongs on death row. In Adam we were all lost, but in Christ we have all been justified. He not only redeemed us from the results of Adam's sin, but "much more," He has also canceled our personal sins "many offenses" (Romans 5:16) and brought the free gift "upon all men unto justification of life" (vs. 18). He has already placed this gift in our hands. The real issue is not whether we will do something that we might acquire it or activate it, but rather how shall we respond to what he has already given to us. This death sentence was not only deferred, it was totally inflicted on Christ. There is no reason any will experience the second death except their own willful, persistent unbelief; their refusal to accept what Christ has already accomplished for them on the cross. This is what Paul meant when he said Christ tasted "death for every man" (Hebrews 2:9).

In the garden of Eden Adam and Eve were told that if they sinned (disobeyed Him and ate of the fruit), there would be serious repercussions. "The LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Genesis 2:16, 17). Did they die "in the day" they ate of the fruit? Why not? Christians often look at this and immediately feel they must devise some theory to prevent God from appearing to be a liar. They must "help God out." Therefore, some have speculated that God only meant they would "begin to die." But is this what God said? Of course not! He clearly said, "in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Others have proposed God meant they would "die spiritually." Is that what God said though? Most definitely not, so how dare any to put words in God's mouth.

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God does not need man messing with His word to get Him out of a “fix.” All we need do is let His word interpret itself.

His word explicitly declares that God “hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (2 Timothy 1:9, 10).

Jesus did all of this and “abolished death” “before the world began” because the moment there was sin, there was a Saviour. If Jesus had not stepped into Adam’s place in the garden, Adam would have died, but Jesus became his substitute and remained on “death row” for four thousand years. Being God for four millennium, Jesus knew all the pain, sorrow, suffering, and rejection He would have to endure, but because of His love for us, He “endured the cross, despising the shame” and is again “set down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hebrews 12:2). This, dear reader, is why Jesus is called “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Revelation 13:8).

In Adam, in the garden, was the entire human race. Every person on this planet is a descendant of his; if he had died, we all would have died. He paid the price for all of us; he took the place of all mankind and thereby “the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life” (Romans 5:18). Now we are all called upon to “trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe” (1 Timothy 4:10).

“To the death of Christ we owe even this earthly life. The bread we eat is the purchase of His broken body. The water we drink is bought by His spilled blood. Never one, saint or sinner, eats his daily food, but he is nourished by the body and blood of Christ. The cross of Calvary is stamped on

every loaf. It is reflected in every water spring.”⁵⁵

This justification, however, should not be confused with the doctrine of justification by faith. This is a legal justification without which none, saint or sinner, would be able to live even now. Every person on the earth owes his or her physical life, his very existence, to the sacrifice of the Son of God. God has taken the initiative, how do we respond to His love? Or, as Paul put it: “How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation” (Hebrews 2:3).

If we are truly honest with ourselves, most of us would have to admit we accepted Jesus for rather selfish reasons: either from fear of hell or a desire to be in heaven; to acquire the good or avoid the bad. Little or no thought was given to what impact our decisions would have upon God. Whereas this may not be bad as a starting point in our Christian experience, I would submit to you that it is impossible to remain a true Christian for selfish reasons. True Christianity is based on a love relationship, upon our loving response to the greatest exhibition of love the world has ever seen. God’s “love is drawing us to Himself. If we do not resist this drawing, we shall be led to the foot of the cross in repentance for the sins that have crucified the Saviour.”⁵⁶

Notice: “It is not the fear of punishment, or the hope of everlasting reward, that leads the disciples of Christ to follow Him. They behold the Saviour's matchless love, revealed throughout His pilgrimage on earth, from the manger of Bethlehem to Calvary's cross, and the sight of Him attracts, it softens and subdues the soul. Love awakens in the heart of

⁵⁵ White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 660

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 176

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the beholders. They hear His voice and they follow Him.”⁵⁷

When an individual sees the unconditional love of God as revealed in this Bible truth and believes, his heart is changed; he abhors his sins which placed the Son of God on the cross; he repents and accepts the Supreme Sacrifice in his behalf. This, then, is justification by faith! Not just a legal declaration, but also a life changing experience, which enables him “both to will and to do of His good pleasure” (Phil. 2:13). And “being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:1)

“True justification by faith in Christ will be made manifest in transformation of character.”⁵⁸ “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; 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.”⁵⁹

True justification by faith will expel the prevalent philosophy of “how much can I get away with and still get into heaven.” The great desire of many to “squeak by the pearly gates” can only be revealed and eliminated in the blazing light of the cross of Christ. Remember, “God's forgiveness is not merely a judicial act by which He sets us free from condemnation. It is not only forgiveness for sin, but reclaiming from sin. It is the outflow of redeeming love that transforms the heart.”⁶⁰

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 480

⁵⁸ White, *Letter 83*, 1890

⁵⁹ White, *Selected Messages*, Vol. 1, p. 480

⁶⁰ White, *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 114

Chapter 7

Our Fitness for Heaven

Today, many of God's professed people are more concerned with arguing the fine points of righteousness by faith than with allowing God to perfect His righteous character in them. They are often seeking to define the minute points of justification and sanctification, rather than acknowledge that both are the working of God, and they are simply to allow Him to work out His will in their lives.

“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?”⁶¹

Since we are counseled not to “try to be more minute than is Inspiration” in defining justification and sanctification, let us begin by considering an inspired definition. “Justification means the saving of a soul from perdition, that he may obtain sanctification, the life of heaven. Justification means that the conscience, purged from dead works, is placed where it can receive the blessings of sanctification.”⁶²

We are further informed that “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,

⁶¹ Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, Vol. 6, p. 1072

⁶² White, *Manuscript 113*, 1902

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the second is our *fitness* for heaven.”⁶³

It is important to note that both justification and sanctification are the work of God and both are accomplished by faith alone. When the Lord sent Paul as the apostle to the gentiles, it was for the purpose of opening “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, and inheritance among them which are *sanctified by faith* that is in me” (Acts 26:18). We are also told God has chosen us “to salvation through *sanctification of the Spirit* and belief of the truth: Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Thessalonians 2:13, 14).

We are not only sanctified by the Spirit, but are also called “to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.” What is this glory we are to receive through faith in the sanctifying power of the Spirit of God? Inspiration gives an unmistakable answer to this. “He has called us ‘to the obtaining of the glory’ - character - ‘of our Lord Jesus Christ;’ has called us to be ‘conformed to the image of His Son’ (2 Thess. 2:14; Rom. 8:29.)”⁶⁴

The word of God also tells us “the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Romans 8:18). Is this possible? Can the glory of God be revealed in His people? Can the character of Christ be reflected in His people? The Apostle Paul firmly believed this and informs us how it can become a reality in our lives, as it was in his.

“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the

⁶³ *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, June 4, 1895

⁶⁴ White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 341

flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20). It is essential that we be crucified with Christ, for if we do not die to self, He cannot live His life within us. "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him" (Romans 6:6-8).

The "old man" is not to become weak, not to become sick, but he is to die, and when he is dead, we no longer serve sin. "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" (Romans 6:1, 2). "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof" (Romans 6:11, 12). If we have truly been justified, have indeed died to self, then we will live a new life altogether. Our thoughts, our words, and our actions will all be heavenward.

"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God... Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him" (Colossians 3:1-3, 9, 10).

The servant of the Lord expressed it in these words: "Then the Spirit of God through faith produces a new life in the soul. The thoughts and desires are brought into obedience to the will of Christ. The heart, the mind are created anew in the image of Him who works in us to subdue all things unto Himself. Then the law of God is written in the mind and

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heart, and we can say with Christ, 'I delight to do Thy will, O my God.' Ps. 40:8."⁶⁵

For this to be an ongoing experience we must be "always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh" (2 Corinthians 4:10, 11). We must always be delivered unto death that the life of Jesus might be manifest. This must happen daily, as Paul said, "I die daily" (1 Corinthians 15:31). There must be a continual, daily dying to self. Our wills constantly surrendered to His, then the "thoughts," the "desires," and the very "mind" will be changed.

It is imperative that we "put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Ephesians 4:22-24). The "old man" will be "put off," and where does he dwell? Right between our ears, that's where. Therefore, the carnal mind is put away and there is a total change of mind. When this happens, Paul says, "you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in his sight" (Colossians 1:21, 22). Unless we receive that new mind, we remain enemies of God, and the only way to receive that mind is to receive Christ.

"Holiness is the gift of God through Christ. Those who receive the Saviour become sons of God. They are His spiritual children, born again, renewed in righteousness and true holiness. Their minds are changed...they are adopted

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 176

into God's family, and they become conformed to His likeness, changed by His Spirit from glory to glory.”⁶⁶

Our minds are to be changed, and as our minds change, our characters change. This is why we are constantly admonished “be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind” and to “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus” (Romans 12:1,2; Philippians 2:5). Knowing what the will of God is “arm yourselves likewise with the same mind” that you no longer live “in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God” (1 Peter 4:1, 2).

We should shun anything that weakens the function of the mind. Until we begin to think like Jesus, we cannot begin to act like Him. Until we give Him control of our minds, we will be at enmity with Him. “For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be” (Romans 8:6, 7).

In Galatians there is a passage that has often been misunderstood and misapplied. “For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would” (Galatians 5:17). What things are these that can't be done: the good things or the bad things? Many believe that it is the good that we cannot do. What a terrible state that would be, not to be able to do good and forced to go through life doing only evil. However, the preceding verse makes it clear that what Paul is saying is if we walk in the Spirit, we will not do evil. “This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh” (Galatians 5:16).

We are so accustomed to running our own lives, we often ignore, resist, or reject the leading and promptings of the

⁶⁶ *Signs of the Times*, December 17, 1902

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Holy Spirit, but if we allow the Holy Spirit to have control of our lives, we cannot do the works of the flesh. The Spirit of God will never lead anyone to lie, steal, cheat, commit adultery, etc. Having been crucified with Christ, the carnal mind is put to death, and being now spiritually minded we walk in the Spirit and “sin shall not have dominion over you” (Romans 6:14). “But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life” Romans 6:22). Those who reject and resist the Bible teaching that we can fully obey and do good works have never fully experienced the power of God’s grace and His Spirit.

What it basically comes down to is which is greater, the Spirit or the flesh? If we believe, as the Bible teaches, that the Spirit of God is all powerful, then it stands to reason that the power of the Spirit can overcome the desires of the flesh. The assurance of God’s word is “greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world” (1 John 4:4). The question is “do you believe this?” Not only can we, through the power of the Holy Spirit, overcome the lusts of the flesh, we must overcome them, for unless we walk in the Spirit, we are in a state of disaster; we are under the condemnation of God. However, “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Romans 8:1).

Being “in Christ” is not a one-time event, but a moment-by-moment choice – a continual surrender of our will to His. If we are walking after the flesh, we are not in Christ and are under condemnation. “So then 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 as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God (Romans 8:8, 9, 14).

It is walking in the Spirit rather than the flesh that distinguishes the “sons of God” from the “children of this world.” Remember, “the Christian's life is not simply a modification of the old, but a total transformation, because the old man is dead. There is a death to self and sin, and a new life altogether. This change can be brought about only by the effectual working of the Holy Spirit”⁶⁷

“When the Spirit of God takes possession of the heart, it transforms the life. Sinful thoughts are put away, evil deeds are renounced; love, humility, and peace take the place of anger, envy, and strife. Joy takes the place of sadness, and the countenance reflects the light of heaven.”⁶⁸

If only we would come to see how our Lord longs for us to put away all doubt, and in simple faith accept the promise of His Spirit that we might be “changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Corinthians 3:18). Why do so many vehemently resist or reject the glorious good news that “By the power of the Holy Spirit the moral image of God is to be perfected in the character. We are to be wholly transformed into the likeness of Christ.”⁶⁹

Jesus says, “without me ye can do nothing” (John 15:5), but God’s people have yet to believe that as Paul, we “can do all things through Christ” (Philippians 4:13). Why do we find it so hard to claim that assurance? Why do God’s people today feel this certainty applies only to Paul, or maybe even Peter, or John, but not to us living today? Our Lord says to us, “Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh: is there any

⁶⁷ White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 172

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 173

⁶⁹ White, *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 506

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thing too hard for me?” (Jeremiah 32:27) and many of His professed people reply, “Yes, Lord, there is; You cannot keep me from sinning.”

Let us, each one, claim by faith this promise from God. “The omnipotent power of the Holy Spirit is the defense of every contrite soul. Not one that in penitence and faith has claimed His protection will Christ permit to pass under the enemy's power. The Saviour is by the side of His tempted and tried ones. With Him there can be no such thing as failure, loss, impossibility, or defeat: we can do all things through Him who strengthens us. When temptations and trials come... look to Jesus, your helper.”⁷⁰

⁷⁰ White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 490

Chapter 8

The Power of the Holy Spirit

Jesus came to this world bearing in His flesh the results of sin, but in His humanity was able to live a life free of sin. In His human nature He was able to overcome all temptations to sin that Satan hurled at Him, and He says to each of us: “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne” (Revelation 3:21). Is this possible? Can we overcome all sin, every temptation, even as Jesus did? God says, YES; Satan says, NO. Whom shall we believe?

“After the fall of man, Satan declared that human beings were incapable of keeping the law of God...and Christ came to unmask the deceiver...and with the same facilities that man may obtain, withstood the temptations of Satan as man must withstand them.”⁷¹

Remember, Jesus came not only to “share our sorrows and temptations,” but to also “give us an example of a sinless life.”⁷² Thus, “having taken our fallen nature, He showed what it might become.”⁷³

The question that must now be answered is: “Does God really expect His people to live sinless lives?” Should we perhaps resign ourselves to the assumption that we must go on sinning, but resolve that we will strive to avoid committing “big” sins and seek to commit only “small” ones? It really sounds rather ridiculous when we put it that way, doesn’t it?

⁷¹ White, *Selected Messages*, Vol. 1, p. 252

⁷² White, *Desire of Ages*, p. 49

⁷³ White, *Selected Messages*, Vol. 3, p. 134

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If we are indeed to put away sin in our lives, and Jesus is our example of how to live a sinless life, then we should look at His life to find the secret of His success. Why is it that Jesus was able to overcome and we are constantly slipping and falling into sin?

Part of the reason for this dilemma is because “the nature of God, whose law had been transgressed, and the nature of Adam, the transgressor, meet in Jesus, the Son of God, and the Son of man.”⁷⁴ It is an irrefutable fact that “Christ did in reality unite the offending nature of man with His own sinless nature.”⁷⁵ If Jesus had both a divine *and* a human nature, how could He be our example? How can He tell us to overcome as He overcame? The answer to this is readily available in God’s word where we are assured that “According as his divine power [He] hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these *ye might be partakers of the divine nature*, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust” (2 Peter 1:3, 4).

Just as surely as He became a partaker of our fallen human nature, we may become partakers of His divine sinless nature. It was His humanity united with divinity that withstood the fiercest test. He repeatedly stated: “The Son can do nothing of himself,” “I can of mine own self do nothing,” “I do nothing of myself,” “the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works” (John 5:19, 30; 8:28; 14:10). “He overcame

⁷⁴ White, *Manuscript 141*, 1901

⁷⁵ *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, July 17, 1900

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in human nature, relying upon God for power.”⁷⁶ “He exercised in His own behalf no power that is not freely offered to us. As man, He met temptation, and overcame in the strength given Him from God.”⁷⁷ “With the same facilities that man may obtain, (Christ) withstood the temptations of Satan as man must withstand them.”⁷⁸

Jesus “withstood the temptation, through the power that man may command. He laid hold on the throne of God, and there is not a man or woman who may not have access to the same help through faith in God. Man may become a partaker of the divine nature; not a soul lives that may not summon the aid of Heaven in temptation and trial. Christ came to reveal the source of His power, that man may never rely on his unaided human capabilities.”⁷⁹

Here is where the root of our problem lies. When we stop looking to self and look to Jesus Christ to whom all power has been given in heaven and earth, then we can become overcomers, even as He overcame. But there must be a constant, cultivated distrust of self and total trust and dependence upon God. All of the power of heaven is awaiting our demand and reception, but do we really reach out for it in faith? Do we really want it, or do we prefer to make excuses for our sins?

“By His humanity, Christ touched humanity; by His divinity, He lays hold upon the throne of God. As the Son of man, He gave us an example of obedience; as the Son of God,

⁷⁶ *The Youth Instructor*, April 24, 1901

⁷⁷ White, *Desire of Ages*, p. 24

⁷⁸ White, *Selected Messages*, Vol. 1, p. 252

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 134

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He gives us power to obey.”⁸⁰ The power is there, but many of God's people are unable to tap into that power, for they refuse to trust God; they refuse to believe that He is able to keep them from falling.

Jesus was able to live a sinless life in human form, solely through the power given Him by God, through the loving, trusting relationship He had with the Father. And the Father desires us to enjoy that same type of relationship with Him that we might possess the same perfect humanity of His Son. Ask God for the faith to claim these inspired promises. “In His humanity, He laid hold of the divinity of God; and this every member of the human family has the privilege of doing. Christ did nothing, that human nature may not do if it partakes of the divine nature.”⁸¹

“Jesus revealed no qualities, and exercised no powers, that men may not have through faith in Him. His perfect humanity is that which all His followers may possess, if they will be in subjection to God as He was.”⁸²

Here we find another reason for our problem, which is we do not want to be in subjection to anyone, including God. I am my own man (or woman) is the declaration of many. “I am a self-made person” they proudly boast exhibiting the well-established fact, self-made people usually worship their “creator.” We need to stop worshiping ourselves, looking to ourselves, and look to the Creator of heaven and earth in whom all power resides that we can receive power to live the life of Christ and to follow the example He has set for us. The promise of God is that we can be set free from sin.

⁸⁰ White, *Desire of Ages*, p. 24

⁸¹ *Signs of the Times*, June 17, 1897

⁸² White, *Desire of Ages*, p. 664

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“That spirit of life in Christ, ‘The power of His resurrection,’ sets men ‘free from the law of sin and death.’ The dominion of evil is broken, and through faith the soul is *kept from sin.*”⁸³ Can this be true? Can the power of God actually keep us from sin? Are we able to live in perfect obedience to the law of heaven?

“Satan represents God's law as a law of selfishness. He declares that it is impossible for us to obey its precepts.... Jesus was to unveil this deception. As one of us He was to give an example of obedience. For this He took upon Himself our nature, and passed through our experiences. ‘In all things it behooved Him to be made like unto His brethren.’ Heb. 2:17. If we had to bear anything which Jesus did not endure, then upon this point Satan would represent the power of God as insufficient for us. Therefore Jesus was ‘in all points tempted like as we are.’ Heb. 4:15... His life testifies that it is possible for us also to obey the law of God.”⁸⁴

Not only does Satan claim that we cannot keep the law of God, but he also has a large number of representatives in many pulpits around the world saying the very same thing. Nearly 15,000,000 Seventh-day Adventists are strangely silent when they should be lifting up their voices and crying in unison, “This is not true, it is a lie, and originated with the father of lies.” But when we consider the Bible definition of sin, we find ourselves in a rather awkward situation. “Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law” (1 John 3:4). Can we not see the inconsistency of saying that through the power of God we can stop transgressing His law, but continue to say that God’s power is not able to keep us from sinning (which is defined as

⁸³ Ibid., pp. 209, 210

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 24

transgression of the law)? Thereby, many of God's remnant people are also perpetuating the lie that we are unable to keep the law.

As can be seen, this means that many are promoting the devil's lie, for they, in union with Satan and the nominal Christian churches of the world, declare that we cannot keep the law, that we cannot receive the power to do what God has commanded us to do. This position (though often held in ignorance) stands in direct opposition to the exactness of inspiration. "Christ died to make it possible for you to cease to sin, and sin is the transgression of the law."⁸⁵ "To everyone who surrenders fully to God is given the privilege of living without sin, in obedience to the law of heaven."⁸⁶

Regardless of what you think or what others may tell you, "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."⁸⁷

What we need, friends, is the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit that we also might live lives of perfect obedience and receive "salvation through sanctification of the Spirit" (2 Thessalonians 2:13). "Christ came to this earth and lived a life of perfect obedience, that men and women, through His grace, might also live lives of perfect obedience. This is necessary to their salvation."⁸⁸

We must always remember, however, that "in our own strength it is impossible for us to deny the clamors of our

⁸⁵ *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, August 28, 1894

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, September 29, 1906

⁸⁷ White, *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 1, p. 144

⁸⁸ *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, March 15, 1906

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fallen nature. Through this channel Satan will bring temptation upon us. Christ knew that the enemy would come to every human being, to take advantage of hereditary weakness, and by his false insinuations to ensnare all whose trust is not in God. And by passing over the ground which man must travel, our Lord has prepared the way for us to overcome... He has endured all that it is possible for us to bear. His victory is ours.

“Jesus rested upon the wisdom and strength of His heavenly Father... He did not consent to sin. Not even by a thought did He yield to temptation. *So it may be with us.* Christ's humanity was united with divinity; He was fitted for the conflict by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. And He came to make us partakers of the divine nature. So long as we are united to Him by faith, sin has no more dominion over us. God reaches for the hand of faith in us to direct it to lay fast hold upon the divinity of Christ, that we may attain to perfection of character.”⁸⁹

⁸⁹ White, *Desire of Ages*, pp. 122, 123

Chapter 9

Does God Expect too Much?

We concluded the previous chapter with the assurance “we may attain to perfection of character.” To many, however, the term “Christian perfection” is taboo, a phrase forbidden to be uttered without incurring divine wrath (or at least the wrath of the saints). While I can understand some of the concerns and fears that people have, I am still amazed at the reaction of some whenever they hear these words (which are perfectly good Bible words) mentioned together. Immediately the defense mechanisms are triggered and without discussion or investigation Christian perfection is declared to be an absolute impossibility. And this is in spite of the fact that Paul's counsel is: “Let us go on to perfection” (Hebrews 6:1). It is indeed evident of the truth of the words of Ellen White that God's people would have “to contend with a strange power opposed to the idea of attaining the perfection that Christ holds out.”⁹⁰

One reason for this reaction, I believe, is that nearly all realize that perfection and sin are as incompatible as love and hate. Therefore, if we cannot be released from the power of sin, we cannot attain to perfection of character for the two cannot dwell together; we cannot cling to and excuse sin and hope to attain to perfection.

It is impossible for one to believe in Christian perfection, unless he or she first believes that it is possible, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to overcome sin. It is likewise impossible for one to believe in overcoming sin and not believe in Christian perfection, for the latter is simply the result of the former. This is what prompted the great reformer, John

⁹⁰ Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, Vol. 6, p. 1098

Wesley, to declare:

“The word perfect is what many cannot bear. The very sound of it is an abomination to them; and whosoever preaches perfection, that is asserts that it is attainable in this life, runs great hazard of being accounted by them worse than an heathen man or a publican.

“And hence some have advised, wholly to lay aside the use of those expressions, 'because they have given so great offense.' But are they not found in the oracles of God? If so, by what authority can any messenger of God lay them aside, even though all men should be offended.”⁹¹

“Why are those who oppose salvation from sin (few excepted) so eager, - I had almost said furious? In God's name, why are you so fond of sin? What has it ever done for you and why are you so violent against those who hope for deliverance from it?”⁹²

The Lord Jesus has given a command that has caused much perplexity among many Christians today. “Be ye therefore perfect,” He says, “even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect” (Matthew 5:48). Part of the problem so many have with this verse is they forget that every command of God carries with it the power to perform. Therefore, some feel they need to add some word to try to qualify this statement, but if God had wanted to qualify it, He would have supplied the qualifying words Himself. The passage is clear just as it reads. Difficult perhaps for some to accept, but clear nonetheless. So, once again, the question that every Christian must settle in his own mind is: “Is the Scripture sufficient, or must we add to it, or take from it, when we have a hard time believing it?”

⁹¹ *The Works of John Wesley*, Vol. 6, Sermon XL, p. 1

⁹² *Ibid.*, Sermon LXXVI, p. 424

Regardless of what some may say, the Bible does teach Christian perfection, but it is not to be found in us; it is found only in Jesus. Notice how clear Jesus makes this. “And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me” (John 17:22, 23). If Christ does not dwell in Christians, they can never be perfect, but if Christ does dwell in them, they must be perfect for He is perfect. The perfection is not ours, but His.

The Apostle Paul fully believed this teaching of Jesus and said we were to “all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:13). He repeatedly expresses the desire to “present every man perfect in Christ Jesus” (Colossians 1:28), “that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God” (Colossians 4:12), “That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Timothy 3:17). Therefore, he says, “Let us go on to perfection” (Hebrews 6:1).

When we look at the writings of Ellen White, we find them full of inspired statements on this subject, all of which assure us of the reality of complete victory in the lives of all who desire it and claim it through faith.

“Christ took humanity and bore the hatred of the world that He might show men and women that they could live without sin, that their words, their actions, their spirit, might be sanctified to God. We can be perfect Christians if we will manifest this power in our lives. When the light of heaven rests upon us continually, we shall represent Christ.”⁹³

“The Spirit was to be given as a regenerating agent, and

⁹³ White, *The Upward Look*, p. 303

without this the sacrifice of Christ would have been of no avail. The power of evil had been strengthening for centuries, and the submission of men to this satanic captivity was amazing. Sin could be resisted and overcome only through the mighty agency of the Third Person of the Godhead, who would come with no modified energy, but in the fullness of divine power. It is the Spirit that makes effectual what has been wrought out by the world's Redeemer. It is by the Spirit that the heart is made pure. Through the Spirit the believer becomes a partaker of the divine nature. Christ has given His Spirit as a divine power to overcome all hereditary and cultivated tendencies to evil, and to impress His own character upon His church... The very image of God is to be reproduced in humanity. The honor of God, the honor of Christ, is involved in the perfection of the character of His people."⁹⁴

Do you realize what a high and holy calling has been extended to you, to be one of those whom God has called to vindicate His honor and character? One to whom He says, "If you will lay hold on My power I promise that you can overcome all of those hereditary and cultivated tendencies to evil and live the life of My dear Son?" Praise God! There is nothing in our lives that Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, does not have the power to subdue, if we will but let Him. And remember, "the honor of Christ must stand complete in the perfection of the character of His chosen people."⁹⁵

"God designs that every one of us shall be perfect in Him, so that we may represent to the world the perfection of His character. He wants us to be set free from sin, that we

⁹⁴ White, *Desire of Ages*, p. 671

⁹⁵ *Signs of the Times*, November 25, 1897

may not disappoint heaven, that we may not grieve our divine Redeemer. He does not desire us to profess Christianity, and yet not avail ourselves of that grace which is able to make us perfect, that we may be found wanting in nothing.”⁹⁶

All of this may be very hard for us to understand, but God never said we had to understand it, all we need do is believe it, and recognize that with Him nothing is impossible. “Our Saviour does not require impossibilities of any soul. He expects nothing of His disciples that He is not 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 upon the ones upon whom He would confer so high and holy a privilege.”⁹⁷

“God plainly states that He expects us to be perfect, and because He expects this, He has made provisions for us to be partakers of the divine nature.”⁹⁸ “Exact obedience is required, and those who say that it is not possible to live a perfect life throw upon God the imputation of injustice and untruth.”⁹⁹

The following is one of the most comprehensive statements ever written on this subject. Meditate long upon it and allow God to bless your heart.

“God’s ideal for His children is higher than the highest human thought can reach. ‘Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.’ This command is a promise. The plan of redemption contemplates our complete recovery from the power of Satan. Christ always separates

⁹⁶ White, *My Life Today*, p. 15

⁹⁷ White, *That I Might Know Him*, p. 130

⁹⁸ *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, January 28, 1904

⁹⁹ Ellen White, *Manuscript 148*, 1899

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 ideal of Christian character is Christlikeness. As the Son of man was perfect in His life, so His followers are to be perfect in their life... His character is to be ours. The Lord says of those who believe in Him, 'I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.' 2 Cor. 6:16...

“He took our nature and overcame, that we through taking His nature might overcome. Made 'in the likeness of sinful flesh' (Rom. 8:3), He lived a sinless life. Now by His divinity He lays hold upon the throne of heaven, while by His humanity He reaches us. He bids us by faith in Him attain to the glory of the character of God. Therefore are we to be perfect, even as our 'Father which is in heaven is perfect.'”¹⁰⁰

Do we dare believe “the Holy Spirit shall be imparted to every repentant soul, to keep him from sinning”? How dare we not believe it simply because the voice of the multitude cries out, “we can not stop sinning until Jesus comes”? We have a choice we must make. Do we believe God or the multitude? The Holy Spirit has said He can keep us from sinning. Do you believe it?

The great problem of God's people is their refusal to believe Him and seek that closer relationship, that greater

¹⁰⁰ White, *Desire of Ages*, p. 671

infilling of His Spirit. Instead, so many continue to make excuses for their sins and “it is these excuses that lead to sin. There is no excuse for sinning.”

Satan is a wily foe and today, as in ages past, he attempts to hinder the truth of God, not only through direct opposition to it, but also through fanatical perversion of it. Not only does he have those who say it is impossible to stop sinning, he also speaks through those who would dare say: “I am sinless!” “I am holy!” “I am perfect!” While it is true that God would have us press toward this goal in Christ Jesus, we, too, must feel as did the Apostle Paul when he said, “Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect” (Philippians 3:12).

God has told us in the clearest language possible that the closer His people are drawn to Him, “The clearer their views of the greatness, glory, and perfection of Christ, the more vividly will they see their own weakness and imperfection. They will have no disposition to claim a sinless character; that which has appeared right and comely in themselves will, in contrast with Christ’s purity and glory, appear only as unworthy and corruptible. It is when men are separated from God, when they have very indistinct views of Christ, that they say, ‘I am sinless; I am sanctified.’”¹⁰¹

Even in light of the counsel, “let not God be dishonored by the declaration from human lips, ‘I am sinless; I am holy.’ Sanctified lips will never give utterance to such presumptuous words,”¹⁰² there are some today who dare make such unsanctified claims. “We may always be startled and indignant when we hear a poor, fallen mortal exclaiming, ‘I am holy: I am sinless!’ Not one soul to whom God has granted

¹⁰¹ White, *The Sanctified Life*, p. 50

¹⁰² White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 561, 562

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the wonderful view of His greatness and majesty, has ever uttered one word like this.”¹⁰³

It would be well to remember that “the claim to be without sin is, in itself, evidence that he who makes this claim is far from holy.”¹⁰⁴

Live Out Thy Life Within Me

Live out Thy life within me, O Jesus King of kings!
Be Thou Thyself the answer To all my questionings;
Live out Thy life within me, In all things have Thy way!
I, the transparent medium Thy glory to display.

The temple has been yielded, And purified of sin;
Let Thy Shekinah glory Now shine forth from within,
And all the earth keep silence, The body henceforth be
Thy silent, gentle, servant, Moved only as by Thee.

Its members every moment Held subject to Thy call,
Ready to have Thee use them, Or not be used at all;
Held without restless longing, Or strain, or stress, or fret,
Or chafings at Thy dealings, Or thoughts of vain regret.

But restful, calm, and pliant, From bend and bias free,
Awaiting Thy decision, When Tho hast need of me.
Live out Thy life within me, O Jesus, King of kings!
Be Thou the glorious answer To all my questionings.

- Frances Ridley Havergal

¹⁰³ *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, January 28, 1904

¹⁰⁴ White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 473

Chapter 10

God's Finished Mystery

In the tenth chapter of Revelation, in the setting of the “Great Disappointment,” we find something very exciting pertaining to God’s last day people. Between the sounding of the sixth trumpet (the fall of the Ottoman Empire, August 11, 1840; Revelation 9:14-21) and the sounding of the seventh trumpet (the second coming of Christ; Revelation 11:15-19) lies the promise that just before the seventh angel sounds, or Jesus comes, “the mystery of God should be finished” (Revelation 10:7).

What is this “mystery of God” that is to be finished in these last days? Paul speaks of this “mystery which has been hid from ages” and says that “God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Colossians 1:26, 27).

What Jesus is waiting for is to be revealed in His people. This is the mystery of God that is to be finished before He returns. Again in Ephesians, the apostle speaks of this mystery throughout most of the third chapter. It is his prayer that God’s people might “be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith” (Ephesians 3:16, 17). The word heart means “mind” and what Paul is saying is: “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 2:5).

The Lord must dwell in our minds, by the power of His Holy Spirit, and have absolute control of our thoughts, before He can have control of our actions. It is not until we make that surrender that we can “be filled with all the fulness of God” (Ephesians 3:19). But once we do submit, God “is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us” (Ephesians 3:20).

However, this power cannot work in us unless Christ dwells in us, for it is only His power that can enable us to do things, which are “exceedingly abundantly” more than we could ever “ask or think.” To experience this, it must be “God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure” (Philippians 2:13).

Do we have the faith to fully accept the Bible teaching that the life and character of Jesus can be fully reflected in His people? Many do not and instead of praying, as did the disciples of old, “Lord, Increase our faith” (Luke 17:5), or crying out “with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief” (Mark 9:24), they begin to devise deceptive little parables and fables to try to illustrate their “doctrines of devils” and “cunningly devised fables” (1 Timothy 4:1; 2 Peter 1:16). Dear reader, I implore you to base all your beliefs upon what God says rather than what man says. A compilation of all of the words of wisdom of the world's greatest scholars and theologians is not what we need, not at all. What we need is the word of God.

Hear what God's word says: “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, *when he shall appear, we shall be like him*; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in *him purifieth himself, even as he is pure*. Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for *sin is the transgression of the law*. And ye know that *he was manifested to take away our sins*; and in him is no sin. *Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not*: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him. Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. *He that committeth sin is of the devil*; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is born of God *doth not*

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commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God (1 John 3:2-9). “We know that whosoever is born of God *sinneth not*; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not” (1 John 5:18).

Scripture declares we will not sin if God’s seed remains in us. If Jesus is abiding in us, it becomes an impossibility for us to sin, for Christ is not the minister of sin. If the Holy Spirit comes into our lives and we are totally submitted to Him, we cannot sin. To say that we must sin is to say that the Holy Spirit is a sinner. The Holy Spirit will lead no one into sin. It is only when we let go of our faith that Satan gains the victory. We must have the faith of Jesus. “Here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus” (Revelation 14:12). Our faith must grasp the promises of God, for if it does not, we cannot lay hold on the power of God, and if we do not have the power of God, we cannot stop sinning, but if we do have this power, we will not continue to sin.

“The Saviour took upon Himself the infirmities of humanity and lived a sinless life, that man might have no fear that because of the weakness of human nature they could not overcome. Christ came to make us partakers of the divine nature; and His life declares that humanity, combined with divinity, does not commit sin.”¹⁰⁵

Many do not realize it, but “when they excuse sin and cling to perversity of character, they give Satan a place in their affections, and pay him homage.”¹⁰⁶ This is why “He who has not sufficient faith in Christ to believe He can keep him from sinning, has not the faith that will give him an entrance

¹⁰⁵ White, *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 180

¹⁰⁶ White, *Our High Calling*, p. 321

into the kingdom of God.”¹⁰⁷

In order to excuse their sinfulness, we often hear people say, “In Christ was no sinful propensity, and we have these sinful propensities, therefore we can not live as Christ lived.” However, “We must realize that through belief in Him it is our privilege to be partakers of the divine nature, and so escape the corruption that is in the world through lust. Then we are cleansed from all sin, all defects of character. We need not retain one sinful propensity.”¹⁰⁸

With such clear, direct, and irrefutable testimonies as these, it is amazing how many still assert that we cannot overcome sin until Jesus returns and does some miraculous thing to “lock us in” so that we will not sin anymore. We must never be duped by such a devilish deception, for sin must be put away before Jesus comes.

“All preparation for heaven must be completed here. When Christ comes, our characters will not be changed. These vile bodies will be changed, and fashioned after the likeness of His glorious body; but there will not be a moral change wrought in us then.”¹⁰⁹ “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 be accomplished before that time. When the Lord comes, those who are holy will be holy still... 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

¹⁰⁷ *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, March 10, 1904

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, April 24, 1900

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, August 7, 1888

done in these hours of probation. It is now that this work is to be accomplished for us.... Many of us are rough stones from the quarry. But as we lay hold upon the truth of God, its influence affects us. It elevates us and removes from us every imperfection and sin, of whatever nature.”¹¹⁰

When Jesus comes it is in order that His people might be glorified, that we might receive a body “like unto His glorious body” (Philippians 3:21). But if we do not have a character like His character, He will not, He can not, give us a body like His. He now “sits as a refiner and purifier of His people; and when His image is perfectly reflected in them, they are perfect and holy, and prepared for translation.”¹¹¹ But before He comes “everything that is imperfect in us will have been seen and put away.”¹¹²

It is very clear that God calls upon His people to put away all sin from their lives and allow Christ to live His perfect life in them. It is only through faith, as we allow Him to live His life in us, that we are able to separate sin from us and live the life He lived.

“Now, while our great High Priest is making the atonement for us, we should seek to become perfect in Christ. Not even by a thought could our Saviour be brought to yield to the power of temptation... there was no sin in Him that Satan could use to his advantage. This is the condition in which those must be found who shall stand in the time of trouble. It is in this life that we are to separate sin from us, through faith in the atoning blood of Christ.”¹¹³

¹¹⁰ White, *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 2, p. 355

¹¹¹ White, *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 1, p. 340

¹¹² White, *Selected Messages*, Vol. 3, p. 427

¹¹³ White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 623

Chapter 11

The 144,000 and the Seal of God

When God's mystery is finished, Jesus shall make the awesome pronouncement: "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still" (Revelation 22:11), and He shall come for His people who will be fully reflecting His character. These holy, righteous people (referred to as the 144,000) will have put away all sin and received "the seal of the living God" in their foreheads (Revelation 7:2, 3).

In Revelation 14 we are told it is the "Father's name written in their foreheads" (Revelation 14:1). They are seen in the closing chapter of Revelation standing in the presence of God and it is again declared that "his name shall be in their foreheads" (Revelation 22:4). This name is "in" their foreheads, not "on" their foreheads. This has nothing to do with an outward mark, but rather it is an inward, evident transformation of their minds (Romans 12:2). In the Bible a name is indicative of character (i.e. Jacob the deceiver, the supplanter, becomes Israel, God ruled). Those who have "the seal of the living God" in their foreheads (Revelation 7:2, 3) will have received the mind of Christ (Philippians 5:2) and will fully reflect His character. Thus, they have the "Father's name written in their foreheads" just as Jesus had the Father's name in Him (Exodus 23:20, 21).

We find in inspiration that this "seal of the living God will be placed upon those only who bear a likeness to Christ in character"¹¹⁴ and "Not one of us will ever receive the seal of

¹¹⁴ *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, April 24, 1900

God while our characters have one spot or stain upon them.”¹¹⁵ Therefore, “Those who receive the seal of the living God and are protected in the time of trouble must reflect the image of Jesus fully.”¹¹⁶

Our Saviour stands poised on the threshold of heaven, waiting, longing to come for His people, but our unbelief will not permit Him to come. He cannot seal us by His Spirit while we remain impure, unholy, unbelieving, and unwilling to allow Him to change us into His image. He continues to wait for one thing. “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.”¹¹⁷

It is only as we place ourselves totally under His control that we can hope to receive His seal. His truth must be rooted in our hearts and our lives transformed by His Spirit. “As wax takes the impression of the seal, so the soul is to take the impression of the Spirit of God and *retain* the image of Christ.”¹¹⁸ What God is waiting for is for us to allow Him to change us, to allow Him to take control of our lives, our very thoughts and actions, and to bring us to the very sinlessness of Adam before the fall?

“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.”¹¹⁹ Do you have

¹¹⁵ White, *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 5, p. 214

¹¹⁶ White, *Early Writings*, p. 71

¹¹⁷ White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p.69

¹¹⁸ Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, Vol. 9 p. 970

¹¹⁹ White, *Manuscript 122*, 1901

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the faith to accept this?

This message was of such importance that the following year the Lord repeated this message to His people. "Every one who believes on Christ, every one who relies on the keeping power of a risen Saviour that has suffered the penalty pronounced upon the transgressor, every one who resists temptation and in the midst of evil copies the pattern given in the Christ-life, will through faith in the atoning sacrifice of Christ become a partaker of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. Every one who by faith obeys God's commandments, will reach the condition of sinlessness in which Adam lived before his transgression."¹²⁰

What an awesome thought, yet many of God's people are too easily satisfied with their attainments. They are neglecting the preparation so needful in these last days. What about you? "What are you doing... in the great work of preparation? Those who are uniting with the world are receiving the worldly mold and preparing for the mark of the beast. Those who are distrustful of self, who are humbling themselves before God and purifying their souls by obeying the truth - these are receiving the heavenly mold and preparing for the seal of God in their foreheads. When the decree goes forth and the stamp is impressed, their character will remain pure and spotless for eternity.

"Now is the time to prepare. The seal of God will never be placed upon the forehead of an impure man or woman. It will never be placed upon the forehead of the ambitious, world-loving man or woman. It will never be placed upon the foreheads of men or women of false tongues or deceitful hearts. All who receive the seal must be without spot before

¹²⁰ *Signs of the Times*, July 23, 1902

God - candidates for heaven.”¹²¹

The word of God teaches “us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world” (Titus 2:12). Have we perhaps forgotten that Jesus died and rose again “that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works” (Titus 2:14)? Therefore, when Jesus returns, His people will constitute “a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish” (Ephesians 5:27).

Our own course of action will determine whether we shall receive the seal of the living God and be a part of these people. But we, as a people, remain in a state of spiritual stupor, so self-satisfied with our attainments. “There has been so little self denial, so little suffering for Christ's sake, that the cross is almost entirely forgotten... So long as we choose the easy path of self indulgence, and are frightened at self-denial, our faith will never become firm and we cannot know the peace of Jesus, nor the joy that comes through conscience victory... Oh, for a living, active faith. We need it; we must have it, or we shall faint and fail in the day of trial.”¹²²

So many are neglecting the needed preparation and “if the mind is filled with other things, present truth is shut out, and there is no place in our foreheads for the seal of the living God.”¹²³ Therefore, “let us strive with all the power that God has given us to be among the hundred and forty-four

¹²¹ White, *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 5, p. 216

¹²² *Ibid.*, p. 215

¹²³ White, *Early Writings*, p. 58

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thousand.”¹²⁴

Of these people John has recorded that “in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God” (Revelation 14:5). However, centuries before John ever penned these words God described His last day “remnant” and declared: “The remnant of Israel *shall not do iniquity*, nor speak lies; neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth: for they shall feed and lie down, and none shall make them afraid... The LORD hath *taken away thy judgments*, he hath *cast out thine enemy*: the king of Israel, even *the LORD, is in the midst of thee: thou shalt not see evil any more*” (Zephaniah 3:13, 15).

As amazing as it may seem, through the grace and power of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, we can be transformed to reflect His character fully and to live the life He lived; we can reach that sinless condition in which Adam lived before his transgression. This can be a reality for each of us. But “are we striving with all our power to attain to the stature of men and women in Christ? Are we seeking for His fullness, ever pressing for the mark set before us - the perfection of His character? When the Lord's people reach this mark, they will be sealed in their foreheads. Filled with the Spirit, they will be complete in Christ and the recording angel will declare, “It is finished.”¹²⁵

There is no doubt that what we, as a people, need most in these last days is the faith of Abraham, who “staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform” (Romans 4:20, 21).

¹²⁴ *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, March 9, 1905

¹²⁵ *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, June 10, 1902

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Remember, dear reader, God's promise to you is that "you need never yield to temptation; for One stands by your side who is able to keep you from falling."¹²⁶ I don't know about you, but that makes me want to shout for joy, "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:57).

"Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and for ever. Amen" (Jude 1:24, 25).

¹²⁶ White, *Our High Calling*, p. 19

Chapter 12

God's Sorrow - Our Shame

As we saw in Chapter 1, even the evangelical world sees there is tremendous “theological diversity” within the Seventh-day Adventist church concerning “such doctrines as the atonement, sin, Christ's nature, authority, and especially the meaning of righteousness by faith.” They are fully aware that “Seventh-day Adventism is experiencing an identity crisis. Ironically, the present confusion is in direct contrast to the confidence of Adventism's pioneers.”

They openly concede that “early Seventh-day Adventists knew exactly who they were. They were God's ‘remnant church,’ ‘a special people, with a special message for a special time,’” and “they believed that they were God's special movement in earth's final days.”

They accurately and forthrightly declared: “This exalted identity remained intact until Adventism's encounter with evangelicalism in the 1950s” when the book *Questions on Doctrine* was published. Even though some of our church leaders deny it, the rest of the Christian world proclaims without any hesitation, this book “repudiated such commonly held traditional Adventist doctrines as the notion that Christ had inherited a human nature affected by the Fall, and an understanding that last-days believers would achieve sinless perfection,” and became “what would later be known as evangelical Adventism.” This book also “reflected a sense of change in how Adventists viewed themselves - and others.”

They further acknowledge that the Seventh-day Adventist Church “has a distinct view concerning righteousness by faith.” A change in this doctrine of righteousness by faith precipitated a change in “the long-standing Adventist belief that Jesus Christ had taken a sinful

human nature at His incarnation.”

The *Christianity Today* article stated that the doctrinal diversity within our church is due, in part, to our church’s “attempt to achieve theological and cultural respectability. In the 1950s and 1960s, many Adventist students began receiving graduate degrees from non-Adventist universities. In many cases, the schools attended by these Adventists were theologically liberal. Thus Adventist scholars were influenced by modern biblical criticism and liberal theology.”

While I am in agreement with this, I believe that is only the superficial and readily discernable cause of the problem and the very core and root of the “identity crisis” we are experiencing goes much deeper than these people, or even most of the remnant people, understand.

Understanding the readily available biblical and historical information can prevent us from becoming downcast and despondent by the overwhelming abundance of compromise and false doctrines, and help us fully understand why these things are happening and how it will all culminate.

We have already explored the magnitude of the beauty and power of the “everlasting gospel” in the Bible doctrines of the previous chapters and how there have always been those who “would pervert the gospel of Christ” (Galatians 1:7). We know that of all people on this planet, Satan concentrates much of his efforts “to make war with the remnant” who “keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Revelation 12:17). As with all wars there are many battles fought in different places at different times, some of which tend to be more significant than others. One of the most (if not *the* most) significant and far reaching battles in which Satan gained the victory over God’s remnant people was fought 118 years ago in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Again as with physical wars, even after a battle is lost, there is often a “resistance” that arises to continue to do battle until

reinforcements arrive to restore what has been lost.

The Seventh-day Adventist church has recognized from its very beginning that God had blessed them with the prophetic gift. There was no doubt in their minds they comprised those foretold, centuries in advance, who were to “keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Revelation 12:17), and that this gift of prophecy was evidenced in the life and writings of Ellen G. White. They were also acutely aware this inspired gift was fully inspired as evidenced by their source, content, and power to change lives and preserve and restore truth. This position of the church is summarized in the following sentiments of one of our pioneers, Uriah Smith.

“On the supposition, now, that these are not the work of the Spirit of God, as they must then be the work of the devil, we inquire, has the devil thus fallen in love with truth and righteousness? Has he made a league with the word of God, to sustain and uphold it? Has he so far lost sight of the interests of his own kingdom as to lend his efforts to root out all false doctrines from our belief, and all seeds of unrighteousness from our hearts, that we may have truth without error, and live a life without sin?

In view of all these considerations, what shall we conclude? Those who reject these manifestations, do so not only without evidence, but against all evidence. Those who profess to stand on the Bible and the Bible alone, are bound to receive what the Bible tells them will exist, and commands them to respect.”¹²⁷

Ellen White said herself that her work either carried the credentials of heaven or the stamp of Satan. “God is either teaching His church, reproofing their wrongs and strengthening their faith, or He is not. This work is of God, or

¹²⁷ *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, January 13, 1863

Which Gospel

it is not. God does nothing in partnership with Satan. My work . . . bears the stamp of God or the stamp of the enemy. There is no halfway work in the matter. The Testimonies are of the Spirit of God, or of the devil.”¹²⁸

The sad thing is that having acknowledged God had sent a prophet to His people, we at times responded as did the children of Israel when God “sent prophets to them, to bring them again unto the LORD; and they testified against them: but they would not give ear” (2 Chronicles 24:19), but “they rejected his...testimonies which he testified against them; and they followed vanity, and became vain, and went after the heathen that were round about them, concerning whom the LORD had charged them, that they should not do like them” (2 Kings 17:15).

God had said through Moses: “I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him (Deuteronomy 18:18, 19). From this we see that when God sends a message through the prophetic office and anyone refuses to hear, or rejects this message, will be held responsible for their actions.

Over a century ago God sent a message to His people as they met in a small church in Minneapolis, and the events which transpired there have sent reverberations through the church, which have made 1888 a date as well known as 1844. However, while many are familiar with the date, they are unaware of its significance.

Divergent theories have been set forth as to what actually took place there, but many questions still demand straight answers.

¹²⁸ White, *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 5, p. 671

1. Did God send a special message to His people 100 years ago?
2. Was the message accepted or rejected?
3. What was this message? Can we know for certain today, or did God allow it to be lost for all eternity?
4. Were Jones and Waggoner "trouble makers" as some claim or were they "Christ's delegated messengers"?
5. What was Ellen White's position in the midst of all this turmoil? Just where did the prophet stand?
6. Do the events in the lives of Jones and Waggoner in later years have any bearing on the message they brought to the church in 1888?

Three key people stand out above all others in the events and issues surrounding this infamous session. These three individuals were Ellen G. White, Ellet J. Waggoner, and Alonzo T. Jones, and the issues we face today (as we did over a century ago) revolve around who these people are and what they were saying.

Jones and Waggoner, two young ministers, were introducing ideas that were contrary to the already established opinions of a large portion of the church leaders. Two of the issues which caused such a stir were, in reality, of little importance, yet they succeeded in distracting from the greater messages God was sending His people at that time.

One of these side issues was between A. T. Jones and Uriah Smith concerning one of the ten horns of Daniel 7. Smith had been teaching for years that one of these horns represented the Huns and now Jones was saying that it was the Alemanni?

The other issue arose between E. J. Waggoner and G. I. Butler, the General Conference president, over the law in Galatians. This had been an issue between the two since the 1886 General Conference Session when Waggoner had presented the idea that the law in Galatians was the moral

law. This, too, was contrary to the position of most Seventh-day Adventists, who believed that it was the ceremonial law referred to in Galatians.

During the 1886 General Conference Session, Ellen White, who was in Europe at the time, was shown the proceedings in vision and later wrote to Elder Butler stating: "That conference was presented to me in the night season. My guide said, 'Follow me; I have some things to show you.' He led me where I was a spectator of the scenes that transpired at that meeting. I was shown the attitude of some of the ministers, yourself in particular, at that meeting, and I can say with you, my brother, it was a *terrible* meeting."¹²⁹ She went on to say: "The Lord was not pleased with that meeting. Your spirit, my brother, was not right. The manner in which you treated Dr. Waggoner was perhaps after your own order, but not after God's order. The course you took was not excusable, even if his views were questionable."¹³⁰

On February 10, 1887 (three months after the 1886 session), Elder Waggoner prepared a 71 page booklet in response to an 85 page booklet by Elder Butler on the law in Galatians, which had been distributed to the delegates at the 1886 Session. However, he left it unpublished for nearly two years, probably due to a letter written by Ellen White on February 18, reproving him and Jones for publicizing differences of belief.

"It is no small thing for you to come out in the Signs as you have done, and God has revealed that such things should not be done. We must keep before the world a united front. Satan will triumph to see differences among Seventh-day

¹²⁹ *The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials*, Vol. 1, pp. 92, 93

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 97

Adventists. These questions are not vital points.”¹³¹

Waggoner took this counsel from God's messenger, but sad to say, Elder Butler did not. Thus, within a couple of months, the prophet sent a rebuke to Elder Butler and Uriah Smith.

“I have sent copies of letters written to Brethren Waggoner and Jones to Elder Butler in reference to introducing and keeping in the front and making prominent subjects on which there are differences of opinion....I was pained when I saw your article in the Review... And when this is followed by a pamphlet published of your own views, be assured I cannot feel that you are just right at this point to do this unless you give the same liberty to Dr. Waggoner... I believe now that nothing can be done but open discussion. You circulated your pamphlet; now it is only fair that Dr. Waggoner should have just as fair a chance as you have had.”¹³²

These were the events leading up to the 1888 Session. And now, with the prophet back from Europe and the delegates assembled, we come to one of the saddest chapters in the history of the remnant church.

A seven-day ministerial institute preceded the conference session during which Jones presented his reasons for preferring the Alemanni rather than the Huns, and Waggoner gave his arguments as to why the law in Galatians was the moral law. Butler was unable to attend the meetings due to poor health, but was kept informed through correspondence by various individuals. At one point Ellen White wrote him: “The spirit which has prevailed at this

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 22, 23

¹³² *Ibid.*, pp. 32, 33, 35

meeting is not of Christ.”¹³³

On October 23 Elder Kilgore (a member of the General Conference committee and a strong supporter of Elder Butler) requested that all discussion on righteousness by faith be discontinued until Elder Butler could be present. In response to this motion, the prophet, who was seated on the platform, immediately rose to her feet and said: “This is the Lord's work. Does He want His work to wait for Elder Butler? The Lord wants His work to go forward and not wait for any man.”

The next morning in her presentation the prophet announced: “Had Brother Kilgore been walking closely with God he never would have walked onto the ground as he did yesterday and made the statement he did in regard to the investigation that is going on. That is, they must not bring any new light or present any new argument... because one man is not here. Have we not all been looking into this subject?”

“I was never more alarmed than at the present time... I want to tell you, my brethren, that it is not right to fasten ourselves upon the ideas of any one man... If the ministers will not receive the light, I want to give the people a chance; perhaps they may receive it. God did not raise me up to come across the plains to speak to you and you sit here to question His message and question whether Sister White is the same as she used to be in years gone by.”¹³⁴

A few days later she wrote: “We have had the hardest and most incomprehensible tug of war we have ever had among our people... We are determined to do all we can in the fear of God to help our people in this emergency.

“A sick man's mind has had a controlling power over the

¹³³ *Ibid.*, p. 94

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 151-153

General Conference Committee and the ministers have been the shadow and echo of Elder Butler about as long as it is healthy and for the good of the cause....Elder Butler, we think, has been in office three years too long and now all humility and lowliness of mind have departed from him. He thinks his position gives him such power that his voice is infallible.”¹³⁵

The problem was the same then as it is today. The people had begun to look to men instead of the word of God, to leaders in the church rather than Christ, to their favorite author in the place of “the Author and Finisher of our faith” (Hebrews 12:2). When we come out of that rut and begin to look to Jesus Christ and Him crucified, the power of the Holy Spirit will enlighten our minds, the eyes of our understanding will be opened, and we will be able to know of the doctrine whether it is of God.

It was because of these divisions and blind loyalties among the brethren, the unwillingness to yield up preconceived opinions, that led to Satan's success “in shutting away from our people, in a great measure, the special power of the Holy Spirit that God longed to impart to them.”¹³⁶

As we continue in our investigation of the events surrounding and the message sent in 1888, I believe it would be well for us to consider one of the first messages given by the Lord's messenger at this General Conference.

“The messages coming from your president at Battle Creek are calculated to stir you up to make hasty decisions and to take decided positions; but I warn you against doing this. You are not now calm; there are many who do not know what they believe. It is perilous to make decisions upon any controverted point without dispassionately considering all

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 182, 183

¹³⁶ White, *Selected Messages*, Vol. 1, p. 235

sides of the questions...

“The truth must be presented as it is in Jesus; if there are any among us who become stirred up because ideas contrary from what they have believed are presented in this meeting, then stop your unsanctified criticisms and candidly investigate the subject, and it will sanctify the soul.”¹³⁷ Would it not be well for God's people today to heed this counsel?

One of the first things that becomes evident when one considers the message God sent to us in 1888 is that there are many warnings given to those who would “rise up against it.” As early as 1857 Ellen White was given a vision in which she was told that the shaking would be caused by an opposition to “the counsel of the True Witness to the Laodiceans.”

“I asked the meaning of the shaking I had seen and was shown that it would be caused by the straight testimony called forth by the counsel of the True Witness to the Laodiceans. This will have its effect upon the heart of the receiver, and will lead him to exalt the standard and pour forth the straight truth. Some will not bear this straight testimony. They will rise up against it, and this is what will cause a shaking among God's people.”¹³⁸

The prophet has also informed us, in no uncertain terms, that “the message given us by A. T. Jones, and E. J. Waggoner is the message of God to the Laodicean church, and woe be to anyone who professes to believe the truth and yet does not reflect to others the God given rays.”¹³⁹

Notice the tremendous importance inspiration placed on

¹³⁷ *The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials*, Vol. 1, p. 165

¹³⁸ White, *Early Writings*, p. 270

¹³⁹ *The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials*, Vol. 3, p. 1052

this "most precious message" from heaven.

"The Lord in His great mercy sent a most precious message to His people through Elders Waggoner and Jones."¹⁴⁰

"The message of Christ's righteousness is to sound from one end of the earth to the other to prepare the way of the Lord. This is the glory of God, which closes the work of the third angel."¹⁴¹

"The loud cry of the third angel has already begun in the revelation of the righteousness of Christ, the sin-pardoning Redeemer. This is the beginning of the light of the angel whose glory shall fill the whole earth."¹⁴²

From the above statements we discover that when God sent this "most precious message" to His people, it was "to prepare the way of the Lord" and "close the work of the third angel" and begin the "loud cry" of the angel "whose glory shall fill the whole earth." If this is true (and if not, then neither is the prophet or the church) and the "latter rain" began to be poured out more than a century ago, why are we still here? Why has our Lord not come? If the "loud cry" that was to lighten the whole world began in 1888, why is so much of the world still in darkness? The answer is simple. It is because this message was despised and the light resisted, and as a result, the "special power of the Holy Spirit" in latter rain measure, which would have enabled God's people to carry the truth to the world as the apostles did on Pentecost, was kept from them.

"An unwillingness to yield up preconceived opinions,

¹⁴⁰ White, *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 91

¹⁴¹ White, *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 6, p. 19

¹⁴² White, *Selected Messages*, Vol. 1, p. 363

and to accept this truth, lay at the foundation of a large share of the opposition manifested at Minneapolis against the Lord's message through Brethren (E. J.) Waggoner and (A. T.) Jones. By exciting that opposition Satan succeeded in shutting away from our people, in a great measure, the special power of the Holy Spirit that God longed to impart to them. The enemy prevented them from obtaining that efficiency which might have been theirs in carrying the truth to the world, as the apostles proclaimed it after the day of Pentecost. The light that was to lighten the whole earth with its glory was resisted, and by the action of our own brethren has been in a great degree kept away from the world.”¹⁴³

The brethren were opposing both the message and the messengers and were warned that if they were not careful, it would be too late before they realized they had been fighting against God. Does not the following warning apply to God's people today, as well as those living when they were first penned?

“I would speak in warning to those who have stood for years resisting light and cherishing the spirit of opposition. How long will you hate and despise the messengers of God's righteousness? God has given them His message. They bear the word of the Lord... Light and power from on high have been shed abundantly in the midst of you. Here was evidence, that all might discern whom the Lord recognized as His servants. But there are those who despised the men and the message they bore. They have taunted them with being fanatics, extremists, and enthusiasts. Let me prophesy unto you: Unless you speedily humble your hearts before God, and confess your sins, which are many, you will, when it is too late, see that you have been fighting against God. Through the conviction of the Holy Spirit, no longer unto reformation

¹⁴³ Ibid., pp. 234, 235

and pardon, you will see that these men whom you have spoken against have been as signs in the world, as witnesses for God... Your turning things upside down is known of the Lord. Go on a little longer as you have gone, in rejection of the light from heaven, and you are lost...

“I have no smooth message to bear to those who have been so long as false guideposts, pointing the wrong way. If you reject Christ's delegated messengers, you reject Christ. Neglect this great salvation, kept before you for years, despise this glorious offer of justification through the blood of Christ and sanctification through the cleansing power of the Holy Spirit, and there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation. I entreat you now to humble yourselves and cease your stubborn resistance of light and evidence.”¹⁴⁴

Shouldn't we determine not to repeat the history of ancient Israel or God's people in (and since) 1888, who “refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear? Yea, they made their hearts as an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law, and the words which the LORD of hosts hath sent in his spirit” (Zechariah 7:11, 12).

There are some who have been told that although the message was rejected at Minneapolis, by the time everything was over, everyone repented, accepted, and went home rejoicing. Is this what really happened? The following statements are all taken from a manuscript written by Ellen White a few months after the 1888 General Conference session and clearly reveals the fallacy of such a fabrication.

“I knew that the same work that had leavened the camp at Minneapolis had not been confined to that place but had reached over to Battle Creek through letters sent from

¹⁴⁴ White, *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, pp. 96, 97

Minneapolis and by word of mouth of those who preceded us to Battle Creek. Reports had come to Elder Butler that were not correct or true. Those reporting were deceived by the enemy and were in turn deceiving him, putting a wrong interpretation upon many things. In his weak condition of health he accepted everything as verity and truth, and acted accordingly. He solicited no interview with me and did not come to call upon me although several times he passed almost by the door where I was rooming. He did not ask me if the statements brought to him were true, but accepted all that had been unwisely told him...

“I met with the brethren in the Tabernacle, and there I felt it my duty to give a short history of the meeting and my experience in Minneapolis, the course I had pursued and why, and plainly state the spirit which prevailed at that meeting. I told them the position I was compelled to take at that meeting which was not in harmony with my brethren, and the efforts I there made with select brethren to convince them that they were not moving in the counsel of God, that the Lord would not sanction any such spirit as that which prevailed at the meeting.

“I told them of the hard position I was placed in, to stand, as it were, alone and be compelled to reprove the wrong spirit that was a controlling power at that meeting...

“I tried at the meeting at Battle Creek to make my position plain, but not a word or response came from the men who should have stood with me. I stated that I stood nearly alone at Minneapolis. I stood alone before them in the conference, for the light that God had seen fit to give me was that they were not moving in the counsel of God. Not one ventured to say, ‘I am with you, Sister White. I will stand by you’....

“I felt deeply grieved that my brethren who had known me for years and had evidence of the character of my labor

should continue to remain in the deception they were in and, rather than confess that they had been mistaken, hold on to the same false impressions as though they were truth.

“I was invited to speak the next Sabbath in the Tabernacle, but afterwards - because the impressions were so strong that I had changed - I think the brother felt a little sorry he had asked me. Two Elders visited me on Sabbath morning, and I was asked by one what I was going to speak upon. I said, ‘Brethren, you leave that matter with the Lord and Sister White, for neither the Lord nor Sister White will need to be dictated to by the brethren as to what subject she will bring before them. I am at home at Battle Creek, on the ground we have broken through the strength of God, and we ask not permission to take the desk in the Tabernacle. I take it as my rightful position accorded me of God. But there is Brother Jones, who cannot feel as I do, and who will wait an invitation from you. You should do your duty in regard to this matter and open the way before him.’ The elders stated they did not feel free to invite him to speak until they had consulted Brother Smith to know whether he would sanction it, for Elder Smith was older than they. I said, ‘Then do this at once, for time is precious and there is a message to come to this people and the Lord requires you to open the way for the light to come to the people of God’...

“Unbelief is the occasion for all sin and the bond of iniquity... A woe is pronounced upon all such unbelief and criticism as was revealed in Minneapolis and as was revealed in Battle Creek. By their fruits ye shall know them. Evidence at every step that God was at work has not changed the manifest attitude of those who in the very beginning pursued a course of unbelief which was an offense to God...

“The present message that God has made it the duty of His servants to give to the people is no new or novel thing. It is an old truth that has been lost sight of, just as Satan made

his masterly efforts that it should be.”¹⁴⁵

This is the inspired record of what was taking place in 1888 and 1889. Two years later (1891) it was time for the next General Conference session and again God sent an appeal and a warning to His people, especially those who were following the teachings and opinions of men rather than searching out the truth about the 1888 message for themselves. The following statements are taken from the message delivered by the prophet to the delegates at the 1891 session.

“God's servants are to impress upon all the importance of finding out for themselves what is truth, watching and praying for a clear understanding of the Word... Let those whom God has imbued with reason search the Scriptures for themselves, obtaining an experience and knowledge for themselves. Let them search with humble and subdued hearts, seeking earnestly for the precious ore. There is altogether too much at stake for men to accept the opinions of their fellowmen, failing to make diligent search for themselves as did the noble Bereans... God's servants find their greatest success among a class who are not wedded to their previous teacher, who ask, Is this the way of the Lord...

“In the fear and love of God I tell those before whom I stand today that there is increased light for us, and that great blessings come with the reception of this light. And when I see my brethren stirred with anger against God's messages and messengers, I think of similar scenes in the life of Christ and the reformers. The reception given to God's servants in past ages is the same as the reception that those today receive through whom God is sending precious rays of light. The leaders of the people today pursue the same course of action that the Jews pursued. They criticize and ply question after

¹⁴⁵ *The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials*, Vol. 1, pp. 352-381

question, and refuse to admit the evidence, treating the light sent them in the very same way that the Jews treated the light Christ brought them...

“In this our day men have placed themselves where they are wholly unable to fulfill the conditions of repentance and confession; therefore they cannot find mercy and pardon. The sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit does not lie in a sudden word or deed; it is the firm, determined resistance of truth and evidence.

“The Lord has been calling His people. In a most marked manner He has revealed His Divine presence. But the message and the messengers have not been received but despised... In rejecting the message given at Minneapolis, men committed sin. They have committed far greater sin by retaining for years the same hatred against God's messengers, by rejecting the truth that the Holy Spirit has been urging home. By making light of the message given, they are making light of the word of God...

“In this time light from the throne of God has been long resisted as an objectionable thing. It has been regarded as darkness and spoken of as fanaticism, as something dangerous, to be shunned. Thus men have become guide posts pointing in the wrong direction. They have followed the example set by the Jewish people. They have hugged their false theories and maxims to their hearts until they have become to them as precious fundamental doctrines.”¹⁴⁶

As a result of their perverse course, we find that “they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear, but walked in the counsels and in the imagination of their evil heart, and went backward, and not forward” (Jeremiah 7:24). How very, very sad.

At the following General Conference Session in 1893, A.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., Vol. 2, pp. 906-916

T. Jones again brought before the people the terrible cost of resisting the Holy Spirit and the message which He brought them.

“Now brethren, when did that message of the righteousness of Christ begin with us as a people? [One or two in the audience: 'Three or four years ago.'] Which was it, three? or four? [Congregation: 'Four.'] Yes, four. Where was it? [Congregation: 'Minneapolis.'] What then did the brethren reject at Minneapolis? [Some in the congregation: 'The loud cry.'] What is that message of righteousness? The testimony has told us what it is; the loud cry - the latter rain. Then what did the brethren in that fearful position in which they stood, reject at Minneapolis? They rejected the latter rain - the loud cry of the third angel's message.

“Brethren, isn't it too bad? Of course the brethren did not know that they were doing this, but the Spirit of the Lord was there to tell them that they were doing it, was it not? But when they were rejecting the loud cry, 'a teacher of righteousness,' and then the Spirit of the Lord, by His Prophet, stood there and told them what they were doing - what then? Oh, then they simply set this prophet aside with all the rest. That was the next thing.”¹⁴⁷

For the first time, the church of the living God had openly defied the prophet of God, and it is on record for all the world to know. Yet we, as a people, continue on as if nothing ever happened. How terribly tragic. Angels are yearning to burst through the clouds with our Redeemer, but we continue moving about in a fog, not grasping what God really wants to do for us.

Both the message and the messengers were “made light of,” “resisted,” “hated,” “despised,” and “rejected” and this rejection caused the power of the Holy Spirit, in “latter rain”

¹⁴⁷ *The 1893 General Conference Bulletin*, p. 183

measure, to be kept from God's people, thus preventing the "loud cry" of the fourth angel. I believe, therefore, that it is imperative we understand what this message was that our Lord sent to us, in order that we today, with a humble and contrite heart and in deep humiliation before God, may accept what has been so long resisted.

There are some today, however, who claim that we have no way of knowing what the actual message was that the Lord sent in 1888. Yet, if we believe that God did indeed send "a most precious message to His people through Elders Waggoner and Jones,"¹⁴⁸ that the message was "rejected"¹⁴⁹ and that our "only remedy" is "acceptance of the light."¹⁵⁰ Is it not absurd to say that God would have allowed to become lost the "only remedy" to the impoverished spiritual condition of His church? Is it not a horrible thought to believe that He has not preserved the message which was (and is) to bring the power of the Holy Spirit in latter rain measure for the proclamation of the "loud cry"?

In addition to this, are we to assume that the prophet, the messengers, and their messages changed after 1888, never to be proclaimed again? Indeed not! With both voice and pen God's servants continued to appeal to the Remnant to accept that which was rejected in Minneapolis. These many sermons, letters, and manuscripts are available today, so that all who will may know with certainty this "most precious message." None need remain in doubt or darkness.

Furthermore, Froom records in his book *Movement of Destiny* (pp.200, 201) that Waggoner's messages in the Signs,

¹⁴⁸ White, *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 91

¹⁴⁹ White, *Selected Messages*, Vol. 1, pp. 234, 235

¹⁵⁰ White, *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 91

which began two months after the 1888 General Conference (1-21-89), were simply edited transcripts of his sermons at the 1888 General Conference, which his wife had taken down in shorthand.

One other issue that should be addressed is: did the events in the lives of Jones and Waggoner in later years nullify the message they brought to the church in 1888? There are some today who believe this to be true and some even go so far as to say that it was their fanatical message that led them to apostasy. However, notice what the Lord has said and decide for yourself whom you shall believe.

“Should the Lord's messengers, after standing manfully for the truth for a time, fall under temptation, and dishonor Him who has given them their work, will that be proof that the message is not true? No, because the Bible is true... Sin on the part of the messenger of God would cause Satan to rejoice, and those who have rejected the messenger and the message would triumph; but it would not at all clear the men who were guilty of rejecting the message of truth sent of God.”¹⁵¹

“It is quite possible that Elder Jones or Waggoner may be overthrown by the temptations of the enemy; but if they should be, this would not prove that they had no message from God, or that the work that they had done was all a mistake. But should this happen, how many would take this position, and enter into a fatal delusion because they are not under the control of the Spirit of God.”¹⁵²

God's word contains an admonition that, had we heeded, would have saved us from much of the perplexities we face today. “Believe in the LORD your God, so shall ye be

¹⁵¹ *The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials*, Vol. 3, p. 1025

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, pp. 1024, 1025

established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper" (2 Chronicles 20:20). When His people of old rejected this counsel, they were carried into Babylonian captivity. Of this Scripture records: "Because they have not hearkened to my words, saith the LORD, which I sent unto them by my servants the prophets, rising up early and sending them; but ye would not hear, saith the LORD. Hear ye therefore the word of the LORD, all ye of the captivity, whom I have sent from Jerusalem to Babylon" (Jeremiah 29:19, 20). Is it possible that because of their refusal to hear and accept the messages God sends to "spiritual Israel," He has allowed them to be taken captive by "spiritual Babylon" today? I believe that all of the doctrinal diversity and theological controversy within the Seventh-day Adventist Church today is the result of this very thing. Our problems did not begin with the evangelical dialogues of the 1950s; what happened then was merely the results of the repeated and prolonged rejection of the Spirit of God in the message He brought to us in 1888. The longer this message is resisted, the greater the problems in the church will become and the more diluted the doctrines of God's word, until the teachings of Babylon will permeate every doctrine we hold.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church upholds numerous Bible doctrines that have been corrupted by the nominal Christian churches comprising Babylon. However, of these many Bible teachings many have now become corrupted within the remnant. (See *Appendix C*.)

"If we place ourselves in a position that we will not recognize the light God sends or His message to us, then we are in danger of sinning against the Holy Ghost. Then for us to turn and see if we can find some little thing that is done that we can hang some of our doubts upon and begin to question! The question is, has God sent the truth? Has God raised up these men to proclaim the truth? I say, yes, God has

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sent men to bring us the truth that we should not have had unless God had sent somebody to bring it to us... and I no more dare to lift up my hand against these persons, because it would be against Jesus Christ, who is to be recognized in His messengers.

“Now, I want you to be careful, every one of you, what position you take, whether you enshroud yourselves in the clouds of unbelief because you see imperfections; you see a word or a little item, perhaps, that may take place, and judge them from that. You are to see what God is doing with them. You are to see whether God is working with them, and then you are to acknowledge the Spirit of God that is revealed in them. And if you choose to resist it you will be acting just as the Jews acted.”¹⁵³

¹⁵³ Ibid., Vol. 2, pp. 608, 609

Chapter 13

The Two Covenants

One of the essential elements of the “most precious message” God sent us in 1888 (and which created so much controversy) was the two covenants. Many of the church leaders were opposed to this light because of what Ellen White called their “idolized ideas” on the law in Galatians.

In confronting this problem Ellen White addressed the brethren in March of 1890 with the following exhortation:

“Will you thinking men please to put your thoughts upon these matters for a time, and then consider what spirit is actuating you, and has been moving you at and since the Minneapolis meeting... This spirit does not bear the marks of the divine, but of the power and subtlety of the enemy of God and of man. I say that is from beneath and not in harmony with the Spirit of God, or with the message He has given His servants to bear at the present time... You have been weighing every precious heaven-sent testimony by your own scales as you interpreted the law in Galatians. Nothing could come to you in regard to the truth and the power of God unless it should bear your imprint, the precious ideas you had idolized on the law of Galatians.”¹⁵⁴

As this controversy raged the prophet refused to speak on the subject, but rather encouraged the brethren to “dig in the Bible. Sink the shaft of truth to find out what is truth.”¹⁵⁵ However, the leaders did not follow this instruction, so the Lord sent His prophet with a confirmation of the message and a rebuke for the leadership.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, pp. 630, 631

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 597

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“Now I tell you here before God, that the covenant question, as it has been presented, is the truth. It is the light. In clear lines it has been laid before me. And those that have been resisting the light, I ask you whether they have been working for God, or for the devil... No more will my lips be sealed.”¹⁵⁶ The following day she wrote: “I have no brakes to put on now. I stand in perfect freedom, calling light, light, and darkness, darkness.”¹⁵⁷

On March 8, 1890 she had been compelled to write a letter of warning to Elder Uriah Smith in which she said: “I was shown that the evidences in regard to the covenants were clear and convincing. Yourself, Brother Dan Jones, Brother Porter and others are spending your investigative powers for nought to produce a position on the covenants to vary from the position that brother Waggoner has presented.”¹⁵⁸ She continued by warning about the danger of “misconstruing the Scriptures as did the Jews.”

It is clear that the teachings of Waggoner (which the leaders were opposing) was the correct view of the two covenants, but what exactly was his position? This position was clearly delineated in his book *The Glad Tidings*.

“The covenant and promise of God are one and the same. This is clearly seen from Galatians 3:17, where Paul asserts that to disannul the covenant would be to make void the promise. In Genesis 17 we read that God made a covenant with Abraham to give him the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession. Galatians 3:18 says that God gave it to him by promise. God's covenants with men can be nothing

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 617

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 604

else than promises to them...

“After the flood God made a ‘covenant’ with every beast of the earth, and with every fowl; but the beasts and the birds did not promise anything in return. Genesis 9:9-16. They simply received the favor at the hand of God. That is all we can do - receive. God promises us everything that we need, and more than we can ask or think, as a gift. We give Him ourselves, that is, nothing. And He gives us Himself, that is, everything. That which makes all the trouble is that even when men are willing to recognize the Lord at all they want to make bargains with Him. They want it to be an equal, ‘mutual’ affair - a transaction in which they can consider themselves on a par with God...

“The gospel was as full and complete in the days of Abraham as it ever has been or ever will be. No additions to it or change to its provisions or conditions could possibly be made after God's oath to Abraham. Nothing can be taken away from it as it thus existed, and not one thing can ever be required from any man more than what was required of Abraham.”¹⁵⁹

Even with this clear statement on the covenants, we still find much confusion and misunderstanding (even among our own people) on this beautiful Bible teaching. A lot of this confusion is caused by the artificial definitions used by the theologians such as the “Adamic covenant,” the “Noachian covenant,” or the “Abrahamic covenant.” Remember, these are all the same covenant -- the “New” or “Everlasting” covenant that God promised to different people under varying circumstances.

Because of a misunderstanding of this principle, many have been led to believe that the covenants are mutual agreements between God His people. Thus the “old covenant,”

¹⁵⁹ Waggoner, *The Glad Tidings*, pp. 71, 73

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many believe, is an agreement (or promise) made between God and His people (the Jews), and the “new covenant” is an agreement between God and Christians, which has replaced the “old covenant.” Therefore, they conclude that the “old covenant” refers to the Old Testament dispensation and the “new covenant” to the New Testament dispensation. However, the word of God clearly reveals that the covenants are not a bargain struck between God and His people, nor are they a matter of time, but of condition.

Our problem is feeling we have to promise God something in return - rather than simply believing God's promise. When the Lord brought the children of Israel out of Egypt, He desired to reaffirm His covenant made to Abraham and promised to make them “a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation” (Exodus 19:6), but rather than simply accept His promise by faith, as had Abraham, the Jews felt they had to make a promise in return “and all the people answered together, and said, All that the Lord has spoken we will do” (Exodus 19:8). Thus, they entered into the “old covenant” of works and futile promises, and within a few weeks they had broken their covenant with God and found themselves dancing around a golden calf, “in bondage” and “under the law,” unable to keep their promise. What a sad sight; unwilling to believe the “new covenant” and unable to keep the “old covenant.”

The apostle Paul referred to this experience in these words: “For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman. But he who was of *the bondwoman was born after the flesh*; but *he of the freewoman was by promise*. Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar. For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem

which is above is free, which is the mother of us all. For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband. Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise" (Galatians 4:22-28).

Abraham, himself, looked for this city, the Jerusalem above. By faith "he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Hebrews 11:10). The gospel was as full and complete in the days of Abraham as it ever has been or ever will be. No additions to it or change to its conditions or provisions could possibly be made after God's promise to Abraham. Nothing could be taken away from it as it thus existed, and not one thing can ever be required from any man more than what was required of Abraham. "For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness" (Romans 4:2-3). Justification always has been and always will be by faith. If we are justified by works, we made God our debtor.

God's promise was given to Abraham before any works on his part. He simply believed God and followed God's instruction. He made no promise in return. "*How was it then reckoned?* when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision. And *he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised:* that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also: And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised. For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through

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the righteousness of faith” (Romans 4:10-13). Abraham did not promise anything in return, he simply “believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness” (Romans 4:3). “He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And *being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform.* And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness” (Romans 4:20-22).

Several times throughout his life, God reaffirmed His covenant with Abraham, and at age 99 God again assures Abraham of His promise calling it an “everlasting covenant” (Genesis 17:7). The reason this “everlasting covenant” is also called the “new covenant” is because even though it “was made with Adam and renewed to Abraham, it could not be ratified until the death of Christ. It had existed by the promise of God since the first intimation of redemption had been given; it had been accepted by faith; yet when ratified by Christ, it is called a *new* covenant.”¹⁶⁰ (Emphasis in the original.)

“These two covenants exist today. The two covenants are not matters of time, but of condition. Let no one flatter himself that he cannot be bound under the old covenant, thinking that its time is passed.”¹⁶¹ Each of us is living under the one or the other. Which of the covenants are you under? Do you say: “I accept” or “I will,” “I believe” or “I promise”?

“Your promises and resolutions are like ropes of sand. You cannot control your thoughts, your impulses, your affections. The knowledge of your broken promises and forfeited pledges will weaken your confidence in your own sincerity, and cause you to feel that God cannot accept you;

¹⁶⁰ White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 370, 371

¹⁶¹ Waggoner, *The Glad Tidings*, p. 100

but you need not despair. What you need to understand is the true force of the will. This is the governing power in the nature of man, the power of decision, or of choice. Everything depends on the right action of the will. The power of choice God has given to men; it is theirs to exercise. You cannot change your heart, you cannot of yourself give to God its affections; but you can choose to serve Him. You can give Him your will; He will then work in you to will and to do according to His good pleasure. Thus your whole nature will be brought under the control of the Spirit of Christ; your affections will be centered upon Him, your thoughts will be in harmony with Him.”¹⁶²

The beautiful “good news” of the two covenants is that the “new covenant” was established upon “better promises” - the promise of forgiveness of sins and the grace of God to renew the heart and bring it into harmony with the principles of God's law. “For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people” (Hebrews 8:10).

“The same law that was engraved upon the tables of stone is written by the Holy Spirit upon the tables of the heart. Instead of going about to establish our own righteousness we accept the righteousness of Christ. His blood atones for our sins. His obedience is accepted for us. Then the heart renewed by the Holy Spirit will bring forth ‘the fruits of the Spirit.’ Through the grace of Christ we shall live in obedience to the law of God written upon our hearts. Having the Spirit of Christ, we shall walk even as He

¹⁶² White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 47

walked.”¹⁶³

If we are truly “Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise” (Galatians 3:29), then we must have the faith of Abraham, “who staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that, what He had promised, He was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness” (Romans 4:20-22).

¹⁶³ White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 372

Chapter 14

The Future of the Remnant Church

Multitudes of God's people today have become contaminated by the prevailing iniquity of the world. They have been influenced by the unrighteousness all about us and grown cold in their religious experience. However, there still is, and will be until the end, a little company who are standing in the light and will be sighing and crying for the abominations that are done in the land, but more specifically in the church, for its members are going after the manner of the world. Although many are still continuing in the forms of religion, God's power and presence are lacking.

The prophet Ezekiel was given a vision and saw: "And, behold, six men came from the way of the higher gate, which lieth toward the north, and every man a slaughter weapon in his hand; and *one man among them was clothed with linen, with a writer's inkhorn by his side*: and they went in, and stood beside the brazen altar. And the glory of the God of Israel was gone up from the cherub, whereupon he was, to the threshold of the house. And he called to the man clothed with linen, which had the writer's inkhorn by his side; And the LORD said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and *set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof*. And to the others he said in mine hearing, Go ye after him through the city, and smite: let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity: *Slay utterly old and young, both maids, and little children, and women: but come not near any man upon whom is the mark; and begin at my sanctuary*. Then they began at the ancient men which were before the house" (Ezekiel 9:2-6).

"The command is: 'Go through the midst of the city,

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through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof.' These sighing, crying ones had been holding forth the words of life; they had reproved, counseled, and entreated...

"In the time when His wrath shall go forth in judgments, these humble, devoted followers of Christ will be distinguished from the rest of the world by their soul anguish, which is expressed in lamentation and weeping, reproofs and warnings. While others try to throw a cloak over the existing evil, and excuse the great wickedness everywhere prevalent, those who have a zeal for God's honor and a love for souls will not hold their peace to obtain favor of any. Their righteous souls are vexed day by day with the unholy works and conversation of the unrighteous. They are powerless to stop the rushing torrent of iniquity, and hence they are filled with grief and alarm. They mourn before God to see religion despised in the very homes of those who have had great light. They lament and afflict their souls because pride, avarice, selfishness, and deception of almost every kind are in the church. The Spirit of God, which prompts to reproof, is trampled underfoot, while the servants of Satan triumph. God is dishonored, the truth made of none effect.

*"The class who do not feel grieved over their own spiritual declension, nor mourn over the sins of others, will be left without the seal of God."*¹⁶⁴

The prophet Joel sounded the alarm: "Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for *the day of the LORD cometh*, for it is nigh at hand... And the LORD shall utter his voice before his army: for his camp is very great: for he is strong that executeth his word: for the day of the LORD

¹⁶⁴ White, *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 5, pp. 210, 211

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is great and very terrible; and who can abide it? *Therefore* also now, saith the LORD, *turn ye even to me with all your heart*, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: *And rend your heart, and not your garments*, and turn unto the LORD your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil... Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly: Gather the people, *sanctify the congregation*, assemble the elders, gather the children, and those that suck the breasts: let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her closet. *Let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep* between the porch and the altar, and *let them say, Spare thy people, O LORD*, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them: wherefore should they say among the people, Where is their God?" (Joel 2:1, 11-17).

Here we see again that the humble, devoted followers of Christ will be distinguished from the others by their soul anguish. Their souls are vexed by the unholy works and conversations in the world and in the church. They mourn to see religion despised in the very homes of those who have great light. They lament and afflict their souls because pride, avarice, selfishness, and deception of almost every kind are in the church. Only they will receive God's "mark" or "the seal of the living God" and remain after all the wicked have been destroyed, for they alone have heeded the commands of God.

When Ellen White said that those "who do not feel grieved over their own spiritual declension, nor mourn over the sins of others, will be left without the seal of God," she was referring to a biblical principle and teaching referred to today as "corporate repentance."

Many today also reject this Bible truth, but as with all other teachings of God's word, the opposition of the obstinate or rejection of the rebellious does not nullify its veracity.

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References to “corporate repentance” are too numerous to ignore or misunderstand.

“And they gathered together to Mizpeh, and drew water, and poured it out before the LORD, and fasted on that day, and said there, *We have sinned* against the LORD. And Samuel judged the children of Israel in Mizpeh” (1 Samuel 7:6).

“*We have sinned with our fathers, we have committed iniquity, we have done wickedly*” (Psalms 106:6).

“Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness, those that remember thee in thy ways: behold, thou art wroth; for *we have sinned* in those is continuance, and we shall be saved” (Isaiah 64:5).

“*We lie down in our shame, and our confusion covereth us: for we have sinned* against the LORD our God, *we and our fathers*, from our youth even unto this day, and *have not obeyed* the voice of the LORD our God” (Jeremiah 3:25).

“O LORD, though our iniquities testify against us, do thou it for thy name's sake: for *our* backslidings are many; *we have sinned* against thee” (Jeremiah 14:7).

“We acknowledge, O LORD, *our wickedness*, and the iniquity of our fathers: for *we have sinned* against thee. Do not abhor us, for thy name's sake, do not disgrace the throne of thy glory: remember, break not thy covenant with us” (Jeremiah 14:20, 21).

“And I prayed unto the LORD my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments: *We have sinned*, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments: *Neither have we* hearkened unto thy servants the prophets, which spake in thy name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land. O Lord,

righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of faces, as at this day; to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and unto all Israel, that are near, and that are far off, through all the countries whither thou hast driven them, because of their trespass that they have trespassed against thee. O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because *we have sinned* against thee. To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though *we have rebelled* against him; *Neither have we obeyed* the voice of the LORD our God, to walk in his laws, which he set before us by his servants the prophets. Yea, all Israel have transgressed thy law, even by departing, that they might not obey thy voice; therefore *the curse is poured upon us*, and the oath that is written in the law of Moses the servant of God, *because we have sinned* against him. And he hath confirmed his words, which he spake against us, and against our judges that judged us, by bringing upon us a great evil: for under the whole heaven hath not been done as hath been done upon Jerusalem. As it is written in the law of Moses, all this evil is come upon us: yet made we not our prayer before the LORD our God, *that we might turn from our iniquities*, and understand thy truth. Therefore hath the LORD watched upon the evil, and brought it upon us: for the LORD our God is righteous in all his works which he doeth: for *we obeyed not his voice*. And now, O Lord our God, that hast brought thy people forth out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and hast gotten thee renown, as at this day; *we have sinned, we have done wickedly*. O Lord, according to all thy righteousness, I beseech thee, let thine anger and thy fury be turned away from thy city Jerusalem, thy holy mountain: *because for our sins*, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and *thy people are become a reproach to all that are about us*. Now therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant, and his supplications, and

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cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's sake. O my God, incline thine ear, and hear; open thine eyes, and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by thy name: for we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousnesses, but for thy great mercies. O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God: for thy city and thy people are called by thy name" (Daniel 9:3-19).

Can you sense the deep anguish and corporate mind set of these prophets of God as they lift up the sins of the people as if they were their own sins. Even Jesus experienced "corporate repentance" as is evidenced by His baptism, for He was baptized by John and "John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance" (Acts 19:4). Jesus had committed no sin to be repented of, but He mourned "over the sins of others" as if they were His own.

Corporate repentance is not, as some have sarcastically stated, a board action by leaders that we repent of our sins, but rather it is feeling grief over our own spiritual declension, as well as mourning over the sins of others. It is not something that begins in the upper echelon of the church, but within the heart of the believer. It is viewing all sin in the way God does and realizing the pain it brings to His heart. Will we ever be brought to this place in our Christian experience? Most definitely! This church will reach the place in their spiritual walk that God desires for them and accomplish the task He has set before them.

There are some among us, as well as on our extreme fringes, who would have us believe that God has cast off the Seventh-day Adventist Church. They teach that the church is in apostasy and has become a part of Babylon. They fail to discern the difference between "apostasy in the church" and "the church in apostasy." They seem unable to comprehend that being infiltrated by Babylon does not make us Babylon.

Infiltration does not make something evil, it simply means we have let down our guard and need to strengthen our borders and purge the enemy from our midst. There must be a call to vigilance, integrity, and faithfulness. However, many are making a false call that “the church has become Babylon; therefore, come out of her and be sure and bring your tithes and offerings with you.” But what does inspiration have to say about this?

“The Lord has declared that the history of the past shall be rehearsed as we enter upon the closing work. Every truth that He has given for these last days is to be proclaimed to the world. Every pillar that He has established is to be strengthened. *We cannot now step off the foundation that God has established. We cannot now enter into any new organization; for this would mean apostasy from the truth.*

“There is no need to doubt, to be fearful that the work will not succeed. *God is at the head of the work, and He will set everything in order.* If matters need adjusting at the head of the work, God will attend to that, and work to right every wrong. Let us have faith that *God is going to carry the noble ship which bears the people of God safely into port.*”¹⁶⁵

“Although *there are evils existing in the church, and will be until the end of the world,* the church in these last days is to be the light of the world that is polluted and demoralized by sin. *The church, enfeebled and defective, needing to be reproved, warned, and counseled, is the only object upon earth upon which Christ bestows His supreme regard.*”¹⁶⁶

“Let all be careful not to make an outcry against the only people who are fulfilling the description given of the

¹⁶⁵ White, *Selected Messages*, Vol. 2, pp. 390, 391

¹⁶⁶ White, *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 49

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remnant people who keep the commandments of God and have faith in Jesus, who are exalting the standard of righteousness in these last days.

“God has a distinct people, a church on earth, second to none, but superior to all in their facilities to teach the truth, to vindicate the law of God.”¹⁶⁷

*“When anyone is drawing apart from the organized body of God’s commandment-keeping people, when he begins to weigh the church in his human scales and begins to pronounce judgment against them, then you may know that God is not leading him. He is on the wrong track.”*¹⁶⁸

“I am instructed to say to Seventh-day Adventists the world over, God has called us as a people to be a peculiar treasure unto Himself. He has appointed that His church on earth shall stand perfectly united in the Spirit and counsel of the Lord of hosts to the end of time.”¹⁶⁹

“We are not going to be interrupted in meeting after meeting by those who claim they have a message to deliver. He who presses himself forward into a place where he is not wanted is not doing the work of God. We are to work like soldiers in an army. We are not to step out of the ranks, and begin to work on our own account.”¹⁷⁰

“God has a people in which all heaven is interested, and they are the one object on earth dear to the heart of God. Let every one who reads these words give them thorough consideration; for in the name of Jesus I would press them home upon every soul. *When any one arises, either among us*

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 57

¹⁶⁸ White, *Selected Messages*, Vol. 3, p. 18

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., Vol. 2, p. 397

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 271

or outside of us, who is burdened with a message which declares that the people of God are numbered with Babylon, and claims that the loud cry is a call to come out of her, you may know that he is not bearing the message of truth. Receive him not, nor bid him God-speed; for God has not spoken by him, neither has he given a message to him, but he has run before he was sent."¹⁷¹

Ellen White's son, Willie, made reference to this subject in a letter written shortly after his mother's death. "I told [Mrs. Lida Scott] how mother regarded the experience of the remnant church, and of her *positive* teaching that God would not permit this denomination to so fully apostatize that there would be the coming out of another church."¹⁷²

"I am encouraged and blessed as I realize that the God of Israel is still guiding His people, and that He will continue to be with them, even to the end."¹⁷³

"Satan will work his miracles to deceive; he will set up his power as supreme. *The church may appear as about to fall, but it does not fall. It remains, while the sinners in Zion will be sifted out--the chaff separated from the precious wheat.* This is a terrible ordeal, but nevertheless it must take place. None but those who have been overcoming by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony will be found with *the loyal and true, without spot or stain of sin, without guile in their mouths.* We must be divested of our self-righteousness and arrayed in the righteousness of Christ."¹⁷⁴

¹⁷¹ *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, August 29, 1893

¹⁷² White, *Letter*, May 23, 1915

¹⁷³ White, *Selected Messages*, Vol. 2, p. 406

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 380

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God's last call to His last church is: "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent" (Revelation 3:15-19). Will they heed this call to repent and receive the righteousness of Christ? Most assuredly according to the "testimony of Jesus."

"When purification shall take place in our ranks, we shall no longer rest at ease, boasting of being rich and increased with goods, in need of nothing..."

"Unless the church, which is now being leavened with her own backsliding, shall repent and be converted, she will eat of the fruit of her own doing, until she shall abhor herself.

*When she resists the evil and chooses the good, when she seeks God with all humility and reaches her high calling in Christ, standing on the platform of eternal truth and by faith laying hold upon the attainments prepared for her, she will be healed. She will appear in her God-given simplicity and purity, separate from earthly entanglements, showing that the truth has made her free indeed. Then her members will indeed be the chosen of God, His representatives."*¹⁷⁵

What is it that will cause the tremendous transformation to take place? "I will pour upon the house of David [the leadership], and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem

¹⁷⁵ White, *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 8, pp. 250, 251

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[the membership], the spirit of grace and of supplications: and *they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn* for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn” (Zechariah 12:10).

Thy Hand, O God Has Guided

Thy hand, O God, has guided Thy flock from age to age;
The wondrous tale is written Full clear on every page;
Our fathers owned Thy goodness, And we their deeds record;
And both of this bear witness, One church, one faith, one Lord.

Thy heralds brought glad tidings To greatest as to least;
They bade men rise and hasten To share the great King's feast:
And this was all their teaching, In every deed and word,
To all alike proclaiming One church, one faith, one Lord.

When shadows thick were falling, And all seemed sunk in night,
Thou, Lord, did send Thy servants, Thy chosen sons of light.
On them and on Thy people Thy plenteous grace was poured,
And this was still their message: One church, one faith, one Lord.

Thy Mercy will not fail us, Nor leave Thy work undone;
With Thy right hand to help us, The victory shall be won;
And then by men and angels Thy name shall be adored,
And this shall be their anthem: One church, one faith, one Lord.
Edward Hayes Plumptre

Appendix A

Counsel on How to Overcome Sin

As we try to become acquainted with our heavenly Father through *His word*, angels will draw near, our minds will be strengthened, our characters will be elevated and refined. We shall become more like our Saviour. And as we behold the beautiful and grand in *nature*, our affections go out after God. While the spirit is awed, the soul is invigorated by coming in contact with the Infinite through His works. Communion with God through *prayer* develops the mental and moral faculties, and the spiritual powers strengthen as we *cultivate thoughts* upon spiritual things. {DA 70:4}

In His industrious life there were *no idle moments* to invite temptation. *No aimless hours* opened the way for *corrupting associations*. So far as possible, He *closed the door to the tempter*. Neither gain nor pleasure, applause nor censure, could induce Him to *consent to a wrong act*. He was wise to *discern evil*, and strong to *resist it*. {DA 72:1}

Jesus did *not shirk care and responsibility*, as do many who profess to be His followers. It is because they seek to evade this discipline that so many are weak and inefficient.... The positiveness and energy, the solidity and strength of character, manifested in Christ are to be developed in us, through the same discipline that He endured. And the grace that He received is for us. {DA 73:1}

He was *never so full of worldly care as to have no time or thought for heavenly things*. Often He expressed the gladness of His heart by *singing psalms and heavenly songs*. {DA 73:3}

As we *associate together*, we may be a blessing to one another. If we are Christ's, our sweetest thoughts will be of Him. We shall love to *talk of Him*; and as we *speak to one*

another of His love, our hearts will be softened by divine influences. *Beholding the beauty of His character*, we shall be “changed into the same image from glory to glory.” 2 Cor. 3:18. {DA 83:5}

If He had responded by an impatient word or look, if He had conceded to His brothers by even one wrong act, He would have failed of being a perfect example. Thus He would have failed of carrying out the plan for our redemption. Had He even admitted that there could be an *excuse for sin*, Satan would have triumphed, and the world would have been lost. This is why the tempter worked to make His life as trying as possible, that He might be led to sin.

But to every temptation He had *one answer*, “*It is written.*” {DA 88:2, 3}

In ourselves we are incapable of doing any good thing; but that which we cannot do will be wrought by the power of God in every *submissive and believing* soul... It is *through faith* that spiritual life is begotten, and we are enabled to do the works of righteousness. {DA 98:3}

All who would perfect holiness in the fear of God must learn the lessons of *temperance and self-control*. The appetites and passions must be held in subjection to the higher powers of the mind. This self-discipline is *essential* to that mental strength and spiritual insight which will enable us to understand and to practice the sacred truths of God's word. For this reason temperance finds its place in the work of preparation for Christ's second coming. {DA 101:2}

He (John the Baptist) *distrusted his own power* to withstand temptation, and *shrank from constant contact with sin*, lest he should lose the sense of its exceeding sinfulness. {DA 101:4}

In all who *submit to His power* the Spirit of God will consume sin. But if men cling to sin, they become identified with it. Then the glory of God, which destroys sin, must

Which Gospel?

destroy them. (DA 107:4)

In our own strength it is impossible for us to deny the clamors of our fallen nature. Through this channel Satan will bring temptation upon us. Christ knew that the enemy would come to every human being, to take advantage of hereditary weakness, and by his false insinuations to ensnare all whose trust is not in God. And by passing over the ground which man must travel, our Lord has prepared the way for us to overcome. It is not His will that we should be placed at a disadvantage in the conflict with Satan. He would not have us intimidated and discouraged by the assaults of the serpent. 'Be of good cheer,' He says; 'I have overcome the world.' John 16:33....

Jesus rested upon the strength and wisdom of His heavenly Father....

He *did not consent to sin*. Not even by a thought did He yield to temptation. *So it may be with us*. Christ's humanity was united with divinity; He was fitted for the conflict by the *indwelling of the Holy Spirit*. And He came to make us *partakers of the divine nature*. So long as we are united to Him by *faith*, sin has no more dominion over us. God reaches for the hand of faith in us to direct it to lay fast hold upon the divinity of Christ, that we may attain to perfection of character.

And how this is accomplished, Christ has shown us. By what means did He overcome in the conflict with Satan? By the *word of God*. Only by the word could He resist temptation. 'It is written,' He said. And unto us are given 'exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.' 2 Peter 1:4. *Every promise* in God's word is ours. 'By every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God' are we to live. When assailed by temptation, *look not to circumstances* or to *the weakness of self*, but to the power of

the word. All its strength is yours. "Thy word," says the psalmist, 'have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee.' 'By the word of Thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer.' Ps. 119:11; 17:4. {DA 122, 123}

The tempter thought to take advantage of Christ's humanity, and urge Him to *presumption*. But while Satan can solicit, he *cannot compel to sin...* Unless Christ should consent to temptation, He could not be overcome. Not all the power of earth or hell could force Him in the slightest degree to depart from the will of His Father.

The tempter can never compel us to do evil. He cannot control minds unless they are yielded to his control. The will must consent, faith must let go its hold upon Christ, before Satan can exercise his power upon us. But *every sinful desire we cherish affords him a foothold*. Every point in which we fail of meeting the divine standard is an open door by which he can enter to tempt and destroy us. And *every failure or defeat on our part gives occasion for him to reproach Christ*. {DA 125:1, 2}

So we may resist temptation, and force Satan to depart from us. Jesus gained the victory through *submission and faith* in God, and by the apostle He says to us, 'Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you.' James 4:7, 8. We cannot save ourselves from the tempter's power; he has conquered humanity, and when we try to stand in our own strength, we shall become a prey to his devices; but 'the name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe.' Prov. 18:10. Satan trembles and flees before the weakest soul who finds refuge in that mighty name. {DA 130:4}

God could have reached His object in saving sinners without our aid; but in order for us to develop a character like Christ's, *we must share in His work*. In order to enter into

Which Gospel?

His joy,--the joy of seeing souls redeemed by His sacrifice,--we must participate in *His labors for their redemption*. {DA 142:2}

We can receive of heaven's light only as we are willing to *be emptied of self*. We cannot discern the character of God, or accept Christ by faith, unless we *consent to the bringing into captivity of every thought to the obedience of Christ*. To all who do this the Holy Spirit is given without measure. In Christ 'dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and in Him ye are made full.' Col. 2:9, 10, R. V. {DA 181:1}

Continual devotion establishes so close a relation between Jesus and His disciple that the Christian becomes like Him in mind and character. {DA 252:1}

The means by which we can overcome the wicked one is that by which Christ overcame,--*the power of the word*. {DA 258:5}

Man must *be emptied of self* before he can be, in the fullest sense, a believer in Jesus. When self is renounced, then the Lord can make man a new creature. New bottles can contain the new wine. The love of Christ will animate the believer with new life. In him who *looks unto the Author and Finisher of our faith* the character of Christ will be manifest. {DA 280:4}

In order to succeed in such a conflict they must come to the work in *a different spirit*. Their faith must be strengthened by *fervent prayer and fasting*, and *humiliation of heart*. They must be *emptied of self*, and be *filled with the Spirit and power of God*. Earnest, persevering supplication to God in faith--faith that leads to *entire dependence* upon God, and *unreserved consecration* to His work--can alone avail to bring men the Holy Spirit's aid in the battle against principalities and powers, the rulers of the darkness of this world, and wicked spirits in high places. {DA 431:2}

And those who would partake of His divine attributes,

and share with Him the joy of seeing souls redeemed, *must follow His example of unselfish ministry.* {DA 651:3}

It is by *receiving the life for us poured out on Calvary's cross*, that we can live the life of holiness. And this life we receive by *receiving His word, by doing those things which He has commanded.* Thus we become one with Him. {DA 660:4}

By *associating with those whom they should avoid*, they place themselves in the way of temptation. They invite the enemy to tempt them, and are led to say and do that of which under other circumstances they would never have been guilty. The disciple of Christ who in our day disguises his faith through dread of suffering or reproach denies his Lord as really as did Peter in the judgment hall. {DA 712:1}

At the reproof from Jesus his very spirit seemed turned to gall. Wounded pride and desire for revenge broke down the barriers, and the greed so long indulged held him in control. This will be the experience of everyone who persists in *tampering with sin.* The *elements of depravity* that are not *resisted and overcome*, respond to Satan's temptation, and the soul is led captive at his will. {DA 720:2}

Appendix B

Fifty Ways to Overcome Sin

1. Study the Bible
2. Become acquainted with nature
3. Spend time in prayer
4. No aimless, idle time
5. No corrupting associations
6. Keep door closed to tempter
7. Do not consent to any wrong
8. Be wise to discern evil
9. Be strong to resist evil
10. Do not shirk care and responsibility
11. Do not become full of worldly cares
12. Reserve time for heavenly things
13. Keep thoughts on heavenly things
14. Sing psalms and heavenly songs
15. Associate with fellow believers
16. Speak to one another of His love
17. Behold the beauty of His character
18. Do not make excuses for sin
19. Answer every temptation with "It is written"
20. Be submissive and believing
21. Have faith
22. Exercise temperance and self-control
23. Distrust your own power and ability
24. Refrain from constant contact with sin
25. Rest upon the strength and wisdom of God
26. Do not consent to sin
27. Constantly partake of the divine nature
28. Consent to be lead of the Holy Spirit
29. Claim every promise of God
30. Do not look to circumstances

Fifty Ways to Overcome Sin ¹⁴⁷

31. Don't be discouraged by your weakness
32. Do not be presumptuous
33. Cherish no sinful desires
34. Remember, every sin we commit brings reproach upon Christ
35. Share in the work of salvation of souls
36. Bring into captivity every thought
37. Cultivate continual devotion
38. Renounce self
39. Constantly look to Jesus
40. Fasting
41. Humility
42. Entire dependence upon God
43. Unreserved consecration to His work
44. Unselfish ministry to others
45. Receive the life of Christ
46. Receive His word
47. Do what you know to be right
48. Do not disguise your faith because of fear or shame
49. Do not tamper with sin
50. Resist the elements of depravity

Appendix C

Doctrinal Differences of the Remnant Church

1. 144,000 *
2. Angels
3. Antichrist #
4. Armageddon
5. Atonement *
6. Babylon #
7. Baptism
8. Christian Education
9. Christian Perfection *
10. Christian Standards *
11. Cleansing of the Sanctuary *
12. Close of Probation @
13. Creation #
14. Ecumenical Movement *
15. Events Surrounding the Second Coming
16. Faith *
17. Fall of Babylon @
18. Glorification
19. Hell
20. Holy Spirit *
21. Human Nature of Christ *
22. Identity of Michael
23. Immortality of the Soul #
24. Inspiration of Scripture *
25. Jesus the Creator @
26. Judgement #
27. Justification *
28. Latter Rain *
29. Law of God *
30. Lord's Supper

31. Mark of the Beast @
32. Medical Missionary Work #
33. Millennium
34. Miracles
35. Modern Israel *
36. New Earth
37. New Jerusalem
38. Obedience *
39. Ordinance of Humility
40. Overcoming Sin *
41. Prophetic Chronology @
42. Relation of the Old and New Testaments *
43. Remnant Church *
44. Resurrection of the Dead
45. Righteousness by Faith *
46. Sabbath @
47. Sabbath Observance *
48. Salvation *
49. Sanctification *
50. Sanctuary @
51. Satan
52. Seal of God *
53. Second Coming
54. Second Death
55. Seven Plagues
56. Sin *
57. Special Resurrection @
58. Spirit of Prophecy #
59. Spiritualism
60. Stewardship
61. Temperance/Health Reform #
62. Tongues #
63. Tribulation
64. Two Covenants *

*Which Gospel***65. U.S. in Bible Prophecy #**

The marked doctrines have appeared in corrupted forms within the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

* Official publications = 25

Church leaders = 10

@ Apostate segments within the church = 8

Appendix D

Babylon's Corrupted Doctrines in Adventism

Of the 65 doctrines listed in *Appendix C*, 43 have been corrupted within the remnant church. Twenty-five have appeared in a corrupted form in our official publications, some of them numerous times. Another ten are held by leaders in high positions within the church and eight by apostate segments within the church. Following is a list of the 35 found in official publications or held by church leaders.

1. The 144,000 are not the living righteous who have overcome all sin and fully reflect the character of Christ.
2. The antichrist is not the Catholic Church.
3. The atonement was complete and final at calvary.
4. Babylon is not Catholicism, Spiritism, and apostate Protestantism.
5. Christian perfection is impossible.
6. To uphold Christian standards is to be legalistic.
7. The cleansing of the sanctuary does not blot out sins and remove sin from people.
8. The world was not created in six literal days.
9. The ecumenical movement is of the Spirit of God.
10. Faith frees one from obedience rather than enabling victorious living.
11. The Holy Spirit is incapable of keeping us from sin.
12. Christ was different from us. He had an unfallen human nature. Therefore we cannot live the life He lived.
13. Man is by nature immortal and some essence lives on after death.
14. All Scripture is NOT inspired by God.
15. The investigative judgment and cleansing of the

Which Gospel

sanctuary do not involve the removal of sin from God's people.

16. Justification is nothing more than a legal declaration made when one accepts Jesus.
17. The latter rain has not been resisted and rejected since 1888.
18. Those who seek to obey God's law are under the old covenant and in bondage.
19. Medical missionary work is not a part of the gospel.
20. Modern Israel are not those in whose hearts God's law has been written.
21. Obedience to God's law is not necessary and leads to legalism.
22. Overcoming sin is impossible, even through the power of the Holy Spirit.
23. N.T. given to correct the errors of the O.T.
24. The Seventh-day Adventist Church does not constitute the "Remnant."
25. Seventh-day Adventists do not have a unique message of righteousness by faith.
26. Sabbath observance and activities are a matter of one's personal preference.
27. One can be saved while practicing know habitual sin.
28. Sanctification is only partial and does not lead to total transformation of character. It is not a salvation issue.
29. The seal of God has nothing to do with overcoming sin or the Sabbath.
30. Sin is not what we do, but what we are and causes us to be born condemned.
31. The prophetic gift ended with John. Ellen White was a good devotional writer.
32. Temperance is not required of Christians today. Social drinking is alright. No unclean foods, etc.

33. Pentecostalism has the correct understanding of speaking in tongues.
34. The two covenants are a matter of time rather than condition.
35. The United States will not be instrumental in establishing the mark or image to the beast (Catholicism).

Lord, Who Dost Give To Thy Church

Lord, who dost give to Thy church for its healing
Gifts and the grace to sustain and renew,
Hear as we pray that today and each morrow
We to Thy purpose may show ourselves true.

Clear be the voices of preachers and prophets
Fearlessly speaking the word of the Lord,
Word of redemption thro' God's Son incarnate,
Blessing for cursing, and peace for the sword.

Tender and wise be the hearts of the pastors,
Guiding and guarding the souls in their care,
Firm with the wayward, a strength to the doubting,
Helping the needy their burdens to bear.

May those who teach grow in knowledge and patience,
Guiding to wisdom the young and the old,
Training for worship and witness and service,
Foes to all falsehood, in truthfulness bold.

Earnest Payne

BOOKS BY THE SAME AUTHOR

Dealing With the Devil's Deception-How to Choose a Bible

An overview of the development and dangers of the modern translations of the Bible and the men and motives behind them.

Over four and a half centuries ago the great reformer, Martin Luther, said, “No greater mischief can happen to a Christian people than to have God's word taken from them, or have it so falsified that they no longer have it pure and clear. God grant that we and our descendants be witnesses of such a calamity.”

Is it possible that we, today, are witnessing just such a calamity? The answer and issues will become extremely clear when you finish *Dealing With the Devil's Deception*.

A Faith That Works

A simple, yet systematic, verse-by-verse study of the book of James.

In the midst of all the confusion and dissension over the relationship between faith and works this book clearly and with simplicity presents the biblical correlation concerning the two imperative of the Christian faith.

The Good News of Galatians

A simple, yet systematic, verse-by-verse study of the book of Galatians.

The glorious good news of the gospel, in Galatians, reveals the power of God that enables the believer to live a victorious life in Christ.

God's Last Message to Earth

A simple, yet systematic, verse-by-verse study of the book of Revelation.

Many claim the book of Revelation cannot be understood and that it was never intended to be. The very title of the book, however, refutes this claim, for it is a revelation or revealing.

There is so much in this book God would have His people come to understand that they might prepare themselves and shape their course of action, so as to escape the plagues that are to shortly fall upon the world. His promise is “Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein.” (Revelation 1:3)

Modern Prophets

A comparison of the real versus the counterfeit of a much neglected Bible teaching that has been ignored, rejected, and corrupted within Christianity - the gift of prophecy.

Jesus gave repeated warning about false prophets, thus emphasizing a counterfeit of a genuine gift. (Matthew 7:15, 16; 24:11, 24) This subject is so vital that the apostle Paul admonished: “Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.” (1 Thessalonians 5:19-21) “Beloved, believe not every spirit” is the apostle John’s admonition, “but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.” (1 John 4:1)

Is the gift of prophecy to be found in the church today? How are we to try or test one thought to possess this gift? How can one tell the true from the false? The Bible speaks decisively on this subject and gives several tests by which one can tell a true prophet from a false one.

Simplified Studies of the Sacred Scriptures

Question and answer studies of many of the great doctrines and prophecies of God’s word presented in a simplified and easy-to-understand format.

This 296 page book is an excellent tool for personal study or Bible study classes. It is filled with Scripture to provide you with answers to nearly all your questions on Bible topics.

Which Gospel?

A treatise of “the everlasting gospel” and how it has been and is being perverted within Christianity.

The word of God makes it clear that the gospel “is the power of God unto salvation.” But do we truly understand what the gospel is or the power it has for us today? With the prevailing perversions of the gospel today, can the people of God really discover which gospel contains this life-changing power and how to experience it? This book presents the truths of the gospel in such a way as is seldom seen in the Christian world today, revealing God’s purpose in the plan of salvation from the atonement to the reception of the redeemed. From justification to the future of God’s Remnant church, this book reveals the power of the Holy Spirit and the assurance that what God has

promised, He is able also to perform.

The Wise Shall Understand

A verse-by-verse study of the book of Daniel presented in a simple, easy-to-understand manner.

Of all the books of the Bible, Daniel speaks repeatedly of last day events and claims to pertain directly to the “time of the end.” (Daniel 12:4, 6, 8, 9, 13) The things written in Daniel were written specifically for those of us living today. Now, as never before, it is necessary for us to understand this book. As for those who say it cannot be understood, I would caution them to beware, lest they find themselves calling God a liar, for He has declared in no uncertain terms that “none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand.” (Daniel 12:10)

BOOKLETS FOR SHARING

The Antichrist and the Mark of the Beast

One of the most awesome warnings ever given in the Bible says: “If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.” (Revelation 14:9-11)

The identity of this power is so intricately detailed in the prophetic books of Daniel and Revelation that none need be confused or uncertain as to who it is, when it is to arise, how long it is to rule, what it will do, and what will eventually become of it. Understanding these things is essential to knowing what the “mark of the beast” is and how to avoid receiving it.

There are 17 different distinguishing points clearly identifying this apostate power presented in this book.

Armageddon and the Plagues

In Revelation chapter fifteen we are introduced to the seven last plagues that culminate in the Battle of Armageddon. These plagues contain God's final judgement which is poured upon the world just before the return of Jesus to take his people home. But before Jesus comes God reveals to John the results of these awesome judgements and shows him those that will survive the plagues. What are these fearsome plagues? How close are we to the Battle of Armageddon? And how can we survive the future? These are questions that are answered in this little book and enable you to face the future with assurance.

The Atonement and the Cleansing of the Sanctuary

The urgency of the following inspired statement has prompted the printing of this little book.

“The subject of the sanctuary and the investigative judgment should be clearly understood by the people of God. All need a knowledge for themselves of the position and work of their great High Priest. Otherwise it will be impossible for them to exercise the faith which is essential at this time or to occupy the position which God designs them to fill.” *The Great Controversy*, p. 488

Bible Studies Made Easy

Outline studies of many of the great doctrines of the Bible presented in a clear and concise manner.

An excellent tool for personal study or for sharing your faith.

Christian Perfection - Does God Expect Too Much?

Jesus came to this world bearing in His flesh the results of sin, but in His humanity was able to live a life free of sin. In His human nature He was able to overcome all temptations to sin that Satan hurled at Him, and He says to each of us: “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.” (Revelation 3:21) Is this possible? Can we overcome all sin, every temptation, even as Jesus did? God says, YES; Satan says, NO. Whom shall we believe?

The City Of God

John said he “saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven” (Revelation 21:2). The real beauty of this glorious city is not found in the golden streets, gates of pearl, or walls of many precious jewels; but something of far more inestimable excellence than all these combined.

Defying The Death Decree

A Study of the great golden image of Daniel three and the parallel to the image to be established in Revelation 13:14 when again the death decree will go forth that “as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed” (Revelation 13:15).

The Desire of Ages Study Guide

A study and chain reference of The Desire of Ages

A study of the human nature of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit to live the victorious, sinless life of Christ.

The Devil's Deception About Death

Where are our beloved dead? Where do people really go at death? Do they haunt houses? Are they reincarnated? Do they perhaps go to someplace called limbo or purgatory? Could it be that they are simply floating around on a little pink cloud strumming a harp? Are they possibly in heaven or hell? That last one is not a very pleasant thought, is it? Yet all of these are prominent teachings in the world today. All religious groups (and even the non-religious) believe one or more of the above. But what does the Bible teach?

The Diabolic Dangers and Doctrinal Destruction in the Modern Bible Versions

Upon investigation of the modern translations, it immediately becomes evident they often contain variant readings. For example, if a person were to take five different translations of the Bible and turn to Hosea 13:9, they would probably find all five translations say something totally different, as can be seen from the following examples.

O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thine help. (KJV). I will destroy you, O Israel; who can help you? (RSV). I

will destroy you, O Israel, because you are against me, against your helper. (NIV).

O Israel, if I destroy you, who can save you? (LB). It is your destruction, O Israel, That you are against Me, against your help. (NASB).

The question that naturally arises is: "Which one is correct?" If a person has four Bibles and they all read differently, can they all be the "word of God?" How can one tell truth from error? This book presents many of the doctrinal dangers in the modern translations.

Food Fights:Some Can Be Fatal

Food Fights to children can be fun, for adults they can be fatal.

This little book examines what the Bible says on the subject of food and how many today respond to what God says about food that kills. It presents a thoughtful analysis of the so-called "problem texts" pertaining to this subject that will clarify the confusion and dissolve the delusions.

The Forgotten Commandment

It is interesting that the only commandment God prefaced with "remember" is the one the majority of the world has forgotten.

The word of God warned that there would be "false teachers" who would "bring in damnable heresies" and "many shall follow their pernicious ways" and the "truth shall be evil spoken of" (2 Peter 2:1-2). This has truly taken place today. Discover how in *The Forgotten Commandment*.

The Glorious Future of the Remnant Church

When Ellen White said that those "who do not feel grieved over their own spiritual declension, nor mourn over the sins of others, will be left without the seal of God," she was referring to a biblical principle and teaching that many today reject and ridicule. But as with all other teachings of God's word, the opposition of the obstinate or rejection of the rebellious do not nullify its veracity. References to this Bible teaching are too numerous to ignore or misunderstand and the response of the Remnant of such relevance that it demands our candid consideration.

God's Sorrow, Our Shame - Let the Prophet Speak

Various theories have been set forth as to what actually took place at the 1888 General Conference Session in Minneapolis, but many questions still demand straight answers. 1) Did God send a special message to His people 100 years ago? 2) Was the message accepted or rejected? 3) What was this message? Can we know for certain today or did God allow it to be lost for all eternity? 4) Were Jones and Waggoner "trouble makers" as some claim or were they "Christ's delegated messengers"? 5) What was Ellen White's position in the midst of all this turmoil? Just where did the prophet stand? 6) Do the events in the lives of Jones and Waggoner in later years have any bearing on the message they brought to the church in 1888?

This little book presents a documented, historical overview of what took place in Minneapolis and the response to the message in the ensuing years.

The Judgment and the Cleansing of the Sanctuary

When, where, and how does the judgment take place? Where is Jesus now? What is He doing? Why hasn't He come back yet? What does the Bible mean when it says "Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed?" (Daniel 8:14) These and many other questions are answered in this little book.

The Kings of the North and South

The prophecy of the Kings of the north and south contain a history that is most essential to understand in order to fully comprehend God's workings among the nations of the world. As we behold how these things have been fulfilled just as God said they would be, we can have full confidence and assurance about those things which lie ahead. Furthermore, if we do not know the historical background of the kings of the north and south it would be impossible to know if they exist today, their identities, how they will meet their end, or when this event is to take place.

This book follows a very important biblical principle of prophetic interpretation: everything should be considered as literal, unless it is obviously symbolic. Because of a failure to adhere to this principle, there have been a variety of views pertaining to this prophecy. Some

claim, for example, the king of the north is Turkey, others that it is the Papacy, some that it is Russia, and still others that it is Satan himself. This confusion need not exist (and indeed would not exist), if people would cease to place their own fanciful interpretation on various passages.

Thus, this book allows the Scripture to be its own interpreter and apply the information contained in God's word to a literal, chronological, historical setting.

The Men. Motives and Malicious Mutilations Behind the Modern Bible Versions

With the multiplicity of modern Bibles today we discover there are between 5,000 and 36,000 changes in the modern Bibles, depending upon the version one chooses. In addition to this there are over 200 cases in which a verse's authenticity is questioned by complete omission, or a footnote, in the modern translations. These various changes affect approximately five percent of the Scriptures, which to some may not appear to be such a large percentage; but it amounts to more than the omission of the entire gospel of John, which is only three percent. It further causes people to doubt and to question what does and does not actually belong in the Bible. For example the NASB contains 4,000 significant additions, subtractions and changes; whereas the NIV contains 6,653 and has 64,094 less words than the KJV.

This book will consider those involved with the manipulation and mutilation of the Bible and reveal their secular approach and handling of the Sacred Scriptures, some of the changes they made, why they made those changes, and how they have destroyed Bible doctrine. You will be both appalled and outraged when you see these crazed critics shredding the word of God, and then officiously piecing it back together with thousands upon thousands of additions, deletions and perversions.

The Millennium

The millennium is a subject that has for years arrested the attention of people world wide. The word itself does not appear in the Bible, but comes from a compound of two Latin words "mille" and "annum," which means simply, "thousand years." This thousand-year period, called the millennium, is mentioned six times in the first seven verses of Revelation chapter twenty and refers to that period of time in which Satan is to be bound and perfect peace and happiness will reign in the universe.

There are many various theories regarding the millennium which have been based largely upon speculations and fictitious novels. Some have even claimed that the devil has already been bound and we are now in the millennium. To this insanity a minister once replied, "If the devil is bound, he must be tied with a rubber chain that stretches from Paris to Bombay and from Washington, D.C. to the Kremlin." All we need to do is look about us to see that the devil has never been more active than he is today. This is why the Word of God warns us, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8).

This book will reveal there is no reason for anyone to experience confusion or uncertainty in regard to the millennium, for the Bible speaks quite clearly and in much detail on this subject presenting a most clear, concise, and concrete statements pertaining to this thousand-year period.

The Nature of Christ and the Spirit of Antichrist

Over a century ago a very gifted Christian writer, E.G. White, declared: "In our conclusions, we make many mistakes because of our erroneous views of the human nature of our Lord. When we give to His human nature a power that is not possible for man to have in his conflicts with Satan, we destroy the completeness of His humanity."

This little book presents an overview of this most vital subject and enables the people of God to see their way through the "erroneous views" and avoid the "many mistakes" that are so prevalent today.

Old Heresies and New Theology - The Misconception of Sin

What is it about sin that makes it so bad? The Bible is clear that sin is something so deadly that it claimed the very life of the Son of God. (Isaiah 53:1-12; Hebrews 9:28) However, there is much confusion on this subject today. Many have a very limited and often perverted concept of what sin is and its tremendous impact on both God and man. This book is designed to solidify the believer in the biblical teaching about sin that they not be deceived by the many false, man-made theories that are circulating within the Christian community today.

Panorama of Prophecy

The book of Daniel is a most unique book in that it not only contains several step-by-step prophecies of world empires from the seventh century B.C. to the very day in which we are now living. These prophecies are some of the most easily understood found in the Scriptures and cover nearly 2600 years of history in absolute accuracy. As one commentator has stated: "Human wisdom has never devised so brief a record that embraced so much. Human language never set forth in so few words such a great volume of historical truth. The finger of God is here. Let us heed the lesson well."

The Secret of the Rapture: Will You Be Left Behind?

Since publication of the *Left Behind* series of books and the recent release of the movie *Left Behind*, there has been an explosion of interest in the sensational and speculative errors being promoted by the movie and the books upon which it is based. This has resulted in many being deceived into thinking these false (and admittedly fictional) concepts are actually Bible truth. *The Secret of the Rapture* is designed to offset these false and fanciful theories and enable people to see the beauty and truth of the coming of Christ. This little book will strengthen your understanding and faith concerning the "blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13), as

well as enable you to share this great Bible truth with those who are being deceived by the errors being propagated today.

Signs of the Savior's Soon Coming

Jesus' disciples gathered with Him on the Mount of Olives and inquired: "Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" (Matthew 24:3) The word of God responds to this question with no less than 53 prophetic events.

In speaking of His coming, Jesus said, "when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors." Matthew 24:33 This little book was prepared that all may "see" and "know" that the "blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13) is closer than many believe.

A Startling Dream

This little book explores one of the most easily understood prophecies found in the Scriptures. It covers nearly 2600 years of history in absolute accuracy, and as one commentator has stated: "Human wisdom has never devised so brief a record that embraced so much. Human language never set forth in so few words such a great volume of historical truth. The finger of God is here. Let us heed the lesson well." Smith, The Prophecies of Daniel and the Revelation, p. 39.

The Two Sides of Justification

Few today have truly understood the depth of what was accomplished at the cross or what motivated such a selfless sacrifice. Although many believe there is unanimity among Christians pertaining to the justification that came through the shedding of the precious blood of God's Son, in reality there is much diversity concerning who has been justified, as well as how and when justification takes place. This little book explores the initiative of God in the redemption of fallen humanity.

Why So Many Denominations

Have you ever wondered, if there's one God and one Bible, why there are so many different churches that dot the hillsides. The world has thousands

upon thousands of church congregations and with this multitude of denominations people often wonder: "How can I find the truth? How can I know what truth is?" With this collection of confusing concepts how can one discover truth? The Bible clearly describes why there are so many different denominations and it helps us find our way through the maze of confusion. It helps intelligent, thinking, rational people to understand where these churches came from, and how to sort out truth from error. As one studies Bible prophecy they will understand what happened to the early Christian church, why it happened, and discover how to find truth for themselves.

Why Suffering and Death

As we look about us today, we see a world that is filled with sickness, suffering, sorrow, pain and death. Encompassed with agony people cry out "Why does God allow these things to happen? Why does He cause so much affliction and anguish?" He is often blamed for things for which He is not responsible and which were never a part of His plan for planet earth and its inhabitants.

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