

Old Paths

Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. Jeremiah 6:16

The secret of the LORD is with them that fear Him; and He will show them His covenant. Psalm 25:14

The Vital Connection

by Howard Williams

(During the recent camp meeting in West Virginia I found a note left in my Bible concerning one of the messages that had been given stating:

“This sermon is, I feel, most unusual and important. I’d like to see it in print. ... The material is well presented, brick upon brick, systematically and precisely.”

Later I talked with the author of the note and asked which sermon he had in mind and the answer was, “all of them!” With this encouragement, and the encouragement of others, we will, by God’s grace, publish, at least an edited, printed version of some of the camp meeting messages. We start this month with the two main articles in this issue: one by Brother Howard Williams and one by Brother Lynnford Beachy. Those who wish to have a complete presentation may contact us and request either the audio or video tapes of the meetings. Editor)

Let me say a pleasant good morning to everyone, and be the first to say, “Pleasant Sabbath.” Let me also say thanks to David for that message in song. Will you kneel with me, please.

Father, we thank You so much for this, Your Sabbath day of rest. We thank You for Your blessings, the fresh air; the atmosphere of praise and worship. As we come before You now we just open our hearts to You that You may teach us what You want us to know. We pray through Christ’s name.

I have to, this morning again, just ask that we not just take the words that are presented here as something to benefit our minds, but that truly we seek the Lord just for how much we can make these words become a reality in our lives. If not, it makes no sense. If all that we’re here for is just head knowledge, just to equip ourselves more for debate and discussion, it makes no sense. But if what we’re here for is to leave this place a better, different person than when we came, then I think the Lord would be more pleased.

This morning I want to speak to us on the subject, “The Vital Connection.” And the first lesson is, What does this word “vital” mean? Vital, necessary, important; vital comes from the word “vita” which means life. So we want to talk this morning about that life-sustaining connection—the vital connection.

A Special Thank You

Just a note of thanks to all those who contributed time, money, and prayers to help us at the time of the fire. (See “West Virginia Camp Meeting Report” September 2000 issue of *Old Paths*.)

We would like to especially acknowledge Dave Shaffer and Steve Sutton for the many hours they spent restoring the power and the plumbing. We could have lost our home and belongings. Thanks to our Heavenly Father and your many prayers that ascended in our behalf our home was spared.

We love each one of you. “Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.” (3 John 2)

Glen & Anna Ford

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I have a statement I want to read to you from the book, *Desire of Ages*, page 324. It says, “The only defense against evil is the indwelling of Christ in the heart through faith in His righteousness.” We’re talking about overcoming sin. We’re talking about striving and becoming like Christ. “My little children,” Paul says, “of whom I travail again in birth until Christ be formed in you.” Ellen White goes on to say, “Unless we become vitally connected with God we can never resist the unhallowed effects of self love, self indulgence and temptation to sin.” (*Ibid.*) Did you get that? Did you get the weight of that? “Unless,” she says, “we are” how? “vitally connected to God we can never” overcome in these areas of self love, self indulgence and temptation to sin.

Now, are you finding problems in these areas? Is self becoming the master in your life? Does self want to push up its ugly head and defeat your own cause and purpose? Then you must be vitally connected. Reading on, “We may leave off many bad habits, for the time we may even part company with Satan, but without a vital connection with God through the surrender of ourselves to Him moment by moment, we shall be overcome. Without a personal acquaintance with Christ and a continual communion, we are at the mercy of the enemy and shall do his bidding in the end.” (*Ibid.*) The vital connection comes through the surrender of ourselves to Him moment by moment.”

John, in the fifteen chapter of his gospel, describes this vital connection and he uses a word; he says we are to “abide.” Now, in John chapter 15, Jesus likens Himself to a vine and He says, “I am the true vine.” And He says, “My Father is the husbandman.” Meaning what? The Gardener. He says, “My Father will take care of this vine.” Now He tells us that, just as the gardener, so His Father will always look through this vine and the branches that are not bearing, He will do something with them. What will He do? Cut them off. And those that are bearing, what will He do? Prune them.

Now in verse four I want you to notice something. Here Jesus says, “Abide in Me.” Are you seeing it? “And I in you.” Why? “As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine.” You’ve got something here. Let me ask a question. How do we abide? [Answers by congregation.] “By choice, permanently live somewhere, by growing, a daily connection”—All those are good. Let me see if I can rearrange the question. How does a branch stay onto the vine? It has to become a part of the vine. The vine and the branch have to become one. And so they are inseparable except separated by some sharp instrument. Now, in the same way, here Christ

is trying to say to us that we need to be connected to Him in such a way that we have become one.

Now look at verse seven. “If you abide in Me,” He says, “and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done.” Beloved, we have been blessed by all the messages we have gotten at this camp meeting, and so there are decisions that are being made at every session, but I need you to understand something else. We need a connection with the Divine that many of us don’t have. And you know what else? We are too indolent to obtain this. So I want you to focus in on your own selves this morning. Look at your own lives. Turn the searchlight inward.

Now Jesus said something to His disciples before He left. You know, in Matthew 24, Elder Willis Smith touched on it last night, and as he mentioned it something came across my mind that I need to share with you. Here the disciples said, “Lord, tell us when shall these things be and what shall be the sign of Thy coming and of the end of the world?” The first thing Jesus said to them was, “be not deceived.” And as He said it, I thought about something. Those that are deceived don’t *know* that they are deceived or they wouldn’t be deceived. Folks that are being deceived, if they *knew*, they wouldn’t be. So the amazing thing is, people that are deceived are *really* deceived. You know that’s sad. Beloved, we must *know* our faith and what we’re about. We must know... It’s sad that there are people who have been in this message for years and years and years. They have gone across the country preaching this message of the three angels, and eventually come to the incorrect conclusion that they were wrong. And now they’ve turned against it and have possibly deceived many. So it’s important that we know where we’re standing, that we have a solid foundation for our faith and our belief.

Jesus says in Matthew 24, that same chapter, in verse 42, something that I want you to take note of. He said to His disciples after describing the scenario of signs of how things would be just before He comes back, He makes a striking statement in verse 42. He says, “Watch, therefore, for you know not the hour your Lord doth come.” (Matthew 25:13) The very same words seem to be echoed here as He says again, “Watch therefore for you know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh.”

Mark 13 and Matthew 24 and Luke 21 are parallel chapters. In Mark 13:33, 35 we find it recorded this way: “Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is. ... Watch ye therefore, for ye know not when the master of the house cometh. At even, or at midnight, or at the cock crowing, or in the morning.”

How do we watch? All right, being on the alert, praying. What faculty do we use in watching? Eyes, the brain and understanding. Let me ask a question, What are we watching for? The Son of Man coming! And I guess we can be watching for the signs that are here laid out. Could it be possible that there are people that would watch and still not be ready? Because the essence of the watching, the essence of the praying, is that we be ready. Watch therefore. Why? Because you don't know when the Son of Man will burst the clouds. So we must be watching, but could it be that we'll be watching and still not ready? How could somebody be watching, seeing the signs and still not ready? How is it possible? How can we watch and not know what we're watching for? Here Christ is teaching us something that is essential for our understanding and that is: We can never be truly watching without being ready; without looking for the physical signs that shall come. Look on, when you see certain things happening, just know that I'm even at the door.

But go with me to the book of Luke, chapter 21, and Jesus seems to change gears as He turns to something else. Ezekiel tells us that we are set as watchmen and he says if the watchman sees the sword coming and warns not the people, then the blood will be required at his hand. But if he warns the people, then will it be required of their hands. In Luke 21:34 Jesus turns the searchlight to something else, He said, "And take heed to..." where? "to yourselves." "Take heed to yourselves."

Christ is saying the only way to be ready is to be watching, watching my own self! Watching my heart; watching my mind, and all that I'm absorbed in. I should be watching what makes my heart grow fonder. I have to be watching my own self. "Take heed to yourself, lest at any time your heart be overcharged with surfeiting..." What is that? "And drunkenness..." What is that?—The wine of the world. "And cares of this life..." I think God is reasonable, don't you? We all need to take care of these things. We all need food and clothes and shelter, right? Don't we? We all need to know that these things are taken care of. And we need to work. But He is saying that, while these things are essential, He will provide them. Take no thought for tomorrow. And He says, the reason being, lest that day come and you are not aware of it. He does not want us to be unaware of what is happening.

Please mark this point, your test as a Christian is really the degree to which you're praying. Your test as a Christian is the degree in which you communicate with your Father. How can you live without this life source, this life power flowing in you daily? Most of us, our

lives are simply getting up, and getting through the day: getting breakfast, getting the children off to school and running off to work. And when we are just at the door-knob to go out we say, "Lord, I didn't remember but help me today." *If your life is like that you won't make it. You **will** be overcome.*

Have you noticed something? How tame and lifeless and powerless we seem to be in our prayer life in comparison to those men of old—in comparison to Bible times? If we want to see a strong, good Christian, we have to go back to the Bible. And yet when these men prayed they saw results. When these men prayed God did something. Somehow these men seem to be able to move the hand of God in such a way that we cannot today. Why? When Bible men prayed they saw it and everybody else saw it. But our lives are just not measuring up.

In Jeremiah 29:13, the Lord speaking through His prophet says, and listen to his words, "And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart." Ah! That's the problem we have. We are not searching with *all our heart*. There is a lack of earnestness and fervency and the element of agonizing is missing from our lives and missing from our prayers and that's the reason we're so powerless. That's the reason we're not vitally connected. That's the reason why we are overcome so easily, because we're not searching with *all our heart*. And we give up so easily.

Something else I notice: We're in a generation where we expect to live any how, any way and when we pray we expect a miracle. When we kneel down to pray we want God to answer immediately. We don't want to agonize. Men of old—the pioneers of this movement—used to spend nights studying and praying. Those days are far gone ... And yet we expect to be like they were? It's impossible. Yet we say that we are the embryo of the 144,000. Some changes need to take place. Some real changes need to take place. You know something? The Bible says of Elijah that he was such a man that he prayed and God stopped the rain for three-and-a-half years. No rain or dew! He prayed again and God sent rain! These men knew what it meant to be totally connected. These men knew what it meant to be men of prayer. And Jesus is trying to teach His disciples some things. They asked Him, "Lord teach us to pray." The essence of His prayer was the kingdom of God being brought on earth. The essence of His prayer was His kingdom to be established here—in our hearts. What is the way that can be done? Beloved, things must be done in earth as they are in heaven because angels and all the beings of heaven are constantly in the

presence of God. For that reason Enoch was translated because he educated his mind to constantly feel the presence of God. And he was translated.

I need to read a few statements here. “There are two kinds of prayer—the prayer of form and the prayer of faith. The repetition of set, customary phrases when the heart feels no need of God, is formal prayer.” (*My Life Today*, p. 19) I’m speaking to myself this morning—I’m speaking to me, because I had to re-examine my own life with this message before I was able to bring it to you. The repetition of set, customary phrases when there is no real need of God is formal prayer. “We should be extremely careful in all our prayers to speak the warmth of the heart and to say only what we mean. *All the flowery words at our command are not equivalent to one holy desire.* The most eloquent prayers are but vain repetition if they do not express the true sentiments of the heart. But the prayer that comes from an earnest heart when the simple wants of the soul are expressed just as you would ask an earthly friend for a favor expecting that it would be granted, this is the prayer of faith.” (*Ibid.* - emphasis supplied) We need to break that down. Sometimes we pray to impress the congregation we are in. And so we want to show to the congregation that we can use words. This is formal prayer. The prayer of faith is just the prayer that the Publican prayed. “Lord have mercy upon me, a sinner.” That was what he saw his greatest need to be—he needed mercy. He saw himself for who he was; a sinner. And he made his prayer to the point.

“After we have offered our petitions, we are to answer them ourselves as far as possible, and not wait for God to do for us what we can do for ourselves.” (*Ibid.*) Well you know, I thought about this quotation. It was more vivid the night we had the fire at the Fords. And we did kneel and have prayer. Things in your country are kind of different from ours. So, while we waited for the fire brigade, God answered and they were there in a few minutes. But in our country it probably would have burned down to the ground before they arrived. So we would have to get on with something. By the way, it says, “The help of God is held in reserve for all who demand it.” (*Ibid.*) All that God has promised has already been given. It’s just ours to claim. It is “held in reserve.” The healing was already in Jesus when the woman, by faith, touched the hem of His garment. When she exercised her faith, she received that which she desired. Christ knew something left Him. It is there. It says, “The help of God is held in reserve for all who demand it.” There is a beautiful passage found in Matthew 11:12 where it says, “From the days of John the

Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffered violence.” But there’s that last part that says, “And the violent take it by force.” Our faith needs to become violent. We need to become violent men to take the kingdom by force; not violent as the world understands force, but men and women of faith who will, as Jacob, not let go of Christ till we receive the blessing! “Divine help is to be combined with human effort, aspirations and energy, but we cannot reach the battlements of heaven without claiming for ourselves. We cannot be borne up by the prayers of others when we ourselves forget to pray, for God has made no such provisions for us.” (*Ibid.*)

Beloved, we don’t want to do anything—we want everything to be done for us. That’s the kind of life we want. We don’t want to believe in the most holy place atonement; we don’t want to believe that Christ is working on our behalf. Why? Because it means that we have to afflict our souls. We’d rather believe that “He that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out.” We’d rather believe this or what we read in John 5:24: “He that heareth my word and believeth on him that sent me hath everlasting life and shall not come into judgment [condemnation] but is passed from death into life.” These texts are fine and true but there is a balance also that we wish to avoid. We’d rather believe once saved always saved! We’d rather believe there’s an easy way to heaven. I’m a Christian and that’s all that matters. I’ve been baptized and I’m saved—I’m born again. But when it comes to us agonizing before God, no way. That’s why we’re so powerless and weak. That’s the vital connection that we need and which we cannot find ourselves getting because of our lifestyle; the way we’re living.

I read something that shocked me at first. I want to read it for you. Let’s see if you’ll be shocked as well. “Through nature and revelation, through His providence, and by the influence of His Spirit, God speaks to us. But these are not enough; we need also to pour out our hearts to Him. In order to have spiritual life and energy, we must have actual intercourse with our heavenly Father.” (*Steps to Christ*, p. 93) Isn’t that strong! “We must have actual “intercourse” with our heavenly Father.” The word just shocked me when I read it. And you know I had to go to the dictionary, and you know the first meaning for the word “intercourse,” naturally, is the marriage relation, but there’s another meaning. It says, “Dealings or communications between persons or groups.” Now listen, how can we be united with God and not know Him? God says He will keep us in perfect peace if our minds are stayed on Him. Except we have

this intercourse, except we become personally acquainted with our Father, we're not on stable ground. When the winds of false doctrine begin to blow and we're not steady ... except your foundation is on the Rock ... you're going to fall.

When there come questions in relation to the inspiration of Ellen White and we begin to see evidences, our faith is just going to shake and we're going to give up and turn. When people begin to find reasons to doubt the Bible and we, ourselves, don't know how to deal with it, we're going to go. Our only safety lies in knowing God. Not just *saying* I know Him, but by *experience*. When our hearts are united with the heart of God, when our minds are controlled by the mind of God, when truly heaven can say, "This is my son," only then will we be safe. And let me tell you something, this doesn't come by saying a prayer at the doorway. This doesn't come just by a silent prayer on the bus. This comes by finding *time* for God.


Don't you know your own relationships? If you should just live in the house without speaking to your wife or husband and you just move along every day like that ... What will happen eventually? And when our religion becomes so tame, when our prayer life becomes so dull, it means we can kneel on our knees, wanting to talk to God and we're thinking about the job tomorrow. We're on our knees and the thoughts that go through our minds have put God far from us. We need that *vital connection*. And if you learn nothing else from this camp meeting, you need to understand what it means to be connected; what it means to abide, what it means to long after God.

What's your goal as a Christian? Is your goal God Himself? Is your goal to have God in such a way that no one else on earth has had Him before? Do you wish you were like great men such as Job, Elijah, or Enoch; or maybe Moses that spoke face to face with God? We can never, ever gain these experiences *until* we begin to seek first things first. The faith that says, "I will not let Thee go except Thou bless me." The faith that says, "Lord, I'm going to stay on my knees until you give me the assurance in my heart that I'm Your friend."

Beloved, this is the faith we need at this time if we're ever going to make it. The Scripture says, "Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold." (Matthew 24:12) There's another verse right after that, do you know what it says? "But he that endureth unto the end, the same shall be saved." (v. 13) We're talking about endurance. We're talking about staying with God come what may. We're talking about when everything comes down to the wire that I am safe under His wings.

"Oh, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, ... how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" Christ wants to give you that same experience today. He wants to give it to you this morning.

This is Sabbath and He says, the Sabbath was made not for fellowship with one another. Not so much for being out and shaking hands meeting others. The Sabbath was made for an experience with you and Me that we can communicate, we can become one. And so God says that through Sabbath observance He is going to sanctify a people. Today, think on these things as we go through these hours, as we listen to these messages and as they bless our hearts. In return, find a secret spot somewhere and communicate with God because that's what He intended the Sabbath to be. That's what the first Sabbath was about, communication; becoming one with our Father.

Jesus said, "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness" and that's the only way we'll be filled. Let us claim these promises and not just to live careless lives, but lives that are lives of prayer and lives of faith. 

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A Thought on the Loud Cry

"There is to be in the churches a wonderful manifestation of the power of God, but it will not move upon those who have not humbled themselves before the Lord, and opened the door of the heart by confession and repentance. In the manifestation of that power which lightens the earth with the glory of God, they will see only something which in their blindness they think dangerous, something which will arouse their fears, and they will brace themselves to resist it. Because the Lord does not work according to their ideas and expectations, they will oppose the work." (Ellen G. White - *Review and Herald*, December 23, 1890)

GETTING BACK TO THE FOUNDATION

by Lynnford Beachy

At times in our Christian experience we tend to be walking on such a high plane that we almost forget about the necessity of making certain we are still on the true foundation. This study is to call us back, to remind us to examine our foundation to make certain it will stand the test of trial and persecution.

Jesus said, “And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say? Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will shew you to whom he is like: He is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock. But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great.” (Luke 6:46-49)

Notice that in this parable both men built a house. Both of them were trying to get to heaven, yet the one man, who refused to do what the Lord said, chose to build his house on the earth, while the other digged deep and placed his foundation on a rock. One man had a foundation for his house and the other man did not.

Paul said, “Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house.” (1 Peter 2:5) You and I, and every believer, are the house which is being built. A house for the Lord to dwell in. (See 1 Corinthians 3:16; 6:17.) We are building a relationship with God. Some people build that relationship on sand, hearing the Word of God but not doing what that Word says. Others hear the Word of God and do what it says, building their house upon the true foundation, the solid Rock. My friends, let us make sure our house is built on the true foundation.

We are continually adding stones to our house, building higher and higher, one stone after another. We may say to ourselves, “I have given a meal to a poor man—one more stone in my house.” Or “I have donated money to a good cause—one more stone in my house.” Or maybe, “I have now given up unhealthy food—one more stone in my house,” etc. We may think to ourselves, “The higher I build my house, the more sure it is that God will accept me into His kingdom. My friends, that is a tragic mistake. It is not how high the house is built, but whether it is built on the foundation or not. Please do not get me wrong, these advancements in our

Christian experience are good, but they, of themselves, can never save us.

How high do you think the thief on the cross built his house? Certainly not very high, but Jesus assured him that he would be with Him in paradise. Though the thief on the cross had not time to build his house high, he placed his house on the true foundation. Is your house built on the true foundation?

Jesus told us about the foundation of His church. He told us about the Rock upon which He would build His church. Notice this interesting conversation He had with His disciples. “When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” (Matthew 16:13-18)

Did Jesus suddenly change the subject of the conversation and say that He would build His church upon Peter? Certainly not! Jesus said He would build His church upon the truth that He is the Son of God. That is the true foundation of His church. Our Christian experience is based upon the truth that Jesus is the Son of God. Understanding that truth gives life and vigor to our Christian experience because it reveals the immense love of the Father in giving up His only begotten Son to die for us. This is why Paul could say, “That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that **ye, being rooted and grounded in love**, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.” (Ephesians 3:17-19)

Our Christian experience must be rooted and grounded in a love relationship with God and His only begotten Son. That is the true foundation of our Christian experience. Intricately connected with this love relationship with God and His Son is an understanding of what they have done for us. The principal thing they have done for us is forgiving us of our sins.

I was talking with a dear sister and I asked her, “Do you know that your sins have been forgiven?” She replied, “I was always taught to answer that question by saying, ‘by God’s grace I shall be forgiven.’” Beloved, this is a sad testimony. This is a very sad condition to be in because it is not what the Bible says about God’s forgiveness of sins.

John wrote, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9) There is no need to doubt the Word of God, for it is sure and will be fulfilled to the letter. When God promises to forgive our sins if we repent, He will certainly do it. If you have confessed and forsaken (Proverbs 28:13) your sins you can be sure that God has forgiven them and will not even mention them to you again. “If the wicked restore the pledge, give again that he had robbed, walk in the statutes of life, without committing iniquity; he shall surely live, he shall not die. None of his sins that he hath committed shall be mentioned unto him: he hath done that which is lawful and right; he shall surely live.” (Ezekiel 33:15, 16)

This is something we can be certain of. There is no room for doubt or uncertainty here. If you have confessed and forsaken your sin, God has certainly, without a shadow of a doubt, forgiven that sin. “But,” some say, “I am not certain if my repentance was genuine.” If you are not certain, then by all means make certain! Genuine repentance includes a sorrow for sin a confession to God of your wrongdoing and a turning away from it. “For I will declare mine iniquity; I will be sorry for my sin.” (Psalms 38:18) “He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.” (Proverbs 28:13)

If you find you do not have a sorrow for your sins, nor a desire to turn from them, ask God to give this to you and He will. For Jesus said, “And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.” (Matthew 21:22) Peter said, “Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.” (Acts 5:31) Repentance is a gift of God. (See also 2 Timothy 2:25; Proverbs 16:1)

Some people have the mistaken idea that every sin that was ever committed since childhood must be mentioned by name before it can be forgiven. While it is true we must be specific in our confession of sins, it is not possible to recall and recite every instance of every wrongdoing that we have ever done in the past. We can be as specific as possible by saying, “Lord please forgive me for all the times I have lied in the past, I am

sorry for it and I am determined not to do it again,” and continue with the other commandments we have transgressed. God is able to forgive all of our sins and we can stand before God as though we had never sinned.

Please don’t get me wrong. There is a time for mentioning specific sins as the children of Israel did in the days of Samuel. “And all the people said unto Samuel, Pray for thy servants unto the LORD thy God, that we die not: for we have added unto all our sins this evil, to ask us a king.” (1 Samuel 12:19) We should humbly ask God to show us the sin in our lives that we may confess and forsake it. If we sin against God after we have given our lives to Him, when it comes to our knowledge, it is not difficult for us to remember that specific sin in which we have transgressed, and therefore that sin should be specifically confessed.

After we have given our hearts to God and understand conversion and the nature of sin, as God reveals our sin to us, if we are sincere Christians, we will, and must freely confess our specific sins.

It is a dangerous error to doubt whether God has forgiven our sins if that doubt is based upon the idea that we are required to specifically mention every incident that we have sinned against God. If you have come to God in humility and sorrow for your sins, asking God for pardon, and then forsaken those sins, you can be sure that God has forgiven you. God wants us to have an assurance that we been forgiven. Jesus said, “as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee.” (Matthew 8:13) Let us consider how serious this statement is when we apply it to our own sins being forgiven.

John wrote, “And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life.” (1 John 2:25) God has promised us eternal life and He keeps His promises! “And this is the record, that **God hath given to us eternal life**, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; **that ye may know that ye have eternal life**, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.” (1 John 5:11-13) John understood it to be very important for us to know that we have eternal life. In fact he said that was the purpose of him writing this letter.

Paul wrote, “Fight the good fight of faith, **lay hold on eternal life**, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.” (1 Timothy 6:12) It takes faith to lay hold on eternal life. We must have unwavering faith in what the Word of God says.

Some people came up to Jesus one day and asked Him, "What shall we do, that we might work the *works* [plural] of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the *work* [singular] of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." (John 6:28, 29) The work of God is to increase your faith and bring you to the place where you "believe on him whom he hath sent." Whatever happens in your life, whatever experiences you are going through, God is trying to get you to believe. This also is the work that God has commissioned His people to do. John wrote, "But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name." (John 20:31) The goal of John, in writing his gospel, was to bring us to the place where we believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, so that we might have everlasting life. This is the work of God.

One night Paul and Silas were in prison when a great earthquake shook the prison, opening all the doors and loosening all the chains of the prisoners. The keeper of the prison awoke from his sleep and saw all the doors open. Being certain everyone had escaped, he determined to kill himself rather than meet a worse fate by the hands of his overseers. "But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here. Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." (Acts 16:28-31)

Here is a man in desperate need of understand the way of salvation. He was told to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Believing is vitally important to obtain salvation. Jesus said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." (Mark 16:16)

When is a man saved? Paul wrote, God "*Who 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." (2 Timothy 1:9) He also wrote, "For *by grace are ye saved* through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." (Ephesians 2:8) The RSV reads, "by grace you *have been* saved" which is more accurate to the original Greek which is in the past tense.

Paul said that he, along with his fellow Christians, were already saved. What were they saved from? "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins." (Matthew 1:21) Jesus came to save His people from their sins. This mission was not a partial mission, but a

mission to completely save His people from their sins. He is able and willing to save us from the penalty of sin by forgiving us of our past sins, from the power of sin by giving us the power to overcome temptations, and from the presence of sin by finally destroying sin and the devil after the thousand years of Revelation 20.

Paul was not ashamed to declare that he had been saved. Yet, Paul also said that we shall be saved in the future. He wrote, "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 5:9-10)

Here Paul makes it very clear that we have already been justified, or forgiven, but shall, at some point in the future, be saved from wrath. Evidently there is more than one aspect to salvation. First, we are saved from the condemnation of our past sins and the present power of sin, and in the future we shall be saved from wrath. This is what the Bible is referring to when it speaks of us being saved in the future. Jesus said, "But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." (Matthew 24:13) It is this aspect of salvation that is not sure to us until we have endured unto the end. It is only after we have endured unto the end that we can be saved from wrath.

At the second coming of Christ there will be two groups of people on this earth. One group will be crying for the rocks to fall on them and hide them from the presence of Christ, while the other group will proclaim, "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the LORD; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation." (Isaiah 25:9) If we have taken part in the first two aspects of salvation (being saved from the condemnation of our past sins and the present power of sin), and we endure unto the end, we shall take part in the last aspect of salvation, which is a physical salvation from this world and wrath to come.

Anyone who takes part in the last aspect of salvation will have already been saved from the penalty and the power of sin. But being saved from the penalty and the power of sin does not guarantee that you will endure unto the end and be saved from this world and wrath to come. For, being once forgiven of your sins, and even walking in victory over sin, does not guarantee that you will not fall into sin tomorrow and remain in that condition. *If we are in that condition at either the end of our life or the second coming of Christ, we will not be saved from this world and wrath to come.* We will then proclaim with the rest of the lost world, "The harvest is

past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.” (Jeremiah 8:20) I pray that each of us will endure unto the end and be saved from wrath to come.

We can be certain that we have been forgiven of our sins. We can be certain that we have been saved from the condemnation of our past sins and the present power of sin. Certainty of our salvation and current condition is a necessity in our Christian walk. Paul wrote, “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?” (2 Corinthians 13:5) Paul admonishes us to examine ourselves and know for sure whether we are in the faith—to know what is our current condition and standing with God. This is not only something we *can* know, but something we *must* know.

Although it is necessary to be certain of our salvation we can be led to believe a lie and have a false hope of salvation when we are living in wickedness. Paul wrote, “Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.” (Galatians 5:19-21) There are people who commit such things yet boldly proclaim that they are saved. This is a sad delusion of the enemy. All such people, if they do not change their course, will find out too late that they have been sadly mistaken.

We must have a certainty of our salvation, but not a certainty based upon suppositions, assumptions, and presumption, but rather a certainty based upon the plain statements of the Word of God. We must know where we stand with God, based upon what His Word says. Having an assurance of our salvation is necessary. However, to make the claim that we are now beyond the reach of Satan is foolishness, for some of the strongest Christians have been deluded and turned out of the way of salvation.

Being saved from the penalty of past sins and the power of current temptations does not guarantee that you will be saved from wrath to come. For at any time in the future you could turn your eyes away from God and forfeit your salvation. It is only he who *endures unto the end* who will be saved from wrath to come. Let us fight the good fight of faith, endure unto the end, and lay hold on eternal life.

One of the main reasons I have decided to share these things with you from the Word of God is because of a

problem among Seventh-day Adventists in knowing for certain that they have been saved from their sins. This problem arises from a misunderstanding of a statement made by Ellen White where she said, “Those who accept the Saviour, however sincere their conversion, should never be taught to say or to feel that they are saved.” (*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 155) A surface reading of this statement can lead to the conclusion that we are never to say, or even feel, that we have been saved from our sins. This is a misunderstanding of this statement as will be seen as we examine it more thoroughly. You will see that she is referring to the danger of claiming or feeling that you are “once saved, always saved.” In other words, she was stating that we should never say or feel that we are completely secure from ever falling away from salvation. Taken in its context, the statement makes perfect sense. The sentence preceding the one just quoted says, “Never can we safely put confidence in self or feel, this side of heaven, that we are secure against temptation.” (*Ibid.*)

Please notice the following statements: “Those who accept Christ, and in their first confidence say, I am saved, are in danger of trusting to themselves. They lose sight of their own weakness and their constant need of divine strength.” (*Ibid.*) “If you sit down with the ease-loving ones, with the words on your lips, ‘I am saved,’ and disregard the commandments of God, you will be eternally lost.” (*Selected Messages*, bk 1, p. 318) You can see already what Ellen White meant when she admonished us against saying, “I am saved.” She says that if we say we are saved while we are disregarding the commandments of God we are lost.

Ellen White also wrote, “If we are disobedient, our characters are out of harmony with God’s moral rule of government, and it is stating a falsehood to say, ‘I am saved.’ No one is saved who is a transgressor of the law of God, which is the foundation of His government in heaven and in earth.” (*Selected Messages*, bk 1, p. 315)

“By living faith, by earnest prayer to God, and depending upon Jesus’ merits, we are clothed with His righteousness, and we are saved. ‘Oh, yes,’ some say, ‘we are saved in doing nothing. In fact, I am saved. I need not keep the law of God. I am saved by the righteousness of Jesus Christ.’ Christ came to our world to bring all men back to allegiance to God. **To take the position that you can break God’s law, for Christ has done it all, is a position of death, for you are as verily a transgressor as anyone.**” (*Faith and Works*, p. 71 - This emphasis, and all other emphasis, is supplied.)

Certainly by now you have a much better understanding of the meaning of Ellen White’s warnings against

saying, “I am saved.” She was combating the popular idea that a person is saved even while he is knowingly transgressing God’s commandments. She was also combating the idea directly related to that of believing that once a person is saved he no longer needs to guard against temptations for he can never be lost—she was combating the false idea of “once saved, always saved.”

Ellen White wrote, “We are never to rest in a satisfied condition, and cease to make advancement, saying, ‘I am saved.’ When this idea is entertained, the motives for watchfulness, for prayer, for earnest endeavor to press onward to higher attainments, cease to exist. No sanctified tongue will be found uttering these words till Christ shall come, and we enter in through the gates into the city of God. Then, with the utmost propriety, we may give glory to God and to the Lamb for eternal deliverance. As long as man is full of weakness,—for of himself he cannot save his soul,—he should never dare to say, ‘I am saved.’ It is not he that putteth on the armor that can boast of the victory; for he has the battle to fight and the victory to win. It is he that endureth unto the end that shall be saved.” (*Review and Herald*, June 17, 1890)

You can see from this statement that she is referring to the final aspect of salvation, which is being saved from wrath. We can never claim, while we are here on earth, that we are sure to take part in that aspect of salvation, because as long as we have free will there is always a chance for future failure. When we make the claim that we are sure to take part in that aspect of salvation we will “cease to make advancement” and “the motives for watchfulness, for prayer, for earnest endeavor to press onward to higher attainments, cease to exist.”


Ellen White wrote, “All those who say, ‘I am saved! I am saved!’ but do not obey God’s commandments, are resting their salvation on a false hope, a false foundation. No one who has an intelligent knowledge of the requirements of God, can be saved in disobedience. Just so far as men have a knowledge of the words of Christ, so plainly laid down in the Bible, they will be held responsible.” (*Signs of the Times*, December 28, 1891)

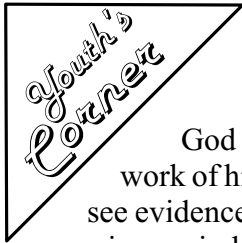
Notice what Ellen White says in the following statement: “But those who after being prayed with say, I am saved, have no real understanding of what it means to receive Christ. No man can say, I am saved, until he has endured test and trial, until he has shown that he can overcome temptation.” (*The Kress Collection*, p. 120) She said that a man cannot make the claim, “I am saved,” until he has shown that he can overcome temptation. This makes it clear that she was stating that he who has shown that he can overcome temptation can say, “I am saved.”

Please notice another statement she makes, “**It is essential** to have faith in Jesus, and **to believe you are saved** through Him; but there is danger in taking the position that many do take in saying, ‘I am saved.’ Many have said: ‘You must do good works, and you will live’; but apart from Christ no one can do good works. Many at the present day say, ‘Believe, only believe, and live.’ Faith and works go together, believing and doing are blended. The Lord requires no less of the soul now, than He required of Adam in Paradise before he fell—perfect obedience, unblemished righteousness. The requirement of God under the covenant of grace is just as broad as the requirement He made in Paradise—harmony with His law, which is holy, and just, and good. The gospel does not weaken the claims of the law; it exalts the law and makes it honorable. Under the New Testament, no less is required than was required under the Old Testament. Let no one take up with the delusion so pleasant to the natural heart, that God will accept of sincerity, no matter what may be the faith, no matter how imperfect may be the life. God requires of His child perfect obedience.” (*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, pp. 373, 374)

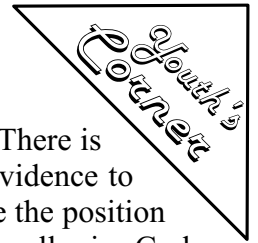
Here Sister White makes it very clear that it is essential for us to believe that we are saved. She obviously is not referring to us believing we are sure to take part in the final aspect of salvation, which is physical deliverance from this world and wrath to come. She is referring to us being sure that we have been saved from the condemnation of past sins and the present power of sin. Of this we can be certain.

Notice this very clear and unmistakable statement by Sister White: “Each one of you may know for yourself that you have a living Saviour, that he is your helper and your God. **You need not stand where you say, ‘I do not know whether I am saved.’** Do you believe in Christ as your personal Saviour? If you do, then rejoice. We do not rejoice half as much as we should.” (*The General Conference Bulletin*, April 10, 1901)

It is essential for us to know that we have been saved—that we have taken part in the first two aspects of salvation—being saved from the condemnation of our past sins and the present power of sin. God’s Word is clear on this subject. When we confess our sins God forgives us of those sins. We can be, and must be, certain of our salvation. Not a certainty that leads to negligence in our Christian experience, but a certainty that lets “us . . . come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.” (Hebrews 4:16) 



Folly of Unbelief



God has stamped his image upon every work of his hand. In every object in nature, we see evidences of his mighty power. The fields of waving grain bow their heads in acknowledgment of the God who gives to man his bread in due season. The trees, bending beneath their weight of precious fruit, bear unmistakable evidence of the love of a beneficent Creator. Every tree and shrub declares the work of infinite power. Upon every blade of grass God's name is written. The opening buds and blooming flowers, with their varied tints, outvying even the glory of Solomon, show forth the skill of the divine Artist. The cattle upon a thousand hills, all with their distinctive characteristics, express the wonders of their Maker, and declare that he is God indeed.

“The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard.” Who can behold the wonders of God in the starry heavens, and yet deny that an infinite Power gave these jeweled lights their place, and upholds them there by his omnipotent arm? God has left his own witness upon the canvas of heaven and upon nature everywhere.

The story is told of an astronomer whose friend denied the existence of God. In order to show him the folly of his unbelief, the astronomer obtained a globe of the starry heavens, and placed it in the room where they were seated. On seeing it, his friend inquired where he got so beautiful a globe, and who was the maker.

“It was not made,” answered the astronomer, “it came into existence of itself.”

“You are jesting,” said his friend; “that is impossible.”

The astronomer answered: “My dear sir, you will not accept my word for it that this small body originated of itself, or came by chance, and yet you contend that those heavenly bodies of which this is but an inferior representation, came into existence without a Master-power of design.” As he pursued this line of reasoning, the atheist saw and acknowledged the absurdity of his own position.

“The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God,” but he can advance no evidence to sustain his claims; he can only take the position of an objector to the purposes of an all-wise God. Atheism can shed no ray of light into the grave. It cannot restrain crime or quicken the moral energies. It has no power to elevate the character or purify the soul. On the contrary, it always tends to degenerate the human race; it leads away from purify and peace. An instance of this is given in the history of the French Revolution. That period, when the existence of God was denied, and his commandments were abolished, was the most revolting that is recorded on the pages of human history.

Was there ever an instance known where a dying Christian left to his watching friends the testimony that he had been deceived, that there is no God, no reality in the religion of Christ? But how many of those who have drawn about them the dark robes of atheism have let them fall before the grim messenger of death. We might call to mind many instances where learned men have gloried in their unbelief, and have thought it a virtue to parade their infidelity upon every occasion. But when death claimed them, they have looked with horror into the starless future, and their dying words have been, “I have tried to believe that there is no God, no reward for the faithful, no punishment for the wicked. But how vain has been the attempt. Now I know that I shall meet the doom of the lost soul.” Sir Thomas Scott in his last moments cried, “Until this moment I believed that there was neither a God nor a hell. Now I know and feel that there are both, and that I am doomed to perdition by the just judgment of God.”

Thus many testimonies have been borne. Men may think that they have succeeded in tearing the image of God from their minds and hearts; but when they are brought face to face with the king of terrors, the image of God remains, and the confession is wrung from unwilling lips that the boasted faith of a lifetime has been a delusion. (Ellen G. White, *Youth's Instructor*, December 24, 1896)

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Last month our feature article, “The Berean Attitude” was published without listing the author’s name. Let me explain why this was done. The article had been submitted some months ago for publication. Upon rereading it, I became impressed that it contained timely material. Since it had been submitted, the author had come under fire from the pastor of the local church he attends for speaking up on the doctrine of God. I wanted to contact him about the use of his name but was unable to reach him till after the paper had been published. While I prefer to have names for all articles, I did not want to put this brother in more “hot water” without his permission.

After talking to the brother, he assured me that not only was it okay to publish his name, but he wanted it published. We are thankful that we might clarify this matter by stating that, the author of “The Berean Attitude” is, Robert “Bob” Habenicht. Bob is a retired

minister and missionary who has spent several years in faithful service to the Master. His friendliness is well known to all who have met him. He is especially at home around children who call him “Pastor Bob.”

Bob would like you to know that he would welcome contact about his article or experience. You may write to Brother Habenicht at: 724 County Rd 89, Bryant, AL 35958. You may also call him at his home phone: (256) 597-3454.

Editor

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