

Amore et studio elucidande veritatis: hec subscripta disputabuntur Wittenberge. Presidente R. P. Martino Luthero: Artium
et S. Theologie Magistro: eiusdemq; ibidem lectore Ordinario. Quare petit: vt qui non possunt verbis
presentes nobiscū disceptare: agant id literis absentes. In noie dñi nostri ihesu chñi. Amē.

the REFORMATION herald

Vol. 58, No. 6

OUR NEED FOR REFORMATION TODAY



Week of Prayer, December 1–10, 2017

the REFORMATION *herald*

Volume 58, Number 6

IN THIS ISSUE

Editorial

Yesterday, Today, and Forever

3

Friday, December 1, 2017

Our Need for Reformation Today

4

Sabbath, December 2, 2017

The Voice at Wittenberg

8

Sunday, December 3, 2017

By Grace Alone - *Sola Gratia*

12

Wednesday, December 6, 2017

By Faith Alone - *Sola Fide*

16

Friday, December 8, 2017

By Scripture Alone - *Sola Scriptura*

20

Sabbath, December 9, 2017

Through Christ Alone - *Solus Christus*

24

Sunday, December 10, 2017

Glory to God Only - *Solo Deo Gloria*

28

Poem

The Bible

32

500 Years of Reformation

Another year is soon to close—and surely each one of us can declare with confidence, “Hitherto hath the Lord helped us” (1 Samuel 7:12).

Why has God seen fit to spare us another year? “In him we live, and move, and have our being; . . . for we are also his offspring” (Acts 17:28). Indeed, we are still here in the land of the living for a reason—there is an important task assigned to us. Entrusted as we are with the message of reformation, it is our work to cooperate with our Creator as He seeks to remold, refashion, and restore our defective characters to reflect His perfect image. Our hope is found in Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world, the one great Source of abundant, omnipotent grace.

As we assemble together for worship and to study these Week of Prayer readings, let each one of us pray for a fresh conversion experience. While much of the information here is historical, the principles being presented are nonetheless vital and highly relevant to our spiritual life today.

Let us prayerfully consider how the great reformation is to apply to every one of us, sharing also the readings with others who may be isolated or homebound, and keeping in mind the following dates:

Prayer with fasting: Sabbath, December 9

Offering for missions: Sunday, December 10

May the Lord grant every reader the rich spiritual blessing so needed—and may the reformatory principles put in action through God’s strength hasten the culmination of our faith and hope in the soon return of our merciful Saviour, Jesus Christ!

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

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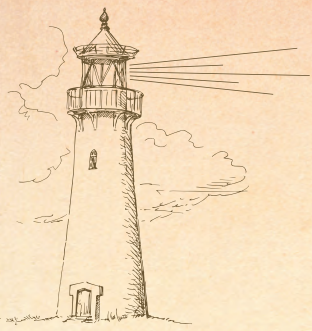
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On front cover: Martin Luther statue in Hannover, Germany; Wartburg Castle, where Martin Luther translated the New Testament into German, during his exile; 1517 Nuremberg printing of the Ninety-five Theses as a placard, now in the Berlin State Library (in background).



YESTERDAY, TODAY, AND FOREVER

The Protestant Reformation of the 16th century was a divinely inspired movement to restore the Gospel principles outlined in the Old and New Testaments. Some basic biblical principles emphasized by the reformers are:

Sola Gratia — According to the message of Paul to the Ephesian Christians, we are saved solely by grace (Ephesians 2:8, 9). “There are thousands today who need to learn the same truth that was taught to Nicodemus by the uplifted serpent. They depend on their obedience to the law of God to commend them to His favor. When they are bidden to look to Jesus, and believe that He saves them solely through His grace, they exclaim, ‘How can these things be?’”¹

Sola Fide — In Romans 3:28, the Word of God makes it clear that repentant sinners can be justified solely by faith: “Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.” Justification by faith is placed beyond controversy. And all this controversy is ended, as soon as the matter is settled that the merits of fallen man in his good works can never procure eternal life for him.”²

Sola Scriptura — In His controversy with Satan, Christ used only the scriptures. “It is written” was His powerful weapon. Likewise referring to the rise of the great advent movement, Ellen White testifies: “We . . . took the position that the Bible, and the Bible only, was to be our guide; and we are never to depart from this position.”³

“God will have a people upon the earth to maintain the Bible, and the Bible only, as the standard of all doctrines and the basis of all reforms. The opinions of learned men, the

deductions of science, the creeds or decisions of ecclesiastical councils, as numerous and discordant as are the churches which they represent, the voice of the majority—not one nor all of these should be regarded as evidence for or against any point of religious faith. Before accepting any doctrine or precept, we should demand a plain ‘Thus saith the Lord’ in its support.”⁴

Solus Christus — “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 2:5). “Christ is your Redeemer; He will take no advantage of your humiliating confessions. If you have sin of a private character, confess it to Christ, who is the only mediator between God and man.”⁵

Solo Deo Gloria — “Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31). “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father, which is in heaven” (Matthew 5:16).

“‘All things are for your sakes,’ [Paul] said, ‘that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God.’ Not for self-aggrandizement did the apostles preach the gospel.”⁶ The whole plan of salvation has the ultimate purpose of restoring humanity to its original condition before sin and for the honor and glory of God.

In harmony with the great Reformation principles, in Hebrews chapter 11, we find that all those heroes according to God’s criteria, were saved by grace and justified by faith, for example: “By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous” (verse 4). “By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not

seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith” (verse 7).

About 600 years before Christ, Habakkuk wrote: “Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith” (chapter 2:4), and Paul echoed this in Romans 1:17.

Martin Luther seriously studied especially Paul’s letters to the Romans and Galatians to understand the magnificent subject of salvation by grace and justification by faith.

Later, in the General Conference held in Minneapolis, 1888, this “most precious message” was brought to God’s people to prepare them for the true evangelization of the world. Ellen White wrote: “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.’”⁷

During this special week of prayer, God’s people around the world will study these subjects so essential for our own salvation and for the purpose of fulfilling the Gospel commission. “This is the message that God commanded to be given to the world. It is the third angel’s message, which is to be proclaimed with a loud voice, and attended with the outpouring of His Spirit in a large measure.”⁸

May the Lord help us to take to heart this wonderful truth! *R*

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- ³ *Counsels to Writers and Editors*, p. 145.
- ⁴ *The Great Controversy*, p. 595.
- ⁵ *The Faith I Live By*, p. 205.
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Our Need for REFORMATION TODAY

*Compiled from the writings of
E. G. White*

Martin Luther statue in Dresden, Germany.

Resisting the temptation to water down the truth

It is easier to tear down than to build up. It is far easier to trig [brake] the wheels of reform than to draw the chariot up the steep ascent.¹

In the days of Martin Luther, there were those that came to him and said, "We do not want your Bible, we want the Spirit." Martin Luther said to them, "I will rap your spirit on the snout [nose]." However great their pretenses, they are not the children of God.²

In earlier ages the righteous felt that it was impossible to affiliate with Rome, and, though their antagonism to this system of error was maintained at risk of property and life, yet they had courage to maintain their separation, and manfully struggled for the truth. Bible truth was dearer to them than wealth, honor, or even life itself. They could not endure to see the truth buried under a mass of superstition and lying sophistry. They

took the word of God in their hands, and raised the standard of truth before the people, boldly declaring that which God had revealed unto them through diligent searching of the Bible. They died the cruellest of deaths for their fidelity to God, but by their blood they purchased for us liberties and privileges that many who claim to be Protestants are easily yielding up to the power of evil. . . .

The voice of Luther, that echoed in mountains and valleys, that shook Europe as with an earthquake, summoned forth an army of noble apostles of Jesus, and the truth they advocated could not be silenced by fagots, by tortures, by dungeons, by death; and still the voices of the noble army of martyrs are telling us that the Roman power is the predicted apostasy of the last days, the mystery of iniquity which Paul saw beginning to work even in his day. . . . Protestants are losing the mark of distinction that distinguished them from the world, and they are lessening the distance

between themselves and the Roman power. They have turned away their ears from hearing the truth; they have been unwilling to accept light which God shed upon their pathway, and are therefore going into darkness. They speak with contempt of the idea that there will be a revival of the past cruel persecution on the part of Romanists and those who affiliate with them. . . .

Popery is the religion of human nature, and the mass of humanity love a doctrine that permits them to commit sin, and yet frees them from its consequences. People must have some form of religion, and this religion, formed by human device, and yet claiming divine authority, suits the carnal mind. Men who think themselves wise and intelligent turn away in pride from the standard of righteousness, the ten commandments, and do not think it is in harmony with their dignity to inquire into the ways of God. Therefore they go into false ways, into forbidden paths, become

self-sufficient, self-inflated, after the pattern of the pope, not after the pattern of Jesus Christ. . . .

While it has been demonstrated that a day of great intellectual darkness was favorable to Romanism, it will also be demonstrated that a day of great intellectual light is also favorable to its power; for the minds of men are concentrated on their own superiority, and do not like to retain God in their knowledge. Rome claims infallibility, and Protestants are following in the same line. They do not desire to search for truth and go on from light to a greater light. They wall themselves in with prejudice, and seem willing to be deceived and to deceive others.

But though the attitude of the churches is discouraging, yet there is no need of being disheartened; for God has a people who will preserve their fidelity to His truth, who will make the Bible, and the Bible alone, their rule of faith and doctrine, who will elevate the standard, and hold aloft the banner on which is inscribed, "The commandments of God and the faith of Jesus" (Revelation 14:12). They will value a pure gospel, and make the Bible the foundation of their faith and doctrine.

For such a time as this, when men are casting aside the law of the Lord of hosts, the prayer of David is applicable—"It is time for thee, Lord, to work; for they have made void thy law" (Psalm 119:126). We are coming to a time when almost universal scorn will be heaped upon the law of God, and God's commandment-keeping people will be severely tried; but will they lose their respect for the law of Jehovah because others do not see and realize its binding claims? Let God's commandment-keeping people, like David, reverence God's law in proportion as men cast it aside and heap upon it disrespect and contempt.³

That voice of 500 years ago

Luther had refused to exchange the yoke of Christ for the yoke of popery. This was his only offense; but it was sufficient to imperil his life.

The attention of the whole empire had been directed to this one man, and all their threats and entreaties had failed to shake his fidelity to God and His word. Luther had not without help maintained his steadfastness. A greater than Luther was with him, controlling his mind, sanctifying his judgment, and imparting to him wisdom in every hour of peril.

Had the Reformer yielded a single point, Satan and his hosts would have gained the victory. But Luther's unwavering firmness under the iron hand of the pope was the means of emancipating the church and beginning a new and better era. The influence of this one man, who had dared to think and act for himself in religious matters, was to affect the church and the world not only in his own time, but to all future generations. His firmness and fidelity would strengthen all who should pass through a similar experience, to the close of time. This was the work of God. Luther's defense before the diet of Worms was one of the grandest scenes recorded in history. The power and majesty of God stand forth above the counsel of men, above the mighty power of Satan.⁴

Where are we now?

Satan's manner of working against God and His word has not changed; he is still as much opposed to the Scriptures being made the guide of life as in the sixteenth century. In our time there is a wide departure from their doctrines and precepts, and there is need of a return to the great Protestant principle—the Bible, and the Bible only, as the rule of faith and duty. Satan is still working through every means which he can control to destroy religious liberty. The antichristian power which the protesters of Spire rejected is now with renewed vigor seeking to re-establish its lost supremacy. The same unswerving adherence to the word of God manifested at that crisis of the Reformation is the only hope of reform today.⁵

The masses of the people turn away their ears from hearing the truth and

are turned unto fables. The apostle Paul declared, looking down to the last days: "The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine" (2 Timothy 4:3). That time has fully come. The multitudes do not want Bible truth, because it interferes with the desires of the sinful, world-loving heart; and Satan supplies the deceptions which they love.

But God will have a people upon the earth to maintain the Bible, and the Bible only, as the standard of all doctrines and the basis of all reforms. The opinions of learned men, the deductions of science, the creeds or decisions of ecclesiastical councils, as numerous and discordant as are the churches which they represent, the voice of the majority—not one nor all of these should be regarded as evidence for or against any point of religious faith. Before accepting any doctrine or precept, we should demand a plain "Thus saith the Lord" in its support.

Satan is constantly endeavoring to attract attention to man in the place of God. He leads the people to look to bishops, to pastors, to professors of theology, as their guides, instead of searching the Scriptures to learn their duty for themselves. Then, by controlling the minds of these leaders, he can influence the multitudes according to his will.⁶

The test of doctrine

The prophet declares a truth by which we may test all doctrine. He says, "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isaiah 8:20). Although error abounds in the world, there is no reason why men need remain in deception. The truth is plain, and when it is contrasted with error, its character may be discerned. All the subjects of God's grace may understand what is required of them. By faith we may conform our lives to the standard of righteousness, because we can appropriate to ourselves the righteousness of Christ.⁷

All articles of faith, all doctrines and creeds, however sacred they have

been regarded, are to be rejected if they contradict the plain statements of the word of God. If the Bible supports the doctrine we have held in the past, we are justified in retaining it; for the word of God gives us foundation for our faith.

The holy oracles should be studied with humble hearts and earnest prayer, in order that we may bring the truth which we see plainly stated into our practical, everyday life. Thus we shall make it evident that we conform our life to the teachings of God's word. Jesus presents to us two classes who have been blessed with an understanding of divine truth. One class not only hear His sayings, but they also do them, and another class hear, but do them not. . . .

Those who see evidences of truth, and yet refuse to walk in its light, because they see that in so doing they would be obliged to make some sacrifice of opinions, of business, or of some other temporal advantage, who put aside their convictions, and

reject the plain "Thus saith the Lord," and turn from the truth unto fables, misapplying and misinterpreting the Scriptures in such a way as to make them appear to sustain their errors—these persons come under the woe pronounced upon Chorazin and Bethsaida. In the days of Christ it was this class who were approved by His words when He said, "Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee" (Matthew 11:21–24).⁸

Experience to be tested by the Word

There are many who claim that they have been sanctified to God, and yet when the great standard of righteousness is presented to them, they become greatly excited, and manifest a spirit which proves that they know nothing of what it means to be sanctified. They have not the mind of Christ; for those who are truly sanctified will reverence and obey the word of God as fast as it is opened to them, and they will express a strong desire to know what is truth on every point of doctrine. An exultant feeling is no evidence of sanctification. The assertion, "I am saved, I am saved," does not prove that the soul is saved or sanctified. Many who are greatly excited are told that they are sanctified, when they have no intelligent idea of what the term means; for they know not the Scriptures nor the power of God. They flatter themselves that they



Martin Luther, the Leipzig Disputation, 1519.

are in conformity to the will of God, because they feel happy; but when they are tested, when the word of God is brought to bear upon their experience, they stop their ears from hearing the truth, saying, "I am sanctified," and that puts an end to the controversy. They will have nothing to do with searching the Scriptures to know what is truth, and prove that they are fearfully self-deceived. Sanctification means very much more than a flight of feeling. Excitement is not sanctification. Entire conformity to the will of our Father which is in heaven is alone sanctification, and the will of God is expressed in His holy law. The keeping of all the commandments of God is sanctification. Proving yourselves obedient children to God's word is sanctification. The word of God is to be our guide, not the opinions or ideas of men. Let those who would be truly sanctified search the word of God with patience, with prayer, and with humble contrition of soul. Let them remember that Jesus prayed. "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth" (John 17:17).

Christianity is simply living by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. We are to believe in, and live in, Christ, who is the way, the truth, and the life. We have faith in God when we believe His word; we trust and obey God when we keep His commandments; and we love God when we love His law. Believing a lie will not put any one of us in the way of being sanctified. Should all the ministers in the world tell us that we were safe in disobeying a single precept of the holy standard of righteousness, it would not lessen our obligations, nor make our guilt less, if we reject a plain "Thou shalt" or "Thou shalt not." We need not think that because our fathers did a certain way, and died happy, we may follow in their footsteps, and be accepted in rendering the same service, and doing the same works, that they did. We have had more light than they had in their day; and if we would be accepted of God, we must be as faithful in obeying the light and walking in it as they were in receiving and obeying

the light that God sent to them. We must accept and improve the light that shines upon our pathway, as faithfully as they accepted and improved the light that fell upon their pathway in their generation. We shall be judged according to the light that shines into the soul-temple in our day; and if we follow the light, we shall be free men and women in Christ Jesus.⁹

A call for reformation

There is a day coming, and it is not far distant, when an account will have to be rendered for wasted opportunities, misspent hours, and neglected privileges. The nature, the effect of all our past life is registered in the books of heaven. We cannot change the figures, cannot undo the past, nor erase the record of good done or ill committed. Day by day the deeds done in the body make our record above, and in the judgment the books will reveal our evil course, unless through sincere repentance, through thorough reformation, our sins are blotted out by the blood of the atonement. We shall be judged, every man according as his works have been. Let everyone think upon the character of his works, and repent, and become transformed by the power of Christ.

In these perilous times, when a form of godliness is popular in the world, and a profession of Christianity is fashionable, only a few will discern the living way of self-denial and cross-bearing. "Watch and pray" is the injunction of Him who endured temptation in our behalf. Christ knows our danger, for he has contended with our powerful foe. He knows that our enemy is on the track of all who are striving to do the right. . . .

The washing of the robes of character must go on from day to day, that at last we may be found without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but blameless before Him with whom we have to do. This work of purifying ourselves even as He is pure must be taken up individually. We should examine our motives, our actions, in the light of God's holy law. We should ever ask, "Is this the way of the Lord?" . . . Angels of God are watching to see

the development of our character; they are weighing moral worth; and may the great day of God reveal the fact that we have not been weighed in the balances and found wanting."¹⁰

Unless the church, which is now being leavened with her own backsliding, shall repent and be converted, she will eat of the fruit of her own doing, until she shall abhor herself. When she resists the evil and chooses the good, when she seeks God with all humility and reaches her high calling in Christ, standing on the platform of eternal truth and by faith laying hold upon the attainments prepared for her, she will be healed. She will appear in her God-given simplicity and purity, separate from earthly entanglements, showing that the truth has made her free indeed. Then her members will indeed be the chosen of God, His representatives.

The time has come for a thorough reformation to take place. When this reformation begins, the spirit of prayer will actuate every believer and will banish from the church the spirit of discord and strife. Those who have not been living in Christian fellowship will draw close to one another. One member working in right lines will lead other members to unite with him in making intercession for the revelation of the Holy Spirit. There will be no confusion, because all will be in harmony with the mind of the Spirit. The barriers separating believer from believer will be broken down, and God's servants will speak the same things. The Lord will cooperate with His servants. All will pray understandingly the prayer that Christ taught His servants: "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10).¹¹ R

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- ³ *The Signs of the Times*, February 19, 1894.
- ⁴ *Ibid.*, September 20, 1883.
- ⁵ *The Great Controversy*, pp. 204, 205.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 594, 595.
- ⁷ *Faith and Works*, p. 97.
- ⁸ *The Review and Herald*, March 25, 1902.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁰ *The Signs of the Time*, May 25, 1891.
- ¹¹ *Testimonies*, vol. 8, pp. 250, 251.

The Voice at WITTENBERG



Luther burns the Papal bull in the square of Wittenberg year 1520.

by A. C. Sas

God's true witnesses

"Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me" (Isaiah 43:10).

In every age of the world's history, God has had faithful messengers as witnesses to represent His divine character. They were to proclaim the truth expressed in His word—the Holy Scriptures. They raised their voices against the prevailing corruptions, inviting the ungodly to turn to God. The plan of salvation had to be presented to all people. The Lord never allowed the truth to be obliterated or

totally forgotten. Even in the period of greatest ignorance of God's will, He raised up faithful messengers to show the people the message of salvation. So it was also in the Dark Ages, when the truths of the Word of God were unknown by the great majority of those who called themselves Christians.

In the 16th century, during the time of the Dark Ages, God chose faithful witnesses to dispel the prevailing darkness and ignorance. One of the outstanding witnesses was Martin Luther.

"Foremost among those who were called to lead the church from the darkness of popery into the light of a purer faith, stood Martin Luther. Zealous, ardent, and devoted, knowing

no fear but the fear of God, and acknowledging no foundation for religious faith but the Holy Scriptures, Luther was the man for his time."¹

Martin Luther was ordained into the priesthood in 1508. In 1512 he went to visit Rome. When he beheld the seven-hilled city, he exclaimed: "Holy Rome, I salute thee!" But great was his disappointment when he arrived there.

"[Luther] entered the city, visited the churches, listened to the marvelous tales repeated by priests and monks, and performed all the ceremonies required. Everywhere he looked upon scenes that filled him with astonishment and horror. He saw that iniquity existed among all classes of the clergy. He heard indecent jokes

from prelates, and was filled with horror at their awful profanity, even during mass. As he mingled with the monks and citizens he met dissipation, debauchery. Turn where he would, in the place of sanctity he found profanation.”²

“An indulgence had been promised by the pope to all who should ascend upon their knees ‘Pilate’s staircase.’ . . . Luther was one day [in 1512] devoutly climbing these steps, when suddenly a voice like thunder seemed to say to him: ‘The just shall live by faith.’ Romans 1:17. He sprang to his feet and hastened from the place in shame and horror. That text never lost its power upon his soul. From that time he saw more clearly than ever before the fallacy of trusting to human works for salvation, and the necessity of constant faith in the merits of Christ.”³

Luther teaching at Wittenberg

After Luther’s return from Rome, in 1512, he received from the University of Wittenberg the degree of doctor of divinity, and was given the duty of teaching at the university. Here he began to question some of the doctrines of the Roman Church. He changed his ideas regarding penance, righteousness, justification and salvation.

While at Wittenberg, “[Luther] applied himself to the study of the Scriptures in the original tongues. He began to lecture upon the Bible; and the book of Psalms, the Gospels, and the Epistles were opened to the understanding of crowds of delighted listeners. Staupitz, his friend and superior, urged him to ascend the pulpit and preach the word of God. Luther hesitated, feeling himself unworthy to speak to the people in Christ’s stead. It was only after a long struggle that he yielded to the solicitations of his friends. Already he was mighty in the Scriptures, and the grace of God rested upon him. His eloquence captivated his hearers, the clearness and power with which he presented the truth convinced their understanding, and his fervor touched their hearts.”⁴

“Luther saw the danger of exalting human theories above the word of God. He fearlessly attacked the speculative infidelity of the schoolmen and opposed the philosophy and theology which had so long held a controlling influence upon the people. He denounced such studies as not only worthless but pernicious, and sought to turn the minds of his hearers from the sophistries of philosophers and theologians to the eternal truths set forth by prophets and apostles.

“Precious was the message which he bore to the eager crowds that hung upon his words. Never before had such teachings fallen upon their ears. The glad tidings of a Saviour’s love, the assurance of pardon and peace through His atoning blood, rejoiced their hearts and inspired within them an immortal hope. At Wittenberg a light was kindled whose rays should extend to the uttermost parts of the earth, and which was to increase in brightness to the close of time.”⁵

The doctrine of indulgences

One of the greatest controversies he encountered was the doctrine of indulgences—by which the church offered to remove punishment and grant full forgiveness of sins of the past, present, and even that would be committed in the future. In 1517 Luther became outraged when he saw that his own congregation began to present indulgences they had purchased in a nearby town from Johann Tetzel, a Dominican friar. Tetzel was selling a paper which contained the doctrine of indulgences, to raise funds for the building of St. Peter’s Basilica. What was the content of the document? We read about it thus:

“As Tetzel entered a town, a messenger went before him, announcing: ‘The grace of God and of the holy father is at your gates.’ . . . The infamous traffic was set up in the church, and Tetzel, ascending the pulpit, extolled the indulgences as the most precious gift of God. He declared that by virtue of his certificates of pardon all the sins which the purchaser should afterward desire to commit would be forgiven him, and

that not even repentance is necessary. . . . More than this, he assured his hearers that the indulgences had power to save not only the living but the dead; that the very moment the money should clink against the bottom of his chest, the soul in whose behalf it had been paid would escape from purgatory and make its way to heaven.”⁶

“As Tetzel continued his traffic and his impious pretensions, Luther determined upon a more effectual protest against these crying abuses. An occasion soon offered. The castle church of Wittenberg possessed many relics, which on certain holy days were exhibited to the people, and full remission of sins was granted to all who then visited the church and made confession. Accordingly on these days the people in great numbers resorted thither. One of the most important of these occasions, the festival of All Saints [November 1, 1517], was approaching. On the preceding day, Luther, joining the crowds that were already making their way to the church, posted on its door a paper containing ninety-five propositions against the doctrine of indulgences. He declared his willingness to defend these theses next day at the university, against all who should see fit to attack them.”⁷

We reproduce here a few points taken from Luther’s 95 theses:

“6. The pope cannot remit any guilt, except by declaring and showing that it has been remitted by God and by assenting to God’s remission. . . .

“7. God remits guilt to no one whom He does not, at the same time, humble in all things and bring into subjection to His vicar, the priest.

“8. The penitential canons are imposed only on the living, and, according to them, nothing should be imposed on the dying. . . .

“10. Ignorant and wicked are the doings of those priests who, in the case of the dying, reserve canonical penances for purgatory. . . .

“21. Therefore those preachers of indulgences are in error, who say that by the pope’s indulgences a man is freed from every penalty, and saved. . . .

“32. They will be condemned eternally, together with their teachers, who believe themselves sure of their salvation because they have letters of pardon.

“33. Men must be on their guard against those who say that the pope’s pardons are that inestimable gift of God by which man is reconciled to Him. . . .

“36. Every truly repentant Christian has a right to full remission of penalty and guilt, even without letters of pardon. . . .

“52. The assurance of salvation by letters of pardon is vain, even though the commissary, nay, even though the pope himself, were to stake his soul upon it. . . .

“76. We say, on the contrary, that the papal pardons are not able to remove the very least of venial sins, so far as its guilt is concerned. . . .

“79. To say that the cross, emblazoned with the papal arms, which is set up [by the preachers of indulgences] is of equal worth with the cross of Christ, is blasphemy.

“80. The bishops, curates and theologians who allow such talk to be spread among the people, will have an account to render. . . .

“86. Again: – ‘Why does not the pope, whose wealth is today greater

than the riches of the richest, build just this one church of St. Peter with his own money, rather than with the money of poor believers?’ . . .

“92. Away, then, with all those prophets who say to the people of Christ, “Peace, peace,” and there is no peace!”⁸

Publishing further truth

Besides writing these 95 theses or propositions, Martin Luther was also involved in the publication of material about justification, pardon of sins through Jesus Christ, and other important aspects of the gospel. These theses and his publications had a powerful influence upon the people. We read about it thus:

“His propositions attracted universal attention. They were read and reread, and repeated in every direction. Great excitement was created in the university and in the whole city. By these theses it was shown that the power to grant the pardon of sin, and to remit its penalty, had never been committed to the pope or to any other man. The whole scheme was a farce—an artifice to extort money by playing upon the superstitions of the people—a device of Satan to destroy the souls of all who

should trust to its lying pretensions. It was also clearly shown that the gospel of Christ is the most valuable treasure of the church, and that the grace of God, therein revealed, is freely bestowed upon all who seek it by repentance and faith.”⁹

Luther in the presence of the Diet

As result of his words at Wittenberg, a great work of reformation was introduced. The pope and prelates tried to destroy the truths presented by Luther. He had to face the Council at Worms, where he would be questioned, yet he was prepared to give an answer:

“With his mind stayed upon God, Luther prepared for the struggle before him. He thought upon the plan of his answer, examined passages in his own writings, and drew from the Holy Scriptures suitable proofs to sustain his positions. Then, laying his left hand on the Sacred Volume, which was open before him, he lifted his right hand to heaven and vowed ‘to remain faithful to the gospel, and freely to confess his faith, even should he seal his testimony with his blood.’

“When he was again ushered into the presence of the Diet, his



Martin Luther at the Diet of Worms.

countenance bore no trace of fear or embarrassment. Calm and peaceful, yet grandly brave and noble, he stood as God's witness among the great ones of the earth. The imperial officer now demanded his decision as to whether he desired to retract his doctrines. Luther made his answer in a subdued and humble tone, without violence or passion. His demeanor was diffident and respectful; yet he manifested a confidence and joy that surprised the assembly."¹⁰

When he was urged to give a short and clear answer to the question put to him, whether he would retract his doctrines, his answer was:

"I cannot submit my faith either to the pope or to the councils, because it is clear as the day that they have frequently erred and contradicted each other. Unless therefore I am convinced by the testimony of Scripture or by the clearest reasoning, unless I am persuaded by means of the passages I have quoted, and unless they thus render my conscience bound by the word of God, *I cannot and I will not retract*, for it is unsafe for a Christian to speak against his conscience. Here I stand, I can do no other; may God help me. Amen."¹¹

The protesters

Martin Luther was not alone in condemning the doctrine of indulgences and defending the truth. The princes of Germany and many protesters united with him against the doctrine of indulgences. They publicly gave their testimony for the truth presented by Luther, and their testimony reached other lands and ages.

"A solemn declaration was therefore drawn up and presented to the Diet:

"We protest by these presents, before God, our only Creator, Preserver, Redeemer, and Saviour, and who will one day be our Judge, as well as before all men and all creatures, that we, for us and for our people, neither consent nor adhere in any manner whatsoever to the proposed decree, in anything that is contrary

to God, to His holy word, to our right conscience, to the salvation of our souls."¹²

"One of the noblest testimonies ever uttered for the Reformation was the Protest offered by the Christian princes of Germany at the Diet of Spires in 1529. The courage, faith, and firmness of those men of God gained for succeeding ages liberty of thought and of conscience. Their Protest gave to the reformed church the name of Protestant; its principles are 'the very essence of Protestantism.'"¹³

The pledge that was made by the protesters reads:

"We are resolved, with the grace of God, to maintain the pure and exclusive preaching of His only word, such as it is contained in the biblical books of the Old and New Testaments, without adding anything thereto that may be contrary to it. This word is the only truth; it is the sure rule of all doctrine and of all life, and can never fail or deceive us. He who builds on this foundation shall stand against all the powers of hell, while all the human vanities that are set up against it shall fall before the face of God."¹⁴

Advancing in reformation

Today Protestantism is not the same as it was in the 16th century. Most of the Protestant churches today have turned away from Bible truths. Many do not accept the Old Testament as valid now, especially the Ten Commandments, and they declare instead that this moral law was given only for the Jews. Neither do they obey the word of God as the only source of truth. They have accepted and conformed to traditions and innovations that have been introduced into the Christian church. These they inherited from paganism. Spiritual Babylon, the mother of confusion, has made all her daughters drunken with the wine of error. The two main doctrines that stand out to cause confusion are the teaching of Sunday sacredness and the immortality of the soul.

Although Martin Luther did not understand the complete truth of the Bible—for he still believed in some

traditions (such as the existence of purgatory, as can be seen in his 95 theses)—he had the correct understanding that forgiveness of sins comes only through Jesus Christ, which the Lord offers to all who accept Him as their personal Saviour.

That voice which spoke at Wittenberg, and defended the work of Reformation, should continue sounding until the very end of time. The Spirit of Prophecy makes it clear in the following words:

"The Reformation did not, as many suppose, end with Luther. It is to be continued to the close of this world's history. Luther had a great work to do in reflecting to others the light which God had permitted to shine upon him; yet he did not receive all the light which was to be given to the world. From that time to this, new light has been continually shining upon the Scriptures, and new truths have been constantly unfolding."¹⁵

We should be very thankful to God for the shining truths that are continuously unfolding on our pathway. Today we have truths that were not known in the past. Together, these doctrines constitute the present truth for our time. May we be faithful to that part of the truth that we already know, and the Lord will add more light until we are perfected in obedience to the truth.

"But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day" (Proverbs 4:18). *R*

References

- ¹ *The Great Controversy*, p. 120.
- ² *Ibid.*, p. 125.
- ³ *Ibid.*
- ⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 124.
- ⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 126.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 127, 128.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 129, 130.
- ⁸ *Concordia Theological Seminary* (the 95 theses).
- ⁹ *The Great Controversy*, p. 130.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 157, 158.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 160.
- ¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 202, 203.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 197.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 203.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 148, 149.



Sola Gratia BY GRACE ALONE

*Compiled from the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy with comments by
The Reformation Herald editorial staff.*

When times are good

In the experience of most people, there are happy times and sad ones. The happy times typically come when we are successfully enjoying the fruit of our labors—for “every man should eat and drink, and enjoy the good of all his labour, it is the gift of God” (Ecclesiastes 3:13). The Lord normally allows us to enjoy the results of hard work often enough, that most would agree it’s definitely worthwhile. Then we feel happy.

At such times we also tend to feel confident. We’ve learned certain things that we did not know before. We accomplish goals that were only a dream before. We’re feeling strong and the future looks bright.

But there is always a potential problem at that time. Exactly when we’re feeling the most confident, we also tend very easily to forget

something essential: “Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the Lord” (Jeremiah 9:23, 24). (See also Deuteronomy 8:11–18.)

When times are bad

When times are good, it’s easy to forget that God is the One who deserves the glory. But when times are hard and perplexities shadow our pathway, it’s easier to search our heart and remember something.

What is it? Our incredible need of His grace.

What is grace? It is the favor of God that we do not deserve. We are really not entitled to His favor because we are permeated with sin.

“We have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; as it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one” (Romans 3:9–12).

Grace for Martin Luther

During this Week of Prayer, we are acknowledging the 500th anniversary of the great Reformation spearheaded by Martin Luther. Let’s see what this notable reformer realized about God’s marvelous grace for fallen sinners—and our serious need of a Saviour:

“Luther . . . entered boldly upon his work as a champion of the truth. His voice was heard from the pulpit in earnest, solemn warning. He set before the people the offensive character of sin, and taught them that it is impossible for man, by his own works, to lessen its guilt or evade its punishment. Nothing but repentance toward God and faith in Christ can save the sinner. The grace of Christ cannot be purchased; it is a free gift. He counseled the people not to buy indulgences, but to look in faith to a crucified Redeemer. He related his own painful experience in vainly seeking by humiliation and penance to secure salvation, and assured his hearers that it was by looking away from himself and believing in Christ that he found peace and joy.”¹

Jesus Christ was indeed a Saviour to Martin Luther—and a Friend such as cannot be found among mortals.

“From the secret place of prayer came the power that shook the world in the Great Reformation. There, with holy calmness, the servants of the Lord set their feet upon the rock of His promises. During the struggle at Augsburg, Luther ‘did not pass a day without devoting three hours at least to prayer, and they were hours selected from those the most favorable to study.’ In the privacy of his chamber he was heard to pour out his soul before God in words ‘full of adoration, fear, and hope, as when one speaks to a friend.’ ‘I know that Thou art our Father and our God,’ he said, ‘and that Thou wilt scatter the persecutors of Thy children; for Thou art Thyself endangered with us. All this matter is Thine, and it is only by Thy constraint that we have put our hands to it. Defend us, then, O Father!’

“To Melancthon, who was crushed under the burden of anxiety and fear, he wrote: ‘Grace and peace in Christ—in Christ, I say, and not in the world. Amen. I hate with exceeding hatred those extreme cares which consume you. If the cause is unjust, abandon it; if the cause is just, why should we belie the promises of Him who commands us to sleep without fear? . . . Christ will not be

wanting to the work of justice and truth. He lives, He reigns; what fear, then, can we have?’

“God did listen to the cries of His servants. He gave to princes and ministers grace and courage to maintain the truth against the rulers of the darkness of this world.”²

Luther’s rediscovery of the biblical revelation of God’s amazing attribute of grace was a refreshing contrast to the oppressive human-based teachings that prevailed in the Dark Ages.

“The Lord saw our fallen condition; He saw our need of grace, and because He loved our souls, He has given us grace and peace. Grace means favor to one who is undeserving, to one who is lost. The fact that we are sinners, instead of shutting us away from the mercy and love of God, makes the exercise of His love to us a positive necessity in order that we may be saved.”³

“Not because we first loved Him did Christ love us; but ‘while we were yet sinners’ (Romans 5:8) He died for us. He does not treat us according to our desert. Although our sins have merited condemnation, He does not condemn us. Year after year He has borne with our weakness and ignorance, with our ingratitude and waywardness. Notwithstanding our wanderings, our hardness of heart, our neglect of His Holy Word, His hand is stretched out still.

“Grace is an attribute of God exercised toward undeserving human beings. We did not seek for it, but it was sent in search of us. God rejoices to bestow His grace upon us, not because we are worthy, but because we are so utterly unworthy. Our only claim to His mercy is our great need.

“The Lord God through Jesus Christ holds out His hand all the day long in invitation to the sinful and fallen. He will receive all. He welcomes all. It is His glory to pardon the chief of sinners. He will take the prey from the mighty, He will deliver the captive, He will pluck the brand from the burning. He will lower the golden chain of His mercy to the lowest depths of human wretchedness, and lift up the debased soul contaminated with sin.

“Every human being is the object of loving interest to Him who gave His life that He might bring men back to God. Souls guilty and helpless, liable to be destroyed by the arts and snares of Satan, are cared for as a shepherd cares for the sheep of his flock.”⁴

The Pharisee syndrome

“Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 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. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other” (Luke 18:10–14).

Like the religious Pharisee, it’s easy to forget that we are saved by grace, especially after we have been in the truth for many years. Most of us are familiar with Jesus’ words, “many be called, but few chosen” (Matthew 20:16) and naturally we like to assume we would be among the chosen. Yet we don’t always consider this entire Bible passage in context. One instance of this declaration of Christ concludes the parable found in Matthew 20:1–16 about the laborers called to work in the vineyard. Those who came early in the morning were promised a penny—and the various ones called over the course of the day, even the eleventh-hour laborers—were promised whatever was right. But when everyone received a penny, the ones who had worked the longest and hardest were resentful of those who had only come in at the last minute. Yet Jesus rebuked them for having such an attitude!

Are we like that? We learn some points of truth, we are on fire for the Lord, we are baptized, we come to church for many years, we develop character, we do good things, we serve in church offices, and we cultivate lots of friendships. Are we not more entitled than the newcomer who has

just accepted the truth? Entitled to what? That's the way those laborers who came early in the morning thought. But do we really deserve better treatment than what we have been promised? No, actually we deserve the death penalty. It is only by the grace of God that we can be saved.

When the Holy Spirit comes upon us in greater measure, "he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment" (John 16:8).

The Holy Spirit convicts us of sin. We will begin to feel guilty about things that before we thought were perfectly okay.

The Holy Spirit convicts of righteousness. As we start to take action on the conviction of sin, we will start to do things better. Then the Holy

Spirit will encourage us that we are heading on the right track.

The Holy Spirit convicts of judgment. Everything we think and do will be in reference to the Judgment of the omniscient Holy Watcher.

With the presence of the Holy Spirit, we will bring forth fruits meet for repentance through the inspiration and strength of the grace of God, the only way by which we can be saved for eternity. "And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace" (John 1:16).

Reaping the blessings of grace

"In His divine arrangement, through His unmerited favor, the Lord has ordained that good works shall be

rewarded. We are accepted through Christ's merit alone; and the acts of mercy, the deeds of charity, which we perform, are the fruits of faith; and they become a blessing to us; for men are to be rewarded according to their works. It is the fragrance of the merit of Christ that makes our good works acceptable to God, and it is grace that enables us to do the works for which He rewards us. Our works in and of themselves have no merit. When we have done all that it is possible for us to do, we are to count ourselves as unprofitable servants. We deserve no thanks from God. We have only done what it was our duty to do, and our works could not have been performed in the strength of our own sinful natures.

"The Lord has bidden us to draw nigh to Him and He will draw nigh to us; and drawing nigh to Him, we receive the grace by which to do those works which will be rewarded at His hands. The reward, the glories of heaven, bestowed upon the overcomers, will be proportionate to the degree in which they have represented the character of Christ to the world."⁵

Our serious need of grace

"We should never have learned the meaning of this word 'grace' had we not fallen. God loves the sinless angels, who do His service, and are obedient to all His commands; but He does not give them grace. These heavenly beings know naught of grace; they have never needed it; for they have never sinned. Grace is an attribute of God shown to undeserving human beings. We did not seek after it, but it was sent in search of us. God rejoices to bestow this grace upon every one who hungers for it. To every one He presents terms of mercy, not because we are worthy, but because we are so utterly unworthy. Our need is the qualification which gives us the assurance that we shall receive this gift.

"But God does not use His grace to make His law of none effect, or to take the place of His law. 'The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness' sake; He will magnify the law, and make it



honorable' (Isaiah 42:21). His law is truth. . . .

"God's grace and the law of His kingdom are in perfect harmony; they walk hand in hand. His grace makes it possible for us to draw nigh to Him by faith. By receiving it, and letting it work in our lives, we testify to the validity of the law; we exalt the law and make it honorable by carrying out its living principles through the power of the grace of Christ; and by rendering pure, wholehearted obedience to God's law, we witness before the universe of heaven, and before an apostate world that is making void the law of God, to the power of redemption.

"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour' (Titus 3:5, 6). Let no one try to carry his own sins, for they have been atoned for by the great sin-bearer. The only begotten Son of God voluntarily met the claims of God's violated law. He was stricken of God and afflicted in our behalf. One with the Father, He was fully able to bear the penalty of our disobedience. By connecting His divinity with our humanity, Christ has exalted the human family. His divinity grasps the throne of the Infinite in behalf of man. As our substitute, He took our sins upon Himself, and now He intercedes before the Father in our behalf. . . .

"It is impossible for us to save ourselves. Only by the efficacy of the blood of Jesus Christ can we be saved. He died on Calvary's cross for us, and we may be complete in Him; for His sacrifice is all-sufficient."⁶

A new outlook

"True happiness is to be found, not in self-indulgence and self-pleasing, but in learning of Christ, taking His yoke, and bearing His burden. Those who trust to their own wisdom and follow their own ways, go complaining at every step, because the burden which selfishness imposes upon them is so heavy and its yoke so galling.

Selfishness cannot exist in a heart where Christ dwells; if cherished, it will crowd out everything else. It will lead persons to follow inclination rather than duty, to make self the subject of thought, and to gratify and indulge themselves, instead of seeking to be a blessing to others. Their wants, their pleasures, must come before everything else. In all this they exemplify the spirit of Satan. By their words and deeds they represent his character, instead of the character of Christ.

"All this might be changed; for the grace of Christ is sufficient, if they would come to Him. If they would lay off their self-imposed burden, renounce their allegiance to Satan, and take the burden which Jesus gives them, and let His yoke bind them to Him in willing service, hope and joy would spring up in their hearts.

"Jesus loves the purchase of His blood, and He longs to see them possess the peace which He alone can impart. He bids them learn of Him meekness and lowliness of heart. This precious grace is rarely seen at the present day. . . .

"If we have become the disciples of Christ, we shall be learning of Him—every day learning how to overcome some unlovely trait of character, every day copying His example, and coming a little nearer the pattern."⁷

God's grace for me

"It is difficult to exercise living faith when we are in darkness and discouragement. But this of all others is the very time when we should exercise faith. 'But,' says one, 'I do not feel at such times like praying in faith.' Well, then, will you allow Satan to gain the victory, simply because you do not feel like resisting him? When he sees that you have the greatest need of divine aid, he will try the hardest to beat you back from God."⁸

"Satan will come to you, saying, 'You are a sinner'; but do not allow him to fill your mind with the thought that because you are sinful, God has cast you off. Say to him, Yes; I am a sinner, and for that very reason I need a Saviour. I need forgiveness and

pardon, and Christ says that if I will come to Him, I shall not perish. In His letter to me I read, '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). When Satan tells you that you are lost, answer, Yes; but Jesus came to seek and to save that which was lost. . . . The greater my sin, the greater my need of a Saviour.

"The moment you grasp God's promises by faith, saying, I am the lost sheep Jesus came to save, a new life will take possession of you, and you will receive strength to resist the tempter. But faith to grasp the promises does not come by feeling. 'Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God' (Romans 10:17). You must not look for some great change to take place; you must not expect to feel some wonderful emotion. The Spirit of God alone can make a lasting impression on the mind.

"Christ longs to see His people resist the adversary of souls; but only by looking away from self to Jesus can we do this. Cease to bemoan your helpless condition; for your Saviour is touched with the feeling of your infirmities, and today He says to you, Be not discouraged, but cast your burdens upon me. I will take them all, and will bring to pass that which is good for your soul. Looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith, we shall be inspired with hope and shall see the salvation of God; for He is able to keep us from falling. . . .

"Never has a soul that trusts in Jesus been left to perish. . . . Respond to the calls of God's love, and say, I will trust in the Lord, and be comforted; for He has loved me. I will praise the Lord, for His anger is turned away."⁹ Amen! *R*

References

¹ *The Great Controversy*, p. 129.

² *Ibid.*, p. 210.

³ *Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 347.

⁴ *The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 161, 162.

⁵ *The Review and Herald*, January 29, 1895.

⁶ *Ibid.*, September 15, 1896.

⁷ *The Signs of the Times*, August 19, 1886.

⁸ *Historical Sketches of the Foreign Missions of the Seventh-day Adventists*, p. 132.

⁹ *The Review and Herald*, September 15, 1896.



Sola Fide BY FAITH ALONE

by D. P. Silva

The Castle in Wittenberg,
where Luther nailed his 95 theses.

Wittenberg, Germany, October 31, 1517. On that day, an Augustinian priest, Martin Luther, nailed 95 theses on the door of the church—challenging the authority of the papal system that was teaching that forgiveness of sin could be bought through indulgences (monetary payments to the ecclesiastical establishment). Luther had learned from the epistle of Paul to the Romans that justification (peace with God, as per Romans 5:1) comes solely by faith and not

by works, penances, or indulgences. So, with this rediscovery of long-forgotten scriptural truth, the great Reformation of the 16th century was born. The expression, “the just shall live by faith” (Romans 1:17), made a strong impact on the mind of the German reformer.

Back in the time of Genesis, the first man was created with a physical and spiritual nature in full harmony with God. His appetites and passions were under the control of the Holy Spirit and he delighted to commune

with God with no hindrance or barrier at all. The condition to live eternally was perfect and perpetual obedience to God’s holy law—the moral law of Ten Commandments. The principles of this law were engraved in the hearts of our first parents.

Having disobeyed God, Adam became a sinner and thus broke his relationship with his Creator. His whole being became corrupt, as he forfeited his power to obey God’s law. Thus he lost all the blessings that came from the sweet harmony

he previously enjoyed with his Maker. Adam lost paradise and was condemned to eternal death. But this not only affected him and his wife—all humanity was doomed to be lost as well. “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). The entire human race became subject to sin and eternal death. “The wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23).

“The fall of man filled all heaven with sorrow. The world that God had made was blighted with the curse of sin and inhabited by beings doomed to misery and death.”¹

“After their sin Adam and Eve . . . pledged themselves for the future to yield strict obedience to God. But they were told that their nature had become depraved by sin; they had lessened their strength to resist evil and had opened the way for Satan to gain more ready access to them. In their innocence, they had yielded to temptation; and now, in a state of conscious guilt, they would have less power to maintain their integrity.”²

In the beginning, humanity had been created in the image of God. Yet after sin, the procreation of the race produced offspring in their own image instead of God’s. “Adam lived an hundred and thirty years, and begat a son in his own likeness, after his image” (Genesis 5:3). When Adam and Eve had sinned, they became sinners. Now they possessed a sinful nature and sinful tendencies. So their descendants were likewise born with the same sinful nature and sinful tendencies.

Yet in His omniscience and love, God had provided an everlasting covenant of grace by which humanity could be rescued from this lost condition. After the moral fall, the Lord implemented the plan of salvation. He came to save the human race from their miserable condition. But He wouldn’t change the necessary prerequisite for eternal life—that was still perfect and perpetual obedience to His law, even though the race in its fallen, corrupt condition was now powerless to keep that law. Human beings were now friends of Satan and were enslaved by his bewitching power.

God said that “in the day” the first man would disobey Him, he would “surely die.” Why didn’t Adam and Eve die the same day they first sinned? It was because the prophetic Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8) was there to suffer the penalty of their guilt. The same day the first couple rebelled against God by succumbing to the temptation of Satan, Christ put Himself as the One who would receive the penalty of their transgression, and become “sin” in their stead (Genesis 3:21).

Paul summed up the principles of the gospel with the following words: “For he [God] hath made Him [Christ] to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him [Christ]” (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Likewise, “in his Epistle to the Romans, Paul set forth the great principles of the gospel. . . . The great truth of justification by faith, as set forth in this epistle, has stood through all the ages as a mighty beacon to guide the repentant sinner into the way of life. This light scattered the darkness which enveloped Luther’s mind, and revealed to him the power of the blood of Christ to cleanse from sin. It has guided thousands of sin-burdened souls to the same source of pardon and peace. Every Christian has reason to thank God for that epistle to the church at Rome.”³

In Romans chapter 1, Paul exposes the depravity of the Gentiles who reject divine light and have become perverted through behavior totally contrary to God’s law. In chapter 2, he proves that the ancient Jewish nation, despite having the divine oracles and knowing the law, also had become corrupt. In chapter 3, he proved that all humanity is under divine condemnation. Then he explained the way we can become righteous before God.

First he declares that our effort to obey God’s law cannot justify us before God. “Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin” (Romans 3:20). And then he reveals the only way we can

be considered and made righteous—by faith alone in Christ, that God “might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus” (Romans 3:26). Since Christ in His human nature developed a perfect character and died on the cross of Calvary in our stead, it is only through His life, death, and resurrection that He can impute His perfect righteousness to those who believe in Him.

In His life of 33 years, Christ maintained a consistently righteous character. His death on the cross consummated His right to justify sinners, since He paid the price for all humanity—to be accepted by whomsoever would be willing to appreciate and cherish His free gift of grace. Then Paul gives his inspired verdict: “Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law” (Romans 3:28).

In chapter 4, the apostle presents the experiences of Abraham and David, revealing the power of faith. (See Romans 4:2–8).

Abraham was justified before God by faith (he believed God). About David, Paul says that God “imputeth righteousness without works” and “will not impute sin.” Why? It’s because the perfect righteousness of Christ is imputed to the repentant sinner who believes on Him. When we believe in Christ, our sins are imputed to Christ, and His righteousness is imputed to us. Our sins are placed on Christ’s account and His perfect life is registered to replace our blemished account.

Minneapolis 1888— Justification by faith within Adventism

“The Lord in His great mercy sent a most precious message to His people through Elders Waggoner and Jones. This message was to bring more prominently before the world the uplifted Savior, the sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. It presented justification through faith in the Surety; it invited the people to receive the righteousness of Christ, which is made manifest in obedience to all the commandments of God. Many



had lost sight of Jesus. They needed to have their eyes directed to His divine person, His merits, and His changeless love for the human family. All power is given into His hands, that He may dispense rich gifts unto men, imparting the priceless gift of His own righteousness to the helpless human agent. This is the message that God commanded to be given to the world. It is the third angel's message, which is to be proclaimed with a loud voice, and attended with the outpouring of His Spirit in a large measure."⁴

As we see above, Ellen G. White considered the message of justification by faith to be "a most precious message." The main objective of this message is to exalt Christ as the only hope for the sinner. The acceptance of the righteousness of Christ by faith enables the believer to obey all the commandments of God.

To many who saw no connection between justification by faith and the third's angel message, she declared: "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.'"⁵

She clarifies issues about the message. Here is a very simple and clear definition: "What is justification by faith? It is the work of God in laying the glory of man in the dust, and doing for man that

which it is not in his power to do for himself."⁶

"When through repentance and faith we accept Christ as our Savior, the Lord pardons our sins, and remits the penalty prescribed for the transgression of the law. The sinner then stands before God as a just person; he is taken into favor with Heaven, and through the Spirit has fellowship with the Father and the Son. Then there is yet another work to be accomplished, and this is for a progressive nature. The soul is to be sanctified through the truth. And this also is accomplished through faith. For it is only by the grace of Christ, which we receive through faith, that the character can be transformed."⁷

Amazingly, the wonderful message brought during the General Conference of Minneapolis actually brought about a crisis, especially among the leaders present at the session. Some of them joyfully accepted the message, experienced a reconversion. Other strongly rejected the message. Among those who rejected were the General Conference President, the Secretary, the President of the European Division and other prominent leaders. Ellen G. White lamented: "I am sorry that so many are doubtful regarding justification by faith, and that some are standing in opposition to the light that God has given on this subject. . . . Nothing

but the grace of Christ is sufficient to free the transgressor from bondage. Through His grace those who are obedient to God's commandments are made free. If sinners repent their pardon is procured through the merits of Christ."⁸

By faith alone

"Salvation is through faith in Jesus Christ alone."⁹

"As the penitent sinner, contrite before God, discerns Christ's atonement in his behalf, and accepts this atonement as his only hope in this life and the future life, his sins are pardoned. This is justification by faith."¹⁰

"There is great need that Christ should be preached as the only hope and salvation. When the doctrine of justification by faith was presented at the Rome [a town in central New York state] meeting, it came to many as water comes to the thirsty traveler. The thought that the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us, not because of any merit on our part, but as a free gift from God, seemed a precious thought."¹¹

"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)."¹²

The fruit of the message

"The present message—justification by faith—is a message from God; it bears the divine credentials, for its fruit is unto holiness."¹³

"Justification by faith in Christ will be made manifest in transformation of character. This is the sign to the world of the truth of the doctrines we profess. The daily evidence that we are a living church is seen in the fact that we are practicing the Word. A living testimony goes forth to the world in consistent Christian action."¹⁴

Avoiding extreme ideas

“No one can believe with the heart unto righteousness, and obtain justification by faith, while continuing the practice of those things which the Word of God forbids, or while neglecting any known duty.”¹⁵

“There are dangers to be guarded against on the right hand and on the left. There will be inexperienced ones, newly come to the faith, who need to be strengthened, and to have a correct example before them. Some will not make a right use of the doctrine of justification by faith. They will present it in a one-sided manner.

“Others will seize the ideas that have not been correctly presented, and will go clear over the mark, ignoring works altogether.

“Now genuine faith always works by love. When you look to Calvary it is not to quiet your soul in the nonperformance of duty, not to compose yourself to sleep, but to create faith in Jesus, faith that will work, purifying the soul from the slime of selfishness. When we lay hold of Christ by faith, our work has just begun. Every man has corrupt and sinful habits that must be overcome by vigorous warfare. Every soul is required to fight the fight of faith. If one is a follower of Christ, he cannot be sharp in deal, he cannot be hardhearted, devoid of sympathy. He cannot be coarse in his speech. He cannot be full of pomposity and self-esteem. He cannot be overbearing, nor can he use harsh words, and censure and condemn.

“The labor of love springs from the work of faith. Bible religion means constant work. ‘Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven’ (Matthew 5:16). Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you, both to will and to do of His good pleasure. We are to be zealous of good works, be careful to maintain good works. And the true Witness says: ‘I know thy works’ (Revelation 2:2).

“While it is true that our busy activities will not in themselves

ensure salvation, it is also true that faith which unites us to Christ will stir the soul to activity.”¹⁶

The divine diagnosis and remedy

The message of the True Witness to the Laodiceans is urgently needed at this time. (See Revelation 3:18–21.) Why?

“Today a large part of those who compose our congregations are dead in trespasses and sins. They come and go like the door upon its hinges. For years, they have complacently listened to the most solemn, soul-stirring truths, but they have not put them in practice. Therefore, they are less and less sensible of the preciousness of truth. The stirring testimonies of reproof and warning do not arouse them to repentance. The sweetest melodies that come from God through human lips—justification by faith, and the righteousness of Christ—do not call forth from them a response of love and gratitude. Though the heavenly Merchantman displays before them the richest jewels of faith and love, though He invites them to buy of Him ‘gold tried in the fire,’ and ‘white raiment’ that they may be clothed, and ‘eye salve’ that they may see, they steel their hearts against Him, and fail to exchange their lukewarmness for love and zeal. While making a profession, they deny the power of godliness. If they continue in this state, God will reject them. They are unfitting themselves to be members of His family.”¹⁷

Our message to the world—the beginning of the loud cry

“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).

About the message presented in Minneapolis in 1888, E. G. White wrote:

“The time of test is just upon us, for the loud cry of the third angel has already begun in the revelation of the righteousness of Christ, the

sin-pardoning Redeemer. This is the beginning of the light of the angel whose glory shall fill the whole earth. . . .

“If you would stand through the time of trouble, you must know Christ, and appropriate the gift of His righteousness, which He imputes to the repentant sinner.”¹⁸

“Justification by faith and the righteousness of Christ are the themes to be presented to a perishing world.”¹⁹

Conclusion

“Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul” (Hebrews 10:35–39). *R*

References

- ¹ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 63.
- ² *Ibid.*, p. 61.
- ³ *Sketches From the Life of Paul*, pp. 187, 188.
- ⁴ *Testimonies to Ministers*, pp. 91, 92.
- ⁵ *Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 372 (1890).
- ⁶ *Testimonies for Ministers*, p. 456.
- ⁷ *The Signs of the Times*, November 3, 1890.
- ⁸ *The Workers' Bulletin*, September 9, 1902.
- ⁹ *Faith and Works*, p. 18.
- ¹⁰ *The Faith I Live By*, p. 116.
- ¹¹ *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 360.
- ¹² *Ibid.*, p. 372.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 359.
- ¹⁴ *The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White *Comments*], vol. 6, p. 1071.
- ¹⁵ *Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 396.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*, bk. 2, p. 20.
- ¹⁷ *Testimonies*, vol. 6, pp. 426, 427.
- ¹⁸ *Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 363.
- ¹⁹ *The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White *Comments*], vol. 7, p. 964.



Sola Scriptura BY SCRIPTURE ALONE



by J. Moreno

“Jesus answered and said unto [the Sadducees], Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God” (Matthew 22:29).

“Acknowledging no foundation for religious faith but the Holy Scriptures, Luther was the man for his time; through him God accomplished a great work for the reformation of the church and the enlightenment of the world.”¹

In this reading, as we commemorate the 500th anniversary of the great reform of the 16th century as led by Luther, we will focus on the principle, “By Scripture alone”—a fundamental concept in the great Reformation.

Luther is identified with the sacred scriptures

It was in 1503, when Luther was 20 years old, that he saw a Bible for the very first time. Over the next 20 years, he would not only master the contents of the Bible but also translate the New Testament from the Greek language into German and begin the translation of the Old Testament.

“While one day examining the books in the library of the university, Luther discovered a Latin Bible. Such a book he had never before seen. He was ignorant even of its existence. He had heard portions of the Gospels and Epistles, which were read to the people

at public worship, and he supposed that these were the entire Bible. Now, for the first time, he looked upon the whole of God’s word. With mingled awe and wonder he turned the sacred pages; with quickened pulse and throbbing heart he read for himself the words of life, pausing now and then to exclaim: ‘O that God would give me such a book for myself!’—*The History of the Reformation of the Sixteenth Century*, D’Aubigné b. 2, ch. 2. Angels of heaven were by his side, and rays of light from the throne of God revealed the treasures of truth to his understanding.”²

“After his return from Rome, Luther received at the University of

Wittenberg the degree of doctor of divinity. Now he was at liberty to devote himself, as never before, to the Scriptures that he loved. He had taken a solemn vow to study carefully and to preach with fidelity the word of God, not the sayings and doctrines of the popes, all the days of his life. He was no longer the mere monk or professor, but the authorized herald of the Bible. He had been called as a shepherd to feed the flock of God, that were hungering and thirsting for the truth. He firmly declared that Christians should receive no other doctrines than those which rest on the authority of the Sacred Scriptures. These words struck at the very foundation of papal supremacy. They contained the vital principle of the Reformation.”³

Because of his belief in the doctrines of the Bible—and no longer in the beliefs of the papacy, Luther was excommunicated and condemned as a heretic. He was summoned more than once to appear before the Diet (the national council of German states, led by the emperor Charles V) to try to persuade him to abandon his belief in the holy Scriptures. In his solemn address to the Diet of Worms in 1521 Luther responded:

“Since your most serene majesty and your high mightinesses require from me a clear, simple, and precise answer, I will give you one, and it is this: I cannot submit my faith either to the pope or to the councils, because it is clear as the day that they have frequently erred and contradicted each other. Unless therefore I am convinced by the testimony of Scripture or by the clearest reasoning, unless I am persuaded by means of the passages I have quoted, and unless they thus render my conscience bound by the word of God, *I cannot and I will not retract*, for it is unsafe for a Christian to speak against his conscience. Here I stand, I can do no other; may God help me. Amen.”—D’Aubigné, b. 7, ch. 8.

“Thus stood this righteous man upon the sure foundation of the word of God. The light of heaven illuminated his countenance. His greatness and purity of character, his peace and joy of heart, were manifest to all. . . .”⁴

It was thus that the work of moral and spiritual reform was grounded in the written Word of God.

The truth of the sacred scriptures

Regarding the nature and veracity of the Holy Scriptures we will consider some important factors:

1. Their divine inspiration

“Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Peter 1:20, 21).

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Timothy 3:16, 17).

“Seek ye out of the book of the Lord, and read: no one of these shall fail, none shall want her mate: for my mouth it hath commanded, and his spirit it hath gathered them” (Isaiah 34:16).

“In His Word God has committed to men the knowledge necessary for salvation. The Holy Scriptures are to be accepted as an authoritative, infallible revelation of His will.”⁵

2. A means of communication between God and humanity

Sacred Scripture is the voice of God speaking to us, as surely as if we were hearing it “live.” Here we find the true history of the world and especially the origin of the human race, without any shadow of doubt. Here is the record of Jesus Christ, our Saviour and His apostles and disciples as well as His church and doctrine.

Penned by 40 authors inspired by God over a period of 1,600 years, the Bible has been translated and published more than any other book in history. Portions have been translated into 2,400 different languages, the New Testament has been translated into 1,115 languages and the complete Bible has been translated into 426

languages. (Today, scholars recognize the existence of 6,900 languages worldwide, so there is more that still needs to be done.)

3. Holy Scripture is worthy of our trust

“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path” (Psalm 119:105).

“Thy word is truth from the beginning, and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever” (Psalm 119:160). Scripture is divine, so it cannot be equated with tradition, let alone the magisterium or the pronouncements of the high pontiff. Scripture perfectly contains the will of God and teaches sufficiently everything that a person needs to know in order to be saved. In the mode of worship that God requires of us is detailed and fully written. Therefore, it is not lawful for anyone, not even ministers or preachers, to teach anything that is different from what Scripture now teaches us. The apostle Paul warned the believers in Galatia: “though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed” (Galatians 1:8). The Lord gives a strict prohibition from adding or removing anything from the Word of God (Deuteronomy 12:32 and Revelation 22:19). It is evident that the doctrine contained in Scripture is perfect and complete in every sense. We should not consider any writings of men, however holy or perfect they may have been, as of equal value to that of the Holy Scriptures. We must not suppose that customs, majorities, antiquities, succession of times and persons, councils, decrees, or statutes could ever have the same value as the truth of God, because His eternal truth is above all else.

4. The Word of God is supreme

The Lord bids us, “Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me” (John 5:39).

The people of God must recognize human government as a divine institution, so that it will teach

obedience to the authorities as a sacred duty in its legitimate sphere. However, when its claims conflict with God's claims, God's Word must be recognized as being above all human law. A "Thus saith the Lord" cannot be put aside or exchanged for a "Thus saith the Church or the State." The crown of Christ must be erected above the diadems of earthly powers.

The principle we must defend at this time is the same that was maintained by the followers of the gospel in the great Reformation. When the princes met at the Diet of Spires in 1529, it seemed that the world's hope was dying out. In that assembly, the

decree of the emperor was presented, restricting religious freedom and prohibiting any further dissemination of the reformed doctrines. Would the German princes accept the decree?

Should the light of the gospel be hidden from multitudes still in darkness? Vital issues for the world were being debated. Those who had accepted the Reformed faith, met and unanimously decided, "We reject the decree. In matters of conscience, the power of the majority should not prevail."

The banner of the truth of religious freedom, raised so prominently by those reformers, has been entrusted

to us in this last conflict. We must receive it. The responsibility for this great gift rests upon those whom God has blessed with the knowledge of His Word. We must receive that Word as the supreme authority and accept the inspired truths found therein. We can appreciate them only if we search them through personal study. Then, by making the Word of God the guide of our life, the prayer of Christ in our behalf will indeed be answered: "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth" (John 17:17). The recognition of truth in words and deeds is our confession of faith. Only then will others know that we believe in the Bible.

The reformers, whose protest gave us the name "Protestants," felt that God had called them to present the gospel to the world, and thus they were willing to sacrifice possessions, freedom, and even life for the cause they cherished. Are we, in this last conflict of the great controversy, as faithful to our legacy as the reformers were to theirs?

Even when faced with persecution and death, these brave pioneers spread everywhere the truth for that time. The Word of God was brought to the people; all classes, low and high, rich and poor, enlightened and ignorant, studied it eagerly, and those who received the light also became their messengers. In those days, the truth was often taken to people's homes through the printed page. Luther's pen was a force, and his writings, widely disseminated, shook the world. The same instruments are at our disposal, with a hundred times greater resources. Bibles and publications in many languages, presenting the truth for this time, are within our reach and can be quickly taken to the whole world. We must be diligent in Bible study and zealous in spreading the light!

Christianity and reform today

"The Reformation did not, as many suppose, end with Luther. It is to be continued to the close of this world's history. Luther had a great work to do in reflecting to others the light which



God had permitted to shine upon him; yet he did not receive all the light which was to be given to the world. From that time to this, new light has been continually shining upon the Scriptures, and new truths have been constantly unfolding.

“Luther and his colaborers accomplished a noble work for God; but, coming as they did from the Roman Church, having themselves believed and advocated her doctrines, it was not to be expected that they would discern all these errors. It was their work to break the fetters of Rome and to give the Bible to the world; yet there were important truths which they failed to discover, and grave errors which they did not renounce. Most of them continued to observe the Sunday with other papal festivals. They did not, indeed, regard it as possessing divine authority, but believed that it should be observed as a generally accepted day of worship. There were some among them, however, who honored the Sabbath of the fourth commandment. Among the reformers of the church an honorable place should be given to those who stood in vindication of a truth generally ignored, even by Protestants—those who maintained the validity of the fourth commandment and the obligation of the Bible Sabbath. When the Reformation swept back the darkness that had rested down on all Christendom, Sabbathkeepers were brought to light in many lands.

“Those who received the great blessings of the Reformation did not go forward in the path so nobly entered upon by Luther. A few faithful men arose from time to time to proclaim new truth and expose long-cherished error, but the majority, like the Jews in Christ’s day, or the papists in the time of Luther, were content to believe as their fathers believed, and to live as they lived. Therefore religion again degenerated into formalism; and errors and superstitions which would have been cast aside had the church continued to walk in the light of God’s Word, were retained and cherished. Thus the spirit inspired by the Reformation gradually died out, until there was almost as great

need of reform in the Protestant churches as in the Roman Church in the time of Luther. There was the same spiritual stupor, the same respect for the opinions of men, the same spirit of worldliness, the same substitution of human theories for the teachings of God’s Word. Pride and extravagance were fostered under the guise of religion. The churches became corrupted by allying themselves with the world. Thus were degraded the great principles for which Luther and his fellow laborers had done and suffered so much.

“As Satan saw that he had failed to crush out the truth by persecution, he again resorted to the same plan of compromise which had led to the great apostasy and the formation of the church of Rome. He induced Christians to ally themselves, not now with pagans, but with those who, by their worship of the god of this world, as truly proved themselves idolaters.

“Satan could no longer keep the Bible from the people; it had been placed within the reach of all. But he led thousands to accept false interpretations and unsound theories, without searching the Scriptures to learn the truth for themselves. He had corrupted the doctrines of the Bible, and traditions which were to ruin millions were taking deep root. The church was upholding and defending these traditions, instead of contending for the faith once delivered to the saints.”⁶

The Word of God will be victorious

“The infidel Voltaire once boastingly said: ‘I am weary of hearing people repeat that twelve men established the Christian religion. I will prove that one man may suffice to overthrow it.’ Generations have passed since his death. Millions have joined in the war upon the Bible. But it is so far from being destroyed, that where there were a hundred in Voltaire’s time, there are now ten thousand, yes, a hundred thousand copies of the book of God. In the words of an early Reformer concerning the Christian church, ‘The Bible is an anvil that

has worn out many hammers.’ Saith the Lord: ‘No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn’ (Isaiah 54:17).

“‘The word of our God shall stand forever.’ ‘All His commandments are sure. They stand fast for ever and ever, and are done in truth and uprightness’ (Isaiah 40:8; Psalm 111:7, 8). Whatever is built upon the authority of man will be overthrown; but that which is founded upon the rock of God’s immutable word shall stand forever.”⁷

“Everything is tainted and corrupted with falsehood and fiction in this age. We want now solid truth for our foundation. Men and women are asleep. Youth are enchanted, infatuated with the false. They lay upon the foundation hay, wood, and stubble which the fires of the last day will consume. The mind will be of the same character as the food is composed of upon which it has been fed. There is only one remedy; that is, to become conversant with the Scriptures. We cannot study the Bible too much. Christ said, ‘Search the Scriptures;’ but the natural heart would search everything else rather than the Scriptures.”⁸

“We are all building for eternity. Let the character have the impress of the divine in pure, noble utterances, in upright deeds. Then the whole universe of heaven will behold and say, Well done, good and faithful servant. . . . The great, grand structure may be going up for time and for eternity. That building must stand the final inspection. Is the foundation sure? Is it built upon the doing of the Word of God? The Word of God warns everyone, Take heed how ye build. Make sure that the foundation is laid on the solid rock.”⁹ *R*

References

- ¹ *The Great Controversy*, p. 120.
- ² *Ibid.*, p. 122.
- ³ *Ibid.*, pp. 125, 126.
- ⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 160. [Emphasis added.]
- ⁵ *My Life Today*, p. 41.
- ⁶ *The Story of Redemption*, pp. 353–355.
- ⁷ *The Great Controversy*, p. 288.
- ⁸ *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 6, p. 260.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*, vol. 19, p. 197.

Solus Christus THROUGH CHRIST ALONE

by P. D. Lausevic
[Emphasis added throughout.]

Let's consider the journey on the road to Damascus nearly 2,000 years ago. Saul is a man full of zeal who is hot on the tracks to seek out the presumed **rebels** of the **one and only true religion**. He is thinking to protect **that faith from their influence**. He is so thirsty to put an end to this **new upstart religion**, that he is eagerly devising plans to execute his merciless agenda. As the Pharisee approaches his destination, Saul the persecutor meets Jesus in His glory and hears an unexpected appeal from the One Whom he blames for all these negative emotions that radiate through his whole being. "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" (Acts 9:4). What an introduction! Recognizing the glory and infinite superiority of the Speaker, the trembling Saul asks, "Who art thou, Lord?" The answer is as stunning as it is brief, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest" (Acts 9:5). What a life-changing experience! What a surprise! What an introduction to the real faith! These Christians are not the ones in rebellion—Christianity is actually the true religion!

The saving covenant

"And [Saul] trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city,

and it shall be told thee what thou must do" (Act 9:6). For three long days in the solitude that only sudden complete blindness can bring, Saul has the opportunity to evaluate the God he is worshipping, his purposes in life, and make the most important decision that any sinful human being can make—the act of complete and unreserved surrender to Jesus Christ as personal Lord and Saviour.

Why did Saul need the three days in darkness? Because he was a Pharisee to the core. "My manner of life from my youth, which was at the first among mine own nation at Jerusalem, know all the Jews; which knew me from the beginning, if they would testify, that after the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee" (Act 26:4, 5). This attitude is reflected in his question, "what wilt thou have me to do?" I want to be faithful. I want to enter heaven. I want to obey God. I want to obey all the rules of this new religion. Give me more rules to instruct me on the way I should do my work. Give me more rules on the way I should eat. Give me more rules on the way I should dress. Give me more rules and I will obey all of them and be declared the strictest follower of Jesus Christ. It sounds so much like the Hebrew people after hearing the law of God at Sinai. "And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience

of the people: and they said, **All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient**" (Exodus 24:7). After being convicted of the truth, these are truly good intentions. These are really good resolutions. But our natural heart has no power to implement them.

This man needed time to really understand the depths of the sinful nature that controls each member of the human race. He had to come to the full realization that "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips." He had to "see" a clear description of the best that we can offer a sinless God. He had to see that "**all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags**" (Isaiah 6:5; 64:6). He had to see himself as a sinner "that Christ Jesus came into the world to save," "of whom I am chief" (1 Timothy 1:15). Until he understood clearly and accepted this fact to the very depths of his whole being, he would still remain a Saul, trying to serve God with constant failure and misunderstanding. He describes this old-covenant living clearly to the newfound believers in Rome. "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do" (Romans 7:18, 19).

Once Saul recognized the depths of the corruption of human nature, he could finally accept the principles of the new covenant relationship with God and allow Him to change the desires of his own nature. “For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people” (Hebrews 8:10). Because this law is written in our heart, the real principles of that law actually change from a “Thou shalt not kill” or even to hate to “I don’t want to kill or hate.” From a “Thou shalt not steal” to “I don’t want to steal.” “The law is an expression of the thought of God; when received in Christ, **it becomes our thought**. It lifts us above the power of natural desires and tendencies, above temptations that lead to sin.”¹ Saul now becomes a Paul and the greatest evangelist of all time is born.

A changed nature at the cross

What does it take to change the sinful, corrupt nature that we inherited from our parents and added to along the way by our own evil decisions? Listening to the Ten Commandments alone at Mount Sinai could not change the Israelites. Yes, it frightened them for a short time; but no permanent change was made. Keeping the law in front of our eyes bound by little boxes called phylacteries could not accomplish that either. “For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh” (Romans 8:3). The recognition, appreciation and complete acceptance of Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ alone, can transform a sinner of any character into a saint not only fit for heaven but to a life of usefulness and devoted service here on this immoral planet. “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). It does not matter how hard we try. It does not

matter how many and how determined are the resolutions we make. There is only One way to transformation—and that is the conscious act of complete surrender to Jesus Christ as our personal Lord and Saviour.

And what are we talking about when we say “Jesus”? To Whom are we to surrender? This is not some nice fancy term found in theological explanations. Nor is it a beautiful picture painted by the greatest artists that place on canvas the best replica of their imagination. “But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness” (1 Corinthians 1:23). It is Jesus dying for my sins. Dying in my place. This is the essence of the gospel. This is the source of power for the humble believer that places him in a position as if he had never sinned by the simple declaration of God. “Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, **to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past**, through the forbearance of God” (Romans 3:25). The life-changing power is found in that declaration from the God of heaven. When He declares someone righteous, **that person is righteous simply because God said so**. (See Hebrews 6:18.)

This is the gospel power. “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek” (Romans 1:16). When we speak of the power to change a person from his or her sinful ways, we have to come to the point in our life to see not only the pathos, but also the beauty and the power of the cross. “But we preach Christ crucified. . . . But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God” (1 Corinthians 1:23, 24). This is the central theme of our religion. “Whatever phase of the subject is presented, uplift Jesus as the center of all hope.”² If we lose this, we have lost our entire religion.

Contrary to normal human thinking, this is the real attraction that brings the sinner to the Eternal God of the universe. We may try all

sorts of ways to attract people to the message. Social events are good. Special youth activities are good. Singing groups and concerts are really attractive. Prophecy seminars show the history of nations in advance and give us confidence in the Bible as the word of God. But the real attraction is found in the simple story of the cross of Calvary. “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me” (John 12:32). This is the drawing power. The crucified and risen Saviour becomes everything to us. “For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified” (1 Corinthians 2:2). “The cross of Calvary appeals in power, affording a reason why we should love Christ now, and why we should consider Him first, and best, and last, in everything.”³

A personal relationship with God

But what do we mean when we say that we are to surrender our heart to Jesus Christ as our personal Lord and Saviour?

This Divine Saviour is nothing less than eternal life. “In him was life; and the life was the light of men” (John 1:4). We are not speaking of mortal life but eternal life. “And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son” (1 John 5:11). This is something that only Deity possesses. “It is not physical life that is here specified, but eternal life, the life which is exclusively the property of God. The Word, who was with God, and who was God, had this life. Physical life is something that each individual has received. It is not eternal or immortal; for God, the Lifegiver, takes it again. Man has no control over his life. But the life of Christ was unborrowed. No one can take this life from Him.”⁴

Knowing Him as a personal human being is the connecting link between fallen humanity and Divinity. It is the ladder that Jacob saw as he was fleeing a certain death caused by his own evil actions. This is why it is so important to know Deity through Jesus Christ. (John 17:3.) If we were to connect

directly to Deity, it would mean death, “for our God is a consuming fire” (Hebrews 12:29).

It is the human nature of Christ that makes the direct connection to humanity. For that reason, it “would be well for us to spend a thoughtful hour each day in contemplation of the life of Christ. We should take it point by point, and let the imagination grasp each scene, especially the closing ones. As we thus dwell upon His great sacrifice for us, our confidence in Him will be more constant, our love will be quickened, and we shall be more deeply imbued with His spirit. If we would be saved at last, we must learn the lesson of penitence and humiliation at the foot of the cross.”⁵

Divine truth

How do you have a relationship with One you don’t see? How can we say *Solus Christus* (Solely through Christ) when our relationship with Him is with One who is invisible?

Jesus gave the answer clearly just before parting from the disciples. In a discussion that involved the separation they would feel when He would be gone, Jesus tells them how to have that personal relationship with Him. “Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, **the truth**, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6). Jesus is the embodiment of the truth. He is the revelation of the plan of redemption that each of us must read and study in order to have eternal life—the Word of God. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1). The entrance of this Word as manifested in the truths or doctrines of the Bible bring liberty to the soul. “And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32). It is the study of this Word—in reality a personal knowledge and acceptance of Jesus Christ—that activates the faith that God introduces to every human being⁶ that is born into this world. “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17).

True doctrine that comes in the light of Jesus as our personal Saviour

is like rain to the plants that depend on it for life. “My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass” (Deuteronomy 32:2). Remove the rain and you have death and a desert. Remove pure doctrines from the church and our personal lives and the result is spiritual death and a cruel desert. Accepting the Bible as Jesus speaking to me is the saving gospel, as it reveals Jesus in a practical and personal way. “Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee” (1 Timothy 4:16). This is why a good minister will couple the knowledge of Jesus as a personal, caring Being with His teachings as revealed in the Scriptures. “If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained” (1 Timothy 4:6).

We read that Jesus is the Word of God. Therefore, we need to read the sacred writings in order to find out the true teachings of Christ so that the power in the word can change us. “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Timothy 3:16, 17). It is only with this kind of change that makes it possible for us to spend eternity with a pure and holy God. “Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy” (1 Peter 1:16).

Our faithful forefathers gave their lives to maintain the clarity of the doctrines they held, because rejecting pure teaching would be a rejection of their Saviour. “Well would it be for the church and the world if the principles that actuated those steadfast souls were revived in the hearts of God’s professed people. There is an alarming indifference in regard to the doctrines which are the pillars of the Christian faith. The opinion is gaining ground, that, after all, these are not of vital importance. This degeneracy is

strengthening the hands of the agents of Satan, so that false theories and fatal delusions which the faithful in ages past imperiled their lives to resist and expose, are now regarded with favor by thousands who claim to be followers of Christ.”⁷

The gospel is the “power of God unto salvation.” Because our faithful forefathers kept to the pure doctrine, they had the power for evangelism in this wicked world, even though everything was seemingly engineered against them. “The early Christians were indeed a peculiar people. Their blameless deportment and unswerving faith were a continual reproof that disturbed the sinner’s peace. Though few in numbers, without wealth, position, or honorary titles, they were a terror to evildoers wherever their **character and doctrines** were known.”⁸ This is why we need to be steadfast to the truths that Christ has revealed to us through His prophets. “Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 1:3).

A faithful rebuke

As the great evangelist Paul realized his life was about to come to an end and the persecutor had become the persecuted till death, he turned his attention to those that will follow after. His exhortation rings down to the end of time: “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables” (2 Timothy 4:2–4).

“Fearing that Timothy’s mild, yielding disposition might lead him to shun an essential part of his work, Paul exhorted him to be faithful in reproving sin and even to rebuke with sharpness those who were guilty of

gross evils. Yet he was to do this 'with all long-suffering and doctrine.' He was to reveal the patience and love of Christ, explaining and enforcing his reproofs by the truths of the word."⁹

When we speak about Jesus and only Jesus, we cannot separate the true and the living Jesus from the teachings that reflect His character. We are often asked the question: "Which is more important, Jesus or doctrines? Jesus or the law?" The Bible teaches us that Jesus is the truth (John 14:6). The same Bible teaches us that the truth is the law. "Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and thy law is the truth" (Psalm 119:142). Since Jesus is the truth, and the truth is the law, then Jesus is the practical revelation of the perfect law of liberty. The formal teachings of the law without a living Saviour cannot produce salvation because the power is in the blood of Jesus Christ. However, the cleansing blood of Christ will naturally produce obedience to that law that simply is an expression of HIMSELF.

The prophecy states that the law is in the heart. "I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart" (Psalm 40:8). Whose heart? Comparing this verse with Hebrews 10:5-7, we see it is speaking of Jesus. He had the law written in His heart. Therefore if I truly accept Jesus as my personal Saviour into my heart without reservation, that same law will be written on my heart as well. (See Jeremiah 31:33.) And the result will be a complete transformation of the life and character. "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them" (Ezekiel 36:26, 27).

"The words, 'A new heart also will I give you' (Ezekiel 36:26), mean, A new mind will I give you. This change of heart is always **attended by a clear conception of Christian duty, an understanding of truth.** The clearness of our view of truth will be **proportionate to our**

understanding of the word of God.

He who gives the Scriptures close, prayerful attention will gain clear comprehension and sound judgment, as if in turning to God he had reached a higher plane of intelligence."¹⁰

The Lord of your life

We may talk about Jesus in many different ways. We may refer to Him by the many titles given Him throughout the Bible. The struggle from the very beginning has always been with His authority; but in the end, every living being must recognize that very authority. "Every tongue should confess that **Jesus Christ is Lord**, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:11). Do you recognize Him not only as your Saviour but as the Lord of your life in everything? The slogan has been used quite often "What would Jesus do?"—and later, "What would Jesus really do?" Are we serious about those questions? We are not speaking here about trying to find a way to force ourselves to obey. We are talking about surrender right from the very beginning. We are talking about the willingness to do the will of God and ask Him to be the true Ruler of our life—not the co-pilot but the pilot. "If anyone wants to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority." John 7:17 (NKJV). "The world can only be warned by seeing those who believe the truth sanctified through the truth, acting upon high and holy principles, showing in a high, elevated sense, the line of demarcation between those who keep the commandments of God and those who trample them under their feet."¹¹ Are you prepared to worship Him not only as Deity, but as the Lord of your life?

Conclusion

We are in a war. "Opposition is the lot of all whom God employs to present truths specially applicable to their time. There was a present truth in the days of Luther—a truth at that time of special importance; there is a present truth for the church today.

He who does all things according to the counsel of His will has been pleased to place men under various circumstances and to enjoin upon them duties peculiar to the times in which they live and the conditions under which they are placed. If they would prize the light given them, broader views of truth would be opened before them. But truth is no more desired by the majority today than it was by the papists who opposed Luther. There is the same disposition to accept the theories and traditions of men instead of the word of God as in former ages. Those who present the truth for this time should not expect to be received with greater favor than were earlier reformers. The great controversy between truth and error, between Christ and Satan, is to increase in intensity to the close of this world's history."¹²

"Now, God wants His converting power to come on this occasion. There are some that come to our meetings—they will sit all through the meetings; they have borne a few words of testimony now and then; they have gone home and done just exactly [the same as], if not worse than, before. Why? Because they had not the new heart. What is the new heart? It is the new mind. What is the mind? It is the will. Where is your will? It is either on Satan's side or Christ's side. Now it is up to you. Will you put your will today on Christ's side of the question? That is the new heart. It is the new will, a new mind. 'A new heart will I give thee.' Then let us begin right here."¹³ *R*

References

- ¹ *The Desire of Ages*, p. 308.
- ² *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 118.
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- ⁴ *The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 5, p. 1130.
- ⁵ *The Desire of Ages*, p. 83.
- ⁶ Romans 12:3.
- ⁷ *The Great Controversy*, p. 46.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*
- ⁹ *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 503.
- ¹⁰ *Counsels to Parents, Teachers and Students*, p. 452.
- ¹¹ *The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 7, p. 980.
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Solo Deo Gloria GLORY TO GOD ONLY

by R. Dumaguit



A boy was busy pedalling his bike down a street in Kampala, Uganda. As he rode along, the eyes of all the bystanders and passers-by were focused on him because his bike was an uncommon sight: it was full of side mirrors. Suddenly, he bumped into an electric post and tumbled down beside the curb in much pain, suffering some abrasions and minor cuts. Fortunately, an American tourist was able to quickly help him and pick him up from the ground. The tourist then asked him, “Why do you have so many side mirrors on your bike? And why weren’t you looking ahead while you were riding your bike?” The boy answered, “You know, I want to see all my glory through the side mirrors as I bike along!”

Human vanity and its consequences

Human beings have the tendency to worship and glorify themselves,

especially if they are blessed with things such as riches, exceptional strength, great educational achievements, or other impressive accomplishments. People are obsessed with breaking records to stand out from their peers, as annually catalogued in a book called *Guinness World Records*. Sadly, looking back in human history, we discover that this vanity syndrome springs out from the bent toward evil which we have inherited from our ancestors. The apostle Peter said that we were redeemed from our vain manner of life received by tradition from our fathers” (1 Peter 1:18), and King David added that “I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me” (Psalm 51:5). The floodgate of this evil tendency of self-glorification was opened long ago in the Garden of Eden. “The result of the eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil is manifest in every man’s experience. There is in his nature a bent to evil,

a force which, unaided, he cannot resist.”¹

In every human life, without divine aid, it is impossible to be free from this problem—whether one is rich or poor, honorable or common, educated or uneducated, young or old. This tendency will always be manifested in our behavior to a greater or lesser degree. The Bible tells us that all “speak vanity every one with his neighbour: with flattering lips and with a double heart do they speak” (Psalm 12:2) and that “The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity” (94:11).

It is important to note that “God will not hear vanity, neither will the Almighty regard it” (Job 35:13) because “there is nothing so offensive to God or so dangerous to the human soul as pride and self-sufficiency. Of all sins it is the most hopeless, the most incurable.”² Pride of opinion, self-conceit “stands in the way of all growth. When a man has defects of

character, yet fails of realizing this; when he is so imbued with self-sufficiency that he cannot see his fault, how can he be cleansed? 'They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick' (Matthew 9:12). How can one improve when he thinks his ways perfect?"³

Indulging in pride and self-centeredness becomes very dangerous when we reach the point of taking for ourselves the glory that belongs solely to God. King Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, had this vanity syndrome. Remember the story of how he indulged in it, how he suffered bitter consequences, and how he finally learned to acknowledge that glory actually belongs to God only? (See Daniel 4:29–37.)

Glory belongs only to God

In the year 1847, a doctor from Edinburgh, Scotland, Sir James Simpson, discovered that chloroform could be used as an anesthetic to render people insensible to pain during surgery. From his early experiments, Dr. Simpson made it possible for people to go through the most dangerous operations without fear of pain and suffering. Some people even claim that his was one of the most significant discoveries of modern medicine.

Some years later, while lecturing at the University of Edinburgh, Dr. Simpson was asked by one of his students, "What do you consider to be the most valuable discovery of your lifetime?" To the surprise of his students, who had expected him to refer to chloroform, Dr. Simpson replied, "My most valuable discovery was when I learned that I was a sinner and that Jesus Christ was my Saviour."

Likewise, the apostle Paul, when considering his impressive life record, ended up considering all his accomplishments as valueless as dung when he met Christ. "Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of

Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless" (Philippians 3:4, 5).

"Are they Hebrews? so am I. Are they Israelites? so am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? so am I. Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren" (2 Corinthians 11: 22–26).

"But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and **do count them but dung, that I may win Christ**" (Philippians 3:7, 8, emphasis added).

"While temporal honor and riches and power are the great objects of ambition with the men of this world, the Lord points out something more worthy of our highest aspirations:

"Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the Lord" (Jeremiah 9:23, 24)."⁴

Because He is our Creator

Ever since the inception of sin, the human race has been inventing many different things to worship and glorify. Some worship the moon, the stars, the sun, the river, the trees and various

things in nature. In certain cultures and religions, a mere human being is exalted as a god and given respect, honor and glory equal to that which is given to the true God. In ancient and even modern times, some have crafted objects of wood, stones, or precious metals, placing them in a worship hall, bowing down to them, glorifying them, and worshipping them. But the Lord has not left us in darkness about the utter futility and sin of such practices. (See Isaiah 44:8–21.)

In view of the fact that God is our Creator and that we are His creatures, we are duty bound to give "the glory due unto his name" and to no one and nothing else. We must "worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness" (Psalm 29:2). We should be ready to say, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake" (115:1). And finally, we are to teach the people to "Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters" (Revelation 14:7).

Because He is our Redeemer

Giving the glory back to God is related to His great plan of saving fallen humanity. When Adam fell, all of humanity fell. The apostle Paul explained: "As by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation" (Romans 5:18). "As related to the first Adam, men receive from him nothing but guilt and the sentence of death."⁵

Yet as soon as sin entered, the plan of redemption was executed at once. "The Godhead was stirred with pity for the race, and the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit gave themselves to the working out of the plan of redemption. In order fully to carry out his plan, it was decided that Christ, the only begotten Son of God, should give Himself an offering for sin."⁶

"By His incarnation, Christ was made fully competent to place man where he would no longer be an outcast."⁷ As Christ took on human form, He became "the representative of the race."⁸

“None need abandon themselves to discouragement and despair. Satan may come to you with the cruel suggestion, ‘Yours is a hopeless case. You are irredeemable.’ But there is hope for you in Christ. God does not bid us overcome in our own strength. He asks us to come close to His side. Whatever difficulties we labor under, which weigh down soul and body, He waits to make us free.

“He who took humanity upon Himself knows how to sympathize with the sufferings of humanity. Not only does Christ know every soul, and the peculiar needs and trials of that soul, but He knows all the circumstances that chafe and perplex the spirit. His hand is outstretched in pitying tenderness to every suffering child. Those who suffer most have

most of His sympathy and pity. He is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and He desires us to lay our perplexities and troubles at His feet and leave them there.

“It is not wise to look to ourselves and study our emotions. If we do this, the enemy will present difficulties and temptations that weaken faith and destroy courage. Closely to study our emotions and give way to our feelings is to entertain doubt and entangle ourselves in perplexity. We are to look away from self to Jesus.”⁹

Our greatest problem is that every one of us was born in sin and we all fall short of the glory of God. How can we, whom the Word of God has condemned as sinners, be found *not guilty*? Our only assurance for redemption is “in Christ Jesus, who

of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 1:30, 31).

He is our Sanctifier

Human beings in their own finite strength cannot perfectly obey God’s law, which is “holy, just, and good” (Romans 7:12). Consequently, none of us is righteous (Romans 3:10), because “all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags.” (Isaiah 64:6). But that which we cannot accomplish, Christ has done for us. By assuming human nature and taking on human flesh, He developed a perfect character through obedience to God’s commandments. The apostle Paul explains: “And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Philippians 2:8). “Christ, coming to the earth as man, lived a holy life, and developed a perfect character. These He offers as a free gift to all who will receive them.”¹⁰

It is interesting to realize that “the religious services, the prayers, the praise, the penitent confession of sin ascend from true believers as incense to the heavenly sanctuary, but passing through the corrupt channels of humanity, they are so defiled that unless purified by blood, they can never be of value with God. They ascend not in spotless purity, and unless the Intercessor, who is at God’s right hand, presents and purifies all by His righteousness, it is not acceptable to God. All incense from earthly tabernacles must be moist with the cleansing drops of the blood of Christ. He holds before the Father the censer of His own merits, in which there is no taint of earthly corruption. He gathers into this censer the prayers, the praise, and the confessions of His people, and with these He puts His own spotless righteousness. Then, perfumed with the merits of Christ’s propitiation, the incense comes up before God wholly and entirely acceptable. Then gracious answers are returned.

“O, that all may see that everything in obedience, in penitence, in



praise and thanksgiving, must be placed upon the glowing fire of the righteousness of Christ. The fragrance of this righteousness ascends like a cloud around the mercy seat.”¹¹

“Christ came to make us ‘partakers of the divine nature,’ and His life declares **that humanity, combined with divinity**, does not commit sin.”¹² “Could we see all the activity of human instrumentality, as it appears before God, we would see that only the work accomplished by much prayer, which is sanctified by the merit of Christ, will stand the test of the judgment.”¹³ “Human effort without the merit of Christ, is worthless.”¹⁴ “It is the fragrance of **the merit of Christ** that makes our good works acceptable to God. . . . Our works in and of themselves have no merit.”¹⁵

“God will not be pleased with anything less than the best we can offer. Those who love Him with all the heart, will desire to give Him the best service of the life, and they will be constantly seeking to bring every power of their being into harmony with the laws that will promote their ability to do His will.”¹⁶ “For it is God which worketh in you **both to will and to do** of his good pleasure” (Philippians 2:13, emphasis added). And in so doing “the pardoned soul goes on from grace to grace, from light to a greater light. He can say with rejoicing, ‘Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us’ (Titus 3:5).”¹⁷

Because He is our supplier

Christ declares: “Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?” (Matthew 6:26). “To the death of Christ we owe even this earthly life. The bread we eat is the purchase of His broken body. The water we drink is bought by His spilled blood. Never one, saint or sinner, eats his daily food, but he is nourished by the body and the blood of Christ. The cross of Calvary is stamped on every loaf. It is reflected in every water spring. All

this Christ has taught in appointing the emblems of His great sacrifice. The light shining from that Communion service in the upper chamber makes sacred the provisions for our daily life. The family board becomes as the table of the Lord, and every meal a sacrament.”¹⁸

“Our Lord adapts Himself to our special needs. He is a shade on our right hand. He walks close by our side, ready to supply all our necessities. He comes very near to those who are engaged in willing service for Him. He knows everyone by name. O what assurances we have of the tender love of Christ.”¹⁹ The apostle Paul emphasizes that “God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:19). “When the Lord gives us a work to do, let us not stop to inquire into the reasonableness of the command or the probable result of our efforts to obey it. The supply in our hands may seem to fall far short of our needs; but in the hands of the Lord it will be more than sufficient.”²⁰ “All our troubles we may take to God. His hand of infinite love is moved to supply our needs. How thankful I am that we have only one day to live at a time. One day to keep our souls stayed upon, one day to watch, one day to progress in the spiritual life and thus our days may be fruitful, precious days to us.”²¹

Conclusion

To be able to truly give all glory to God, as repentant sinners, we are to look away from ourselves and fix our eyes upon “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29)—and by beholding Him, we become changed. Fear is turned to joy, doubts to hope. Gratitude springs up. The stony heart is broken. A tide of love sweeps into the soul. Christ is in the renewed heart—a well of water springing up unto everlasting life.

“When we see Jesus, a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief, working to save the lost, slighted, scorned, derided, driven from city to city till His mission was accomplished; when we behold Him in Gethsemane, sweating great drops of blood, and on

the cross dying in agony—when we see this, self will no longer clamor to be recognized. Looking unto Jesus, we shall be ashamed of our coldness, our lethargy, our self-seeking. We shall be willing to be anything or nothing, so that we may do heart service for the Master. We shall rejoice to bear the cross after Jesus, to endure trial, shame, or persecution for His dear sake.”²²

“When the redeemed stand in the presence of God, they will see how short-sighted were their conclusions as to what heaven records as success. As they review their efforts to achieve success they will see how foolish were their plans, how petty their supposed trials, how unreasonable their doubts. They will see how often they brought failure to their work by not taking God at His word. And one truth will stand out in clear lines: that position does not prepare a man for entrance into the heavenly courts. They will see, too, that the honour given to man is due to God alone, that to Him belongs all the glory. From the lips of the angelic choir and the redeemed host will peal forth the chorus: ‘Great and marvellous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints. Who shall not fear Thee, O Lord, and glorify Thy name? for Thou only art holy’ (Revelation 15:3, 4).”²³ R

References

- ¹ *Education*, p. 29.
- ² *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 154.
- ³ *Testimonies*, vol. 7, pp. 199, 200.
- ⁴ *Selected Messages*, bk. 2, pp. 139, 140.
- ⁵ *Child Guidance*, p. 475.
- ⁶ *The Review and Herald*, May 2, 1912.
- ⁷ *The Signs of the Times*, June 17, 1897.
- ⁸ *Confrontation*, p. 51.
- ⁹ *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 249.
- ¹⁰ *The Desire of Ages*, p. 762.
- ¹¹ *Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 344.
- ¹² *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 180. [Emphasis added.]
- ¹³ *Christian Service*, p. 263.
- ¹⁴ *Evangelism*, p. 192.
- ¹⁵ *God's Amazing Grace*, p. 244. [Emphasis added.]
- ¹⁶ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 352, 353.
- ¹⁷ *Faith and Works*, p. 101.
- ¹⁸ *The Desire of Ages*, p. 660.
- ¹⁹ *Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 16.
- ²⁰ *Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 466.
- ²¹ *This Day With God*, p. 27.
- ²² *The Desire of Ages*, p. 439.
- ²³ *Testimonies*, vol. 7, p. 28.

MOVING? Please let us know.

THE BIBLE

*This little book I'd rather own
Than all the gold and gems,
That e'er in monarchs' coffers shone—
Than all their diadems.
Nay; were the seas one chrysolite,
The earth one golden ball,
And diamonds all the stars of night,
This book were worth them all.*

*How baleful to Ambition's eye
His blood-wrung spoils must gleam,
When Death's uplifted hand is high,
His life a vanished dream!
Then hear him with his gasping breath
For one poor moment crave!
Fool! Wouldst thou stay the arm of Death,
Ask of thy gold to save!*

*No, no; the soul ne'er found relief
In glittering hoards of wealth,
Gems dazzle not the eye of grief,
Gold cannot purchase health;
But here a blessed balm appears
To heal the deepest woe;
And he that seeks this book in tears,
His tears shall cease to flow.*

*Here He who died on Calvary's tree
Hath made that promise blest:
"Ye heavy-laden, come to me,
And I will give you rest;
A bruised reed I will not break,
Nor contrite heart despise;
My burden's light, and all who take
My yoke, shall win the skies!"*

*Yes, yes; this little book is worth
All else to mortals given;
For what are all the joys of earth
Compared to joys of Heaven?
This is the guide our Father gave
To lead to realms of day—
A star whose luster gilds the grave,
The Light, the Life, the Way.*

William Leggett

