

the
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Vol. 53, No. 5



GOD'S
Forgiveness

The Unpardonable Sin / A Guilt-Free Life / The Joy of Forgiveness

the REFORMATION *herald*

Volume 53, Number 5

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“The age in which we live calls for reformatory action.”
—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 488.

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CONSCIENCE

Conscience can be defined as the faculty, power, or principle of a person which decides on the lawfulness or unlawfulness of his or her actions, with a compulsion to do right; a moral judgment that prohibits or opposes the violation of a previously recognized ethical principle.

"The conscience is the regulative faculty, and if a man allows his conscience to become perverted, he cannot serve God aright."¹

"The Spirit of God keeps evil under the control of conscience."²

Through the prophet Isaiah, God speaks of a divine voice giving clear directions to men and women, guiding them in the right path: "Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left" (30:21).

One of the most useful inventions for giving accurate Global Positioning System navigation directions is the GPS. To work properly, the system must be connected with GPS satellites.

Our conscience was given to protect us against following wrong directions. When guided by the Holy Spirit, it helps us to do right and avoid wrong steps in daily life. However, the conscience by itself cannot do much. Our conscience is a safe guide only when led by the Holy Spirit.

There are many kinds of conscience; for example, a good conscience, a defiled conscience, a seared conscience, an evil conscience.

Through God's strength, the apostle Paul was able to testify: "I have lived in all **good conscience** before God until this day" "and herein do I exercise myself, to have always a **conscience**



void of offence toward God, and toward men" (Acts 23:1; 24:16, emphasis added). He explains that the "end [aim] of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience" (1 Timothy 1:5).

Paul also identifies those who reject divine truth as "speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their **conscience seared** with a hot iron" (1 Timothy 4:2, emphasis added), revealing that "unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled. They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate" (Titus 1:15, 16).

We are solemnly warned that "one safeguard removed from conscience, the indulgence of one evil habit, a single neglect of the high claims of duty, may be the beginning of a course of deception that will pass you into the

ranks of those who are serving Satan, while you are all the time professing to love God and His cause. A moment of thoughtlessness, a single misstep, may turn the whole current of your lives in the wrong direction."³

"It is a solemn thought that the removal of one safeguard from the conscience, the failure to fulfill one good resolution, the formation of one wrong habit, may result not only in our own ruin, but in the ruin of those who have put confidence in us. Our only safety is to follow where the steps of the Master lead the way, to trust for protection implicitly to Him who says, 'Follow me.'"⁴

Only the blood of Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit can purify our conscience: "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" (Hebrews 9:14).

After being forgiven through the merits of Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit, the believer can be in peace with God without an accusing conscience. "Because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins" (Hebrews 10:2). Therefore, "let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water" (verse 22).

In this issue of *The Reformation Herald*, the importance of this subject is seriously considered.

Good reading! *R*

References

¹ *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 13, p. 155

² *Sermons and Talks*, vol. 2, p. 183.

³ *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 398.

⁴ *Conflict and Courage*, p. 129.



A Brand Plucked *Out of the Fire*

*A Bible and Spirit of Prophecy compilations, with comments
by Davi P. Silva*

In chapter 3 of the book bearing his name, the prophet Zechariah describes an amazing vision in which he was shown "Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him. And the Lord said to Satan, 'The Lord rebuke you, O Satan! The Lord who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is not this a brand plucked from the fire?' Now Joshua was standing before the angel, clothed with filthy garments. And the angel said to those who were standing before him, 'Remove the filthy garments from him.' And to him he said, 'Behold, I have taken your iniquity away from you, and I will clothe you with rich apparel.' And I said, 'Let them put a clean turban on his head.' So they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him with garments; and the angel of the Lord was standing by" (3:1-5, RSV).

Here we find a scene of judgment.

Joshua was the high priest of Israel after their return from the Babylonian captivity. In the vision presented to the prophet Zechariah, Joshua, representing God's people, was clothed with filthy rags, a symbol of sin of the people and of his own sins. The Angel of the Lord is Christ Himself. Satan was doing what is his best: accusing Joshua and God's people. Joshua couldn't deny Satan's accusation, but he presented the faith and repentance of Israel, trusting in the mercy and grace of Christ.

The Angel of the Lord, Christ, rebuked Satan and gave orders that the filthy garments of Joshua should be removed, and that he should be clothed with glorious apparel. In other words, Joshua and Israel were justified. Their sins were forgiven. Being justified before the Lord, Joshua received the following instruction:

"Thus says the Lord of hosts: If you will walk in my ways and keep my charge, then you shall rule my house and have charge of my courts, and I will give you the right of access among those who are standing here" (verse 7, RSV).

"As the people of God afflict their souls before Him, pleading for purity of heart, the command is given, 'Take away the filthy garments' from them, and the encouraging words are spoken, 'Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment' (verse 4). The spotless robe of Christ's righteousness is placed upon the tried, tempted, yet faithful children of God. The despised remnant are clothed in glorious apparel, nevermore to be defiled by the corruptions of the world. Their names are retained in the Lamb's book of life, enrolled among the faithful of all ages. They have resisted the wiles of the deceiver; they have not been turned from their loyalty by the dragon's roar. Now they are eternally secure from the tempter's devices. Their sins are transferred to the originator of sin. And the remnant are not only pardoned and accepted, but honored. 'A fair miter' is set upon their heads. They are to be as kings and priests unto God. **While Satan was urging his accusations and seeking to destroy this company, holy angels, unseen, were passing to and fro, placing upon them the seal of the living God.** These are they that stand upon Mount Zion with the Lamb, having the Father's name written in their foreheads. They sing the new song before the throne, that song which no man can learn save the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth. 'These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God' (Revelation 14:4, 5)."¹

Being sealed is equivalent to being covered by the righteousness of Christ forever, and to possess the same righteousness in the practical life.

The vision of Zechariah 3 has an application to God's people in these last days. The sealing work is directly connected with the work presented to Zechariah.

Joshua with filthy rags represents the condition of God's people as they face the judgment. As Joshua humbles himself before God, confessing his sins and the sins of the people whom he represents as high priest, the order is given: "Take away the filthy garments from him." What is the meaning of this order? "I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of garment" (Zechariah 3:4).

What happens when Satan is accusing those who are connected with Christ by living faith? "While Satan was urging his accusations and seeking to destroy this company, holy angels, unseen, were passing to and fro, placing upon them the seal of the living God."

"The seal of the living God will be placed upon those only who bear a likeness to Christ in character."²

When we are justified by faith, "looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith," the Holy Spirit starts the work of sanctification, and we are transformed to the likeness of Jesus.

"We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Corinthians 3:18).

As we keep looking unto Jesus, the Spirit of God works in us to print in our character the righteousness of Christ.

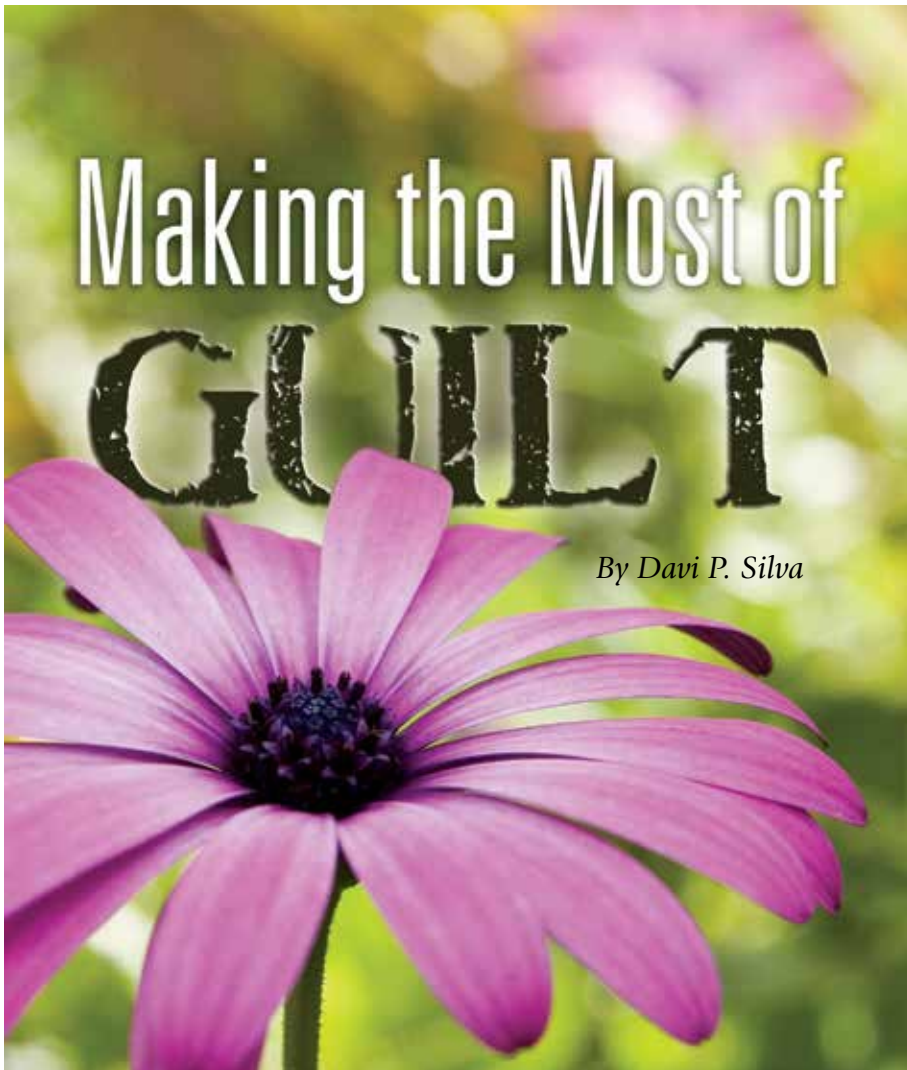
"The Holy Spirit never leaves unassisted the soul who is looking unto Jesus. He takes of the things of Christ and shows them unto him. If the eye is kept fixed on Christ, the work of the Spirit ceases not until the soul is conformed to His image. The pure element of love will expand the soul, giving it a capacity for higher attainments, for increased knowledge of heavenly things, so that it will not rest short of the fullness. 'Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled' (Matthew 5:6)."³ *R*

References

¹ *Lift Him Up*, p. 377, emphasis added.

² *The Review and Herald*, May 21, 1895.

³ *The Desire of Ages*, p. 302.



Making the Most of GUILT

By Davi P. Silva

Is guilt a blessing or a curse? It depends on the attitude of the guilty one. If the sinner believes in Christ as a personal Saviour, acknowledges his or her condition, repents and confesses it to the Lord, he or she is acquitted, totally forgiven, justified, and restored to the favor of God. But on the other hand, if he or she resists the appeal of the Holy Spirit, refusing to repent, then he or she will suffer the present and eternal consequences of wrongdoing.

What is guilt? According to *Webster's Dictionary*, guilt is "1. the act or state of having done a wrong or committed an offense; culpability, legal or ethical; 2. conduct that involves guilt; wrongdoing; crime; sin."¹

"[Guilt is] the legal and moral condition that results from a violation

of God's Law as expressed through the covenant, i.e., from sin."²

The fall of the first couple, Adam and Eve, gives us a very meaningful picture of the guilt and its consequence. Actually, Genesis chapter 3 reflects the terrible drama of all humanity.

Before transgressing God's express commandment, Adam and Eve enjoyed a wonderful relationship with their Creator. They had free communication among them as friend to friend.

After their disobedience, that happy environment was totally changed.

"And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and **Adam and his wife hid themselves** from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden. And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou? And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and **I was afraid,**

because I was naked; and **I hid myself**" (Genesis 3:8–10, emphasis supplied).

Three phrases from the above scriptures are brought out here:

1. "Adam and his wife hid themselves."
2. "I was afraid."
3. "I hid myself."

Why did the couple hide themselves? Why were they afraid? In the dialogue that followed, we can realize how terrible sin is.

God said to Adam, "Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat? And the man said, **The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.** And the Lord God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? And **the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat**" (verses 11–13, emphasis supplied).

Other tremendous result of sin is *self-justification*. When there is no legitimate repentance, the guilty one always blames someone else for his or her wrong acts. Adam blamed Eve and God. Eve blamed the serpent and God. At first, they didn't recognize their great crime against their lovely Creator. In verse 15, God declared to the serpent: "I will put enmity between thee and the woman." Why was it necessary for God to "put enmity" between Adam and Eve and the serpent? Because, through sin, they became good friends. They reflected now Satan's character. An intervention from outside became indispensable for the restoration of those now sinful creatures.

After the spiritual tragedy that happened when the Israelites worshipped the golden calf, God identified Himself to Moses with the following words: "The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, **and that will by no means clear the guilty;** visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation" (Exodus 34:6, 7, emphasis supplied).

Legally and ethically, all who commit sin are guilty. And God said that He "will by no means clear the guilty." The New International Version puts it this way: "Yet [God] does not leave the guilty unpunished."

If God cannot, because of His justice, clear the guilty or, in other words "does not leave the guilty unpunished," what will be the fate of the sinners, since "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23)?

In Romans 3:19, Paul makes it clear that the whole human race is guilty before God: "Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God."

James declares that if we break just one commandment, we are guilty of breaking the whole Law: "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law" (2:10, 11).

Let us consider Romans 13:8–10: "Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law."

In His sermon on the mount, Christ revealed the deep spirituality of the Law, when He said:

"Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire" (Matthew 5:21, 22).

"Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart" (verses 27, 28).

"Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust" (verses 43–45).

As we see, any thing we think, speak, or do against the great principle of love, is a transgression of the law of love. Anyone who is separated from Christ is guilty before the Lord.

The solution for our guilt

Through His infinite grace and mercy, God does something wonderful in behalf of the repentant and contrite sinner: He transfers the guilt of the sinner to the Innocent "Lamb of God." "For [God] hath made [Christ] to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in [Christ] (2 Corinthians 5:21)."

"Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows. . . . He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement or our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. . . . The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:4–6).

"Upon Christ as our substitute and surety was laid the iniquity of us all. He was counted a transgressor, that He might redeem us from the condemnation of the law. The guilt of every descendant of Adam was pressing upon His heart. The wrath of God against sin, the terrible manifestation of His displeasure because of iniquity, filled the soul of His Son with consternation. All His life Christ had been publishing to a fallen world the good news of the Father's mercy and pardoning love. Salvation for the chief of sinners was His theme. But now with the terrible

weight of guilt He bears, He cannot see the Father's reconciling face. The withdrawal of the divine countenance from the Saviour in this hour of supreme anguish pierced His heart with a sorrow that can never be fully understood by us. So great was this agony that His physical pain was hardly felt."³

"Christ was treated as we deserve, that we might be treated as He deserves. He was condemned for our sins, in which He had no share, that we might be justified by His righteousness, in which we had no share. He suffered the death which was ours, that we might receive the life which was His. 'With His stripes we are healed.'"⁴

"Only by faith in Christ can the sinner be cleansed from guilt and be enabled to render obedience to the law of his Maker."⁵

"The spotless Son of God hung upon the cross, His flesh lacerated with stripes; those hands so often reached out in blessing, nailed to the wooden bars; those feet so tireless on ministries of love, spiked to the tree; that royal head pierced by the crown of thorns; those quivering lips shaped to the cry of woe. And all that He endured—the blood drops that flowed from His head, His hands, His feet, the agony that racked His frame, and the unutterable anguish that filled His soul at the hiding of His Father's face—speaks to each child of humanity, declaring, It is for thee that the Son of God consents to bear this burden of guilt; for thee He spoils the domain of death, and opens the gates of Paradise."⁶

What can we do with our guilt? Through repentance and confession, transfer it to Christ our Saviour and Lord. By transferring our guilt to Christ, He will impute His perfect righteousness to us. Are you willing to accept this wonderful gift?

"How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation" (Hebrews 2:3)? *R*

References

- ¹ Webster's New 20th Century Dictionary.
- ² *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*.
- ³ *Christ Triumphant*, pp. 277.
- ⁴ *The Desire of Ages*, p. 25.
- ⁵ *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 425.
- ⁶ *The Desire of Ages*, p. 755.

The Unpardonable



By A. Balbach

When

Jesus was in the world, He went about healing the sick and delivering many sufferers from the control of evil spirits. On one occasion it was “brought unto him one possessed with a devil, blind, and dumb: and he healed him” (Matthew 12:22). The Pharisees heard of the miracle and had to give an explanation. This placed them in a dilemma. Many times, in the process of arguing, an individual wants to maintain his or her position at any cost, even if he or she must use unreasonable ideas and words. And this is exactly what the Pharisees did when they said: “This fellow doth not cast out devils,

but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils” (verse 24). They did not believe in their own words—words which they used only for argumentative purposes.

Seeing their mental dishonesty, Jesus warned them and others: “All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men” (verse 31).

This verse seems startling. We think of sin as something that can be forgiven. Jesus is “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). After meditating upon this verse in Matthew 12, many readers of the Bible may ask themselves: What is an unpardonable sin?

A long time ago, I had a dialogue with a student of theology. During

our discussion, a common question came up, “Why did Jesus come to the world?” The declaration in John 3:16 was clear to both of us, as it is clear to every Christian. Every believer knows that “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners” (1 Timothy 1:15). But then I asked, “Jesus came to save us from what?” He said, “He came to save us into the kingdom.” He was not able to answer my question. I insisted, “Before we can get into the kingdom we must be saved—saved from what?” Then I read to him, “He shall save his people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21).

What exactly is sin, anyway?

From the very beginning, sin has been the breaking of God’s law, which

had been written in the hearts and minds of men and women (Jeremiah 31:33). Paul writes that before the law of God was proclaimed on Mt. Sinai, sin was imputed to all people. "For the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23), and everyone who lived before God met with Israel at Mt. Sinai died. If there were anyone who had not sinned back in those days, they would never have died. Therefore all of those people were sinners and guilty before God. Read Romans 5:12, 13.

What does Scripture say of sin?

"Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4).

"By the law is the knowledge of sin" (Romans 3:20).

"I had not known sin, but by the law" (Romans 7:7).

Therefore: "If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well: But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors. For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law. So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty" (James 2:8-12).

The law of God is called "the law of liberty" because we can be free from sin only if we let Christ come into our heart (Galatians 2:20). Jesus said: "I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart" (Psalm 40:8). When He comes into our hearts, the law of God in His heart becomes the law of God in our heart. There is no such thing as Christ without the law of God or the law of God without Christ.

If the law of God could be abolished, sin would be no more sin. "For where no law is, there is no transgression" (Romans 4:15). But, "the strength of sin is the law" (1 Corinthians 15:56), and all sinners should listen to what the law says to them, because they are under the sentence of the law (Romans 3:19) and therefore guilty before God. Christ is our only hope.

What is really meant by "belief" in Christ?

To believe in Christ is much more than having a favorable opinion about Him. Those who receive Him (John 1:12) are "justified by faith" (Romans 3:25-28). Experiencing remission of their sins (verse 25) which they did while living in ignorance or "without the deeds of the law," they are forgiven. But they cannot continue doing the sin they have been forgiving for committing. The person who is forgiven most, loves most (Luke 7:42, 43). "If a man love me, he will keep my words"; "if ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:23, 15). From now on, they will keep the law of God, for Christ says to them, "Go, and sin no more" (John 8:11). Paul writes about the duty of those who have already started a new life in Christ:

"Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law." "Not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified" (Romans 3:31; 2:13).

"The end [Greek: *telos*, i.e. purpose] of [keeping] the law" is Christ "that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us" (Romans 10:4; 8:4). Compare Romans 8:1-7 with Romans 10:3, 4.

This brief introductory explanation gives us a clear understanding of the function of the law of God in the process of salvation. First of all, we need to know: what is sin? How does Christ want to save us from sin? What are some of the different categories of sin? On what condition can sin be forgiven?

And—this is the main focus of our article—what is an unpardonable sin?

Priorities and attitudes

One day a man approached Jesus with a question:

"Lord, are there *few* that be saved? And he said unto them, Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able" (Luke 13:23, 24, emphasis supplied).

So today, a few "are waiting and watching and working for our Lord's appearing. Another class are falling

into line under the generalship of the first great apostate. Few believe with heart and soul that we have a hell to shun and a heaven to win. . . . Pleasure lovers are still crowding to theaters, horse races, gambling hells. The highest excitement prevails, yet probation's hour is fast closing, and every case is about to be eternally decided. Satan sees that his time is short. He has set all his agencies at work that men may be deceived, deluded, occupied and entranced, until the day of probation shall be ended, and the door of mercy be forever shut."¹

Many professed Christians think, live, and act like the presumptuous prayer of the Pharisee: "God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess" (Luke 18:11, 12). Even we may have the typical attitude of the Laodicean: "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing" (Revelation 3:17).

Many think they are already saved. But in my mind I must raise some serious questions: Do they know the truth? Does their life demonstrate the fruits of salvation? Are they happy and holy? Are they able to identify with those who appreciate and accept the truth? Are they prepared to stand before the judgment seat of God?

When I was in Brazil, I spoke with a couple of visitors, husband and wife, at the end of our service. I was curious to know about their religious affiliation, so I asked the man which church they belonged to. He said, "The Church of My Wife and Myself."

One day a young man knocked at my door offering me a magazine. I said I would read his publication if, in turn, he accepted to read one of our publications. He said he could not do that. I asked him, why? He answered, "Because *we* have the truth." I said to him, "then we are in the same boat, because we also believe that *we* have the truth." He finally accepted a copy of *Steps to Christ*, and I accepted his magazine. All professed Christians think they have the truth and expect to be in heaven, but, very, very, few seem to understand the plan of salvation in the light of this fact:

"As many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law" (Romans 2:12).

"God has jewels in all the churches, and it is not for us to make sweeping denunciation of the professed religious world, but in humility and love, present to all the truth as it is in Jesus."² Those who have known the three angels' messages should not come to the erroneous conclusion that they may join any religious group and expect to be saved. Honest souls are scattered everywhere under the patience of God, because they don't know a better way. But Christ is calling them to leave spiritual Babylon—the mother church and all of her daughters (Revelation 17:4–6)—that they be not partakers of their sins (Revelation 18:4). These honest believers are responsible only for the limited light that they have received so far. But they will not be able to plead ignorance after the full light of the three angels' message has shone upon them, should they choose to reject it. Therefore, we have a solemn responsibility toward these souls. "Let men see piety and devotion, let them behold Christlikeness of character, and they will be drawn to the truth. He who loves God supremely and his neighbor as himself will be a light in the world."³

We should make it clear to them that not sinners, but only **former** sinners, will be admitted into the kingdom. This is true whether the sinner is a member of the church or not.

"Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Corinthians 6:9–11).

Those who continue sinning, and sinning, and sinning, rejecting the helping hand of Christ, will finally reap what they have chosen. They will be destroyed under the wrath of God when Christ shall come "in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God,

and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thessalonians 1:8).

"For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame" (Hebrews 6:4–6).

"For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins" (Hebrews 10:26).

"For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning" (2 Peter 2:20).

"This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light" (John 3:19).

"The wrath of God is not declared against unrepentant sinners merely because of the sins they have committed, but because, when called to repent, they choose to continue in resistance, repeating the sins of the past in defiance of the light given them."⁴

For having been "stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears," and for having resisted "the Holy Ghost" to the very end, many individuals, both in the Old and in the New Testament, perished without salvation (Acts 7:51). Their names and their negative experiences stand as a warning to us. Think of the parables in Luke 12:16–20; 11:23–26. This happened to church members and non-church members alike.

Persevering to the end

"[Christ warned] those who had been impressed by His words, who had heard Him gladly, but who had not surrendered themselves for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. It is not only by resistance but by neglect that the soul is destroyed. 'When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man,' said Jesus, 'he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence

I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there' (Matthew 12:43–45).

"There were many in Christ's day, as there are today, over whom the control of Satan for the time seemed broken; through the grace of God they were set free from the evil spirits that had held dominion over the soul. They rejoiced in the love of God; but, like the stony-ground hearers of the parable, they did not abide in His love. They did not surrender themselves to God daily, that Christ might dwell in the heart; and when the evil spirit returned, with 'seven other spirits more wicked than himself,' they were wholly dominated by the power of evil.

"When the soul surrenders itself to Christ, a new power takes possession of the new heart. A change is wrought which man can never accomplish for himself. It is a supernatural work, bringing a supernatural element into human nature. The soul that is yielded to Christ becomes His own fortress, which He holds in a revolted world, and He intends that no authority shall be known in it but His own. A soul thus kept in possession by the heavenly agencies is impregnable to the assaults of Satan. But unless we do yield ourselves to the control of Christ, we shall be dominated by the wicked one. . . . Unless we become vitally connected with God, we can never resist the unhallowed effects of self-love, self-indulgence, and temptation to sin. We may leave off many bad habits, for the time we may part company with Satan; but without a vital connection with God, through the surrender of ourselves to Him moment by moment, we shall be overcome."⁵

And if we are finally overcome, we must blame ourselves for having committed the unpardonable sin. Let's not allow that to happen to us! *R*

References

¹ *The Desire of Ages*, p. 636.

² *The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 4, p. 1184.

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⁴ *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 62.

⁵ *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 323, 324.

THE PURGING OF

Peter



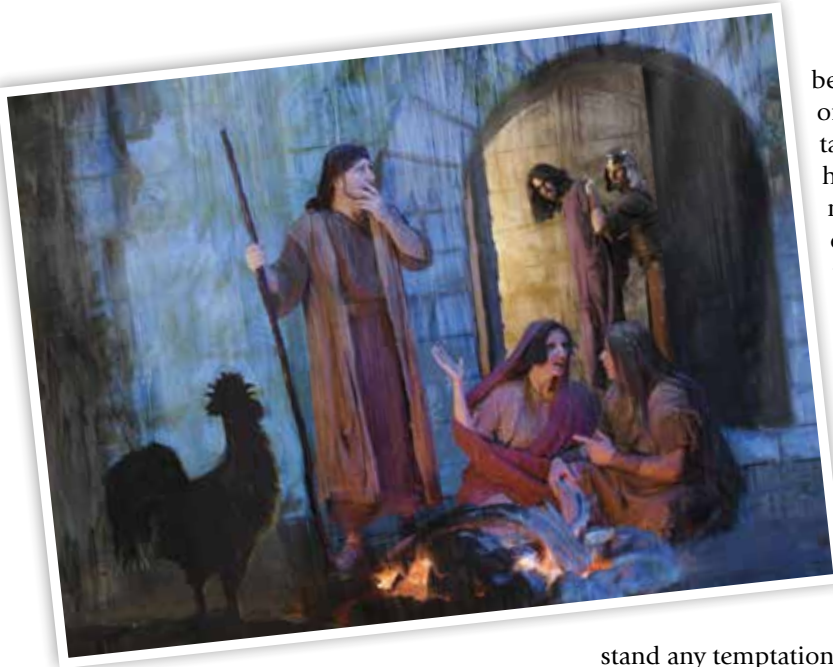
By Ellen G. White

Excerpts from The Review and Herald, February 6, 1913.

When Jesus was actually in the hands of the armed men, where were the boastful disciples?—They had fled. Even Peter was in the rear, far from his suffering Lord. When the cruel trial began in the judg-

ment hall, had Jesus a defender in the ardent Peter? Was he then by the side of his deserted Lord?—No, but with those who were mocking and reviling. It is true that Peter had a deep interest in the trial, and he did desire to be at the side of his Lord; but he could not endure the scorn, the reproach,

that would fall upon him if he should take his place as a disciple of Christ. When one of the women of the palace said to Peter, “Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee” (Matthew 26:69), he denied before all the company, saying, “I know not what thou sayest” (verse 70). He who had made so confident



Peter had been warned of this temptation; but he did not realize his danger and therefore had not prepared himself for the trial. He had been filled with self-confidence, and deemed that he was able to with-

a statement of his fidelity to Christ, now denied his Lord at the question of a maid in the palace. Did he now move nearer to his Lord?—No; he pushed his way out to the porch, seeking to escape the prying eyes of the enemies of his Lord; but again he was recognized, and another said to him, "This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth" (verse 71). And again he denied with an oath, "I do not know the man" (verse 72). Peter was irritated that he could not find an escape from the eyes of his enemies, and he returned to the hall, where he could better view the trial, but he stood among the mockers and revilers of Christ. The third time he was recognized, and they said to him, "Surely thou also art one of them; for thy speech bewrayeth thee" (verse 73).

Peter had been ready to take up arms in defense of Christ, but to acknowledge the Lord when He was the object of scorn and derision was more than he had courage to do. He was a moral coward, and with curses and oaths he denied that he knew his Master.

stand any temptation, assuring the Lord that though all others should be offended, he would be ready to go with Him to prison and to death. When he took his stand with the revilers of Christ, he placed himself on the enemy's ground, and he fell.

At his third denial of his Lord the cock crew, and Jesus turned His eyes upon Peter with a look of peculiar sadness, and the words that Christ had spoken to him came quickly to his mind. All through his life the memory of that look was with Peter. His sinful boasting, his Lord's warning, his denial of the Saviour, all came to him like a flash of lightning; and casting one pitiful look upon his suffering, insulted Lord, he hurried away from the sound of false accusation and reproach, rushed from the palace, plunged into the darkness, and weeping bitterly, hurried to Gethsemane. He began to see himself as he really was. Memory was alive, and his sins were pictured before him in all their heinous light. Peter threw himself on the spot where a few hours before Jesus had prayed and wept in agony, and there the disciple

prayed as he never before had prayed. With deep repentance and terrible remorse he pleaded for forgiveness, and he rose a converted man; but he felt that although Jesus would forgive him, he could never forgive himself.

Jesus knew all the sorrow and remorse of His erring disciple; and when the heavenly messengers appeared to the women at the sepulcher, they told them of Christ's resurrection, and bade them tell the disciples and Peter that He went before them into Galilee. How eagerly did Peter receive this word of love and compassion! He knew that his Lord still thought of him, still loved him, and he took this message as a sign of forgiveness. . . .

"So when [the disciples] had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep" (John 21:15–17).

In the answers that Peter gave to the Lord's thrice-repeated question, a different spirit is manifested from what we find in the boastful assurances before the crucifixion of Christ. Peter was a converted man and showed in his life that transforming grace had taken possession of his heart. As firm as a rock, he ever after stood up boldly to witness for Christ. Jesus had said to Peter, "Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren" (Luke 22:31, 32). Peter had severe trials to pass through, but although he was called to go to prison and to death for Christ's sake, never again did he waver from his allegiance. *R*

The disciple prayed as he never before had prayed. With deep repentance and terrible remorse he pleaded for forgiveness, and he rose a converted man.



A Guilt-Free Life

By T. Stockler

We may be tall or short. Our eyes may be brown or blue or green. We may have strong or weak emotions. We may find it easier or harder to be happy. But we all feel guilt. Guilt is a universal experience. It does not discriminate between people. It does not select only certain personality types. Everyone experiences it—except possibly a few people without much of a conscience.

We talk of guilt. We talk about it when we consider how much food we ate at a really good meal. We talk about

it when we think about doing something we think isn't quite right. We talk about it when we make a mistake or when we make someone else really angry.

Most of us haven't learned what to do with guilt since Adam and Eve first experienced it and were driven to invent sewing and hide from their best Friend in the Garden of Eden.

We find guilt confusing because God causes us to feel guilty and also the devil showers guilt on us. Since guilt comes from the Author of Good, we are often confused because it can also come from the captain of evil.

Several circumstances lead us to feel guilty. We may feel guilty for being angry at others. Every one of us gets hurt by someone else at some point in our life. We experience injustice from family or friends or at work or in the community or all of them together. Usually we get angry at those that hurt us. Sometimes we hurt them back through screaming, hitting, or attacking their character. Then we feel guilty for hurting them.

God tells us: "Be . . . angry, and sin not" (Ephesians 4:26). God will never give us guilt for anger when He says it is no sin to be angry. But many of us

“The development of the plant is a beautiful figure of Christian growth. As in nature, so in grace; there can be no life without growth.”

let anger control our words and actions and motives instead of God. God sends us guilt for our discouraging words, our belittling motives, and our destructive actions to ask us to pray for grace from Him to do differently.

We may feel guilt for how much we depend on others for help. We are tempted to believe that accepting the help of others is wrong or harmful. Or we are tempted to freely accept the kindness of others and take advantage of them. Either course is wrong.

Jesus accepted the gift of five loaves when that gift seemed impossibly small. He accepted the gift of being anointed with spikenard and reproved those that said the gift was too big. Jesus accepted the kindness and the help of anyone. He also gave Himself “unto the least of these” and unto the greatest of these “my brother and [my] sister and [my] mother.”

Some of us have been told that we should feel guilt for enjoying anything. But God takes pleasure and has delight. He even offers to share His pleasure. There is no shame in accepting what God offers. God only gives us guilt if our pleasure is harmful to someone or something.

Sometimes we feel guilty for growing. There is no reason children should be guilty for falling as they learn to walk. God does not shame us for learning and growing as adults and Christians. “The development of the plant is a beautiful figure of Christian growth. As in nature, so in grace; there can be no life without growth. The plant must either grow or die. As its growth is silent and imperceptible, but continuous, so is the development of the Christian life. At every stage of development our life may be perfect; yet if God’s purpose for us is fulfilled, there will be continual advancement.”¹

Sometimes we feel guilty for resting. It is as though we cannot think of ceasing work. But God, at the end of creating, did rest on the seventh day from all His

works. He designed work and rest as a rhythm with a designated ratio between the two. We ought to feel shame only if we tamper with His ratio and rhythm.

Many folks in Western countries experience times when guilt is more common. Around major holidays people eat more food and eat types of food that are not healthful. They indulged their time and their budget in ways they know they will regret. It has become part of the ritual.

But there is a danger in trivializing guilt. Guilt is a holy gift from a loving God. He gives it to us to lead us to recognize our helplessness and turn to Him. Whenever we ignore or belittle guilt, we are interfering with the voice of God’s Spirit to ourselves. Whenever we permit false guilt to darken our emotions and our souls, we make it harder for God to talk with us.

We have a duty to God to handle guilt with care. This is difficult. We often do not know God well enough to know how He uses guilt to lead us to Him. We often do not know how easily we can be released from guilt. We often do not know that we can always find freedom from guilt at the moment we seek it.

“Many are quieting a troubled conscience with the thought that they can change a course of evil when they choose; that they can trifle with the invitations of mercy, and yet be again and again impressed. They think that after doing despite to the Spirit of grace, after casting their influence on the side of Satan, in a moment of terrible extremity they can change their course. But this is not so easily done. The experience, the education, of a lifetime, has so thoroughly molded the character that few then desire to receive the image of Jesus.”²

“Beware of procrastination. Do not put off the work of forsaking your sins and seeking purity of heart through Jesus. Here is where thousands upon thousands have erred to their eternal loss. . . . There is a terrible danger—a danger not

sufficiently understood—in delaying to yield to the pleading voice of God’s Holy Spirit, in choosing to live in sin; for such this delay really is. Sin, however small it may be esteemed, can be indulged in only at the peril of infinite loss. What we do not overcome, will overcome us and work out our destruction.”³

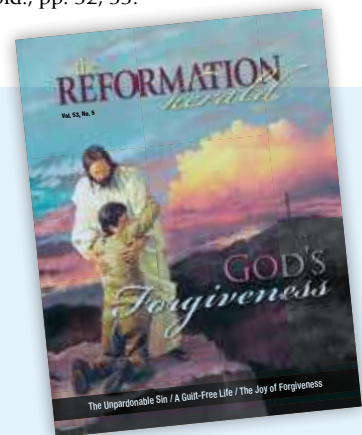
Guilt may be a universal experience. How to handle guilt is not universal knowledge. God has provided us with an understanding and complete solution to all guilt. His Word explains the legitimacy or falsehood of every guilty feeling we ever experience. God Himself will remove all our shame and guilt from us the moment we ask and are willing to be changed. Let us not ignore and waste this precious knowledge and solution that God gives us! *R*

References

¹ *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 65.

² *Steps to Christ*, pp. 33, 34.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 32, 33.

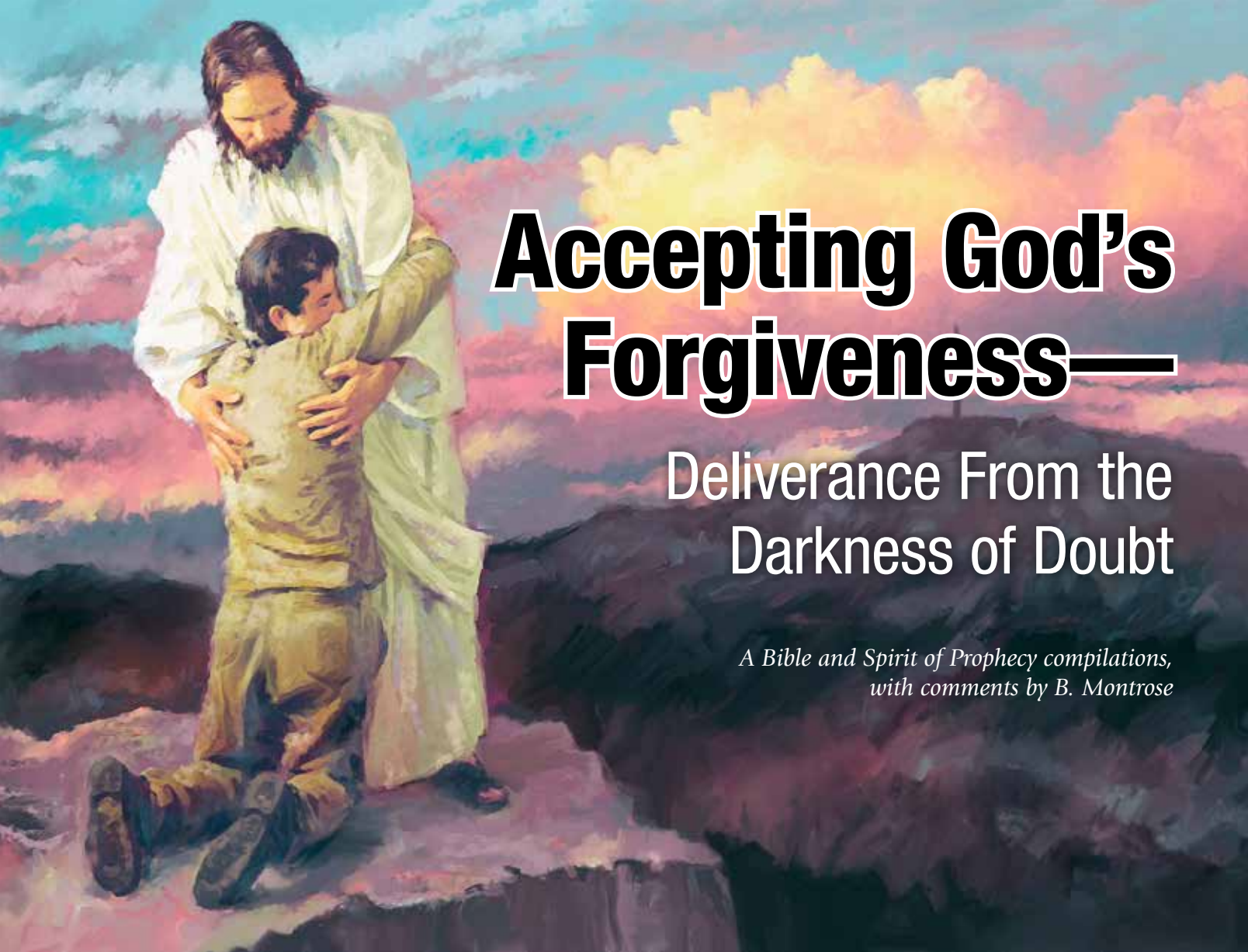


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Accepting God's Forgiveness—

Deliverance From the Darkness of Doubt

*A Bible and Spirit of Prophecy compilations,
with comments by B. Montrose*

It's tricky. The enemy of our souls likes to make us think that succumbing to temptation is perfectly okay. In ancient Eden, he used a sneaky strategy on our mother Eve. Freely enticing her with forbidden fruit, he essentially said (probably in that sarcastic, mocking tone of voice we've all had to hear at times), "Come on, go ahead and try it! It's not going to kill you!" ("Ye shall not surely die.")

So, the sin (violating our conscience by indulging in something we know that God has clearly forbidden) is made to appear small and minor—an act that doesn't matter and supposedly won't really hurt anybody or anything. After all, the tempted soul

begins to presume—the end supposedly will justify the means. If it's for a good cause, then everything is thought to be fine. Thereafter, one sin follows another and the soul is trapped in an incredibly sticky spider web of circumstances. . . .

Then, suddenly the enemy is absolutely scandalized at what you've done. He taunts and reviles you as if you were the worst person that ever lived.

The plague that follows

The year was 2005. The hallways of the attractive suburban nursing home normally tended to be fairly quiet, but on that day there was something tragic to behold: An aged gentleman, sitting in his wheelchair, hunched over and sobbing loudly. In some ways, it was a

bit surprising to see this male individual so much more distraught than the other residents—most of them women, who by nature might have been more likely to express some kind of emotional distress or grief. The man did not seem to show any outward signs of physical pain—and so many other residents were lonely, having few or no visits from family or friends. Yet this man's daughter came to see him almost daily. Life seemed better for him than for many of the other patients there.

What was the problem? Why was he weeping? Pulling up a chair to sit beside him, I gently approached him to find out what was on his mind.

"I was a soldier in World War II—and I killed many men there," he

explained in horror as he shook his head almost in disbelief. "And I feel so bad—so guilty."

Here it was 60 years after the war, yet the heart of this Catholic gentleman was wrenching with remorse over actions carried out in the distant past. I then spent some moments sharing with him about the wonderful gospel of Jesus Christ—the comforting news about the sin-pardoning Saviour who is willing and able to forgive even the darkest chapters of our experience. The gentleman seemed to appreciate the words of faith and reassurance, and we had prayer together, claiming the promises of a merciful, compassionate God.

The next day, upon my return to see how the man was doing, once again he was crying. When I inquired to know what was on his mind, he again said woefully: "I was a soldier in World War II—and I killed many men there . . . and I feel so bad—so guilty."

What had happened? God was certainly willing to forgive this poor soul, but—perhaps due to short-term memory loss often characteristic of aging—his long-term memory did not allow him to forget the evil and/or forgive himself.

What about us? Although most of us are not as old as he (and therefore not as weakened physically and mentally), do we sometimes do the same to ourselves?

Relief desperately needed!

The psalmist David describes his suffering from the agony of guilt and unconfessed sin with the following words: "When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer" (Psalm 32:3, 4).

Sin is indeed a plague that crushes. It's amazing—the burden of guilt is so heavy, yet before we committed the evil deed, the enemy of souls made us think it was such a light matter—just a little thing. It is afterwards that we see how badly we were fooled! This is the lot of fallen humanity. As part of their job, psychiatrists, psychologists, and counselors seek to help people with this per-

petual problem. Some try to obliterate the sin by telling the patients that their deficiencies are all the fault of someone else. Often there is partial truth in their claim—sadly, the world has plenty of genuine victims. But it is also true that each of us carries some guilt in life, "for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" and "the wages of sin is death" (Romans 3:23; 6:23). Yes, sin indeed brings remorse—and remorse eats away the life forces.

Even "good" people suffer from this problem. Ellen G. White makes an observation based on her own experience in early youth:

"When I reflected that the Creator of the universe would plunge the wicked into hell, there to burn through the ceaseless rounds of eternity, my heart sank with fear, and I despaired that so cruel and tyrannical a being would ever condescend to save me from the doom of sin.

"I thought that the fate of the condemned sinner would be mine, to endure the flames of hell forever, even as long as God Himself existed. This impression deepened upon my mind until I feared that I would lose my reason. I would look upon the dumb beasts with envy, because they had no soul to be punished after death. Many times the wish arose that I had never been born.

"Total darkness settled upon me and there seemed no way out of the shadows. Could the truth have been presented to me as I now understand it, much perplexity and sorrow would have been spared me. If the love of God had been dwelt upon more, and His stern justice less, the beauty and glory of His character would have inspired me with a deep and earnest love for my Creator.

"I have since thought that many inmates of insane asylums were brought there by experiences similar to my own. Their tender consciences were stricken with a sense of sin, and their trembling faith dared not claim the promised pardon of God."¹

The power of the only One who can save from sin

Yes, we really need to be "saved" from sin. That's why Jesus came to this

earth. Prophecy foretold that He would "save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). And indeed He does! He saves from the penalty, the guilt, and ultimately even the taste for it. There are wonderful passages of Scripture that describe how Jesus cures this horrible problem:

"Behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy; Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee. And, behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves, This man blasphemeth. And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts? For whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house. And he arose, and departed to his house. But when the multitude saw it, they marvelled, and glorified God, which had given such power unto men" (Matthew 9:2–8).

"The paralytic found in Christ healing for both the soul and the body. The spiritual healing was followed by physical restoration. This lesson should not be overlooked. There are today thousands suffering from physical disease, who, like the paralytic, are longing for the message, 'Thy sins are forgiven.' The burden of sin, with its unrest and unsatisfied desires, is the foundation of their maladies. They can find no relief until they come to the Healer of the soul. The peace which He alone can give would impart vigor to the mind and health to the body."²

Confession is key

"We should not try to lessen our guilt by excusing sin. We must accept God's estimate of sin, and that is heavy indeed. Calvary alone can reveal the terrible enormity of sin. If we had to bear our own guilt, it would crush us. But the sinless One has taken our place; though undeserving, He has borne our iniquity. 'If we confess our sins,' God 'is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness' (1 John 1:9)."³

“The answer to our prayer may be delayed, or God may give us something other than we ask, but not so when we ask for deliverance from sin.”

Why do many still feel guilty even after confession?

“Those who have not humbled their souls before God in acknowledging their guilt have not yet fulfilled the first condition of acceptance. If we have not experienced that repentance which is not to be repented of and have not confessed our sin with true humiliation of soul and brokenness of spirit, abhorring our iniquity, we have never sought truly for the forgiveness of sin; and if we have never sought, we have never found the peace of God. The only reason why we may not have remission of sins that are past is that we are not willing to humble our proud hearts and comply with the conditions of the word of truth.”⁴

What is the problem here? Too often the enemy manages to deceive us into thinking that the particular sin of which we are guilty is just a minor matter. Then we don’t bother to see it as anything wrong, and therefore we don’t bother to confess it. That’s a big mistake! Instead, it is safer to go ahead and paint that sin before God in its darkest hue—not try to whitewash it. The danger is not in the size of the sin, for nothing is too big or too dark for Christ to forgive. The danger is in our refusal to admit that it was a sin! If we’re either too proud or too ashamed to face that reality, then we won’t confess it. And if we don’t confess it, the sin remains on record and we go around with a dirty conscience. As a result, our connection with Christ dwindles and we don’t even realize it. That’s no way to live!

What do I need to know about confession?

1. Prayer for forgiveness is answered instantly!

“In some instances of healing, Jesus did not at once grant the blessing sought. But in the case of leprosy, no sooner was the appeal made than it was granted. When we pray for earthly blessings, the answer to our prayer

may be delayed, or God may give us something other than we ask, but not so when we ask for deliverance from sin. It is His will to cleanse us from sin, to make us His children, and to enable us to live a holy life.”⁵

2. Even if you’re not sure whether something was sin or not, confess it to God just in case it might be!

It may be that the Holy Spirit is trying to bring you to a higher standard in your experience. In your earlier years (or perhaps even last week or yesterday), something may not have appeared to be wrong, but now you’re starting to have a clearer picture of what it means to become truly Christ-like in character. The closer we come to Christ, the more things that we thought were harmless we will now recognize as wrong. As sin becomes more hateful to us, we will find ourselves feeling guilty about more things. But again, this new guilt is not for the purpose of making us feel bad just to leave us feeling bad, but rather for us to take the issue to our Saviour so that He can clean us and make us new. This is evidence of the working of the Holy Spirit, or Comforter. Jesus explains that “when [the Comforter] is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment” (John 16:8). The comforting Holy Ghost reproves/convicts/convinces us that we have done something wrong. Then He also encourages us when we are doing right. He reminds us of the judgment—our ultimate accountability to our Creator. To be at peace with our Creator, we then admit/confess our sin/wrong/defect of character, and He impresses us that by so doing we are now on the right path, properly preparing for judgment through the merits of His mercy.

It’s not enough just to say, “O Lord, forgive our sins,” in a superficial, general way. We need to go to our closet and get to the real point: What did I actually do wrong?

“True confession is always of a specific character, and acknowledges particular sins. They may be of such a nature as to be brought before God only; they may be wrongs that should be confessed to individuals who have suffered injury through them; or they may be of a public character, and should then be as publicly confessed. But all confession should be definite and to the point, acknowledging the very sins of which you are guilty.”⁶

A Friend you never knew you had!

We often thank our heavenly Father and think of our Elder Brother, Christ, as our Best Friend, which of course He is. But we do not always thank God for the Holy Spirit as a Friend as well. This Friend pricks our conscience when we do wrong—yes, because He is our Friend. “Faithful are the wounds of a friend” (Proverbs 27:6).

“The Lord requires us to obey the voice of duty, when there are other voices all around us urging us to pursue an opposite course. It requires earnest attention from us to distinguish the voice which speaks from God. We must resist and conquer inclination, and obey the voice of conscience without parleying or compromise, lest its promptings cease, and will and impulse control. The word of the Lord comes to us all who have not resisted His Spirit by determining not to hear and obey. This voice is heard in warnings, in counsels, in reproof. It is the Lord’s message of light to His people. If we wait for louder calls or better opportunities, the light may be withdrawn, and we left in darkness.”⁷

Educate the conscience, confess the wrong

“One says, ‘My conscience does not condemn me in not keeping the commandments of God.’ But in the Word of God we read that there are good and bad consciences, and the fact that your conscience does not condemn you in not keeping the law of God does not prove that you are uncondemned in His sight.

"Take your conscience to the Word of God and see if your life and character are in accordance with the standard of righteousness which God has there revealed. You can then determine whether or not you have an intelligent faith and what manner of conscience is yours. The conscience of man cannot be trusted unless it is under the influence of divine grace."⁸

The apostle explained to the repentant believers at Corinth: "Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing. For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death" (2 Corinthians 7:9, 10).

Sorrow that works repentance consists of appropriate confession followed by watchful vigilance, lest our frailty should betray us again in the future. In contrast, sorrow that works death is a plague of endless guilt that actually has the audacity to question the ability of the Lord Jesus Christ to forgive.

Do not fail to accept God's forgiveness!

"The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit" (Psalm 34:18).

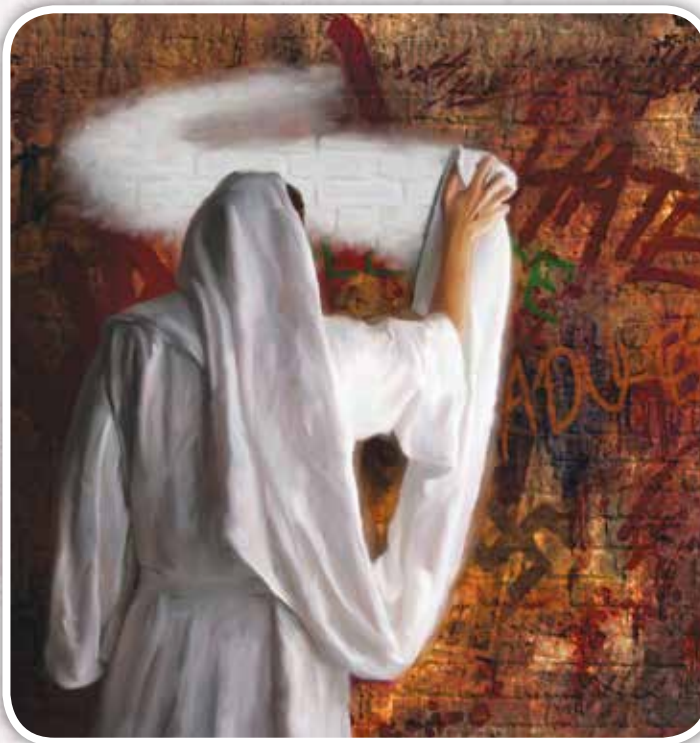
"Grief, anxiety, discontent, remorse, guilt, distrust, all tend to break down the life-forces and to invite decay and death."⁹

"[The] feeling of guiltiness must be laid at the foot of the cross of Calvary. The sense of sinfulness has poisoned the springs of life and true happiness. Now Jesus says, Lay it all on Me; I will take your sin, I will give you peace. Destroy no longer your self-respect, for I have bought you with the price of My own blood. You are Mine; your weakened will I will strengthen; your remorse for sin I will remove.

"Then turn your grateful heart, trembling with uncertainty, and lay hold

upon the hope set before you. God accepts your broken, contrite heart. He offers you free pardon. He offers to adopt you into His family, with His grace to help your weakness, and the dear Jesus will lead you on step by step if you will only put your hand in His and let Him guide you.

"Satan seeks to draw our minds away from the mighty Helper, to lead us to ponder over our degeneration of soul. But though Jesus sees the guilt of the past, He speaks pardon; and we should not dishonor Him by doubting His love."¹⁰



"We have the precious promise that every sin, if sincerely repented of, will be forgiven. To turn to God with contrition of soul, claiming the merits of the blood of Christ, will bring to us light, pardon, and peace. But we must turn to the Lord with full purpose of heart, with a decision to be doers of the words of Christ. Our past sins will sometimes come to mind, and cast a shadow over our faith, so that we can see nothing but merited punishment in store for us. But at such times, while we feel sorrow for sin, we should look to Jesus, and believe that He has pardoned our transgressions. [Romans 3:24, 25 quoted.] To those who, though they have repented, are troubled over their past sins, who are

tempted to think that perhaps they are not forgiven, Christ says, 'Go, and sin no more' (John 8:11). You have found peace with God; through His grace you have entered upon a new life; 'by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God' (Ephesians 2:8). Then allow no unbelief to come in. Commit the keeping of your souls unto God as to a faithful Creator; He will keep that which is committed to His trust against that day. Instead of looking inward with regret and despair, look outward and upward in faith. Unless you are constantly fighting the fight of faith, the past will press its shadow over the present.

"Every Christian will have a hard battle to fight with wrong habits. He must overcome his unbelief, his deformity of character, his inclination to self-indulgence. His long resistance of light, warnings, and appeals has left its mark upon his life; and although God has forgiven him, he feels that he cannot forgive himself. He often thinks of what he might have been in physical and moral strength if it were not for that sinful past. But to him I say, 'Look and live.' The Lord declares, 'My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways.' 'As the heaven is high above the

earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him.' His promise is, 'I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more' (Isaiah 55:9; Psalm 103:11; Jeremiah 31:34)."¹¹ What a marvelous assurance! *R*

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- ⁴ *Mind, Character, and Personality*, vol. 2, p. 456.
- ⁵ *The Desire of Ages*, p. 266.
- ⁶ *Steps to Christ*, p. 38.
- ⁷ *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 69.
- ⁸ *The Review and Herald*, September 3, 1901.
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By George Pina

The Joy of Forgiveness

I've been forgiven. God's forgiveness made me a different man. Let me tell you why I'm grateful to be forgiven.

Forgiveness gave me the freedom to enjoy life. Before I was forgiven, I lived an exciting life. If I wanted something, I found a way to get it. I drove a restored 1970 Datsun 240Z that could accelerate from 0-60 mph in 8 seconds. I thrilled with the power I felt in the driver's seat of that car. My eye focused on the road ahead of me. But I was so driven to feel the power, I didn't notice the color all around me. The beauty of the Pacific Ocean with its blue waves rolling up the white sands and licking toward the green grass and trees was just outside my window flying past. But all I could see was where to drive faster. It was as though my eyes just couldn't see anything past the edge of the road.

It was as if I was scared to see what was really there. Scared I would have to face the lies I told to get this car. Scared to face the friends I cheated. Scared to face my own conscience. Scared to face the real world around me, I focused on the road ahead and tried to hide my real powerlessness by feeling the power of this car.

I no longer drive the Z. I don't need to. I don't need the false sense of control. I can make choices now that were impossible before I was forgiven. I can face the realities of life. I can see the shades of green, yellow, orange, and brown in the maple trees as I drive down my street. Do I miss the Z? Not much. If I honestly earn enough to purchase another, it might be worth it. But there are plenty of

other ways to use that money that would make me happier.

Forgiveness simply made everything in life "taste" better to me. I see the world around me better. I thrill with the sight and the flavors of the food I eat more. I appreciate what I feel more. I enjoy what I smell more. The sounds that reach my ears please me more.

Forgiveness gave me more than the ability to enjoy the world around me. It gave me the affection of God. I am an outdoor person. I don't like to stay inside four walls. I remember when I was just a boy, I was active. And I fell down and injured my knee. My precious mother came and picked me up. She held me. She stroked my head. She told me I would be all right. In her arms, I felt secure and content. I was safe and happy. My world was good.

When God forgave me, my world was all right. I felt the same sense of comfort and security. I felt protected. I realized that whatever happened to me, I was held in the invisible arms of God. I felt as though He were stroking my head and telling me, I would be okay.

Life is thrilling when I sense the affection of God. I feel like a lion cub. It is as though my mother (or rather my heavenly Father) watches me play. He lets me wander around and explore and tussle with my siblings. But when He sees me wander too far or play too rough, He catches me ever so gently by the nape of my neck and carries me back to where I am safe.

Forgiveness gives me the freedom to enjoy this moment and all that surrounds me without any fear, or frustra-

tion. Forgiveness gives me an inner sense of security and contentment. And forgiveness gives me hope for the future.

I was always an optimistic kind of person. But in my optimism, I felt a certain discomfort with eighty years of life being all there is. I didn't want to die and it all be over. Even in a life filled with excitement and dread, thrill and fear, constant emotional crutches to distract me from the unspoken ache of heartache and horror in my heart, I didn't want life to be so short. Forgiveness gave me for the first time a life worth living for more than eighty years. It also gave me the real expectation of eternity. Should I be laid in an earthly grave temporarily, I still look forward to enjoying the world that surrounds me—forever. Should I fertilize the flowers of the field a little while, I am thrilled to enjoy the sense of safety and affection provided to me now by the Invisible God, for eternity where I can see God face to face.

I don't take forgiveness for granted. I realize that a little ingratitude could throw it all away. I realize that being forgiven gives me the responsibility to forgive others. I realize that the more I am forgiven, the more I want to be forgiven for everything that I have done to injure Jesus or any of His children on this world. There is no way I can explain forgiveness. It has to be experienced to fully appreciate it. But being forgiven has been the best thing that ever happened to me. And it is the best thing I can ever wish for you. Won't you join me in living a life anchored in the forgiveness of God? *R*



"LEAD US NOT INTO 'TEMPTATION'"

*Compiled from the writings of Ellen G. White, with commentary
by the Reformation Herald editorial staff.*

Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." In Jesus' model prayer, these words come immediately after the plea to "forgive

us our debts" (Matthew 6:12, 13). As soon as we have by faith grasped the forgiveness purchased for us by the death of our Saviour, we need these words. As soon as justification with the peace and sense of relief from the burden of guilt that accompanies it has entered the soul, we are to make this request. Having obtained justification, we must immediately pray to retain justification, and in order "to retain justification, there must be continual obedience."¹

Continual obedience is in jeopardy in times of temptation and trial. Hence Christ has bidden us pray these words.

What does, "Lead us not into temptation," mean? Does God lead us into temptation? Do we need to plead for Him to refrain from doing so? Should we expect God to remove all temptation from us in answer to this prayer?

The Greek word *peirasmos*, which in Matthew 6:13 is translated "temptation," is in other places in Scripture translated "test," "trial," or "prove." Inspiration is clear that God tests, or proves, the loyalty of His people. How does He do this? After He had spoken the Ten Commandments from Mt. Sinai, Moses told Israel, "Fear not: for God is come to prove you, and that his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not" (Exodus 20:20). God tests us by giving us His law, the standard of His righteousness. "The law is the great standard of righteousness. It represents the character of God and is the test of our loyalty to His government."²

In the first chapter of the epistle of James, we are taught what our attitude should be towards temptations, and what is the source of temptation: "Count it all joy when ye fall into div-



ers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. . . . Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him" (James 1:2-4, 12). Having given His law as a test, God "permits us to encounter obstacles, persecution, and hardships, not as a curse, but as the greatest blessing of our lives. Every temptation resisted, every trial bravely borne, gives us a new experience and advances us in the work of character building."³ On the other hand, Satan exploits these times in our experience. "Whenever one is encompassed with clouds, perplexed by circumstances, or afflicted by poverty or distress, Satan is at hand to tempt and annoy. He attacks our weak points of character. He seeks to shake our confidence in God, who suffers such a condition of things to exist. We are tempted to distrust God, to question His love."⁴ So James advises further, "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed" (James 1:13, 14).

Our Father has given us His law as a test of our loyalty, but He never tempts us to sin. "Temptation is enticement to sin, and this does not proceed from God, but from Satan and from the evil of our own hearts."⁵

The process is clear in the very first temptation of our race.

STEP 1: God set the standard — "Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it" (Genesis 2:17).

STEP 2: "Eve had wandered near the forbidden tree, and her curiosity was aroused."⁶

STEP 3: Satan tempted her and she yielded.

When we pray, "Lead us not into temptation," we cannot expect that God will change His standard. We should not expect that all tempta-

God has given us His law as a test of our loyalty, but He never tempts us to sin. "Temptation is enticement to sin—which proceeds from Satan and from the evil of our own hearts."

tions and difficulties will suddenly evaporate. Instead, this is a prayer of surrender "to the guidance of God, asking Him to lead us in safe paths."⁷ It is a prayer asking Divine help so that we do not perversely wander toward temptation. Then, having surrendered ourselves to God's leading, we pray, "... but deliver us from evil." We claim the promise that He "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).

On the eve of His crucifixion, Jesus knew His betrayal and death would be an overwhelming trial to His disciples. He knew it would cause them all to be offended (meaning ensnared, or tripped up). The evening before His crucifixion, Jesus said, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matthew 26:41). Jesus was not proposing that they pray for the removal of the coming test. He Himself was agonizing as He submitted in prayer to those events. The problem was with their flesh, with their unwillingness to relinquish their own expectations regarding Christ's kingdom. It was with their unwillingness to submit to the Divine will for the establishment of His kingdom. This is what they were to wrestle with and surrender in prayer.

When we look back over the many times we have been tempted and sinned, like Adam and Eve before us, we have often

blamed God. We too often ask, "Why did You lead me into temptation?" as though He had somehow let us down. In reality, those temptations were opportunities for us to prove our loyalty to Him, and we failed Him. It was we who betrayed Him; He never betrayed us. God help us henceforth to pray "Lead me not into temptation." Let this prayer be a surrender of our will to His, rather than in expectation that He will give us a smooth, easy path to heaven. *R*

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- ³ *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 117.
- ⁴ *The Desire of Ages*, p. 120.
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Question & Answer



With answers derived from the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy.

"I feel like my emotions control me. I am a slave to them. What do I do?"

Emotions are part of our nature. God created us to have emotions. The Bible talks of our emotions. Two of the most common words it uses to talk of emotions are "heart" and "reins." In the King James Version, Psalm 73:21 reads, "Thus my heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my reins." The Complete Jewish Bible translates the last part of the same passage in a way that demonstrates that the word "reins" refers to our emotions. I "felt stung by pained emotions."

The word "heart" generally refers to our mind when it is used in the Bible. Sometimes this refers to our intellect. "Let thine heart retain my words: keep my commandments, and live." Sometimes it refers to our mind as the part of our body that experiences emotions. "Heaviness in the heart of man maketh it stoop" "A merry heart maketh a

cheerful countenance: but by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken" (Proverbs 4:4; 12:25; 15:13).

Some have thought that we should repress our emotions. This is wrong. A well-known doctor treated patients with leprosy, a disease that causes nerve damage that results in a loss of feeling in the physical body. He observed that, without pain, there is no way to protect the body. This is true of emotions and the mind. Without emotional pain we do not know how to protect ourselves psychologically.

The Bible teaches that healthy emotions are valuable and useful. But the Bible does not tolerate making idols out of emotions. Here it reproves our generation. Thousands around us live by the idea that "If it feels good, do it." Pleasure and a thirst for pleasure is the god they worship. But that god does not make them happy. Nor does it pro-

vide for them contentment or guidance through hardship.

We do well to learn from eating. God created food to taste wonderful. He provided vivid color and different consistency. But food is primarily a means of providing nutrition to our bodies. If we eat only for the pleasure of taste, we would never need to swallow. The pleasure of taste is what makes the task of eating enjoyable. Taste and texture and color in food are the packaging for nutrition. They are not the purpose of eating, they are its servants.

This is true of all healthy pleasure. It is what makes life rich, not what makes life worth living. Emotions are messengers to teach us about ourselves. They give us messages that we need to make wise decisions about life. Those that have no emotion lose the ability to appreciate joy, kindness, and virtue. They lose the ability to have empathy.

Here is a brief compilation of inspired thoughts on emotions and how to control them.

"The religion of Christ brings the emotions under the control of reason."¹

"God's Spirit moves upon the mind and controls the emotions of the soul. The rational thought and the right feelings and the faultless life come from the same source and are quiet and strong and sensible in their operation. To possess and enjoy the Spirit of God, there must be a conformity to the life, the actions to the will, of God; the heart must be prepared; the soul

"By steadfastly keeping the will on the Lord's side, every emotion will be brought into captivity to the will of Jesus. You will then find your feet on solid rock."

temple cleansed from defilement of self and sin. Then the power of grace comes in."²

"God's children are not to be subject to feelings and emotions. When they fluctuate between hope and fear, the heart of Christ is hurt; for He has given them unmistakable evidence of His love."³

"Feelings are often deceiving, emotions are no sure safeguard; for they are variable and subject to external circumstances. Many are deluded by relying on sensational impressions."⁴

"The Word must enlighten the mind as to the true character of the emotions, for they are often changeable and very unreliable. As long as feeling in no way takes the lines of control, and interferes with the healthful life of the human agent in religious experience, there is no danger. The emotions are not always misleading; but as soon as they take control of the soul, body, and spirit, they must be sensibly considered and restrained. Feelings are no guide; they are ever to be kept under the control of a firm, intelligent principle, in conformity to the divine will; the balance of the mind needs to be preserved."⁵

"The power of the truth . . . brings the appetites, the passions, and the emotions under the control of reason and conscience, and disciplines the thoughts to flow in a healthful channel. And then the tongue will not be left to dishonor God by expressions of sinful repining."⁶

"How can I master my own actions and control my inward emotions? Many who profess not the love of God do control their spirit to a considerable extent without the aid of the special grace of God. They cultivate self-control. This is indeed a rebuke to those who know that from God they may obtain strength and grace and yet do not exhibit the graces of the Spirit."⁷

"You cannot control your impulses, your emotions, as you may desire, but you can control the will, and you can make an entire change in your life. By yielding up your will to Christ, your life will be hid with Christ in God,

and allied to the power which is above all principalities and powers. You will have strength from God that will hold you fast to His strength; and a new light, even the light of living faith, will be possible to you. But your will must cooperate with God's will, not with the will of associates through whom Satan is constantly working to ensnare and destroy you.

"Will you not, without delay, place yourself in right relation to God? Will you not say, 'I will give my will to Jesus, and I will do it now,' and from this moment be wholly on the Lord's side? Disregard custom, and the strong clamoring of appetite and passion. Give Satan no chance to say, 'You are a wretched hypocrite.' Close the door, so that Satan will not thus accuse and dishearten you. Say, 'I will believe, I do believe that God is my helper,' and you will find that you are triumphant in God. By steadfastly keeping the will on the Lord's side, every emotion will be brought into captivity to the will of Jesus. You will then find your feet on solid rock. It will take, at times, every particle of will-power that you possess, but it is God that is working for you, and you will come forth from the molding process a vessel unto honor."⁸

"Let no one say, I cannot remedy my defects of character. If you come to this decision, you will certainly fail of obtaining everlasting life. The impossibility lies in your own will. If you will not, then you cannot overcome. The

real difficulty arises from the corruption of an unsanctified heart and an unwillingness to submit to the control of God."⁹

"Heaven is worth everything to us. We must not run any risk in this matter. We must take no venture here. We must know that our steps are ordered by the Lord. May God help us in the great work of overcoming. He has crowns for those that overcome. He has white robes for the righteous. He has an eternal world of glory for those who seek for glory, honor, and immortality. Every one who enters the city of God will enter it as a conqueror. He will not enter it as a condemned criminal, but as a son of God. And the welcome given to everyone who enters there will be, 'Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world' (Matthew 25:34)."¹⁰ *R*

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² *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 5, p. 236.

³ *Testimonies to Ministers*, pp. 518, 519.

⁴ *Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 188.

⁵ *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 1, pp. 391, 392.

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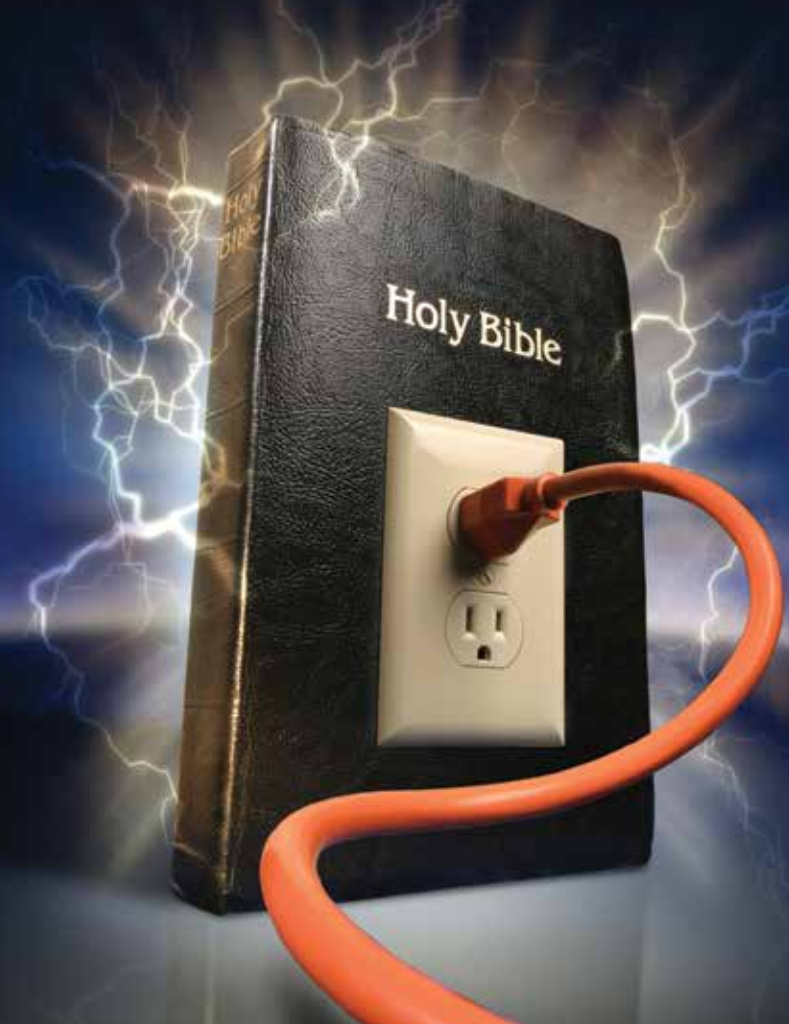
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THE *Power* OF THE *Gospel*

Excerpt from a sermon by Charles Fitch



*F*or I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Romans 1:16).

The apostle Paul tells us in what the power of the gospel consists, when he says as in the first chapter of his 1st Epistle to the Thessalonians, "For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost." Peter in the first chapter of his first epistle speaks of "the things which were reported by them that have preached the gospel, with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven."

Paul also says to Titus, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us," *i.e.*, from sin, "by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost which He shed on us

abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour." The power of the gospel then to save from sin consists in the regenerating, renewing, and sanctifying influences of the Spirit of God, shed forth to attend the gospel through Jesus Christ our Saviour, and without these influences the Gospel, with all the love which it reveals is utterly powerless in working in the hearts of men that "holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord."

Accordingly, our Lord Jesus Christ at His ascension, after having commissioned His disciples to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem but to wait for the promise of the Father. "Ye shall receive power," said He, "after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you, and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and in Samaria and unto the uttermost parts of the earth."

Having therefore received from Christ the direction, "Tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high," and the assurance behold I send the promise of My Father upon you; and ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you, the disciples returned unto Jerusalem from the Mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a Sabbath day's journey, and went into an upper chamber, and there continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, both men and women, until they were, on the day of Pentecost, all filled with the Holy Ghost. Then they preached the gospel with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, and multitudes were pricked in their hearts and inquired, What shall we do? And when others mocking said "these men are full of new wine"—they replied, "this Jesus whom ye crucified hath God raised up whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear. Yea and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after have likewise foretold these days. Unto you first, God having raised up his Son Jesus Christ, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities." Here then we behold the power of the gospel to save men from sin: It is in being attended by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. I freely admit that it is the setting forth of the love of God which saves men from sin, but in order that the love of God may have its cleansing efficacy—it must be as Paul says to the Romans, "The love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." Accordingly, we find that the success of the apostles in saving men from sin by the preaching of the gospel is uniformly ascribed to the Holy Ghost. Barnabas was a man full of the Holy Ghost and faith, and much people were added to the Lord. Peter preached at the house of Cornelius, and the Holy Ghost fell on all which heard the word.—"Then remembered I," said he, "the word of the Lord, how that he said, John in-

deed baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost."

The whole current of the New Testament shows that the work which should follow the coming of Christ should be the dispensation of the Holy Ghost. Peter in the first chapter of his 1st Epistle tells us that the prophets searched and inquired diligently respecting the time of this salvation, which the Spirit of Christ which was in them signified, when it testified beforehand of the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow. This glory was to be the outpouring of the Spirit as predicted by Joel; and which Ezekiel also had in view, when God is heard saying by the mouth of that prophet, "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you and ye shall be clean, from all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you. And I will save you from all your uncleannesses." Here also is brought to view by the prophets that baptism of the Holy Ghost which was to be the establishment of the kingdom of heaven upon earth—which kingdom we are told is "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

John the Baptist was sent to prepare the way of the Lord for the establishment of this kingdom. This work of preparation was performed by him, as he preached saying, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand, the kingdom of "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but there cometh one after me, mightier than I, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose, He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire. Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner, but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

The same great truths Christ Himself had in view, when He said to Nicodemus, "Verily verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit—he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." What is the kingdom of God? "Righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." What is it to be born of water? It is to receive John's baptism unto repentance. That

is, truly to repent and bring forth fruits meet for repentance. This prepares the way of the kingdom of heaven in us. What is it to be born of the Spirit? It is to receive the baptism of Christ with the Holy Ghost, or to have Christ "sprinkle clean water upon us, and make us clean; and cleanse us from all our filthiness, and from all our idols." Then when this baptism of Christ is received, when this work of purification is wrought by being baptized with the Holy Ghost, we enter that "kingdom of God" which "is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." And we have the positive assertion of the Son of God, "Verily, verily, I say unto you except a man be born of water," *i.e.*, led to the exercise of true repentance, "and of the Spirit," *i.e.*, sprinkled with clean water, or baptized with the Holy Ghost, and cleansed from all his filthiness and from all his idols—"he cannot enter into the kingdom of God," which "is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

Here then we clearly see, my hearers, what it is which makes the gospel of Christ the power of God unto salvation from sin. It is our Lord Jesus Christ, baptizing with the Holy Ghost, and thus cleansing men from all their filthiness and from all their idols; thus bringing them into God's kingdom of righteousness, and establishing that kingdom in their hearts—filling them with righteousness, as Christ says those shall be, who hunger and thirst after it; and giving them peace and joy in the Holy Ghost—making their peace as a river and their righteousness as the waves of the sea. This gospel is indeed the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth. It is the dispensation of God's Almighty Spirit, "Burying us with Jesus Christ, by baptism of the Holy Ghost into death," *i.e.*, making us dead to sin—"that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also should walk in newness of life." It is enabling us to "put off the old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and to put on the new man, which after God" (*i.e.*, after the likeness of God) "is created in righteousness and true holiness." *R*

Look and Live

By Ellen G. White

In the wilderness, when the Lord permitted poisonous serpents to sting the rebellious Israelites, Moses was directed to lift up a brazen serpent and bid all the wounded look to it and live. But many saw no help in this Heaven-appointed remedy. The dead and dying were all around them, and they knew without divine help their fate was certain; but they would lament their wounds, their pains, their sure death, until their strength was gone, and their eyes were glazed, when they might have had instant healing.

"As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness," even so was "the Son of man . . . lifted up: that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:14, 15). If you are conscious of your sins, do not devote all your powers to mourning over them, but look and live. Jesus is our only Saviour; and although millions who need to be healed will reject His offered mercy, not one who trusts in His merits will be left to perish. While we realize our helpless condition without Christ, we must not be discouraged; we must rely upon a crucified and risen Saviour. Poor, sin-sick, discouraged soul, look and live. Jesus has pledged His word; He will save all who come unto Him.

Come to Jesus, and receive rest and peace. You may have the blessing even now. Satan suggests that you are helpless and cannot bless yourself. It is true; you are helpless. But lift up Jesus before him: "I have a risen Saviour. In Him I trust, and He will never suffer me to be confounded. In His name I triumph. He is my righteousness and my crown of rejoicing." Let no one here feel that his case is hopeless, for it is not. You may see that you are sinful and undone, but



it is just on this account that you need a Saviour. If you have sins to confess, lose no time. These moments are golden. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). Those who hunger and thirst after righteousness will be filled, for Jesus has promised it. Precious Saviour! His arms are open to receive us, and His great heart of love is waiting to bless us.

Some seem to feel that they must be on probation and must prove to the Lord that they are reformed, before they can claim His blessing. But these dear souls may claim the blessing even now. They must have His grace, the Spirit of Christ, to help their infirmities, or they cannot form a Christian character. Jesus loves to have us come to Him, just as we are—sinful, helpless, dependent.

Repentance, as well as forgiveness, is the gift of God through Christ. It is through the influence of the Holy Spirit that we are convicted of sin and feel our need of pardon. None but the contrite are forgiven; but it is the grace of God that makes the heart penitent. He is acquainted with all our weaknesses and infirmities, and He will help us.

Some who come to God by repentance and confession, and even believe that their sins are forgiven, still fail of claiming, as they should, the promises of God. They do not see that Jesus is an ever-present Saviour; and they are not ready to commit the keeping of their souls to Him, relying upon Him to perfect the work of grace begun in their hearts. While they think they are committing themselves to God, there is a great deal of self-dependence. There are conscientious souls that trust partly to God and partly to themselves. They do not look to God, to be kept by His power, but depend upon watchfulness against temptation and the performance of certain duties for acceptance with Him. There are no victories in this kind of faith. Such persons toil to no purpose; their souls are in continual bondage, and they find no rest until their burdens are laid at the feet of Jesus.

There is need of constant watchfulness and of earnest, loving devotion, but these will come naturally when the soul is kept by the power of God through faith. We can do nothing, absolutely nothing, to commend ourselves to divine favor. We must not trust at all to ourselves or to our good works; but when as erring, sinful beings we come to Christ, we may find rest in His love. God will accept everyone that comes to Him trusting wholly in the merits of a crucified Saviour. Love springs up in the heart. There may be no ecstasy of feeling, but there is an abiding, peaceful trust. Every burden is light; for the yoke which Christ imposes is easy. Duty becomes a delight, and sacrifice a pleasure. The path that before seemed shrouded in darkness becomes bright with beams from the Sun of Righteousness. This is walking in the light as Christ is in the light.—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, pp. 352–354. *R*



Repentance the Gift of God

By Ellen G. White

of God
the Gift

Repentance

There are many who have erroneous ideas in regard to the nature of repentance. They think that they cannot come to Christ unless they first repent, and that repentance prepares them for the forgiveness of their sins. It is true that repentance does precede the forgiveness of sins; for it is only the broken and contrite heart that will feel the need of a Saviour. But must the sinner wait until he has repented before he can come to Jesus? Is repentance to be made an obstacle between the sinner and the Saviour? Jesus has said, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me" (John 12:32). Christ is constantly drawing men to Himself, while Satan is as diligently seeking by every imaginable device to draw men away from their Redeemer. Christ

must be revealed to the sinner as the Saviour dying for the sins of the world; and as he beholds the Lamb of God on the cross of Calvary, the mysteries of redemption begin to unfold to his mind, and the goodness of God leads him to repentance.

Although the plan of salvation calls for the deepest study of the philosopher, it is not too deep for the comprehension of a child. In dying for sinners, Christ manifested a love that is incomprehensible; and in beholding this love the heart is impressed the conscience is aroused, and the soul is led to inquire, "What is sin, that it should require such a sacrifice for the redemption of its victim?" John, the beloved disciple, declares that "whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law; for sin is the transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4). The apostle Paul instructed men in regard to the plan



Christ draws the sinner by the exhibition of His love upon the cross, and this softens the heart, impresses the mind, and inspires contrition and repentance in the soul.

of salvation. He declares, "I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publickly, and from house to house, testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:20, 21). John, speaking of the Saviour says, "Ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin" (1 John 3:5).

The living oracles do not teach that the sinner must repent before he can heed the invitation of Christ: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). Men must come to Christ because they see Him as their Saviour, their only helper, that they may be enabled to repent; for if they could repent without coming to Christ, they could also be saved without Christ. It is the virtue that goes forth from Christ that leads to genuine repentance. Peter makes the matter clear in his statement to the Israelites, when he says, "Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins" (Acts 5:31). Repentance is as much the gift of Christ as is forgiveness, and it cannot be found in the heart where Jesus has not been at work. We can no more repent without the Spirit of Christ to awaken the conscience than we can be pardoned without Christ. Christ draws the sinner by the exhibition of His

love upon the cross, and this softens the heart, impresses the mind, and inspires contrition and repentance in the soul.

Paul says, "I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died" (Romans 7:9). What was it that brought that commandment to the mind of Paul? The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom Jesus said, "the Father will send in my name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John 14:26). Paul continues, "And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me. Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good. Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful" (Romans 7:10-13).

Men sometimes become ashamed of their sinful ways and give up some of their evil habits, before they are aroused to manifestly come to Christ; but it is the power of the gospel, the grace of Christ, that is drawing them to make reformation in their conduct. An influence of which they are unconscious works upon the soul, and the conscience is quickened, and

the outward life is amended. And as Christ draws them to look upon His cross, to look upon Him whom their sins have pierced, the commandment comes home to the conscience. The wickedness of their life, the deep-seated sin of the soul, is revealed to them. They begin to comprehend something of the righteousness of Christ, and exclaim, "Was all this love, all this suffering, all this humiliation demanded that we might not perish, but have everlasting life?" They then understand

that it is the goodness of God that leadeth to repentance. A repentance such as this lies beyond the reach of our own powers to accomplish; it is obtained only from Christ, who ascended up on high, and has given gifts unto men. Christ is the source of every right impulse. He is the only one who can arouse in the natural heart enmity against sin. He is the source of our power if we would be saved. No soul can repent without the grace of Christ. The sinner may pray that he may know how to repent. God reveals Christ to the sinner, and when he sees the purity of the Son of God, he is not ignorant of the character of sin. By faith in the work and power of Christ, enmity against sin and Satan is created in his heart. Those whom God pardons are first made penitent.

The pleasing fable that all there is to do is to believe has destroyed thousands and tens of thousands, because many have called that faith which is not faith, but simply a dogma. Man is an intelligent, accountable being; he is not to be carried as a passive burden by the Lord but is to work in harmony with Christ. Man is to take up his appointed work in striving for glory, honor, and immortality. God calls upon men for the use of every talent He has lent them, the exercise of every power He has given; for man can never be saved in disobedience and indolence. Christ wrestled in earnest prayer; He offered up His supplications to the

Father with strong crying and tears in behalf of those for whose salvation He had left heaven and had come to this earth. Then how proper, yea, how essential that men should pray and not faint! How important that they should be instant in prayer, petitioning for the help that can come only from Christ our Lord! If you will find voice and time to pray, God will find time and voice to answer.

Some of our brethren have expressed fears that we shall dwell too much upon the subject of justification by faith, but I hope and pray that none will be needlessly alarmed; for there is no danger in presenting this doctrine as it is set forth in the Scriptures. If there had not been a remissness in the past to properly instruct the people of God, there would not now be a necessity of calling especial attention to it. Some of our brethren are not receiving the message of God upon this subject. They appear to be anxious that none of our ministers shall depart from their former manner of teaching the good old doctrines. We inquire, Is it not time that fresh light should come to the people of God, to awaken them to greater earnestness and zeal? The exceeding great and precious promises given us in the Holy Scriptures have been lost sight of to a great extent, just as the enemy of all righteousness designed that they should be. He has cast his own dark shadow between us and our God, that we may not see the true character of God. The Lord has proclaimed Himself to be "merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth" (Exodus 34:6).

Several have written to me, inquiring if the message of justification by faith is the third angel's message, and I have answered, "It is the third angel's message in verity." The prophet declares, "And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory" (Revelation 18:1). Brightness, glory, and power are to be connected with the third angel's message, and conviction will follow wherever it is preached in demonstration of the Spirit. How will any of our brethren

know when this light shall come to the people of God? As yet, we certainly have not seen the light that answers to this description. God has light for His people, and all who will accept it will see the sinfulness of remaining in a lukewarm condition; they will heed the counsel of the True Witness when He says, "Be zealous therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me" (Revelation 3:19, 20).

The Church is presented as standing in a self-satisfied, pleased, proud, independent position, ignorant of her destitution and wretchedness. By her attitude she says, "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing." How many who claim to be keeping the commandments of God are in this position today! The charge against the Church is, "Thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot." But while many may be satisfied with their lukewarm condition, the Lord is far from pleased and declares that unless you are zealous and repent, He will spue you out of His mouth. But He warns you, He entreats you. He says, "Thou knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see" (verses 15-18).

The gold that Jesus would have us buy of Him is gold tried in the fire; it is the gold of faith and love, that has no defiling substance mingled with it. The white raiment is the righteousness of Christ, the wedding garment which Christ alone can give. The eyesalve is the true spiritual discernment that is so wanting among us, for spiritual things must be spiritually discerned.

To our brethren who are standing in this self-confident, self-satisfied position, who talk and act as if there was no need of more light, we want to say

that the Laodicean message is applicable to you. Many professed Christians are without Christ because they refuse to weave His principles of truth into their life. The word of God declares, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled" (Matthew 5:6). We should pray earnestly and inquire with sincere hearts as to what the will of the Lord is, that we may be ready to receive the blessing we so much need.

We must have oil in our vessels with our lamps, and not be like the foolish virgins of the parable whose lamps went out as they slumbered and slept, and who had no oil to replenish them, and so failed to be ready to meet the bridegroom. We should seek for a living experience, and obtain the grace of Christ. We need His love and gentleness; we need our faith revived. Let no one disregard the counsel of God, but let us all buy of Him gold, and white raiment, and plead for the anointing of His Holy Spirit. Jesus desires us to have a personal knowledge of the truth, and we should search the heart carefully, critically, cease to do evil, and learn to do well. Jesus says, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten; be zealous therefore, and repent" (Revelation 3:19). No one should feel like rebelling, like standing in defiance of God, because He rebukes you on account of your lukewarm condition and spiritual pride. God condescends to entreat you that He may talk with you, and invites you to open the door of the heart, that He may come in and sup with you, and you with Him. He declares, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne" (verse 21).—*The Review and Herald*, April 1, 1890. *R*



Mozambique

Session delegates in 2012 (left).

Tanzania

Session delegates in 2012 (below).



Peru

Workers seminar, February 2013 (below).



Germany

Workers seminar for
European Region,
April 2013 (right).

U.S.A.

Session delegates
of the Southeast
U.S. Field, March
2013 (middle).

Kenya

A group of believers
and children,
November 2012
(bottom).



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DOING THINGS WELL

By A. Balbach



One day my dad sent me to a farmer to buy oranges. We lived between two towns in Brazil. The farmer lived a few miles away. I was an eight-year-old boy. I picked for our family two big bags of oranges directly from the trees. When I was finished, I tied them together. Then I asked someone to help me by swinging them over the horse.

On the way home I rode through the pasture. I happily touched the two bundles with the tips of my toes. Halfway home, the bundles loosened from each other and suddenly dropped to the ground. And a second misfortune followed unexpectedly.

Before I had a chance to bind the two bags together, a big cow surprised me. I tried to scare her away, but she ignored me. As she sniffed at the oranges, I thought: Nothing will happen, because the oranges are inside the bags. I was mistaken.



The cow picked up one bag with her teeth and threw it on the ground with a sharp jerk. Then she did the same with the other one. The bags burst and the oranges rolled all over. While this little boy sat helpless and crying, the cow ate as many oranges as she liked.

After the cow had walked away, I thought: who is to blame for the disaster? The horse? No! The cow? No! The man who helped with the bags? No! I came to the conclusion that I could only blame myself, because, from the beginning, I did not tie the bags together well.

Some passers-by took pity on me and helped me, and I rode home with the remaining oranges. But I learned an important lesson: "See what thou doest" (1 Kings 20:22). Whatever is worth doing is worth doing well.

"Perfection consists not in doing extraordinary things, but in doing ordinary things extraordinarily well." — Angeliqne Arnauld.

Here's another story on the same theme: While my family was living in the Brazilian countryside, I had only a cat for my amusement. It was a ginger cat, like the one I had in Verbalis, Lithuania. It reminded me of when I was a little boy in Europe. She also helped to comfort me after the death of my younger brother and sister. Every day at sunrise, my cat was at the door, meowing to wake me up. She would wait for me to open the door and give her a hug. One day I opened the door with troubled feelings. I did not hear

the customary meowing. There was nothing but an ominous silence. I kept searching and calling around the house, the stable, the granary, and everywhere. Then I heard a faint meowing in the distance. I followed the sound until I came to a well that my father was drilling by hand. How fortunate it was for my cat that my father had not reached the water level yet! In that well is where I found my cat.

I immediately called my dad. He came with a bucket tied to a rope and lowered the bucket into the well. Then my dad tried to cajole the cat into jumping into the bucket. But the cat did not know what she was supposed to do. Finally, my dad sent me into the well. Carefully, he lowered me down in the bucket. I'm glad he did it with so much care! While I was still on my way down in the bucket, preparing to grab the cat, she jumped into my arms. She purred with great contentment. The memory of that event taught me a lesson. Over the years, it has given me a special appreciation of John 3:16. God so loved the world, that He sent His Son down here. I thank God that He did not send us only a bucket or a rope. Instead He sent us His only begotten Son to rescue us. He did the best job possible. Let us climb into His everlasting arms! *R*