

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

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Hungering and Thirsting

“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.” (Matthew 5:6)

The Bible makes it clear that the prerequisite for being filled with righteousness is for us to be first hungering and thirsting after it. Jesus tells us to seek God’s righteousness above all other things. “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.” (Matthew 6:33) He also tells us that when the Comforter is come, He will reprove us (i.e., convict us) of righteousness. “And when he is come he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.” (John 16:8)

Paul states in Romans 1:17 that the righteousness of God is revealed in the gospel of Christ, but it should also be noted that the wrath of God is revealed against men who hold the truth in unrighteousness. (Romans 1:18) God cherishes His truth so seriously that any mishandling of it incurs His wrath. Our pastors and leaders need to very carefully hold His truth with pure, sanctified hands as they present it to others for their salvation, as well as for their own.

Now, the question arises, “Are we hungering and thirsting after this righteousness with our entire being, not just with a flickering flame of desire but with an earnest, deep-seated fire that causes this desire to be first and foremost in our lives?” We usually think of the five foolish virgins as having no oil in their lamps, but the original Greek tells us they still had a flickering flame. Their lamps were not totally out; nevertheless, they missed the Bridegroom, and if we likewise have just a flickering flame of desire or even if we have occasional eager spurts of sporadic desire for righteousness, we will still miss out on this beautiful experience that God so desperately needs to develop within us. When we are really hungry and thirsty, the only thing that matters to us is food and water, and the same will be true for our spiritual hunger and thirst.

After having gained the doctrine of Christ, have we gone on to perfection? (Hebrews 6:1) Perhaps in so trying, we have become stymied on the way. Maybe we have stalled in the valley of despair or maybe we have run ahead of Christ into the heights and the thin air of a thorough knowledge of Scripture and of what righteousness is but we are left gasping for the very life breath with which to accomplish righteous living. Hosea 4:6 says that God’s “people are *destroyed* for lack of knowledge,” but knowledge is not enough, for Satan even has this. We must have more! To understand what is needful in our experience, we must first understand what sin truly is and the exceeding sinfulness of sin, as Paul says in Romans 7:13.

Prayer Requests

Many of our readers are currently facing major health problems, but two of our brothers are especially in great need of our prayers now. Brother Lew McGee’s bone marrow is functioning poorly and this is causing him extreme weakness. Brother Steve Sutton desperately needs a liver transplant and he continues to increase in weakness as he awaits one. Please remember both of these dear brothers in prayer, not only for their physical health, but also that God’s Spirit will be very close to them, bringing encouragement, strength, and comfort.

Also, please remember Smyrna Gospel Ministries as we reach out to God’s people around the earth, that we will be always sensitive and wise to know what God’s will is, and then ever eager and ready to do it.

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Some of the teachers of the new theology have said that sin is a broken relationship with God. Christ's relationship with His Father was broken at the cross and this is why He was able to die, so these proponents say, even though Jesus had committed no acts of sin, and therefore what each one of us needs to do is to focus on maintaining our relationship with Jesus and then we will not sin. This understanding of sin teaches us that we don't have to worry about the fruit we produce or even resist temptation. In fact, some teach it is a sin to resist temptation because to do so is not of faith but of works.

Instead we only have to be concerned about maintaining the connection with Jesus. Sin is, therefore, an attitude and not an act. However, no Bible texts are offered to verify this definition of sin and neither is support given from Ellen White. It is of course true that we do need to maintain a relationship with Jesus. He is the vine and we are the branches. (John 15) Portrayed here is a very intimate and vital relationship, one in which the branch is dependent upon the vine for life, but separation from God is not sin, it is the *result* of 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) Jesus' separation from His Father at the cross was the end result of my sin and your sin. He bore our sins for us so that we might share in His eternal glory.

It has also been said that sin is what my nature is. It is because Adam sinned that I am a sinner, not because of anything I have done or will do, and therefore as soon as I was born, I was counted as a sinner in the eyes of God. The texts used to support this definition only yield illustrations of sin, rather than provide a proper definition of it. Now it is true

that because of Adam's sin, I have a fallen nature. My propensity is toward selfishness and pride, but my propensity is not sin in the eyes of God, but only representative of my fleshly nature and this nature can be subdued by "grace through faith." (Ephesians 2:8)

The one definition of sin that is given in the Bible is found in 1 John 3:4, "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law," and this is the one definition that Ellen G. White supports. Many *illustrations* of sin are given in the Bible, but this is the only definition.

A correct understanding of the nature and person of Christ and whether He was omnipotent when He lived on this earth is also vital to our understanding of how we are to be enabled to live victoriously now. His struggle in the wilderness with temptation is an example to us in our struggle with temptation. Our view of sin even affects our understanding of the nature of Christ, and thus we need to be crystal clear on all of these important issues. To help us, Pastor Stump will be addressing these topics over the next few months, starting with this issue of *Old Paths*. Let us be in prayerful study on these serious topics during the coming weeks, for God is truly purifying and refining a people to bring honor and glory to Him in a way that no other people have done in the history of this earth.

"The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light." (Romans 13:12)

Onycha Holt

The Road to Perfection has been Built

(As we promised last month, we are beginning a series of articles this month on living the victorious Christian life. This first article begins by showing the Bible truth that victory over all sin is not only God's will for us, but also that He makes more than ample provision for us to be a partaker of His Holy Spirit whereby we are empowered..... Editor)

"Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment." (Hebrews 6:1, 2)

As long as there are new converts to the faith, there will be a need for what Paul calls, in the prior chapter, the "milk" of the word of God. But for those who are more mature in the faith are to partake of the "meat" of the Word of God, in addition to partaking of the experience that this "meat" is to bring.

The doctrine of Christ is the foundation of our experience we build upon as we partake of the "strong meat." (Hebrews 5:12) The Bible plainly declares that salvation does not exist outside of this foundation.

Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole. This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved. (Acts 4:10-12)

For if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins. (John 8:24)

As important as the principles of the doctrine of Christ are, Paul tells us that we are to go beyond our beginning experience unto perfection. Today, most professed Christians do not believe that Christian perfection is possible while we are still in the flesh and that we must wait until Jesus comes to be enabled to live above sin. But the Bible says that God's people can, and must, overcome sin and that we must not wait until Jesus comes to do so. All the promises in the book of Revelation, a book especially for God's end-time people, are to those who overcome. Of special note are the promises made to the churches of Ephesus and Smyrna.

To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God. (Revelation 2:7)

He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death" (Revelation 2:11)

When Adam sinned, he and all of his prosperity lost access to the tree of life. God said, "Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever." (Genesis 3:22) Therefore to prevent Adam from becoming an immortal sinner, God "drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life." (Genesis 3:24) Adam's sin barred him, along with all the human race, from the tree of life. The personal sins of Adams descendents, if unrepented of and unforgiven, will cause the sinner to partake of the second death. The plan of salvation empowers the believer by faith in his Redeemer to overcome sin and Jesus said that those who overcome will have access to the tree of life and will not suffer the second death.

The book of Revelation also speaks of a group of people called the 144,000 in whose "mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God." (Revelation 14:5) The concept of a remnant people tied together with the 144,000 has been a significant factor in Adventist thinking since the movement's early inception. This has caused Adventism to be under the symbolic microscope of others. The late Walter Martin, author of *The Kingdom of the Cults*, stated that Adventists needed to be willing to accept more scrutiny than other Christian bodies because, unlike the Baptists, Methodists, and other groups which do not profess to be a remnant people, Adventists claim to be the remnant of Revelation 12:17.

Why does this concept create such a stir for others? There are at least two reasons. Firstly, being "the remnant" implies that other churches do not have the favor of God, or at least don't have His favor in the same manner. Secondly, the concept often embodies the teaching of Christian perfection. Since most evangelical churches deny that God's people can live without sin, they consequently also deny that the remnant is a special group of people who live above sin. Historically, Adventists have understood the Bible truth that there will be a time when probation for all of humanity

closes; Jesus will cease to mediate in the heavenly sanctuary; and God's sealed people will still continue to live without sin even though they do not have a mediator between them and the Father. They will not need a mediator at this point because they will have, by the grace of Christ, forever ceased from sin.

Is it possible to be victorious over all sin? This question has haunted men and women for centuries. This question has been difficult for some, such as Augustine, to resolve because they have not been able to realize it in their own lives or because they have not seen it demonstrated in the lives of others. Many times detractors will ask such questions as, "Are you living without sin?" "Do you know any perfect people?" However, these are the wrong questions to ask in this matter for they limit God's plan and desire to what humanity may or may not realize. Proper questions could include: "Does God desire for His children to overcome sin? Has God made provision for us to overcome all sin? If so, when, or at what point in our experience may we have victory over sin? Can we ever truly be totally free from the power, penalty, and presence of sin?"

If people do not think it is possible to live without sin, it is certain that nobody will endeavor to see this reality fulfilled in his life. Recently I read a challenge on the Internet that declared:

I challenge you to give me one Bible text stating that, contrary to Proverbs 20:9; Jeremiah 2:35; 1 John 1:8-10 and Ephesians 2:8-9, Christians can live without sin in perfect obedience to God's law as your Church and your prophet Ellen G. White teaches in *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, September 27, 1906, page 8. Do so and I will give you \$1,000. I am waiting for you to produce this one Bible text. (<http://www.babylonforsaken.com/challenge.html>)

Let us see if this writer's challenge, and perhaps our own challenge, have a clear, positive answer. Let us first notice some statements from Jesus. In Matthew 5:48 He says, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." This certainly is a high and worthy standard that we are commanded by Jesus to attain. Jesus did not say if you wish to be better or merely good you may do so if you so desire. No, He said that we are to be perfect as God in heaven is perfect.

The command, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect," would never have been given, if every provision had not been made whereby we may become as perfect in our sphere as God is in his. (*Review and Herald*, April 12, 1892)

As God is perfect in his sphere, so are we required to be perfect in ours. (*Review and Herald*, June 3, 1884)

"If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth." (Mark 9:23) Jesus didn't say that fifty percent or even ninety-nine percent of things are possible to those who believe, but one hundred percent are possible. The context of

this verse involved Jesus freeing a man's son of demon possession. Satan will attempt to control our lives, but he is powerless against Jesus. Even the sinful nature can be kept in check one hundred percent of the time by the power of Jesus. The access to this great power of God comes by faith in Jesus. Jesus told this father that if he believed (had faith), all things were possible. In 1 John 5:4 we read, "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."

Jesus said in John 14:15, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." Love combined with faith is the golden key in the Christian's life that unlocks for him or her the mystery of overcoming all sin. Galatians 5:6 tells us that faith works by love. It is this faith that Ellen White says "purifies the soul." In 2 Corinthians 5:14 Paul writes, "For the love of Christ constraineth us." Constrain is an old English word for motivate or propel. It is the opposite of restrain. The New King James Version of this text reads, "For the love of Christ compels us." "We love him, because he first loved us." (1 John 4:19) "Nature and revelation alike testify of God's love." (*Steps to Christ*, p. 9) Beloved, the Bible speaks of God's love being expressed to this pitiful race in so many ways; however, the one supreme revelation of God's love was demonstrated in the gift of His only begotten Son. "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." (1 John 4:9, 10)

But this great sacrifice was not made in order to create in the Father's heart a love for man, not to make Him willing to save. No, no! "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son." John 3:16. The Father loves us, not because of the great propitiation, but He provided the propitiation because He loves us. Christ was the medium through which He could pour out His infinite love upon a fallen world. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself." 2 Corinthians 5:19. God suffered with His Son. In the agony of Gethsemane, the death of Calvary, the heart of Infinite Love paid the price of our redemption.

Jesus said, "Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life, that I might take it again." John 10:17. That is, "My Father has so loved you that He even loves Me more for giving My life to redeem you. In becoming your Substitute and Surety, by surrendering My life, by taking your liabilities, your transgressions, I am endeared to My Father; for by My sacrifice, God can be just, and yet the Justifier of him who believeth in Jesus."

None but the Son of God could accomplish our redemption; for only He who was in the bosom of the Father could declare Him. Only He who knew the height and depth of the love of God could make it manifest. Nothing less than the infinite sacrifice made by Christ in behalf of fallen man could express the Father's love to lost humanity.

"God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son." (*Steps to Christ*, pp. 13, 14)

Divinity never commands that which is impossible. 1 Corinthians 15:57 says that victory is a gift given by God and Jesus tells us that our Father in heaven greatly desires for us to have the best of gifts. (Matthew 7:11)

Knowing God's love as revealed in the Cross of Calvary establishes faith in the Christian's life. It was this faith that works by love that enabled men and women in the past, and enables them today to live for Jesus. Hebrews 11 has been called by some, "God's honor roll." In it we find a lustrous list of people from the Old Testament times who did wonderful things for God and will be saved in His kingdom. Each one of these special warriors did their great feats and will be in heaven by faith. The same faith that worked by love and brought God's power into the lives of these Old Testament worthies can work by love and bring God's power into our lives today, enabling us to live for Christ day by day, for we have no power of our own.

The Apostle Paul writes, "Finally, my brethren, *be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might*. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." (Ephesians 6:10, 11) The Bible is clear that we have no ability to live above sin by ourselves. It can not happen apart from the power of God, accessed by faith. Jesus stated, "without me ye can do nothing." (John 15:5) However, we can, with the Apostle Paul declare, "I can do *all things* through Christ which strengtheneth me." (Philippians 4:13) In God's strength and the "power of his might" we can stand against the wiles of the devil. By faith in the promises of God we become partakers in the divine nature. (2 Peter 1:4)

Beloved, the Bible is full of assurance that the life of the Christian need not be one of defeat, but one of victory over sin. There is one more testimony that I would like to offer on this important matter. Our heavenly Father in His sacred law, declares in the second commandment that He is "the LORD thy God, . . . shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments." (Exodus 20:6) God does not say that He has just one or two, but God declares that He has thousands that truly love Him and are keeping His commandments. Surely no one would wish to contradict God.

Ellen White also positively agrees with the plain position of Scripture.

Jesus came to bring moral power to man that he might *overcome every sin*, that he might become conqueror through Christ. (*Sermons and Talks*, book 1, p. 26 — All emphasis in this issue is supplied unless otherwise noted.)

If we will trust him, and commit our ways to him, he will direct our steps in the very path that will result in our obtaining the *victory over every evil passion, and every trait of character* that is unlike the character of our divine Pattern. (*Signs of the Times*, May 25, 1888)

It is now or never that you must *perfect* Christian character (*Signs of the Times*, February 14, 1878)

Ellen White's agreement with the Bible theme of victory over sin is so strong in her writings that Ralph Larson has compiled a book (*Tell of His Power*) of over three hundred pages of quotations from Ellen White's writings on the theme of total and complete victory over sin.

Now if God assures us that we may have full victory over sin, why do so many teach that we cannot have total victory. The devil is behind this. The Bible says that he "was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it." (John 8:44) "Satan represents God's law of love as a law of selfishness. He declares that it is impossible for us to obey its precepts." (*Desire of Ages*, p. 24)

It is important to remember the promise that "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." (1 Corinthians 10:13) This promise assures us that God measures every trial and temptation before it ever comes to us. He only allows that which, by His grace, we may overcome. Suppose that we accept the assumption that we cannot overcome all sin. The first logical question would be, "How much sin cannot be overcome?" Or we might ask, "How much can we overcome? Ninety percent of our temptations? Or eighty percent? Or thirty percent?" If you ask pastors who teach that total victory is not possible, if you ask conference officials who teach and believe this concept, and even if you ask the theology teachers at Adventist schools, you will find it interesting that nobody knows. The idea is often presented that each person must decide for himself and thus each person sets his own standard for godly living instead of letting the Word of God set the standard. Ellen White counseled against such foolishness. She wrote:

The Ten Commandments are called in the New Testament the royal law of liberty. In obeying the divine precepts, men will assimilate to the divine character; for the character of God is expressed in his holy law. In substituting their own ideas, in erecting their own standard, they will come to misrepresent the Father and Jesus Christ, whom he has sent, coming far short of Christlikeness of character. In erecting a standard for themselves, they will cling to their own deficiencies, practice their former habits, and fall far below the perfection of Christ's character. But through the grace of Christ, we should ever strive to reach the perfect standard. (*Signs of the Times*, October 17, 1895)

God's word presents the standard to which we are to conform our life and character. We may choose to follow some other standard, which is more in harmony with our own hearts, but we can never thus gain the divine approval. Only by conforming to the word of God, can we hope to come to 'the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.' But we must do this, or we shall never enter Heaven. Without purity and

holiness of heart, we cannot win the crown of immortal glory" (*Review and Herald*, May 30, 1882)

While it is true that man sinned and thus brought a just condemnation on himself, we see the wonderful character of God when we realize that He is not content to allow mankind, made in His own image, to wallow in the "slough of despond" ever trying to overcome sin, but never finding victory. No! NO! A thousand times no! God has made full and ample provision for His children who are in the world to live above the world, in the very atmosphere of heaven as they live in the conscience presence of their Creator.

The Scriptures teach us to seek for the sanctification to God of body, soul, and spirit. In this work we are to be laborers together with God. Much may be done to restore the moral image of God in man, to improve the physical, mental, and moral capabilities. Great changes can be made in the physical system by obeying the laws of God and bringing into the body nothing that defiles. And while we cannot claim perfection of the flesh, we may have Christian perfection of the soul. (*Selected Messages*, Book 2, p. 32)

The Bible does not say our flesh or our sinful nature is to be changed before Jesus comes, but they will be changed at Christ's second coming. (1 Corinthians 15:53, 54) Till that time our flesh and the sinful nature are to be subdued by the indwelling power of Jesus. The real battleground is the mind. The Bible says to "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 2:5) The Bible says that you are to be "transformed by the renewing of your mind." (Romans 12:2) "Every organ of the body was made to be servant to the mind. The mind is the capital of the body." (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, p. 136)

These truths take on greater meaning when we connect them to Paul's statement in Hebrews 9:14 where he tells us that God's desire is to "purge your conscience [mind] from dead works to serve the living God." The ministry of Jesus in the final atonement in heaven provides that "the sins of the truly penitent are to be blotted from the records of heaven." (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 358) Before this can be accomplished, sin must first be conquered in our lives and the first place that all sin begins is in our minds. Jesus expressed this principle by noting, "whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." (Matthew 5:28) Before a man steals with his hand, he covets with his heart or mind. Before a man commits murder, he is first angry. God wants to clean up our cup from the inside out knowing that outward solutions do not change our character. But God has promised that if we have a willing heart, He will change our character. "When the character of Christ shall be perfectly reproduced in His people, then He will come to claim them as His own." (*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 69)

Allen Stump

Theology Made Simple

While a small group of Christians admit that victory over sin is God's will, fewer seem to be able to agree on how this victory may be obtained. However, if we will allow inspiration to speak to our hearts, God's plan will not be difficult to understand despite the fact that theologians have argued over these points for millennia.

Let us begin with some terminology. Vocabulary is essential for proper communication. Perhaps we have been intimidated by theologians who have used big terms that were foreign to us. There are some extra-biblical words that we often use which we are comfortable with. Words such as theology, incarnation, and millennium are often used by Bible students with little objection because the meaning of these words has become so well known. Other words become a little more difficult to understand because their definitions are not well known. These words include Christology and soteriology. While these words may not be understood by the average layperson, their meanings are very important and the concepts they express are studied by all Christians and are extremely important to the Christian's experience for they are two foundational pillars of the plan of salvation. So let's take a look at these two words.

Christology: Christology is the study of and affirmation of Jesus as the Christ, the Messiah. The foundational point of Christology is one's view of the nature and person of Christ. The importance of this should not be too hard to see. The view that people have of Jesus greatly affects their understanding of God's character, purposes, and even His nature. If Jesus is understood to be the Father, such as in monarchianism which holds that God is one sovereign, eternal being manifested in three forms, then God did not really have a son to give for our sins and to demonstrate His love by. Jesus could not have truly died for our sins for God cannot die. The implications go on and on. We have, from time to time, explored the implications of Jesus being part of a triune God, such as there being no gift of a real son, no true death on the cross, no real mediation for sins, a god that practices in role playing, etc. If we believe that Jesus was simply a man upon whom God placed His spirit in a special way, there are a multitude of issues that must be resolved and that will react with other areas of our theology.

Even if we believe that Jesus is the literal Son of God, our view of his nature in the incarnation greatly affects how we understand His work and ministry. Much of the contention that is raised by those who advocate what is called "historic Adventism" arises over whether Jesus accepted the nature of Adam in his unfallen state prior to sin or in his fallen state after he sinned.

As you can see by looking at some of these basic issues, there is a great deal involved in Christology and you have been studying it all of your Christian life, even if you did not

know the terminology. Volumes have been written on this subject and the scope of this article does not allow a thorough explanation of these points now, but we plan to discuss these issues in detail in the coming months.

Soteriology: According to the *Seventh-Day Adventist Theology Handbook*, soteriology is, "From the Gr. *sôtēia*, 'deliverance,' and *logos*, 'discourse.' It is that area of Christian theology that deals with God's plan of "redemption, more particularly Christ's work of salvation." (p. xxiii) Perhaps the most basic principle of soteriology is our understanding of the nature of sin. Our view of sin even helps to carve out our understanding of the nature of Christ. Any time there is a shifting of theology, or any time a new paradigm is introduced, concerning how mankind is saved, there is almost always also a shift in the understanding of the nature of Christ and/or the nature of sin. Whenever someone begins a study by defining sin differently than it has been defined, expect to hear a new theology on the nature of Christ, or if that person should start with a new understanding of the nature of Christ, expect that a different definition of sin will follow, because the two almost always go together.

Some of the greatest theological discussions that have ever occurred within the professed Christian Church have been over the definition of sin. Do not think that this matter is of little importance. It is of great importance.

If we are to have pardon for our sins, we must first have a realization of what sin is, that we may repent and bring forth fruits meet for repentance. (Faith and Works, p. 49)

Aurelius Augustine (354-450), one of the ancient Catholic Church fathers, struggled with the sin of unrighteous sexual desires and when he found no victory over his problem, the only solution left to him was to change his theology so as to fit his problem. He came to the conclusion that man was helpless, even under the power of Christ, to overcome sin due to the weakened nature he received from Adam. This included not only a weakened nature, but the guilt and condemnation of Adam as well. By defining sin to include the nature we are born with, Augustine concluded that we are born as sinners. This suggestion that man is born a sinner leads directly to the Roman Catholic doctrines of infant baptism and the Immaculate Conception.

Defining Sin

For an overview, let us notice some basic points from Inspiration concerning the nature of sin. 1 John 3:4 states: "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law." Notice that this follows the proper syntax for a definition: "Sin is ..." Paul, in Romans 7:7, clearly tells us the law John makes reference to here is the Ten Commandment Law: "I had not known sin,

but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.” It is important to note that in Romans 7, Paul says he would not have known what sin was except by God’s law.

Some have tried to spin the Bible definition of sin by appealing to such texts as Romans 14:23 and 1 John 5:17.

... for whatsoever is not of faith is sin. (Romans 14:23)

All unrighteousness is sin: ... (1 John 5:17)

Unlike 1 John 3:4 which follows the proper syntax for a definition, these texts actually express examples of sin rather than give a definition for it. Examples help to illustrate a concept but do not define it. For instance, consider the following statement: “A Mercedes Benz is a car.” This is a true sentence that illustrates what a car can be. However, when we reverse the syntax and state, “A car is a Mercedes Benz,” we create a sentence that, while it may be true, it is not necessarily always true. A car can also be a Ford, a Toyota, or a Honda, for example. These sentences do not define what a car is, they only provide illustrations of a car. Likewise, even if we reverse the syntax of Romans 14:23 and say, “Sin is whatsoever is not of faith,” while this statement in itself is true, sin is more than this. It is the transgression of the Ten Commandment Law.

Since victory over sin can only be obtained by faith, it is perfectly logical that when faith is not lived and expressed, our actions and life will only result in sin. Further, faith is based on the Word of God (Romans 10:17), the true source of strength for the Christian. The context of Paul’s statement in Romans 14:23 involves making decisions based on pressure to please someone else, rather than basing our decisions on God’s Word.

John’s statement in 1 John 5:17 is easily understood when compared to 1 John 3:4. These two statements are virtually saying the same thing for obedience to God’s law brings righteousness, but when we transgress the law of God, we sin and only end up with unrighteousness.

It might be important to note that 1 John 3:4 can also be translated, “Every one who commits sin is guilty of lawlessness; sin is lawlessness.” (R.S.V.) The phrase, “sin is lawlessness” is also so translated in the New King James Version, the New International Version, and the America Standard Version. Some take this to mean that instead of defining sin as an action of thought, word, or deed, sin is defined as a state of being. But what is lawlessness? Is it really more a state of being than an action? The Greek word, *ανωμα* (*anomia*) translated “lawlessness” or “transgression of the law” means the negative (*α*) of law (*νομος*). What does it mean to be lawless? It means to break the law. 1 John 3:4 has also been translated as:

Every one who is guilty of sin is also guilty of violating Law; for sin is the violation of Law. (Weymouth)

Every one who is guilty of sin is also guilty of violating Law; for sin is the violation of Law. (Darby)

Every one who is doing the sin, the lawlessness also he doth do, and the sin is the lawlessness. (Young’s Literal)

Notice these other verses that use *anomia*:

And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity (*anomia*). (Matthew 7:23)

Here *anomia* clearly is speaking of action rather than a state of being.

I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity (*anomia*) unto iniquity (*anomia*); even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness.” (Romans 6:19)

As in Matthew 7:23, the use of *anomia* here cannot be in reference to a state of existence, especially one that we are born into for we are commanded not to yield to *anomia*.

The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity(*anomia*). (Matthew 13:41)

Ellen White wrote many things concerning sin and righteousness. While people have taken some of her statements concerning the Godhead to mean different things, her statements on the fundamental nature of sin are very clear, leaving little room to question her understanding of the matter. Notice how she clearly understood the Bible definition of sin.

The *only definition* we find in the Bible for sin is that “sin is the transgression of the law” (1 John 3:4). (*Signs of the Times*, December 5, 1892)

The *only definition* for sin that we have in the Bible is that it is the transgression of the law. (*Ibid.*, March 3, 1890)

The *only definition* given in the word of God as to what is sin, is found in 1 John 3:4: “Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law; for sin is the transgression of the law.” (*Ibid.*, January 8, 1894)

“Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law; for sin is the transgression of the law.” Here we have the *true definition* of sin; it is “the transgression of the law.” (*Ibid.*, June 20, 1895)

“It is the privilege of every sinner to ask his teacher what sin really is. Give me a definition of sin. We have one in 1 John 3. ‘Sin is the transgression of the law.’ Now this is the *only definition* of sin in the whole Bible.” (*Sermons and Talks*, vol. 1, p. 228)

Our *only definition* of sin is that given in the word of God; it is “the transgression of the law;” it is the outworking of a principle at war with the great law of love which is the foundation of the divine government. (*The Great Controversy*, p. 492)

[1 John 3:4 quoted] “This is the *only definition* of sin.” (MS 27, 1899, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 951)

The *only definition* of sin given in God’s Word, is transgression of the law. (*General Conference Daily Bulletin*, March 2, 1897)

Faith and Works

by Ellen G. White

Notice in these statements that we find the terms, “only definition” and “true definition.” These are various statements that reflect a broad sample of Ellen G. White’s writings and they all clearly, without ambiguity, give one view of the definition of sin and they all resonate with the same clear, pure tone.

But perhaps you have read a statement from Ellen White which says something about our receiving guilt from Adam. Let’s look at the main statement in question. It comes from what has become known as the “Baker Letter.” Some may not feel qualified to say whether or not Ellen White was wrong or right when she said, “The mother who follows on to know the Lord will teach her children to follow in her footsteps. The promise is to fathers, mothers and their children. (Acts 2:39) These dear children received from Adam an inheritance of disobedience, of guilt and death.” But it is clear to me that this statement rings of truth and rightly understood it is incontrovertible. Does this teach a different principle than her statements which declare sin is an action of thought, word, or deed as opposed to a state of being? No! Notice how Ralph Larson provides the key to clarifying this point well:

Ellen White wrote in careful conformity to dictionary definitions, and according to the dictionaries an inheritance is something that can be retained, rejected, divided, bought, sold, or lost, according to the choices of the recipient’s will. Calvinistic concepts of inherited guilt as something that no human can avoid or escape would need to be described as a biological, or flesh to flesh, inheritance of guilt. In that case the inheritance could not be rejected or disposed of by any means since it would be in the flesh. No such expression and no such thought can be found in the writings of Ellen White. She never describes guilt or its transmission in terms of flesh, nor in terms of an unavoidable state or condition.

According to the teaching of Ellen White, and of the Seventh-day Adventist church in general until recent years, all earth-born children, including Jesus, inherit the fallen nature of Adam as weakness, not as guilt. At the point in time when the will of the child chooses to sin, guilt enters the picture. (Ellen White attributes the death of infants to separation from the tree of life, not to inherited guilt.) (*The Word was Made Flesh*, pp. 344, 345, emphasis in original)

Understanding this clear meaning of sin will help us to avoid the pitfalls that even some of the reformers fell into because they accepted in varying degrees the doctrine of original sin based on a faulty concept of sin. In our next issue, we will continue this study of sin, specifically addressing the concept of original sin in deeper detail. May God richly bless you as you study these topics, for “The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.” (Romans 13:12)

Allen Stump

“Without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him” (Hebrews 11:6). There are many in the Christian world who claim that all that is necessary to salvation is to have faith; works are nothing, faith is the only essential. But God’s Word tells us that faith without works is dead, being alone. Many refuse to obey God’s commandments, yet they make a great deal of faith. But faith must have a foundation.

God’s promises are all made upon conditions. If we do His will, if we walk in truth, then we may ask what we will, and it shall be done unto us. While we earnestly endeavor to be obedient, God will hear our petitions; but He will not bless us in disobedience. If we choose to disobey His commandments, we may cry, “Faith, faith, only have faith,” and the response will come back from the sure Word of God, “Faith without works is dead” (James 2:20). Such faith will only be as sounding brass and as a tinkling cymbal. In order to have the benefits of God’s grace we must do our part; we must faithfully work and bring forth fruits meet for repentance.

We are workers together with God. You are not to sit in indolence, waiting for some great occasion, in order to do a great work for the Master. You are not to neglect the duty that lies directly in your pathway, but you are to improve the little opportunities that open around you. ...

To Wrestle, Labor, and Strive

We are to do all that we can do on our part to fight the good fight of faith. We are to wrestle, to labor, to strive, to agonize to enter in at the strait gate. We are to set the Lord ever before us. With clean hands, with pure hearts, we are to seek to honor God in all our ways. Help has been provided for us in Him who is mighty to save. The spirit of truth and light will quicken and renew us by its mysterious workings; for all our spiritual improvement comes from God, not from ourselves. The true worker will have divine power to aid him, but the idler will not be sustained by the Spirit of God.

In one way we are thrown upon our own energies; we are to strive earnestly to be zealous and to repent, to cleanse our hands and purify our hearts from every defilement; we are to reach the highest standard, believing that God will help us in our efforts. We must seek if we would find, and seek in faith; we must knock, that the door may be opened unto us. The Bible teaches that everything regarding our salvation depends upon our own course of action. If we perish, the responsibility will rest wholly upon ourselves. If provision has been made, and if we accept God’s terms, we may lay hold on eternal life. We must come to Christ in faith, we must be diligent to make our calling and election sure. The

forgiveness of sin is promised to him who repents and believes; the crown of life will be the reward of him who is faithful to the end. We may grow in grace by improving through the grace we already have. We are to keep ourselves unspotted from the world if we would be found blameless in the day of God. Faith and works go hand in hand; they act harmoniously in the work of overcoming. Works without faith are dead, and faith without works is dead. Works will never save us; it is the merit of Christ that will avail in our behalf. Through faith in Him, Christ will make all our imperfect efforts acceptable to God. The faith we are required to have is not a do-nothing faith; saving faith is that which works by love and purifies the soul. He who will lift up holy hands to God without wrath and doubting will walk intelligently in the way of God's commandments.

If we are to have pardon for our sins, we must first have a realization of what sin is, that we may repent and bring forth fruits meet for repentance. We must have a solid foundation for our faith; it must be founded on the Word of God, and its results will be seen in obedience to God's expressed will. Says the apostle, "Without ... [holiness] no man shall see the Lord" (Hebrews 12:14).


Faith and works will keep us evenly balanced and make us successful in the work of perfecting Christian character. Jesus says, "Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter in the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 7:21). Speaking of temporal food, the apostle said, "For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat" (2 Thessalonians 3:10). The same rule applies to our spiritual nourishment; if any would have the bread of eternal life, let him make efforts to obtain it.

We are living in an important and interesting period of this earth's history. We need more faith than we have yet had; we need a firmer hold from above. Satan is working with all power to obtain the victory over us, for he knows that he has but a short time in which to work. Paul had fear and trembling in working out his salvation; and should not we fear lest a promise being left us, we should any of us seem to come short of it, and prove ourselves unworthy of eternal life? We should watch unto prayer, strive with agonizing effort to enter in at the strait gate.

Jesus Makes Up for Our Deficiency

There is no excuse for sin or for indolence. Jesus has led the way, and He wishes us to follow in His steps. He has suffered, He has sacrificed as none of us can, that He might bring salvation within our reach. We need not be discouraged. Jesus came to our world to bring divine power to man, that through His grace, we might be transformed into His likeness.

When it is in the heart to obey God, when efforts are put forth to this end, Jesus accepts this disposition and effort as man's best service, and He makes up for the deficiency with His own divine merit. But He will not accept those who claim to have faith in Him and yet are disloyal to His Father's commandment. We hear a great deal about faith, but we need to hear a great deal more about works. Many are deceiving their own souls by living an easy-going, accommodating, crossless religion.

But Jesus says, "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me" (Matthew 16:24). 

Youth's Corner – Beware of Imitations

Association with learned men is esteemed by some more highly than communion with the God of heaven. The statements of learned men are thought of more value than the highest wisdom revealed in the word of God. But while infidelity is proudly lifting up its head, Heaven looks down upon the vanity and nothingness of human reasoning; for man in and of himself is vanity. All the merit, all the moral dignity, of men, has been theirs simply in and through the merits of Jesus Christ. What, then, are the speculations of the greatest minds of the greatest men that have ever lived? Yet men place their human reasonings before the revealed

will of God, and present to the world that which they claim is higher wisdom than the wisdom of the Eternal. In their vain imaginations, they would bring down the economy of heaven to suit their own inclinations and desires.

The great God has a law by which to govern his kingdom, and those who trample upon that law will one day find that they are amenable to its statutes. The remedy for transgression is not to be found in declaring that the law is abolished. To abolish the law would be to dishonor it, and to cast contempt upon the Lawgiver. The only escape for the transgressor of law is found in the Lord Jesus Christ; for through the

grace and atonement of the only begotten Son of God, the sinner may be saved and the law vindicated. The men who parade before the world as wonderful specimens of greatness, and at the same time trample down the revealed will of God, robe man with honor, and talk of the perfection of nature. They paint a very fine picture, but it is an illusion, a flattering deception; for they walk in the sparks of their own kindling.

Those who present a doctrine contrary to that of the Bible, are led by the great apostate who was cast out of the

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The Door is Closing!

*On the eye of a needle
Truth slips in
To a quiet spot
Among settled thoughts
And there begins
A tapestry
Within*

(Editor's Note: *This article by Sister Onycha Holt is worthy of the most serious consideration by all. I highly recommend it. Sister Holt serves as my personal assistant in the work of editing Old Paths and the other publications I work with at Smyrna Gospel Ministries. She does not, nor does she desire to, function as an "assistant pastor."*)

Does truth enter our lives quietly and almost imperceptibly? Not always. There are famous "Eureka" moments such as when Johann Kepler discovered the third law of planetary motion in 1618. "I feel carried away possessed by an unutterable rapture," he wrote. When Albert Einstein realized that Mercury's orbit could be accounted for by his theory of relativity, he stated that for a few days he "was beside" himself "with joyous excitement." Werner Heisenberg was "shocked to the core" when the principle of quantum mechanics

dawned upon him in 1925. "I had the feeling that I was seeing through the surfaces of atomic phenomena to their deep underlying basis, which had a remarkable inner beauty. So excited was I that I could not think of sleeping, but remained awake all night and watched the sunrise." And Stephen Hawking, a world leader in cosmology, speaks of "a glorious feeling." "There's nothing like the eureka moment of discovering something that no one knew before."

Spiritual enlightenment can also be bold and invigorating. While climbing Pilate's staircase, Luther heard a thunderous voice proclaiming, "The just shall live by faith," and Saul had a life-changing encounter with Jesus on the Damascus Road. "And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" (Acts 9:3, 4) But there are times when God speaks in a still, small voice, as He did with Elijah. "And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the LORD. And, behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the LORD; but the LORD was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the LORD was not in the earthquake: And after the earthquake a fire; but the LORD was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice. And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave. And, behold, there came a voice unto him, and said, What doest thou here, Elijah?" (1 Kings 19:11-13)

Now, whether they come as an eureka flash of light or as a still, small voice, spiritual testing truths are often hard to bear and put into practice. Some of the challenging truths many have difficulty coming to grips with are: "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." (Matthew 5:48) Or, Jesus' words of forgiving one another, "I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven." (Matthew 18:22) Or, "Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth." (1 Corinthians 10:25) Or, "Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God." (Ephesians 5:21) "If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body." (James 3:2) And we are not to covet anything that belongs to another human being, whether it be material things, spouses, position, power, talents, or resources. (Exodus 20:17) And the big question is: How can we possibly fulfill all of this and more?

Deadly Things That Separate Us From Jesus

Paul tells us in Philippians 4:13: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me," but we must maintain that connection with Christ and there are some very deadly things that separate us from Jesus and from heaven's influences.

Known Sin

Known sin is one. “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) God’s Word declares that sin is the transgression of the law, for “Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law,” (1 John 3:4) and that love is the fulfilling of the law, “Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.” (Romans 13:8) Often the people we transgress the most against are the people in our own families, for we tend to be most careless around those with whom we spend much time and we are more guarded with those with which we are less intimate. We put on our best front for casual acquaintances and then we are our “real selves” at home. But friends, this should not be! We need to be on our best behavior always and especially at home, because the ones we love the most are there and our responsibility for their salvation is the greater. God requires this of us.

But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel. (1 Timothy 5:8)

From every Christian home a holy light should shine forth. Love should be revealed in action. It should flow out in all home intercourse, showing itself in thoughtful kindness, in gentle, unselfish courtesy. There are homes where this principle is carried out—homes where God is worshiped and truest love reigns. From these homes morning and evening prayer ascends to God as sweet incense, and His mercies and blessings descend upon the suppliants like the morning dew. (*Adventist Home*, p. 37)

But, there are homes where this does not occur because, as Ellen White stated to one person:

...you have allowed yourself to become exasperated at very trivial matters; and at such times you seem to have a frenzied passion, while Satan stands by and laughs at the misery you are bringing upon yourself and those whom it is your duty to make happy ... In the human heart there is natural selfishness and corruption, which can only be overcome by most thorough discipline and severe restraint; and even then it will require years of patient effort and earnest resistance. God permits us to experience the ills of poverty, and places us in difficult positions, that the defects in our characters may be revealed and their asperities be smoothed away. But after privileges and opportunities have been given of God, after light and truth have been brought home to the understanding, if persons still make excuses for their deformity of character, and continue in their selfishness and jealousy, their hearts become as granite, making it impossible for them to be reformed, except by the chisel, the hammer, and the polishing of the Spirit of God. (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, pp. 495, 496)

Friends, God works patiently with each one of us. He is long-suffering and tender, but if we don’t respond to His

gentleness, He will out of necessity use a chisel and hammer. Far better it is for us to respond to His slightest whisper. Abram experienced a horror of great darkness. “And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and, lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him,” following which God informed him that Abram’s seed would be servants in a land that was not theirs for four hundred years. (Genesis 15:12, 13) In *Patriarchs and Prophets* p. 137 we read:

About sunset he sank into a deep sleep; and, “lo, a horror of great darkness fell upon him.” And the voice of God was heard, bidding him not to expect immediate possession of the Promised Land, and pointing forward to the sufferings of his posterity before their establishment in Canaan. The plan of redemption was here opened to him, in the death of Christ, the great sacrifice, and His coming in glory. Abraham saw also the earth restored to its Eden beauty, to be given him for an everlasting possession, as the final and complete fulfillment of the promise.

Even though the promise of the restoration of Eden was made to Abram, the terrible suffering of his descendants and then the awful darkness of the death of Christ were revealed to Abram with a great horror. Is there anything that can cause greater pain and terror than seeing the Son of God crucified because of the sinfulness of man? I don’t think so, but God can bring a sense of darkness and horror to us individually if we do not heed his still, small voice.

I know for I have experienced the terrible horror it is to live without the presence of God. There was a time when my prayers didn’t ascend higher than my head and there was no sweet, open presence of my heavenly Father. His absence left me with a complete and heavy spiritual darkness and I understood in a way that I never understood before how important He really is to me. The hiding of His face made me realize how much I truly need Him for the protection of my children and grandchild and how much I depend on Him to intervene in their lives for their salvation. I became acutely aware of how much I need Him moment by moment for my own soul’s salvation and for physical protection from Satan, and how badly I need His help for my extended family, for my friends, for my church family, for the people I work with, etc. I know this experience was not as great as Abram’s horror, for I have not seen what he saw, but it was so completely devastating that I don’t want to ever experience it again. And why did I experience the darkness of losing God’s sweet presence? I had repeatedly failed to heed His counsel about an area in my life that I needed to change, an area that I thought was not so important. I made the terrible mistake of lightly valuing His precious still, small voice.

We are on a difficult journey and every ounce of our energy needs to be directed toward staying on the straight and narrow path and helping our brothers and sisters to do the same. “In the warfare in which we are engaged, all may win who will disciple themselves by obedience to right

principles. The practice of these principles in the details of life is too often looked upon as unimportant—a matter too trivial to demand attention. But in view of the issues at stake, nothing with which we have to do is small. Every act casts its weight into the scale that determines life's victory or defeat." (*Ministry of Healing*, p. 129) In His great mercy He restored His face to me, but a day is coming when this privilege will no longer be extended to mankind, and then what will we do? Our horror will be so great that in sheer desperation we will call on the mountains and rocks to cover us. We will feel as Judas felt before He ended his life. Our heavenly Father needs to be so vitally important to us that life without Him, even for a moment, is comparable to an already-executed death sentence. If you are doing something similar to what I did, if you are doing something that you know is not pleasing to our heavenly Father, don't put off making the reformation. We don't have time to continue to play a game with God. The door is swiftly closing on our opportunities to heed His Word and to follow His commands.

We Must Desire God's Spirit

Another deadly problem that stifles the work of God in us is when we have no desire for a greater measure of His Holy Spirit. How can we pray for such a great blessing to fall upon the heads of our leaders and of our pastors if they are not themselves eagerly seeking for this blessing? How can I pray for you and that you will know God in a richer and fuller way if you do not really want the same thing? It just will not happen and God cannot honor such prayers for ourselves and for others if we and they truly do not cherish His response to them. The best that we can do in such situations is to pray that our hearts and their hearts will be changed, but God does not wish for our prayers to be so limited. We are missing great and precious opportunities with God by our uninspired desires.

Perhaps we are content with our current spiritual state because we feel really quite self-sufficient. We may have successful careers and we can solve day-to-day problems at the work place and at home. We have strong intellects that can reason well. We have a good memory base that keeps us in good stead with our jobs and with our responsibilities and in our Christian witness, but this self-sufficiency is a deadly poison in spiritual matters for it means we truly don't have a concept of our great need and of the foe we are up against. We are no match for Satan. We might feel we can match a certain brother's or sister's intellectual abilities in a discussion with them over spiritual matters, but we war not against them. We war against principalities and we dare not step on this battleground in our own self-sufficiency, for we will be defeated. "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." (Ephesians 6:12)

Consider Ai

We often lay the blame of Israel's defeat at Ai at Achan's doorstep, but he is only partly blame him. God, through Ellen White, tells us:

The great victory that God had gained for them had made the Israelites self-confident. Because He had promised them the land of Canaan they felt secure, and failed to realize that divine help alone could give them success. Even Joshua laid his plans for the conquest of Ai without seeking counsel from God. The Israelites had begun to exalt their own strength and to look with contempt upon their foes. An easy victory was expected, and three thousand men were thought sufficient to take the place. These rushed to the attack without the assurance that God would be with them. They advanced nearly to the gate of the city, only to encounter the most determined resistance. Panic-stricken at the numbers and thorough preparation of their enemies, they fled in confusion down the steep descent. (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 493, 494)

Soon after this experience, Joshua encountered the Gibeonites. "And the men took of their victuals, and asked not counsel at the mouth of the LORD. And Joshua made peace with them, and made a league with them, to let them live: and the princes of the congregation sware unto them." (Joshua 9:14, 15) As much as we respect Joshua as a leader of God's people, he still hadn't learned his lesson about seeking God's counsel before making decisions. Had the leaders asked, God would have instructed them in how to deal with the Gibeonites, but they failed to do so and in so doing lost the great opportunity of working with God for their own character development and in the development of their flock's faith. And I ask each of you, "Are you seeking God's face before you carry out your plans for the day? Are you depending on Him to guide and direct in all affairs of your life?" If not, you should be, or you may find yourself with your face on the ground, as Joshua did following a significant defeat at the hands of Satan. Consider your early morning prayer and study time. Is it meaningful to you? Do you even have it? Many times it is easy to say a quick prayer and be out the door, but we need to give God the best time of our day—the first hours of the day. In these precious moments, He will draw very close to us and show us great and mighty things that we knew not. We can't afford to miss even one of these opportunities, for God has great things to show us in preparation for the times that we are about to face.

I also think of the self-sufficiency of "the man of God out of Judah" who came "by the word of the LORD unto Bethel: and Jeroboam." (1 Kings 13:1) This person was a man of God, the Bible says so, and, to a certain point, he did what God told him to do. "And the man of God said unto the king, If thou wilt give me half thine house, I will not go in with thee, neither will I eat bread nor drink water in this place: For so was it charged me by the word of the LORD, saying, Eat no bread, nor drink water, nor turn again by the same way that thou camest." However, there dwelt an old prophet in Bethel

who “went after the man of God, and found him sitting under an oak: and he said unto him, Art thou the man of God that camest from Judah? And he said, I am. Then he said unto him, Come home with me, and eat bread. And he said, I may not return with thee...” But the old prophet said unto him, “I am a prophet also as thou art; and an angel spake unto me by the word of the LORD, saying, Bring him back with thee into thine house, that he may eat bread and drink water. But he lied unto him.” The man of God returned to the old prophet’s home, contrary to his instruction by God. “And it came to pass, after he had eaten bread, and after he had drunk, that he saddled for him the ass, to wit, for the prophet whom he had brought back. And when he was gone, a lion met him by the way, and slew him.” (Taken from 1 Kings 13:8-24) The man of God lost his life because He did not rely on what God had told him to do, but put his confidence in the word of a man. We cannot feel self-sufficient at any moment in our life’s experience, for Satan is well aware of how to orchestrate our downfall, and he will do it if we allow him to.

Have We Chosen an Easy Road?

Our satisfaction with the way things currently are in our lives prevents us from a closer walk with God. We have often chosen an “easy road” in our Christian experience and this may prevent God from answering our prayers for truth to be imparted to us or for the opening of blind eyes if we continue to choose an “easy” but “dead-end” path to heaven. It just won’t work. God does not force Himself on any one of us.

Now, when we usually think of an easy path to heaven such theology as “once saved, always saved” comes to mind. What could be easier? I can enjoy the sinful pleasures of this world for the rest of my life, because in the end I will be saved in glory. But, does it even make sense that I will be happy in glory if my waking hours here are spent in pursuit of sinful, decadent pleasure in any of the sin-polluted cities across the face of this earth? Of course not. But you and I would not be caught traveling down this path, would we, for we know better and we know that we need to be transformed daily. “And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is the good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.” (Romans 12:2) “I die daily.” (1 Corinthians 15:31) We know we need to have the mind of Christ, as Paul tells us in Philippians 2:5. “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.”

So, is there an easy path to tempt the very elect? Don’t be deceived to think that Satan does not have his wiles to deceive the very elect. “For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.” (Matthew 24:24) Perhaps an easy path is a social gospel that teaches us that what is most important is how we treat one another. What we believe about God and righteous living is not as important as loving each other. We can have differences of opinions in the church, but what is needed is to love

one another in spite of our differences. Of course it is true that we need to love one another! We are commanded to love one another, but the well-spring of all of our actions, the source of all of our treatment of others, the deep-laid foundation under all the pillars of our belief structure is our understanding about God and what He requires of us, one requirement of which is to show *agape* to each other. (Matthew 22:37-40)

Another possibility might be in having a faith-only religion or even a works-only religion. “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.” (Acts 16:31) “Belief” is important, but even the devils “believe” yet it has no power to save them. “Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.” (James 2:19) James goes on to explain that faith without works is dead and that faith is made perfect by works. Do you want a perfect faith? I do, but don’t be tempted to think that if you can just do the works your faith will then be perfect, for consider what Jesus says: “Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.” (Matthew 7:22, 23)

We need faith in our spiritual experience, yes, a true, honest and deep-rooted faith, but we also need works that reveal that faith, and those works only come from an understanding of, an experiential knowledge in, and an all-encompassing and never-ending appreciation for the great *agape* our heavenly Father and His Son Jesus have for each one of us. Love is what changes us, love is what saves us, and then love is what motivates us in every action, thought, and desire. *Agape* is what allows us to take up our cross and follow Him, to resist the devil, to bear one another’s burdens, to bridle our tongues, to prefer one another over ourselves, to fast and pray for God’s cause, and to go the second mile for someone. Love truly is the fulfilling of the law.

Are You Cherishing the Light God Has Given?

We can also separate ourselves from God by not cherishing the light He has so graciously given us, not only in His written Word, but also in His gift of prophecy through Ellen White. We know we are living in the last days of this earth’s history and the value of the Scriptures cannot be overestimated. We need them desperately, all of them. “Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.” (1 Corinthians 10:11) “None but those who have fortified the mind with the truths of the Bible will stand through the last great conflict.” (*Great Controversy*, p. 593) We also need what Ellen White has written, all of it, for it will guide us in the turbulent times we are living in and prepare us for the great time of trouble that is just ahead of us. Satan knows great good will come from her writings and he “is ...

constantly pressing in the spurious—to lead away from the truth. The very last deception of Satan will be to make of none effect the testimony of the Spirit of God... Satan will work ingeniously, in different ways and through different agencies, to unsettle the confidence of God's remnant people in the true testimony..." (*Publishing Ministry*, p. 360) Proverbs 29:18 says: "Where there is no vision, the people perish." We need to cherish and honor the great gift God has given us through Ellen White. We have such hopeful and guiding statements as her dreams and visions about the narrow path we are traveling:

While I was praying at the family altar, the Holy Ghost fell upon me, and I seemed to be rising higher and higher, far above the dark world. I turned to look for the Advent people in the world, but could not find them, when a voice said to me, "Look again, and look a little higher." At this I raised my eyes, and saw a straight and narrow path, cast up high above the world. On this path the Advent people were traveling to the city, which was at the farther end of the path. They had a bright light set up behind them at the beginning of the path, which an angel told me was the midnight cry. This light shone all along the path and gave light for their feet so that they might not stumble. If they kept their eyes fixed on Jesus, who was just before them, leading them to the city, they were safe. But soon some grew weary, and said the city was a great way off, and they expected to have entered it before. Then Jesus would encourage them by raising His glorious right arm, and from His arm came a light which waved over the Advent band, and they shouted, "Alleluia!" (*Early Writings*, pp. 14, 15)

I want to be on that straight and narrow path, don't you? Another time she wrote about a group journeying on a narrow, steep road beside a deep precipice:

We had heavily loaded wagons. As we journeyed, the road seemed to ascend. On one side of this road was a deep precipice; on the other was a high, smooth, white wall...

As we journeyed on, the road grew narrower and steeper. In some places it seemed so very narrow that we concluded that we could no longer travel with the loaded wagons. We then loosed them from the horses, took a portion of the luggage from the wagons and placed it upon the horses, and journeyed on horseback.

As we progressed, the path still continued to grow narrow. We were obliged to press close to the wall, to save ourselves from falling off the narrow road down the steep precipice. As we did this, the luggage on the horses pressed against the wall, and caused us to sway toward the precipice. We feared that we should fall, and be dashed in pieces on the rocks. We then cut the luggage from the horses, and it fell over the precipice. We continued on horseback, greatly fearing, as we came to the narrower places in the road, that we should lose our balance and fall. At such times, a hand seemed to take the bridle, and guide us over the perilous way.

As the path grew more narrow, we decided that we could no longer go with safety on horseback, and we left the horses and went on foot, in single file, one following in the footsteps of another. At this point small cords were let down from the top of the pure white wall; these we eagerly grasped, to aid us in keeping our balance upon the path. As we traveled, the cord moved along with us. The path finally became so narrow that we concluded that we could travel more safely without our shoes; so we slipped them from our feet, and went on some distance without them. Soon it was decided that we could travel more safely without our stockings; these were removed, and we journeyed on with bare feet.

We then thought of those who had not accustomed themselves to privations and hardships. Where were such now? They were not in the company. At every change, some were left behind, and those only remained who had accustomed themselves to endure hardships. The privations of the way only made these more eager to press on to the end.

Our danger of falling from the pathway increased. We pressed close to the white wall, yet could not place our feet fully upon the path; for it was too narrow. We then suspended nearly our whole weight upon the cords, exclaiming: "We have hold from above! We have hold from above!" The same words were uttered by all the company in the narrow pathway.

As we heard the sounds of mirth and revelry that seemed to come from the abyss below, we shuddered. We heard the profane oath, the vulgar jest, and low, vile songs. We heard the war song and the dance song. We heard instrumental music, and loud laughter, mingled with cursing and cries of anguish and bitter wailing, and were more anxious than ever to keep upon the narrow, difficult pathway.

I want to stop here for a minute and consider again what Sister White heard in the abyss below: the profane oath, the vulgar jest, low and vile songs, the war song, the dance song, instrumental music, loud laughter, cursing, and cries of anguish and bitter wailing, and I ask you, "Are you listening to such things now?" You may not be saying such things, you may not be singing such things or even dancing such things, but are you watching such things? I think of television and the time many of us spend before it. I also think of the counsel given by God through Ellen White to parents about the training that is not given to their children during Sabbath hours. "Parents, above everything, take care of your children upon the Sabbath. Do not allow them to violate God's holy day by allowing them to play in the house or out-of-doors. You may just as well break the Sabbath yourselves as to let your children do it, and when you suffer your children to wander about, and suffer them to play upon the Sabbath, God looks upon you as Sabbath-breakers." (*Review & Herald*, March 28, 1893) And in putting the two thoughts together, I wonder, "Just as God considers parents to be Sabbath-breakers when they allow their children to treat the Sabbath in an unholy manner, does He also view us as

commandment-breakers when we take pleasure in watching (on TV or in other ways) others break His holy commandments?"

I think of the television shows *I Love Lucy* and *Home Improvement*, for example, and how most people laugh at Lucy as she constantly disregards her husband's wishes and gets into predicaments because she wants her own way. Is this something God is pleased with? Absolutely not. And Tim, on *Home Improvement*, is constantly criticizing and making cutting remarks to his associate. Is this pleasing to God? Of course not. We are to be kind and tender-hearted one to another. Do you expect the actors and actresses you watch on TV and in the movies to be in heaven? If not, why are you spending time with them now?

Many of us enjoy shopping, but we often spend money on things we do not need. Many in the world "shop until they drop," for example, or eat until they are stuffed, or even stay up most of the night talking to friends or watching movies, but I ask you, is this staying on the narrow path? Is it pleasing to God? No. How can you be used by God to alleviate the real needs of others if you have spent your extra money on yourself, or how can God use your mind to help guide another into paths of right choices, if your mind is groggy because of over-eating or from lack of sleep. He just can't do it, and He will be forced to turn from you to another servant who is more able-bodied and you will lose the blessing. We need to live simply and eat simply so that we are in the best frame of mind and have the best resources available to help those around us. It is our duty.

At length we came to a large chasm, at which our path ended. There was nothing now to guide the feet, nothing upon which to rest them. Our whole reliance must be upon the cords, which had increased in size, until they were as large as our bodies. Here we were for a time thrown into perplexity and distress. We inquired in fearful whispers, "To what is the cord attached?" My husband was just before me. Large drops of sweat were falling from his brow, the veins in his neck and temples were increased to double their usual size, and suppressed, agonizing groans came from his lips. The sweat was dropping from my face, and I felt such anguish as I had never felt before. A fearful struggle was before us. Should we fail here, all the difficulties of our journey had been experienced for nought.

Before us, on the other side of the chasm, was a beautiful field of green grass, about six inches high. I could not see the sun, but bright soft beams of light, resembling fine gold and silver, were resting upon this field. Nothing I had seen upon earth could compare in beauty and glory with this field. But could we succeed in reaching it? was the anxious inquiry. Should the cord break, we must perish. Again, in whispered anguish, the words were breathed, "What holds the cord?"

For a moment we hesitated to venture. Then we exclaimed: "Our only hope is to trust wholly to the cord. It has been our dependence all the difficult way. It will not fail us now." Still

we were hesitating and distressed. The words were then spoken: "God holds the cord. We need not fear." These words were then repeated by those behind us, accompanied with: "He will not fail us now. He has brought us thus far in safety."

My husband then swung himself over the fearful abyss into the beautiful field beyond. I immediately followed. And oh, what a sense of relief and gratitude to God we felt! I heard voices raised in triumphant praise to God. I was happy, perfectly happy.

I awoke, and found that from the anxiety I had experienced in passing over the difficult route, every nerve in my body seemed to be in a tremor. This dream needs no comment. It made such an impression upon my mind that probably every item in it will be vivid before me while my memory shall continue. (*Christian Experience and Teachings of Ellen White*, pp. 179-184)

God has also blessed us with counsel on health reform:

I then saw that the appetite must be denied, that rich food should not be prepared, and that which is spent upon the appetite should be put into the treasury of God. It would tell there and those that denied themselves would lay up a reward in heaven. I saw that God was purifying His people.

Pride and idols must be laid aside. I saw that rich food was destroying the health of bodies, was ruining constitutions, destroying minds, and was a great waste of means. (*Selected Messages*, Book 3, p. 274)

And counsel on the time of trouble just ahead of us:

The time of trouble is just before us, and then stern necessity will require the people of God to deny self and to eat merely enough to sustain life, but God will prepare us for that time. In that fearful hour our necessity will be God's opportunity to impart His strengthening power and to sustain His people. (*Testimonies to the Church*, vol. 1, p. 206)

In the midst of the time of trouble that is coming,—a time of trouble such as has not been since there was a nation,—God's chosen people will stand unmoved. Satan and his host cannot destroy them, for angels that excel in strength will protect them. (*Testimonies to the Church*, vol. 9, pp. 17)

God has informed us about the dangers of Spiritualism:

Among the most successful agencies of the great deceiver are the delusive teachings and lying wonders of Spiritualism. Disguised as an angel of light, he spreads his nets where least suspected. If men would but study the Book of God with earnest prayer that they might understand it, they would not be left in darkness to receive false doctrines. But as they reject the truth they fall a prey to deception. (*Great Controversy*, p. 524)

And Ellen White warns us against false view of Jesus:

Another dangerous error is the doctrine that denies the diety of Christ, claiming that He had no existence before His advent to this world. (*Great Controversy*, p. 524)

The Door Is Closing

Friends, the door is closing. We don't have time to play in this world any longer. We need to be totally dedicated to God and His work. We need to lay aside every encumbrance and lay it all on the altar for Him. We need to seek a righteous walk with God and stop dabbling in sin. We need to right every wrong, no matter how humbling it might be to do so. It will be worth it all. I plead with you to surrender all and to consider what you can do to further God's work on earth. I know you want to be a part of the action. If you aren't, He will pass you by for another. He's done so in the past and He will do it again. He has a place and purpose for you in His army and if you don't fill it, He will find someone else to join the ranks, and I don't want that to happen to any of you because it will cause an eternal loss, even if you are in heaven. I don't want you to be robbed of a righteous life with Him now and perhaps for all of eternity.

Your reality today might seem to be the room you read this article in, the faces you see each day, the voices you hear, but there is another reality that is occurring, unseen, of which you must be very cognizant. Daniel was in prayer for three full weeks (Daniel 10:2) before an angel came in response to his prayer. And why? "Then said he unto me, Fear not, Daniel: for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words. But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days: but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia . . . Then said he, Knowest thou wherefore I come unto thee? And now will I return to fight with the prince of Persia . . ." (Daniel 10:12, 13, 20) Beyond our limited, earthly vision, a great warfare is going on. All heaven is astir making ready for the grandest event of all time. By faith's eye we see this happening and by our own personal experience we know God is preparing our hearts and the hearts and minds of people to be able to stand in that fearful day, whose only desire is to please the God they have grown to love and adore.

I think of when I had brain surgery a few years ago. I was told my surgeon was world-renowned; princes and kings from all over the world came to America seeking his help. One night in the hospital I woke up with a young man standing at the foot of my bed, who asked how I was doing. He was a medical student and even though he had not been assigned to my case, he was following on his own time everything my surgeon was doing because, as he said with splendid enthusiasm while bouncing up and down on his toes, "I want to be just like Dr. Fukashema!" Even in my post-operative state I could see the gleam and vision in his eyes and I could only smile. I hope he is becoming a fine surgeon now, but God is looking for a people who want just as eagerly to be like Him. He is looking for able-bodied seasoned soldiers in His army, as well as determined minutemen, for the last great battle this earth will ever see and He is saying, who "will take

up his cross and follow me?" (Matthew 16:24) With Isaiah, may we each respond, "Here am I; send me." (Isaiah 6:8)

The greatest want of the world is the want of men—men who will not be bought or sold, men who in their inmost souls are true and honest, men who do not fear to call sin by its right name, men whose conscience is as true to duty as the needle to the pole, men who will stand for the right though the heavens fall. (*Education*, p. 57)

And I ask you, "Are you such a person?"

But such a character is not the result of accident; it is not due to special favors or endowments of Providence. A noble character is the result of self-discipline, of the subjection of the lower to the higher nature—the surrender of self for the service of love to God and man. (*Education*, p.57)

Soon God's people will be tested by fiery trials, and the great proportion of those who now appear to be genuine and true will prove to be base metal. . . To stand in defense of truth and righteousness when the majority forsake us, to fight the battles of the Lord when champions are few—this will be our test. At this time we must gather warmth from the coldness of others, courage from their cowardice, and loyalty from their treason. (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 136)

He [Satan] has gained control of the apostate churches; but here is a little company that are resisting his supremacy. If he could blot them from the earth, his triumph would be complete. As he influenced the heathen nations to destroy Israel, so in the near future he will stir up the wicked powers of earth to destroy the people of God." (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 231)

And always remember, "It is better to die than to sin; better to want than to defraud; better to hunger than to lie." (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 495)

It is Time to Sacrifice to Do More!

Until recently, I was a social worker having worked for several years in the field of mental health, but I resigned that position and joined the staff at Smyrna Gospel Ministries. This was very difficult for me to do for one main reason. The hearts of my clients were intertwined with my own. I loved them dearly and they loved me. Each goodbye seemed to break my heart a little more, and the last goodbye was to Lenny (not his real name) and was the most touching of all. I would like to tell you a little bit about him, as best I remember his story.

Lenny doesn't read or write. He was repeatedly kicked out of his home by his father and this was done with the approval of his mother, starting at the age of eight or nine. He had to live under a tree or bridge and find food as best he could at that young age, until his father would finally let him back in the house. He was rejected, cursed, and abused, and as is understandable, depression started at an early age for him. It has never left him. The thing that touched me the most about Lenny was the care I saw him give his elderly parents in the last years of their lives. Even though they had treated him so

vilely as a child and youth, he did not hold this against them. Lenny has many brothers and sisters who could have cared for his parents, but he is the one that stepped in. When they were old and feeble and needed someone in the home, he moved in with them. He provided for them, took them to medical appointments, and when his mother was gone during the day for dialysis treatments, he would continually reassure his father's failing memory that she would return in the evening. Lenny would look sheepishly at me in the office and say softly, "How can I do otherwise? I can't let them suffer," and I would affirm that he was doing the right thing. Lenny started attending church and for a while was happy there, but then stopped going because "They told me all I had to do was believe and that just can't be. I know I have to do what is right too."

One day he told me he had lied to his brother. Lenny has a very limited income and his brother had asked him to drive over and help him with a project. Lenny said he could if his brother would pay for his gasoline, which the brother agreed to do. However, the brother failed to keep his word and Lenny told his brother later the same day that he had run out of gas on the way home, even though he hadn't, just to make his brother feel badly. I told him, "Lenny, you can't do that. You can't lie. It is not right. Liars won't enter heaven." Lenny and I would talk about what was right and wrong. There was no one else who would do that with him.

Lenny knew that I loved him. When he was hungry, if I had food in my desk, I shared it. He rarely would take a few dollars when he needed it, but he knew that I tried to share. He usually threw his mail away because he couldn't read it, so I would encourage him to bring it in and we could sort through it together. He only did that once in a while with official-looking mail. When I sent my letter to him explaining that I was leaving, I knew he wouldn't be able to read it but I hoped his girlfriend would read it to him before he threw it away. By my last day in the office I still hadn't heard from Lenny, so I decided to call him, but before I could do so, he called me. "I, ah, got your letter here. Why ... why are you leaving?" And then a little later, "Are you retiring?" When I explained that I was going to work for my church, he said, "Oh, your church, well... well, that's alright then." And in his own faltering way he said that he would miss me. "Will you send me a card sometime?" And, "Will I ever see you again?" And finally when we were saying our last words, his voice choked and almost in desperation, just as I was about to hang up, he blurted, "I love you." He had never told me that before, just as I had never told him, but we both knew.

Now, I ask you, "How do you walk away from someone you love?" It is not easy, and I could only do so because I love God more. Even though I believe God and I worked together for many years for the benefit of such people as Lenny, it was time for me and it is time for you to do more for God. The door is closing, friend, and you can't continue on with the status quo. You and I must be quickly advancing, and if we

aren't, God may just pass us by for other workers. I don't want that to happen, do you?

John Mark turned back from his missionary journey with Paul because he was unused to hardship and he became discouraged by the perils and privations he was expected to bear, although he later became a steadfast worker for God. He had not yet learned to face *opposition, danger, persecution, and adversity*, (See *Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 170-171) and, as we have seen, Ellen White saw in vision a group of people traveling "the straight and narrow path." Only those who had accustomed themselves to endure hardship remained in the narrow path. I want to remain in the narrow path and I hope and pray you do too.

I want to see Lenny in heaven and God does too. God is working on the hearts of people all over this globe, on every continent, on every highway and byway, regardless of the people's backgrounds or limited abilities. It is past time to call people from the highways and hedges to the great supper (Luke 14:16-24) because those who were first bidden refused to come, and even after the poor, the maimed, the halt, and the blind have come, there is still room! God wants you and He wants me to be His servants to call people to His great supper and to a knowledge of the wonderful truths He has given in His Word. You may have to endure privation to work for God. You may have to endure hardship, but know that in surrendering everything to Him, He will never leave you nor forsake you.

In choosing men and women for His service, God does not ask whether they possess worldly wealth, learning, or eloquence. He asks, "Do they walk in such humility that I can teach them My way? Can I put My words into their lips? Will they represent Me?"

God can use every person just in proportion as He can put His Spirit into the soul temple. The work that He will accept is the work that reflects His image. His followers are to bear, as their credentials to the world, the ineffaceable characteristics of His immortal principles. (*Ministry of Healing*, p. 37)

Brothers and sisters, may those immortal principles be what actuates us each day; may we be filled to overflowing with His beautiful Spirit; may we not be fearful of the thunderous voice of God, if He speaks to us in such a way; and may we always be sensitive to His precious still, small voice is my prayer for each one of us.

Onycha Holt

Old Paths is available in electronic format on our website, <http://www.smyrna.org>. It is posted in both html format and Adobe Acrobat[®] format. To receive a notice of the posting with a link each month, email us at: request@smyrna.org and request to be added to our e-list.

Christ's Divine Person - Pioneer Reprint

Editor's Preface:

If there was ever a time that inspiration records God drawing near to the Advent people to accomplish a special work for them, it was in 1888. Ellen White wrote,

“The Lord in His great mercy sent a most precious message to His people through Elders Waggoner and Jones. This message was to bring more prominently before the world the uplifted Saviour, the sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. It presented justification through faith in the Surety; it invited the people to receive the righteousness of Christ, which is made manifest in obedience to all the commandments of God. Many had lost sight of Jesus. They needed to have their eyes directed to His divine person, His merits, and His changeless love for the human family. All power is given into


His hands, that He may dispense rich gifts unto men, imparting the priceless gift of His own righteousness to the helpless human agent. This is the message that God commanded to be given to the world. It is the third angel's message, which is to be proclaimed with a loud voice, and attended with the outpouring of His Spirit in a large measure.” (*Testimonies to Ministers*, pp. 91, 92)

Sister White strikingly pointed out the condition of God's people. Most stunning to me is that we needed to have our eyes directed to **Christ's divine person**. Now we may feel as a people that we are far in advance of where our people were in 1888, but I don't think so. If we really were far in advance of our spiritual forefathers, I believe that Jesus would have come and we would now be in heaven. While it is true that we are to know the

fundamental principles of Christ and go on to perfection (Hebrews 6:1), it is also true that to review fundamental truth is safe and good. Paul says, “To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe.” (Philippians 3:1)

Ellen White understood this principle as it related to the messages that had been given by our pioneers. In 1905 she wrote:

“God has given me light regarding our periodicals. What is it?—He has said that the dead are to speak. How?—Their works shall follow them. We are to repeat the words of the pioneers in our work.” (*Review & Herald*, May 25, 1905)

Therefore, we believe that it is with the approval of heaven that we share this reprint on the divine person of Christ from one of the 1888 messengers. 

Study from A. T. Jones

What, then, is the thought concerning Christ in the first chapter of Hebrews?

First of all there is introduced “God”—God the Father—as the speaker to men, who “in time past spake unto the fathers by the prophets” and who “hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son.”

Thus is introduced Christ the Son of God. Then of Him and the Father it is written: “Whom He [the Father] hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He [the Father] made the worlds.” Thus, as preliminary to His introduction and our consideration of Him as High Priest, Christ the Son of God is introduced as being with God as Creator and as being the active, vivifying Word in the creation—“by whom also He [God] made the worlds.”

Next, of the Son of God Himself we read: “Who being the brightness of His [God's] glory, and the express image of His [God's] person [“the very impress of His substance,” margin R.V.], and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.”

This tells us that in heaven the nature of Christ was the nature of God, that He in His person, in His substance, is the

very impress, the very character, of the substance of God. That is to say that in heaven as He was before He came to the world the nature of Christ was in very substance the nature of God.

Therefore it is further written of Him that He was “made so much better than the angels, as He hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.” This more excellent name is the name “God,” which, in the eighth verse, is given by the Father to the Son: “Unto the Son He [God] saith, Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever.”

Thus, He is “so much” better than the angels as God is better than the angels. And it is because of this that He has that more excellent name—the name expressing only what He is in His very nature.

And this name “He hath by inheritance.” It is not a name that was bestowed but a name that is inherited.

Now it lies in the nature of things, as an everlasting truth, that the only name any person can possibly inherit is his father's name. This name, then, of Christ's, which is more excellent than that of the angels, is the name of His Father, and His Father's name is God. The Son's name, therefore, which He has by inheritance, is God. And this name, which is more excellent than that of the angels, is His



because he is “so much better than the angels.” That name being God, He is “so much better than the angels” as God is better than the angels.

Next, His position and nature, as better than that of the angels, is dwelt upon: “For unto which of the angels said He [the Father] at any time, Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to Me a Son?” This holds the thought of the more excellent name spoken of in the previous verse. For He, being the Son of God—God being His Father, thus hath “by inheritance” the name of His Father, which is God and which is so much more excellent than the name of the angels as God is better than they.

This is dwelt upon yet further: “And again, when He bringeth in the first begotten into the world, He saith, and let all the angels of God worship Him.” Thus He is so much better than the angels that He is worshiped by the angels: and this according to the will of God, because He is, in His nature, God.

This thought of the mighty contrast between Christ and the angels is dwelt upon yet further: “Of the angels He saith, Who maketh His angels spirits, and His ministers a flame of fire. But unto the Son He saith, Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever [‘from eternity to eternity,’ German translation].”

And again, “A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows.”

And yet again, the Father, in speaking to the Son, says: “Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the

earth; and the heavens are the works of Thine hands: they shall perish; but Thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shalt Thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but Thou are the same, and Thy years shall not fail.”


Note the contrasts here and in them read the nature of Christ. The heavens shall perish, but He remains. The heavens shall wax old, but His years shall not fail. The heavens shall be changed, but He is the same. This shows that He is God, of the nature of God.

Yet more of this contrast between Christ and the angels: “To which of the angels said He at any time, Sit on My right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool? Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?”

Thus, in the first chapter of Hebrews Christ is revealed higher than the angels, as God; and as much higher than the angels as is God, because He is God.

In the first chapter of Hebrews Christ is revealed as God, of the name of God, because He is of the nature of God. And so entirely is His nature of the nature of God that it is the very impress of the substance of God.

This is Christ the Saviour, Spirit of Spirit, substance of substance, of God.

And this it is essential to know in the first chapter of Hebrews, in order to know what is His nature revealed in the second chapter of Hebrews as man. 

(The above article is a reprint from, *The Consecrated Way to Christian Perfection*, pp. 13-16)

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courts of God. Of him before his fall, it was written, “Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty. Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering. ... Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee. ... Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness: I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee. ... I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all them that behold thee, All they that know thee among the people

shall be astonished at thee: thou shalt be a terror, and never shalt thou be any more.”

With such a leader,—an angel expelled from heaven,—these supposed wise men of earth may fabricate bewitching theories with which to infatuate the minds of men. Paul said to the Galatians, “Who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth?” Satan has a masterly mind, and he has his chosen agents by which he works to exalt men, and clothe them with honor above God. But God is clothed with power; he is able to take those who are dead in trespasses and sins, and by the operation of the Spirit which raised Jesus from the dead, transform the human character, bringing back to the soul the lost image of God. Those who believe in Jesus Christ are changed from being rebels against the law of

God into obedient servants and subjects of his kingdom. They are born again, regenerated, sanctified through the truth. This power of God the skeptic will not admit, and he refuses all evidence until it is brought under the domain of his finite faculties. He even dares to set aside the law of God, and prescribe the limit of Jehovah's power. But God has said, “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek

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after wisdom: but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness: but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.” (Ellen G. White — *Youth's Instructor*, February 7, 1895) ✍

Prayer Requests; continued from p. 1

Continue to pray for Michael Sibanda who is on death row in Zimbabwe who has been accused of a crime we do not believe he committed. If you wish to write to Michael a word of encouragement, you may in care of:

P.No. 3572101
P. O. Box CY 188
Harare Central Prison
Causeway, Zimbabwe, AFRICA

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Success in this life, success in gaining the future life, depends upon a faithful, conscientious attention to the little things. Perfection is seen in the least, no less than in the greatest, of the works of God. The hand that hung the worlds in space is the hand that wrought with delicate skill the lilies of the field. (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 574)