REFORMATION Vol. 59, No. 2

God's Grace
Mercy to Survive;
Power to Thrive



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

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Grace

Grace is a word characteristic of Christianity. No other religion knows it. It has a broad meaning—it is unmerited favor and power to do God's will. This blessing given for our regeneration or sanctification is also explained as a virtue coming from God or a state of sanctification enjoyed through divine assistance.

Practically all the Pauline epistles start with this kind of phrase: "Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 1:3). This same expression is repeated in several letters. It was a kind of regular salutation that introduced the apostle's messages. In 1 Timothy 1:2, he says: "Grace, mercy, and peace, from God our Father, and Jesus Christ our Lord."

John declares that "of his [Christ's] fulness have all we received, and grace for grace. For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John 1:16, 17).

What is God's purpose with His grace bestowed upon sinners?

In his letter to Titus, Paul explains: "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works" (Titus 2:11-14). God's purpose in the whole plan of salvation, which is an eternal covenant of grace, is full restoration of His character in His sinful children. Peter confirmed that we need to "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18).

"In giving us the privilege of studying His Word, the Lord has set before us a rich banquet. Many are the benefits derived from feasting on His Word, which is represented by Him as His flesh and blood, His spirit and life. By partaking of this Word, our spiritual strength is increased; we grow in grace and in a knowledge of the truth. Habits of self-control are formed and strengthened. The infirmities of childhood-fretfulness, willfulness, selfishness, hasty words, passionate acts—disappear, and in their place, are developed the graces of Christian manhood and womanhood."1

"Before the foundations of the earth were laid the covenant was made that all who were obedient, all who should through the abundant grace provided become holy in character and without blame before God by appropriating that grace, should be children of God.

"We owe everything to grace, free grace, sovereign grace. Grace in the covenant ordained our adoption. Grace in the Saviour effected our redemption, our regeneration, and our adoption to heirship with Christ."²

Peter declared that "grace and peace" are multiplied unto us through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord (2 Peter 1:3). He echoes the words of Christ uttered in His intercessory prayer before going to Gethsemane and Calvary: "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3).

"He who does not climb the ladder of progress and add grace to grace "is blind, and cannot see afar off." He fails to discern that without taking these successive steps in ascending the ladder round after round, in growing in grace and the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, he is not placing himself in a position where the light of God above the ladder is reflected upon him. As he does not add grace to grace, he has forgotten the claims of God upon him, and that he was to receive the forgiveness of sins through obedience to the requirements of God. He is in the position of a sinner before God. If he has the graces of Christ he will exercise and increase them, but if he does not bear fruit in good works to the glory of God he remains in a state of blindness and ignorance, self-indulgence, and sin. He "cannot see afar off." His eyes are fastened upon the earth, not on God above the ladder."3

Then the entire process of our salvation depends on God's wonderful grace. Paul summed it up when he wrote: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:8, 9).

On accepting God's saving grace depends our present and eternal life. Many refuse salvation because it comes from God's grace. But there isn't any other option. Grace or grace. We must be thankful to God who provided by His grace everything we need to be restored to His original purpose with humanity.

"To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen" (2 Peter 3:18, last part). R

- ¹ Child Guidance, pp. 505, 506.
- ² God's Amazing Grace, p. 54.
- ³ Manuscript Releases, vol. 19, pp. 350, 351.

Grace Unveiled on Galvary

by Davi P. Silva

od forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Galatians 6:14).

"For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. . . . For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God" (1 Corinthians 1:18, 22–24).

"I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2, RSV).

Why was the sacrifice of Christ on Calvary so essential for the life and work of Paul and why is it so vital for our salvation today?

Without the death of Christ on the cross, there would be no salvation at all. Why not?

When we consider the New Covenant, the Covenant of Grace, we understand that even though this covenant was an everlasting covenant, it is called the New Covenant because its validity depended on the sacrifice of Christ on Calvary.

God couldn't forgive sinners at the expense of His justice. Sin must be punished with eternal death. Since the

broken law of God is an eternal law, only the Creator could pay the price of its transgression. It is true that grace started working on the same day man disobeyed the Lord, because Christ offered Himself to pay the penalty for sin on the same day. But the assurance of grace depended on His victory on the cross.

"Adam listened to the words of the tempter, and yielding to his insinuations, fell into sin. Why was not the death penalty at once enforced in his case?-Because a ransom was found. God's only begotten Son volunteered to take the sin of man upon Himself, and to make an atonement for the fallen race. There could have been no pardon for sin had this atonement not been made. Had God pardoned Adam's sin without an atonement, sin would have been immortalized, and would have been perpetuated with a boldness that would have been without restraint."1

God couldn't just say: "You are forgiven. Let's simply forget everything!" Only the sacrifice of One who was perfectly just, and whose authority was above any law, could expiate sin by being able to forgive the transgression.

"The instant man accepted the temptations of Satan, and did the very things God had said he should not do, Christ, the Son of God, stood between the living and the dead, saying, 'Let the punishment fall on Me. I will stand in man's place. He shall have another chance.'

"As soon as there was sin, there was a Saviour. Christ knew that He would have to suffer, yet He became man's substitute. As soon as Adam sinned, the Son of God presented Himself as surety for humanity, with just as much power to avert the doom pronounced upon the guilty as when He died upon the cross of Calvary." ²

Only by developing a perfect character in full harmony with the principles of God's holy law, and dying for guilty man, could Christ save the repented sinner from eternal death. And this Christ did. During His whole life on earth, He formed a spotless and perfect character. Besides that, since man had transgressed the law, someone else must die in his stead so that the eternal debt with the law could be paid.

When Adam and Eve disobeyed the word of God, sadness filled the heavenly environment. Angels ceased singing and all the musical instruments stopped sounding. Then the heavenly "Trio" met together to implement the plan of salvation. After that solemn meeting, Christ invited the whole heavenly host to unveil to them the devised plan for the restoration of humanity. Christ explained to the inhabitants of heaven that He would take man's place, live a life of sacrifice and self-denial, and finally die a terrible death of a criminal.

The angels became deeply sad, and offered themselves to die in man's instead. However, Christ explained to them that only a Creator could redeem the transgression of an eternal law. The life of a creature would never be sufficient to expiate sin. If the death of a pure, holy angel couldn't expiate man's transgression, how could a sinful man's works expiate his sins? That is the main reason that we are saved solely by grace. The best that faithful humanity can do is defiled and contaminated by our sinful condition. Our only hope for eternal salvation depends upon the perfect righteousness of Christ, which includes His perfect life and His atoning sacrifice on Calvary.

"The highest angel in heaven had not the power to pay the ransom for one lost soul. Cherubim and seraphim have only the glory with which they are endowed by the Creator as His creatures, and the reconciliation of man to God could be accomplished only through a mediator who was equal with God, possessed of attributes that would dignify, and declare him worthy to treat with the infinite God in man's behalf, and also represent God to a fallen world. Man's substitute and surety must have man's nature, a connection with the human family whom he was to represent, and, as God's ambassador, he must partake of the divine nature, have a connection with the Infinite, in order to manifest God to the world, and be a mediator between God and man.

"These qualifications were found alone in Christ. Clothing His divinity with humanity, He came to earth to be called the Son of man and the Son of God. He was the surety for man, the ambassador for God--the surety for man to satisfy by His righteousness in man's behalf the demands of the law, and the representative of God to make manifest His character to a fallen race." ³

Our mind is too limited to understand fully the tremendous sacrifice that Christ went through during those terrible hours on the cross, when He felt deeply the separation between Him and the Father. As a matter of fact, only those who will be eternally lost will feel something that Christ felt during those agonizing hours. But grace could be bestowed upon guilty humanity only by having Christ fully satisfy the measure of God's justice.

Even if Christ had lived an absolutely perfect life and decided to return to Heaven without dying for humanity, there would be no grace for the sinners. Then the sacrifice of Christ consummated on Calvary became a true source of grace for the entire race.

It is this grace that is offered to all who desire salvation. Christ's work for sinners in the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary provides mercy and grace for all who are seriously interested in their own salvation.

"We must center our hopes of heaven upon Christ alone, because He is our Substitute and Surety. We have transgressed the law of God, and by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified. The best efforts that man in his own strength can make are valueless to meet the holy and just law that he has transgressed; but through faith in Christ he may claim the righteousness of the Son of God as all-sufficient. Christ satisfied the demands of the law in His human nature. He bore the curse of the law for the sinner, made an atonement for him, 'that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life' (John 3:16). Genuine faith appropriates the righteousness of Christ, and the sinner is made an overcomer with Christ: for he is made a partaker of the divine nature, and thus divinity and humanity are combined."4

"In the prophecy of Daniel it was recorded of Christ that He shall 'make reconciliation for iniquity, and . . . bring in everlasting righteousness' (Daniel 9:24). Every soul may say: "By His perfect obedience He has satisfied the claims of the law, and my only hope is found in looking to Him as my substitute and surety,

who obeyed the law perfectly for me. By faith in His merits I am free from the condemnation of the law. He clothes me with His righteousness, which answers all the demands of the law. I am complete in Him who brings in everlasting righteousness. He presents me to God in the spotless garment of which no thread was woven by any human agent. All is of Christ, and all the glory, honor, and majesty are to be given to the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world.

"Many think that they must wait for a special impulse in order that they may come to Christ; but it is necessary only to come in sincerity of purpose, deciding to accept the offers of mercy and grace that have been extended to us. We are to say: 'Christ died to save me. The Lord's desire is that I should be saved, and I will come to Jesus just as I am without delay. I will venture upon the promise. As Christ draws me, I will respond.' The apostle says, 'With the heart man believeth unto righteousness' (Romans 10:10). 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."5

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

"How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation"? (Hebrews 2:3). \mathscr{R}

- 1 The Review and Herald, April 23, 1901.
- ² The Faith I Live By, p. 75.
- ³ Selected Messages, bk. 1, p. 257.
- ⁴ Faith and Works, pp. 93, 94.
- ⁵ Selected Messages, bk. 1, p. 396.

Understanding God's Matchless Love

by Peter C. Cay-ohen

Part 2 of 2

The Father's face was hidden

"About the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46).

"Oh, was there ever suffering and sorrow like that endured by the dying Saviour! It was the sense of His Father's displeasure which made His cup so bitter. It was not bodily suffering which so quickly ended the life of Christ upon the cross. It was the crushing weight of the sins of the world, and a sense of His Father's wrath. The Father's glory and sustaining presence had left Him, and despair pressed its crushing weight of darkness upon Him and forced from His pale and quivering lips the anguished cry: 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?' "1

"Why was the suffering of Christ more dreadful than that of other persons who have yielded their lives for His sake? If the sufferings of Christ consisted in physical pain alone, then his death was no more painful than that of some of the martyrs. Bodily pain was but an item in the agony of God's dear Son. The sins of the world were upon him, also the sense of his Father's wrath as He

suffered the penalty of the law. It was these that crushed His divine soul. It was the hiding of his Father's face, a sense that His own dear Father had forsaken him, which brought despair. The separation that sin makes between God and man was fully realized and keenly felt by the innocent, suffering Man of Calvary. He was oppressed by the powers of darkness. He had not one ray of light to brighten the future. And He was struggling with the power of Satan, who was declaring that Christ was in his hands, that he was superior in strength to the Son of God, that God had disowned His Son, and that He was no longer in the favor of God any more than himself. If He was indeed still in favor with God, why need He die? God could save Him from death. Christ yielded not in the least degree to the tormenting foe, even in His bitterest anguish. Legions of evil angels were all about the Son of God. Yet the holy angels were bidden not to break their ranks and engage in conflict with the taunting reviling foe. Heavenly angels were not permitted to minister unto the anguished spirit of the Son of God. It was in this terrible hour of darkness, the face of His Father hidden, legions of

evil angels enshrouding Him, the sins of the world upon him, that the words were wrenched from his lips, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me' (Matthew 27:46)."²

"As He hung upon the cross, angels gathered about the divine Sufferer. As they looked upon their loved Commander, and heard His cry, they asked with intense emotion, 'Will not the Lord Jehovah save Him? Shall not that soul-piercing cry of God's only begotten Son prevail?' We ask, What if it had? What if the world had been left to perish with its accumulation of guilt, while the Commander of all heaven again took up His kingly crown and royal robe, leaving an ungrateful, unappreciative people to perish in their sins?"

Why?

"It was **our sins** that caused the Saviour of the world such intense agony, pouring darkness into His soul, and extorting from His pale lips the anguished cry, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' "4

"The cup of suffering was placed in His hand, **as if He were the guilty one**, and He drained it to the dregs. He bore the sin of the world to the bitter end. And yet men continue to sin, and Christ continues to feel the consequences of their sin as if he Himself were the guilty one.

"Did the Father hear the cry of His Son in His agonized humiliation, 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?' That cry, wrenched from the divine Sufferer in that hour of anguish, was an appeal to the Father. No line can fathom, no measurement compute, the love revealed by the cross of Calvary. We could understand it more fully if we were capable of seeing it as it is."

"Christ the sinless became sin for man. He bore the guilt of transgression, and the hiding of His Father's face, until His heart was broken and His life crushed out. All this sacrifice was made that sinners might be redeemed."

Was He "forsaken" in the sense of being abandoned? No—and neither are we!

"Amid the awful darkness, apparently forsaken of God, Christ had drained the last dregs in the cup of human woe. In those dreadful hours He had relied upon the evidence of His Father's acceptance heretofore given Him. He was acquainted with the character of His Father; He understood His justice, His mercy, and His great love. By faith He rested in Him whom it had ever been His joy to obey. And as in submission He committed Himself to God, the sense of the loss of His Father's favor was withdrawn. By faith, Christ was victor."7

"Christ is our example. In His life on earth He withstood the temptations of the enemy; for He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. No man will ever be called upon to endure what Jesus had to endure. No man will ever have occasion to cry out, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' Jesus endured the hiding of His Father's face, that God might never have to forsake the children of earth, unless they deliberately turned from Him.

In the light of the cross of Calvary, I ask you if you cannot see why the transgressor cannot escape the penalty of the broken law. Death is the wages of sin, and the law cannot be changed in the least to make a way of escape for its transgressor. The anguish of Christ on Calvary's cross speaks louder than any argument that can be presented, to prove the immutability of the law. But Jesus bore the penalty of the law, and tasted death for every man. But the tomb could not hold Him."8

"In that thick darkness God's presence was hidden. He makes darkness His pavilion, and conceals His glory from human eyes. God and His holy angels were beside the cross. The Father was with His Son. Yet His presence was not revealed. Had His glory flashed forth from the cloud, every human beholder would have been destroyed. And in that dreadful hour Christ was not to be comforted with the Father's presence. He trod the wine press alone, and of the people there was none with Him."

Bodily pain was but a small part of the agony of Christ. There was a pain greater than the bodily pain of the crucifixion that Christ experienced. The weight of the sins of the whole world was laid upon Him and the sense of the curse of the Father's wrath against sin crushed His soul. The hiding of the Father's face—a sense that His Father had forsaken Himbrought despair upon Christ. The separation that sin makes between God and man was fully realized and keenly felt by the innocent, suffering man of Calvary. This was what Christ pleaded with His Father to be taken away from Him.

But the Father said, in essence, "No, I cannot remove the cup (curse) from you. This is the only way we could save humanity from eternal destruction." We know this was the case because we read that the Father "spared not His own son" (Romans 8:32). In that fearful moment when the destiny of humanity hung in the balance, Jesus made His final decision, saying:

"Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.... O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done" (Matthew 26:39, 42).

Why was it that the Father did not spare His own Son? It was because the Father loves us so much that He gave His only begotten Son to be made a curse for us. It was because Jesus also loves us so much that He was willing to be cursed for us, to say goodbye to life forever, that you and I might enjoy eternal life.

The Father loves us, not because of the sacrifice made by His Son in our behalf, but He provided the sacrifice because He loves us. His beloved Son was the medium through which God the Father could pour out His infinite love upon us, sinful and unworthy as we are. "Look unto Jesus, not yourself Christ is the Author and Finisher of vour faith. Trust the One who has helped you in the past to hold fast to the faith. In the hour of death Christ cried out, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' Had God forsaken Him? No, no. Neither has He forsaken any soul who trusts in Him. He will bring them off victorious, and give them the crown of life."10

A new way of looking at God

This fact tells us that we should no longer think of God as a being whose chief attribute is stern justice, standing as a severe judge who is watching with jealous eye to discern our errors and mistakes, that He may visit judgments upon us. Rather, we should see God as He really is, a loving Father whose heart yearns over His children with a love stronger than death. To appreciate God's matchless love, what did the apostle John urge us to do? Behold what manner of love the Father has given us, that we should be called the sons of God.

John understood something of the height, the depth, and the breadth of the Father's love toward our perishing race and His heart was filled with admiration and reverence. Finding no suitable words to express this love of God, he calls upon all people to behold it:

"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God" (1 John 3:1). What a value this places upon humanity!

Changed by beholding

God's love is without a parallel in its purity and power. By beholding the marvelous love of God, sinners may be transformed into saints. One who experienced the transforming power of God's love in her own life wrote:

"He who beholds the Saviour's matchless love will be elevated in thought, purified in heart, transformed in character. He will go forth to be a light to the world, to reflect in some degree this mysterious love. The more we contemplate the cross of Christ, the more fully shall we adopt the language of the apostle when he said, 'God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world' (Galatians 6:14)."

Knowing that Christ "has borne our grief and carried our sorrows ... smitten of God, and afflicted"; that "he was wounded for our transgressions," "was bruised for our iniquities," "and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:4-6), let us appreciate this amazing sacrifice that Christ has exerted to reclaim us back to our Father's house. Let us be encouraged to give our heart's loving service to our Creator and Redeemer. Instead of doubting God's love and wondering in the desert of uncertainty and hopeless despair, let us follow the divine counsel given by the apostle Paul:

"Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:16).

Moreover, let us not resist the power of God's love now drawing each one of us toward a loving relationship with Him through His Son Jesus Christ. God is telling us individually: "I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee" (Jeremiah 31:3).

Indeed God loves us, and He wants us to enjoy life to the fullest in His kingdom. But He does not use force to compel us to follow Him. He is drawing us with the "cords" and "bands" of His matchless "love" (Hosea 11:4). If we allow ourselves to be drawn by the love of God, the experience of the apostles will become our experience. The Spirit of Prophecy beautifully explains the real motivation to follow Christ as follows:

"It is not the fear of punishment, or the hope of everlasting reward, that leads the disciples of Christ to follow Him. They behold the Saviour's matchless love, revealed throughout His pilgrimage on earth, from the manger of Bethlehem to Calvary's cross, and the sight of Him attracts, it softens and subdues the soul. Love awakens in the heart of the beholders. They hear His voice, and they follow Him." 12

The assurance of final victory

It is good to allow ourselves to be drawn by the love of God, to have our hearts softened and subdued, and be enlisted as followers of Christ. It is true that the Christian life is a battle and a march, and the way we are traveling is narrow (Matthew 7:13, 14), and trials abound to test our characters and faith to the utmost. But we should not fear and let our courage fail. Our Saviour is as compassionate and powerful today as He ever was and He assures us of final victory through His grace:

"Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Philippians 1:6; 4:13).

"Though now He has ascended to the presence of God, and shares the throne of the universe, Jesus has lost none of His compassionate nature. Today the same tender, sympathizing heart is open to all the woes of humanity. Today the hand that was pierced is reached forth to bless more abundantly His people that are in the world. 'And they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand.'

"The soul that has given himself to Christ is more precious in His sight than the whole world. The Saviour would have passed through the agony of Calvary that one might be saved in His kingdom. He will never abandon one for whom He has died. Unless His followers choose to leave Him, He will hold them fast.

"Through all our trials we have a never-failing Helper. He does not leave us alone to struggle with temptation, to battle with evil, and be finally crushed with burdens and sorrow. Though now He is hidden from mortal sight, the ear of faith can hear His voice saying, Fear not; I am with you. 'I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive forevermore' (Revelation 1:18). I have endured your sorrows, experienced your struggles, encountered your temptations. I know your tears; I also have wept. The griefs that lie too deep to be breathed into any human ear, I know. Think not that you are desolate and forsaken. Though your pain touch no responsive chord in any heart on earth, look unto Me, and live. 'The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of My peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee' (Isaiah 54:10)."13

- ¹ Testimonies, vol. 2, p. 209. [Emphasis added.]
- ² Pamphlet 169, The Sufferings of Christ, p. 14. [Emphasis added.]
- ³ Manuscript Releases, vol. 12, p. 407.
- ⁴ The Signs of the Times, January 6, 1881.
- ⁵ Manuscript Releases, vol. 13, pp. 369, 370.
- ⁶ The Great Controversy, p. 540.
- ⁷ The Desire of Ages, p. 756.
- ⁸ The Review and Herald, July 19, 1892. [Emphasis added.]
- ⁹ The Desire of Ages, pp. 753, 754.
- ¹⁰ Manuscript Releases, vol. 7, p. 154. [Emphasis added.]
- ¹¹ The Desire of Ages, p. 661.
- ¹² Ibid., p. 480.
- ¹³ Ibid., pp. 480, 483.

Gracifies That Fortifies

by Rolly Dumaguit

ob, in his deepest spiritual struggle, was asking this vital question: "How . . . can man be justified with God? or how can he be clean that is born of a woman? Behold even to the moon, and it shineth not; yea, the stars are not pure in his sight. How much less man, that is a worm? And the son of man, which is a worm?" (Job 25:4–6).

Today, many are asking the same question, "How can I be right before God?" The truth is that salvation is for everyone and everyone has the opportunity to be saved! But sadly, not everyone will receive this blessing. Although we have all the resources to know the truth, unfortunately, not everyone will be saved because they choose not to be saved. The prophet Jeremiah said, "Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, we will not walk therein" (Jeremiah 6:16).

Ever since sin entered the world, people have sought to invent ways to be reconciled with God. Adam and Eve sewed a fig leaf garment in order to try to be comfortable when they would meet with their Maker. Over succeeding generations, people sacrificed the blood of innocent

children and virgin women, thinking to placate the wrath of the type of Omnipotent they pictured. Today, some well-intended Christians have invented pilgrimages, monasteries and penances, thinking that the more sacrifices they undergo, the more they will be acceptable to God. Even the Jews and some well-meaning Christians chosen by God as depositories of His oracles have not always been exempt from falling short in understanding the plan of redemption. The scribes, for example, thought that obedience to the minutest details of the binding claims of the moral law of God would take them to heaven. Yet, on the other hand, the majority of those who read the Bible today believe that the law was done away with by Christ. Their idea is that there is nothing to do on our part-just believe in Christ and He will do the rest.

The futility of human devising

We can really understand how futile is the strength and effort of human beings without the mercy of God. The apostle Paul recounted all of his unsuccessful struggles against sin. He bemoaned, "We know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. 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. Now if I do that I would not. it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Romans 7:14-23). After making a thorough self-examination, he recognized his powerless and hopeless situation with the conclusion, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (verse 24).

The only way to sure reconciliation

King David was not only guilty of murder and adultery, but also of deliberate lying. When confronted by the prophet Nathan about his sinful activities, he did not attempt

to justify himself; he recognized that was impossible. So, in Psalm 51 is recorded the unconditional confession and repentance of David: "I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.... Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit" (Psalm 51:3, 4, 10-12).

"Those who have not humbled their souls before God in acknowledging their guilt have not yet fulfilled the first condition of acceptance. If we have not experienced that repentance . . . and have not confessed our sin with true humiliation of soul and brokenness of spirit, abhorring our iniquity, we have never sought truly for the forgiveness of sin; and if we have never sought, we have never found the peace of God. The only reason why we may not have remission of sins that are past is that we are not willing to humble our proud hearts and comply with the conditions of the word of truth."1

"The sense of need, the recognition of our poverty and sin, is the very first condition of acceptance with God."²

Forgiving grace

In answer to any sincere and contrite request, God in His loving way will give us a new heart. "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).

In giving this new heart, forgiving grace will be implanted, "for by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:

not of works, lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:8, 9).

"The miracle-working power of Christ's grace is revealed in the creation in man of a new heart, a higher life, a holier enthusiasm. God says: 'A new heart also will I give you' (Ezekiel 36:26). Is not this, the renewal of man, the greatest miracle that can be performed? What cannot the human agent do who by faith takes hold of the divine power?" ³

"When in conversion the sinner finds peace with God through the blood of the atonement, the Christian life has but just begun.

The grace that Christ implants in the soul . . . creates in man enmity against Satan. Without this converting grace and renewing power, man would continue the captive of Satan, a servant ever ready to do his bidding. But the new principle in the soul creates conflict where hitherto had been peace. The power which Christ imparts, enables man to resist the tyrant and usurper. Whoever is seen to abhor sin instead of loving it, whoever resists and conquers those passions that have held sway within, displays the operation of a principle wholly from above."4

"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." 5

"The grace of Christ is freely to justify the sinner without merit or claim on his part. Justification is a full, complete pardon of sin. The moment a sinner accepts Christ by faith, that moment he is pardoned. The righteousness of Christ is imputed to him, and he is no more to doubt God's forgiving grace." 6

Fortifying grace

The grace of God is very important for a forgiven sinner from the start of

his/her spiritual journey until the end. It is not enough that we are forgiven; we need fortifying grace to obey God's holy oracles. "Divine grace is needed at the beginning, divine grace at every step of advance, and divine grace alone can complete the work."

When the apostle Paul met Jesus on the way to Damascus, he experienced a real conversion in his life. Those three days of darkness were the brightest days of his spiritual experience. He recollected by memory all those verses written by the prophets of old in connection with the Messiah. He could now see clearly how these prophecies were directly fulfilled in the life of Jesus Christ. His zeal in persecuting the church was now refocused toward the preaching of the gospel of Christ. His only object at hand became to unfurl the banner of Christ in foreign lands. Whatever would be the prospect of his future, he made sure that first and foremost of all, his greatest need in his ministry would be the presence of Christ. "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)

The apostle experienced spiritual death of his past life. "I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily" (1 Corinthians 15:31). He also resurrected in newness of life: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20). He further demonstrated that this new life in Christ was powerful to resist the enemy because the human flesh was no longer controlling his mind, "for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13, emphasis added). "To make God's grace our own, we must act our part. His grace is given to work in us to will and to do, but never

as a substitute for our effort.... Those who walk in the path of obedience will encounter many hindrances. Strong, subtle influences may bind them to the world; but the Lord is able to render futile every agency that works for the defeat of His chosen ones; in His strength they may overcome every temptation, conquer every difficulty."8

"Without the grace of Christ it is impossible to take one step in obedience to the law of God." 9

"We may grow in grace by improving through the grace we already have." ¹⁰

The continual service of love

Once God is in control of our being, He will implant in us His heavenly grace that will produce continual service of love in order to follow Him. "And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us" (Romans 5:5). "The whole work of grace is one continual service of love, of self-denying, self-sacrificing effort. . . . When men are bound together, not by force or self-interest, but by love, they show the working of an influence that is above every human influence." "11

"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." ¹²

Is it any wonder that in John 14:15 the Lord said, "If you love me, keep my commandments?" Would anyone question that? Is it important to be in love with God? How powerful will such a service of love be? "Love is power. Intellectual and spiritual strength are involved in this principle. Pure love has special efficacy to do good, and can do nothing but good. It prevents discord and misery and brings the truest happiness." ¹³

"Love cannot live without action, and every act increases, strengthens, and extends it. Love will gain the victory when argument and authority are powerless. Love works not for profit nor reward; yet God has ordained that great gain shall be the certain result of every labor of love. It is diffusive in its nature, and quiet in its operation, yet strong, mighty, to overcome great evils. It is melting and transforming in its influence, and will take hold of the lives of the sinful and affect their hearts when every other means has proved unsuccessful." ¹⁴

No wonder those apostles and martyrs in the history of Christendom were able to survive and accept the lot of an ignominious death! It is because they were inspired by the word of God, "for the love of Christ constraineth us" (2 Corinthians 5:14). "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, for thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:35-39).

Conclusion

In the culmination of Paul's ministry he focused only on the honor and glory that will be given for those who will overcome. In some of his voluminous writings he said, "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:13, 14). He added further, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge,

shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing" (2 Timothy 4:7–8).

Paul's struggles now are different than in the time of his early experiences. He is now totally dependent upon the grace of God. "Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:11–13).

The one great object of Paul was to give honor and glory to the Being he met on the way to Damascus. For us today we have the same grand object. "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.' " 15

Seeing that the signs of Jesus' coming are fulfilling every day, "let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us" (Hebrews 12:1). For "the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong. The weakest saint, as well as the strongest, may wear the crown of immortal glory. All may win who, through the power of divine grace, bring their lives into conformity to the will of Christ." ¹⁶

- $^{1}\, Mind,$ Character, and Personality, vol. 2, p. 456.
- ² Christ's Object Lessons, p. 152.
- ³ God's Amazing Grace, p. 253.
- ⁴ The Faith I Live By, p. 117. [Emphasis added.]
- ⁵ Selected Messages, bk. 1, p. 347.
- ⁶ The Faith I Live By, p. 107.
- ⁷ Testimonies to Ministers, p. 508.
- ⁸ God's Amazing Grace, p. 253.
- ⁹ Selected Messages, bk. 1, p. 372.
- ¹⁰ Faith and Works, p. 48.
- ¹¹ The Desire of Ages, pp. 677, 678.
- ¹² Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 353.
- ¹³ The Adventist Home, p. 195.
- ¹⁴ Gospel Workers, p. 312. [1892 edition.]
- ¹⁵ Faith and Works, p. 101.
- ¹⁶ The Acts of the Apostles, p. 313.



Is goodness really everywhere?

Language changes over the years, moving along with the flow of cultural trends. For example, people used to greet each other with, "How are you?" followed by the response, "I'm fine, thank you-and you?" This conventional way of greeting conveyed that thankfully all was going well and that the one greeting was just as important and worthy of interest and attention as the one greeted. Sometimes people still do ask about the wellbeing of the other person—but the odd change is that what used to be "I'm fine," seems to have typically become replaced with "I'm good." Notice the result: If I'm "good" and you're "good" and everybody else is "good" too, then whatever happened to what Jesus said about the goodness of humanity?

"There came one running, and kneeled to [Jesus], and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? **there is none good but** **one, that is, God"** (Mark 10:17, 18, emphasis added).

The man was correct in realizing that Jesus was indeed good, because He was indeed God. Yet the Lord here makes it clear that the human race is not inherently good—not a single one of us, including this man who was so eager to inquire of the Lord that he had come running, even kneeling before Him.

Jesus continued: "Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother. And he answered and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth. Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest" (Mark 10:19–21).

Most of us are familiar with this story. Here was a young man who had likely been a model youth among his peers. He had grown up knowing and keeping God's law, at least outwardly. As Jesus beheld him, He loved him—but He also saw the deeper picture: that there was something missing in this young man's experience. The succeeding verses reveal that the hidden issue was a lack of care for others less fortunate.

Perhaps the man had assumed that those less fortunate were less materially blessed by God because they were less "good" than he was. After all, he had known the law and kept it many years. So, he may have reasoned, God was simply being fair by giving him a lot because he deserved a lot.

How many of us assume that blessings come because we deserve a lot? Probably most. But "[God] maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust" (Matthew 5:45).

In reality, "God looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, that did seek God. Every one of them is gone back: they are altogether become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, not one" (Psalm 53:2, 3).

What about reformers?

Does this sad situation include me? Human nature supposes: "It's easy to see the flaws in everyone around me. I'm in a church with high standards, so my brethren should be without spot or wrinkle or any such thing; they are to be holy and blameless (Ephesians 5:27). I can see that they are not, so I deserve more." But what does God want us to realize?

"The disciple is not above his master: but every one that is perfect shall be as his master. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but perceivest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Either how canst thou say to thy brother, Brother, let me pull out the mote that is in thine eye, when thou thyself beholdest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to pull out the mote that is in thy brother's eye" (Luke 6:40–42).

This same passage in Matthew 7:3 warns that "thou considerest not" the beam in thine own eye—in other words, we tend not to think about this beam; we give it no consideration. After all, we may think we've got other religious things to think about (perhaps some pet doctrinal theory or religious controversy to distract us away from focusing on the investigative judgment, or church problem supposedly showing my life to be cleaner than someone else's). (Remember, God reads our motives!)

The similar passage in Luke says we don't even perceive this beam. That means not only do we not consider it; we don't even see it! Yet a beam is much bigger than a mote—and it's bigger than an entire eyeball, too! How could we possibly manage to miss it?

Self-examination at the last supper

Let us recall the scene: Jesus is with His twelve disciples at the last supper before His crucifixion. He utters the prophecy that one of them will betray Him. Nearly all are horrified at such a thought. Who would do such a thing? They immediately search their own hearts, freshly softened by the sight of their beloved Master having washed their feet (John chapter 13).

Matthew describes: "Now when the even was come, [Jesus] sat down with the twelve. And as they did eat, he said, Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me. And they were exceeding sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto him, Lord, is it I?" (Matthew 26:20–22).

The disciples dreaded the thought that any could be guilty of such a thing—yet they were so tenderhearted

"It seems that
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at this moment that they were open to digging deeper into their souls to see whatever might be the honest truth about themselves. All did this . . . except the disciple who really was guilty. He avoided the heart-searching moment.

"The disciples did not suspect Judas. But they saw that Christ appeared greatly troubled. A cloud settled over them all, a premonition of some dreadful calamity, the nature of which they did not understand. As they ate in silence, Jesus said, 'Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray Me' (Matthew 26:21). At these words amazement and consternation seized them. They could not comprehend how any one

of them could deal treacherously with their divine Teacher. For what cause could they betray Him? and to whom? Whose heart could give birth to such a design? Surely not one of the favored twelve, who had been privileged above all others to hear His teachings, who had shared His wonderful love, and for whom He had shown such great regard by bringing them into close communion with Himself!

"As they realized the import of His words, and remembered how true His sayings were, fear and self-distrust seized them. They began to search their own hearts to see if one thought against their Master were harbored there. With the most painful emotion, one after another inquired, 'Lord, is it I?' But Judas sat silent. John in deep distress at last inquired, 'Lord, who is it?' And Jesus answered, 'He that dippeth his hand with Me in the dish, the same shall betray Me. The Son of man goeth as it is written of Him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born' (Verses 23, 24). The disciples had searched one another's faces closely as they asked, 'Lord, is it I?' And now the silence of Judas drew all eyes to him. Amid the confusion of questions and expressions of astonishment, Judas had not heard the words of Jesus in answer to John's question. But now, to escape the scrutiny of the disciples, he asked as they had done, 'Master, is

So, Judas was finally stuck asking the question just to escape the scrutiny of his brethren. They had already been informed that he was the traitor, but somehow it had not registered in their minds. Now Judas' main preoccupation was not to please his Lord, but rather to keep his status in the group.

Avoid the shallow mentality: A social club full of "good" people

Like Judas, Ananias and Sapphira were bent on maintaining prestige in the congregation. Acts chapter 5:1–11 relates how they conspired to impress their brethren with a more extensive appearance of charity than they actually had. In another case, in John 9:19–22, the parents of a blind man whom Jesus had healed refused to confess the great Healer out of fear of losing their social status among their religious peers.

Further, "among the chief rulers also many believed on [Jesus]; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God" (John 12:42, 43). Today, in the current dispensation in which circumcision has been replaced by baptism, the fervent appeal of the apostle echoes down to us, the spiritual Jews awaiting the Lord's return:

"Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God? For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you. . . . For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God" (Romans 2:23, 24, 28, 29, emphasis added).

So, what is this circumcision of the heart? Circumcision is a cutting of the flesh-and likewise, the circumcision of the heart comes through the surgical expertise of God's word, which is "is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do" (Hebrews 4:12, 13).

"It is Christ who searches the hearts and tries the reins of the children of men. All things are naked and open before the eyes of Him with whom we have to do, neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight. In the days of ancient Israel the sacrifices brought to the high priest were cut open to the backbone to see if they were sound at heart. So the sacrifices we bring today are laid open before the piercing eye of our great High Priest. He opens and inspects every sacrifice brought by the human race, that He may prove whether it is worthy of being presented to the Father."²

Many of us unconsciously boast of a religious pedigree. Others boast of vast years of experience in the church. It seems that the longer we are connected with the present truth,

"But in reality,
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deserving—we're
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the more deserving we tend to think we are. But in reality, we're not more deserving—we're more accountable to God and others, and are without excuse.

Jesus warns, "that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more" (Luke 12:47, 48).

"To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (James 4:17). We like to expect unconditional love from God, but

do we render to Him unconditional confession of specific sins—with no self-justification, if's, and's or but's?

"Many have a form of godliness, their names are upon the church records; but they have a spotted record in heaven. The recording angel has faithfully written their deeds. Every selfish act, every wrong word, every unfulfilled duty, and every secret sin, with every artful dissembling, is faithfully chronicled in the book of records kept by the recording angel."

In such a light, am I really as good as I thought I was?

A lesson from a heathen commander

"When Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto him a centurion, beseeching him, and saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented. And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him" (Matthew 8:5–7).

Jesus was willing to heal the servant of a Roman soldier. Weren't this type of people usually the kind that the Jews would not mingle with? How had Christ come in contact with this man?

Luke gives the background:

"When [the centurion] heard of Jesus, he sent unto him the elders of the Jews, beseeching him that he would come and heal his servant. And when they came to Jesus, they besought him instantly, saying, That he was worthy for whom he should do this: For he loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue" (Luke 3:3–5). By this logic, although the man did not have a religious pedigree, he was supposedly worthy to receive a favor from the Healer because of financial favors he had rendered to the Jewish society.

Would Jesus be impressed with that? What did the man declare about himself?

"The centurion answered and said, **Lord**, **I am not worthy that**

thou shouldest come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed.

For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it" (Matthew 8:8, 9, emphasis added).

Here the centurion openly acknowledges the omnipotence and omnipresence of Christ and his own unworthiness. He boasts neither of his Roman military pedigree ("boss" status) nor of his generous philanthropy towards the national temple. Though evidently a wealthy man, he does not even boast of his high-end domicile as being a dwelling sufficiently adequate to welcome the Healer.

"When Jesus heard it, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the selfsame hour" (Matthew 8:10-13, emphasis added).

What's getting in our way?

The experience above clearly reveals that greater faith is somehow found outside of spiritual Israel than within it. What did the centurion have that the religious people did not? Or rather, what did he not have? He could boast of no religious pedigree, nor even a religious standing within the clique. He recognized that his monetary gifts and even his posh house weren't good enough. We need to learn from his attitude. "We have nothing to recommend us to God; but the plea that we may urge now and

ever is our utterly helpless condition that makes His redeeming power a necessity. Renouncing all selfdependence, we may look to the cross of Calvary and say—

'In my hand no price I bring; Simply to Thy cross I cling.' "4

A lesson from a frail, young airl

While in her youth, Ellen White dreamed: "If Jesus were upon earth, I would go to Him, and throw myself at His feet, and tell him all my sufferings. And if He would have mercy upon me, I would love Him always—He would not turn me away. Soon the door opened, and a person of beautiful form



and countenance entered. He looked upon me with pity. Said he, 'Do you wish to see Jesus? He is in the place, and you can see Him. Take everything that you possess and follow me.'

"Gladly did I gather up everything, every treasured trinket, and followed him who had given me the pleasing information. He led me to a steep, and it looked like a frail stairway. As I commenced to ascend the stairs, he gave me a word of caution, to keep my eyes fixed upwards, for if I looked down I should become dizzy and fall. Many seemed to be climbing up this steep stairway, and some fell before reaching the top. I succeeded in climbing to the top. Then my guide bid me lay everything at the door.

Cheerfully I laid down all I possessed. He then opened the door and told me to go in. As I entered I saw Jesus, so lovely and beautiful. His countenance expressed benevolence and majesty. I tried to shield myself from His piercing gaze. I thought He knew my heart, and every circumstance of my life. I tried not to look upon His face, but still His eyes were upon me. I could not escape His gaze. He then, with a smile, drew near me, and laid His hand upon my head, saying, 'Fear not.' The sound of His sweet voice, caused me to feel a thrill of happiness I never before experienced. I was too full of joy to utter a word. I grew weak, and fell prostrate at His feet. And while lying helpless, scenes of glory

> and beauty passed before me. I thought I was saved in heaven. At length my strength returned. I arose upon my feet. The loving eyes of Jesus were fixed upon me still, and He smiled upon me. His presence filled me with such holy awe that I could not endure it. My guide opened the door and I passed out. Then all things I had left at the door he handed me again. And he also handed me a green cord, coiled up, and he bid me wear it next my heart, and when I wished to see Jesus, to stretch this cord. I must not let it lie still any length of time; for if I should, it would become knotted and difficult to

straighten. I placed the cord near my heart, and joyfully went down the narrow stairway, praising the Lord as I went, and telling all I met where they could find Jesus. I then awoke."⁵

May God help us to be truly awestruck by this same precious assurance for every trembling soul. It is the only ground of hope for the "not-so-bad" who are often far worse in God's sight than the "bad"—and either way, it's the grace desperately needed by all.

- ¹ The Desire of Ages, p. 654.
- ² SDA Bible Commentary [E. G. White
- Comments], vol. 1, p. 1110. [Emphasis added.]
- ³ Testimonies, vol. 2, p. 442. [Emphasis added.]
- ⁴ The Desire of Ages, p. 317.
- ⁵ Spiritual Gifts, vol. 2, pp. 18-20.

Not as We Forgive Our Debtors

by Dina Melnychuk-Stratan

n our church, almost every
Sabbath, children are given the
opportunity to pray. We are very
pleased to hear their childlike
voices lifted up towards the
Heavenly Throne through the Lord's
Prayer. What we can learn from them
is simplicity and sincerity.

Once, however, one of them, probably by mistake, instead of saying, "and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors," prayed "and forgive us our debts not as we forgive our debtors." Amazed and surprised by what I had just heard, I opened my eyes to look at the child who was praying—and I said to myself, "This is the right way to pray; this is for us, the adults." It describes us perfectly—because we ask God to be forgiven, but when it's time for us to forgive, we find it to be very difficult.

The prayer ended, we rose, but those words were still resounding in my mind. Yes!!! I'm inclined to believe that if we were to pray the Lord's Prayer more often, we would become more kind and forgiving towards those who, in our mind, are guilty of offending us. Have we ever meditated deeply upon these words "and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors"?

How could God forgive our sins if we are unforgiving, vengeful and cannot forget the evil that has been done to us? How much longer are we going to stay in the same situation and deceive ourselves by thinking that we are Christians? If this is the case, then our going to church is in vain. How many fellow believers excuse themselves by thinking, "This is how I am, accept me as I am." Yes, people can accept you as you are and treat you in an insincere way—but how is God going to look at you?

"He that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there's no respect of persons" (Colossians 3:25).

God has given us clear instructions through Paul, "Grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption . . . And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Ephesians 4:30, 32).

If we are vengeful, unforgiving, or unkind, we are grieving the Holy Spirit. God clearly says, "My spirit shall not always strive with man" (Genesis 6:3, first part). Knowing all this, if we continually grieve the Holy Spirit, then he will eventually depart from us. David, tearfully praying for this very reason wrote, "Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me" (Psalm 51:11).

Jesus promises that "the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John 14:26).

This is the reason why we need the Holy Spirit to guide us into all truth. What happens when the Spirit departs from a person? The spirit of deceit comes and that person is doomed. Are we going to remain a people with hardened hearts? The apostle Paul mentions in Acts 7:51, "You stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost."

The inspired word tells us, "When sin has deadened the moral perceptions, the wrongdoer does not discern the defects of his character nor realize the enormity of the evil he has committed; and unless he yields to the convicting power of the Holy Spirit he remains in partial blindness to his sin. His confessions are not sincere and in earnest. To every acknowledgment of his guilt he adds an apology in excuse of his course, declaring that if it had not been for certain circumstances he would not have done this or that for which he is reproved."

We have to ask for forgiveness from our brother or sister, but without trying to make excuses for our defects of character, or excusing ourselves because of our circumstances. When we are not willing to forgive, then God does not live in us, but when God abides in believers' hearts, they are enabled, through love, to forgive and to do good even to those who have wronged them. All need to learn to forgive. There is a song in another language that says the following:

"To forgive just as you breathe As you drink and eat your daily bread And then He'll listen to your prayers When in you the light of forgiveness burns. To be able to forgive forgiveness is a power; For unforgiveness is a fatal spirit. To the grave the evil and unforgiveness My friend and brother, do not take with you."

The apostle says, "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed" (James 5:16).

"Confess your sins to God, who only can forgive them, and your faults to one another. If you have given offense to your friend or neighbor, you are to acknowledge your wrong, and it is his duty freely to forgive you. Then you are to seek the forgiveness of God, because the brother you have wounded is the property of God, and in injuring him you sinned against his Creator and Redeemer."2

God does not deal with us as we deal with our fellowmen. He treats us with mercy, love and tender care. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon" (Isaiah 55:7). I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee" (Isaiah 44:22).

"And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors." There is a condition that needs to be met. If we forgive those who have erred against us, then God will forgive our sins. However, what tends to happen is that we want forgiveness without forgiving others. We want to be loved without being loving. We want others to come and socialize with us, but when it's our turn to do so, we don't want to do it.

"I," this is "Me." And "I" expect others to come and talk with me, to be friendly, to love, forgive, and the list goes on. But how is it that "someone" has to do something for me, but "I" do not need to do anything for others? Because "Me" is "Me."

Have we ever asked ourselves if there was anyone that has gone to their grave whom we have offended or have not forgiven?

How many times have we hurt our friends—and even our parents with harsh words, and forgot to ask forgiveness? Time washes away the painful memories and heals the wounded hearts. But we forget that the deeper the wounds, the uglier the scars—and even though wounds heal, the scars are visible, and they can hurt for a very long time.

We often forget that death can take our loved ones away from us, and with sadness we'll remember that we could've done and said more-but we did nothing instead.

Those who do not forgive are constantly complaining and ungrateful. In their eyes, everyone is guilty and they find fault with everyone, and no matter where they are, they are always dissatisfied.

My dear friends, God is calling us to have a change of heart. But instead of that, people choose to move somewhere else or leave the church. We can run away from situations and people, but we can never run

> away from our thoughts or feelings. Why is that? Let everyone answer this question for themselves!

Dear reader, Christ's kingdom is founded on love, and if we are unable to forgive, that means we do not love. If that's the case, then for us there's no place in this Kingdom of Love.

Sometimes we should feel a burning desire to utter this prayer: "Lord,

we are so sinful, it is so hard for us to ask for forgiveness. We can't easily forget when we are wronged, we can't reconcile, we're easily offended, we don't show the necessary love. Oh, Lord, do not hide Your face and do not take away Your Holy Spirit from us. Forgive us our sins, help us to change . . . and to forgive; forgive us, not as we forgive those who are indebted to us."

- ¹ Steps to Christ, p. 40.
- ² Ibid., p. 37.



by Charles Fitch (1805-1844)

Part 2 of 2 (Adapted)

The Holy Ghost in our lives

Here we behold the power of the gospel to save us from sin: It is in being attended by the Holy Ghost sent down from Heaven. I freely admit that it is the setting forth of the love of God which saves people from sin, but in order that the love of God may have its cleansing efficacy, it must be as Paul says to the Romans, "the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us" (Romans 5:5). Accordingly, we find that the success of the apostles in saving from sin by the preaching of the gospel, is uniformly ascribed to the Holy Ghost. Barnabas was a man full of the Holy Ghost and faith, and many

people were added to the Lord. Peter preached at the house of Cornelius, and the Holy Ghost fell on all which heard the word. "Then remembered I," said he, "the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost" (Acts 1:5). The whole current of the New Testament shows that the work which should follow the coming of Christ, should be the dispensation of the Holy Ghost. Peter in the first chapter of his first epistle tells us that the prophets searched and inquired diligently respecting the time of this salvation, which the Spirit of Christ which was in them signified, when it testified beforehand of the sufferings of Christ

and the glory that should follow. This glory was to be the outpouring of the Spirit as predicted by Joel; and which Ezekiel also had in view, when God is heard saying by the mouth of that prophet, "then will I sprinkle clean water upon you and ye shall be clean, from all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you. And I will save you from all your uncleannesses" (Ezekiel 36:25). Here also is brought to view by the prophets that baptism of the Holy Ghost which was to be the establishment of the kingdom of Heaven upon earth—which kingdom we are told is "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Romans 14:17).

Righteousness, peace, and joy

John the Baptist was sent to prepare the way of the Lord for the establishment of this kingdom. This work of preparation was performed by him, as he preached saving, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand" (Matthew 3:2), the kingdom of "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Romans 14:17). "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but there cometh one after me, mightier than I, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose, He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire. Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but the chaff he will burn up with unquenchable fire" (Luke 3:16, 17).

The same great truths Christ Himself had in view, when He said to Nicodemus, "Verily verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5). What is the kingdom of God? "Righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Romans 14:17). What is it to be born of water? It is to receive John's baptism unto repentance. That is, truly to repent and bring forth fruits meet for repentance. This prepares the way of the kingdom of heaven in us. What is it to be born of the Spirit? It is to receive the baptism of Christ with the Holy Ghost, or to have Christ sprinkle clean water upon us, and make us clean; and cleanse us from all our filthiness, and from all our idols. (Ezekiel 36:25.) Then when this baptism of Christ is received, when this work of purification is wrought by being baptized with the Holy Ghost, we enter that kingdom of God which is "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." And we have the positive asservation [acknowledgment] of the Son of God, "Verily, verily, I say unto you except a man be born of water" i.e., led to the exercise of true repentance, "and of the Spirit," i.e., sprinkled with clean water, or baptized with the Holy Ghost, and

cleansed from all his filthiness and from all his idols, "he cannot enter into the kingdom of God," which is "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

The cleansing baptism

Here then we clearly see, my hearers, what it is which makes the gospel of Christ the power of God unto salvation from sin. It is our Lord Jesus Christ, baptizing with the Holy Ghost, and thus cleansing our souls from all their filthiness and from all their idols; thus bringing us into God's kingdom of righteousness, and establishing that kingdom in our hearts—filling

"This gospel is indeed the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth."

them with righteousness, as Christ says those shall be, who hunger and thirst after it; and giving them peace and joy in the Holy Ghost-making their peace as a river and their righteousness as the waves of the sea. This gospel is indeed the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. It is the dispensation of God's Almighty Spirit, burying us with Jesus Christ, by baptism of the Holy Ghost into death"—i.e., making us dead to sin—"that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also should walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4). It is enabling us to "put off the old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and to put on the new man, which after God" (i.e., after the likeness of God) "is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Ephesians 4:24).

We cannot leave out of the account the work of the Holy Ghost in renewing and cleansing the heart. "Create in me," said the psalmist, "a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within me. Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean, wash me and I shall be whiter than snow" (Psalm 51:10, 7)....

[Some expect to cleanse their own heart merely by contemplation] of the universal love of God. I know it is by the revelation of the love of God that the heart must be cleansed-but this love as I have already said, great as it is, is powerless in our hearts until "shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost given unto them" (Romans 5:5). Paul speaks of "the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power" (Ephesians 3:7). It is in this way that every gift of God's grace is communicated: only by the effectual working of God's power. The Bible represents unholy men as dead in trespasses and sins, and as having no spiritual life but in Christ. . . . "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you" (John 6:53). He therefore who would have spiritual life is to look to Christ for it. He is to seek, through faith in Christ, that baptism of the Holy Ghost which will cleanse him from sin; or in other words, raise him up from his spiritual death, and make him alive to the love and enjoyment of God. That same God who first breathed into man the breath of spiritual life, so that he became a living soul-must again by the power of that same Spirit breathe spiritual life anew, or the sinner will remain dead in sin forever. All his contemplations of the love of God, without this baptism of the Holy Ghost, this resurrection from spiritual death by the power of Christ, will avail nothing. Men will by such contemplations, become no better than whited sepulchres. If the outside is beautiful, the uncleanness will all remain within. "If ye believe not that I am he," said Christ "ye shall die in your sins" "and whither I go ye cannot come" (John 8:24, 21) if ye believe not that I am . . . the Saviour whom God promised to send into the world; and whose "name was called Jesus,

because he should save his people from their sins." (Matthew 1:21.)

The question for us

The question then, for you to settle, my hearers, is this: have you been baptized by the Holy Ghost? Have you been raised up by the power of Christ's spiritual resurrection from the death of sin and made alive unto God, and had that kingdom of

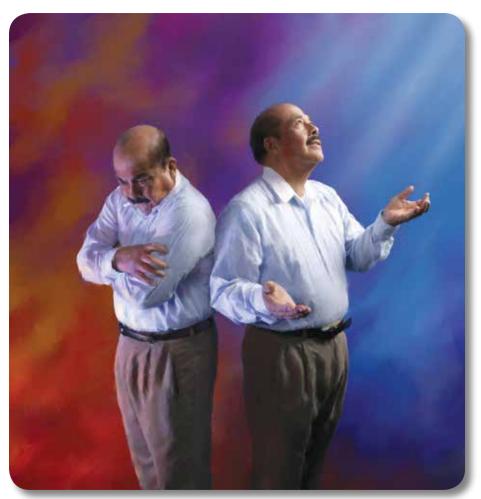
God established within you which "is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost?" If not, you are dead in sin, and your expectation of going where Christ is, in your present state, will avail you nothing. To the Jews, Christ said, ye will not come unto me that ye may have life....[We] must come to Christ for it by faith, and receive it by the power of the Holy Ghost, for "the kingdom of God is not in word but in power."...

"It is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth" (1 John 5:6), and when we obtain the witness of the Spirit that we are

righteous, by having Christ baptize us with the Holy Ghost, then we know in our own blessed experience, what it is which makes the gospel "the power of God unto salvation [from sin] to every one that believeth"; and are prepared with Paul to say, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ" (Romans 1:16)....

Here is Christ our horn of salvation, even Jesus saving His people from their sins—but instead of saving them at death, it is all the days of their life. Saving them too, out of the hand of all the enemies of their souls, unto holiness and righteousness all the days of their life.

With the same blessed truth in view, we hear Paul saying to the Corinthians, "I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ, that in every thing ye are enriched by him in all utterance, and in all knowledge; even as the testimony of



Christ was confirmed in you: so that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless, in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Corinthians 1:4–9). Faithful to preserve blameless to the end. This same faithfulness of God in preserving His people blameless, after enriching them with the blessedness

of full salvation from sin, Paul recognized again in writing to the Thessalonians. "The very God of peace sanctify you wholly; I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it" (1 Thessalonians 5:23). He says also again, to the same church, "but the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you,

and keep you from evil" (2 Thessalonians 3:3). Thus plainly does the Bible present to us the doctrine of salvation from sin through Christ-in this life, and during all this life, while it never speaks of death as the time of salvation. Its language is, "now is the accepted time, behold now is the day of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:2). And the Bible nowhere regards anything as salvation but salvation from sin.

Salvation from sin is needed

You must then, my hearers, have salvation from sin while you live, or die in your sins, and where Christ has gone, never go. Any hope but this is baseless, for Christ declares that at His coming, He will give every man according as his work shall be, and that the unjust shall be unjust still, and the filthy, filthy still—while the righteous and the holy shall so remain. Revelation 22:11. O that every heart who hears me, might be brought by the

Holy Ghost, to cry out, how shall this salvation from sin be obtained?

In reply to such an inquiry, I answer: The blessed Bible tells us that God's "divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (2 Peter 1:3, 4)...

"All the promises of God in [Christ] are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us" (2 Corinthians 1:20) so that if we seek by earnest prayer and faith in Christ, to have these promises fulfilled in us, their fulfilment is sure. These promises are such as the following:

"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" (Luke 11:9-13).

I have already shown that the design of this gift or baptism of the Holy Spirit, which we receive through faith in Christ, is to save from sin; to sprinkle with clean water, and cleanse us from all our filthiness and all our idols (Ezekiel 36:25), this is the baptism of Christ, which cleanses from sin, or makes us dead to sin, and alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. If you would have this gift of the Holy Ghost, this baptism of Christ, this salvation from sin, seek it, with earnest prayer, and faith in Christ, and you shall find in your own blessed experience, that "all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive" (Matthew 21:22).

"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled" (Matthew 5:6), and filled as we are assured, in the covenant and oath of God, all the days of their life. Come, I beseech you, by faith, to Christ, for this salvation, and you shall find, that the gospel of Christ is indeed the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth. All this, hearer, you must receive, or Christ will say to you at last, "I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity" (Luke 13:27).

O, it is a dreadful opiate to the consciences of men, to teach them, that though they sin against God every

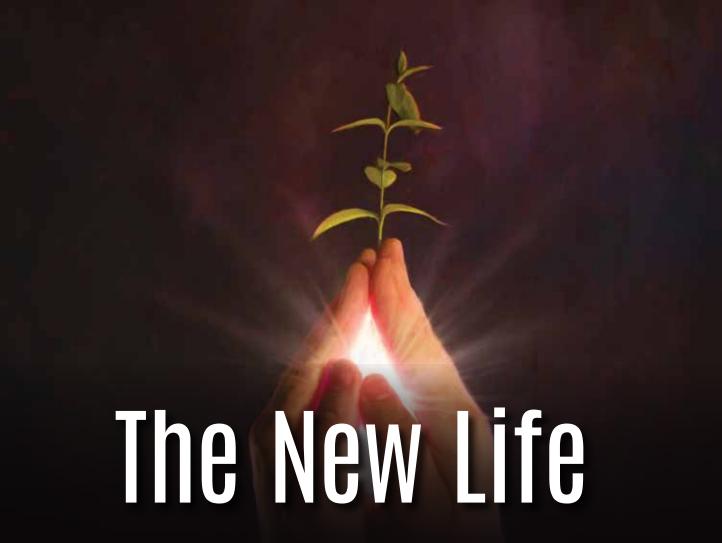
"And the Bible nowhere regards anything as salvation but salvation from sin."

day, in thought, word and deed, they may yet be saved from sin, when they die, and be received to heaven. It lulls into carnal security. It operates as a standing excuse for all the iniquities which [they] may chance to commit. While on the contrary, our Savior's doctrine, that if we believe not in Him as our Savior from sin, we shall die in our sins, and where He has gone never go, tends most directly and powerfully to arouse from the fatal slumbers of worldliness and sinful pleasure, to cry mightily to God in Christ's name, for deliverance from all our spiritual foes-and for strength and grace that we "might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life" (Luke 1:74, 75).

God grant that this may be the earnest cry of every soul, and be continued by every one of you until you find your feet in that highway of holiness over which the unclean shall not pass (Isaiah 35:8). He that thinks that he shall certainly be saved from sin at last, will be almost sure to be saying, "a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep" (Proverbs 6:10). May the Lord save us out of this destructive snare of the devil, and bring us all to behold by faith, "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world" (John 1:29). Then shall we obtain the witness that we are righteous, God testifying (Hebrews 11:4) within us by His Spirit of His own gifts, and then shall we not be ashamed when we have respect unto all his commandments (Psalm 119:6).

We may see it to be a matter of unspeakable consequence, that we do not trifle with, nor resist the Holy Ghost. He trifles with the Holy Ghost, who thinks lightly of the pollutions which God charges upon him, and will not seek to be cleansed by the Spirit of God. He resists the Holy Ghost who will not yield to the motives of the gospel, and come to Christ for the Holy Spirit that he may have life. If any of you, my hearers, desire the salvation of God, let me say to you as did David to Solomon his son: "Thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind: for the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever" (1 Chronicles 28:9).

The influences of God's Spirit are the waters of salvation, from sin. They can be had by being sought through faith in Christ. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters" (Isaiah 55:1). "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink" (John 7:37). "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Revelation 22:17). Amen.



A study from the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy with comments by Daniel Arwa Ojuok

What is it?

In the Concise Oxford Dictionary (10th edition), the word "new" is defined as "something not existing before, something made, introduced or made recently or now for the first time—not previously used or owned."

The Bible says, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

It means the believer in Christ has received a change of life—totally different from the life lived before. The person has been actually set free by Christ from the controlling power of sin.

What are the "old things"?

"Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (Galatians 5:19–21).

What constitutes the "new life"?

There is now "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance; against such there is no law" (Galatians 5:22, 23).

Why are Christian believers called new creatures?

- 1. Because "they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts" since they are "dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord" and we have been "buried with him by baptism unto death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we should also walk in newness of life" (Galatians 5:24; Romans 6:4).
- 2. Because they now serve in "the newness of spirit and not in the

oldness of the letter," "for sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace," "that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Romans 6:14; 7:6; Ephesians 4:24).

- 3. Because they are not to let sin reign in the mortal body, that they should obey it in the lust thereof, neither should they yield their members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin, but should yield themselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and their members as instruments of righteousness unto God, for sin shall not have dominion over them (Romans 6:12–14).
- 4. Because they "walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Romans 8:1).

Therefore we are bidden to "lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man and his deeds; and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him" (Colossians 3:9, 10).

By all these means, Christians live the life of the Lifegiver, a life of complete surrender and obedience to every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. In the new life, the Christian has been crucified with Christ, has died to sin and has been resurrected to newness of life. By being under grace, we are not to continue in sin. "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid" (Romans 6:1, 2).

Why?

Because we have died to sin, we can no longer live in it. There is no possibility.

For "how shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer in it" (Romans 6:2)?

"Our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin" (Romans 6:6). It is simply because the old man has died with its old established habits, both cultivated and inherited.

What is the outcome?

"Wherever the word of God has been faithfully preached, results have followed that attested its divine origin. The Spirit of God accompanied the message of His servants, and the word was with power. Sinners felt their consciences quickened. The 'light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world' (John 1:9) illumined the secret chambers of their souls, and the hidden things of darkness were made manifest. Deep conviction took hold upon their minds and hearts. They were convinced of sin and of righteousness and of judgment to come. They had a sense of the righteousness of Jehovah and felt the terror of appearing, in their guilt and uncleanness, before the Searcher of hearts. In anguish they cried out: 'Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' (Romans 7:24). As the cross of Calvary, with its infinite sacrifice for the sins of men, was revealed, they saw that nothing but the merits of Christ could suffice to atone for their transgressions; this alone could reconcile man to God. With faith and humility they accepted the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world. Through the blood of Jesus they had 'remission of sins that are past' (Romans 3:25).

"These souls brought forth fruit meet for repentance. They believed and were baptized, and rose to walk in newness of life—new creatures in Christ Jesus; not to fashion themselves according to the former lusts, but by the faith of the Son of God to follow in His steps, to reflect His character, and to purify themselves even as He is pure. The things they once hated they now loved, and the things they once loved they hated. The proud and self-assertive became meek and lowly of heart. The vain and supercilious became serious and unobtrusive. The profane became reverent, the drunken sober, and the profligate pure. The vain fashions of the world were laid aside. Christians sought not the 'outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but ... the hidden man of the heart, in

that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price' (1 Peter 3:3, 4)."

What does the presence of Christ do in the life?

It brings an end to sin, a full stop to it. It is not a comma to sin; it is not a continuation of the life of sin. But instead it is a radical change; "behold, all things are become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

"Jesus took upon Himself man's nature, that He might leave a pattern for humanity, complete, perfect. He proposes to make us like Himself, true in every purpose, feeling, and thought—true in heart, soul, and life. This is Christianity. Our fallen nature must be purified, ennobled, consecrated by obedience to the truth." ²

Will you accept and believe that the old man is dead?

This was the faith of the apostle Paul. He said, "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20).

Christ gives power to live the new life

"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:13). "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God" (John 1:12).

Jesus said, "for without me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5).

Christ took our sins

"And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him" (1 John 3:5, 6).

"Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God" (1 John 3:9).

"Abundant grace has been provided that the believing soul may be kept free from sin; for all heaven, with its limitless resources, has been placed at our command. We are to draw from the well of salvation." 3

"[Christ] makes an end of the controlling power of sin in the heart, and the life and character of the believer testify to the genuine character of the grace of Christ....

"By beholding Jesus we receive a living, expanding principle in the heart, and the Holy Spirit carries on the work, and the believer advances from grace to grace, from strength to strength, from character to character. He conforms to the image of Christ, until in spiritual growth he attains unto the measure of the full stature in Christ Jesus. Thus Christ makes an end of the curse of sin, and sets the believing soul free from its action and effect."

Why do we often fail?

"We fail many times because we do not realize that Christ is with us by His Spirit as truly as when, in the days of His humiliation, He moved visibly upon the earth. The lapse of time has wrought no change in His parting promise to His apostles as He was taken up from them into heaven: 'Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world' (Matthew 28:20)." 5

"Henceforth through the Spirit, Christ was to abide continually in the hearts of His children. Their union with them was closer than when He was personally with them."

"It is the merit of Christ that will avail in our behalf. Through faith in Him, Christ will make all our imperfect efforts acceptable to God."⁷

"[Christ] 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."8

What is God's view of those who accept the righteousness of Christ?

Through Christ, they are seen by the Father as righteous and without spot or wrinkle.

"Christ is the fragrance, the holy incense which makes your petition acceptable to the Father." 9

"All must be laid upon the fire of Christ's righteousness to cleanse it from its earthly odor before it rises in a cloud of fragrant incense to the great Jehovah and is accepted as a sweet savor." 10

Christ's righteousness is the wedding garment

"And to her [the church] was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints" (Revelation 19:8).

"Christ's righteousness alone can avail for his salvation, and this is the gift of God. This is the wedding garment in which you may appear as a welcome guest at the marriage supper of the Lamb." ¹¹

What happens when we surrender to Christ?

When we surrender to Christ, our sins are pardoned, the filthy garments are removed and transferred to Jesus who is the sinner's representative, substitute and surety. At the same moment, the Lord imputes the righteousness of Christ to the believer's account and pronounces him/her righteous before the universe, forgiven and renewed in the spirit of the mind. A new heart is given and the image of Christ is stamped upon the very mind and soul.

The Old Testament prophet Zechariah was shown in vision the high priest, Joshua, standing before the Lord and Satan at his right hand to resist him.

"Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel. And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment" (Zechariah 3:3, 4). When Christ covers us with the robe of His righteousness, He does not furnish a cloak for sin, but rather takes the sin away. This shows that forgiveness of sins is not simply a mere formality. It is something more than a mere entry in the books of record in heaven.

The forgiveness of sins is a reality; it vitally affects the individual, clearing the soul from guilt. If one is justified and made righteous, a radical change occurs. He or she becomes a new person, having obtained the righteousness of Christ. The full and free forgiveness of sins carries with it the wonderful and miraculous change known as the new birth. This is the same as having a new or clean heart.

"It is the righteousness of Christ, His own unblemished character, that through faith is imparted to all who receive Him as their personal Saviour." ¹²

"Pardon and justification are one and the same thing. Through faith, the believer passes from the position of a rebel, a child of sin and Satan, to the position of a loyal subject of Christ Jesus, not because of an inherent goodness, but because Christ receives him as His child by adoption. The sinner receives the forgiveness of his sins, because these sins are borne by his Substitute and Surety. The Lord speaks to His heavenly Father, saying: 'This is My child, I reprieve him from the condemnation of death, giving him My life insurance policy—eternal life—because I have taken his place and have suffered for his sins. He is even My beloved son.' Thus man, pardoned, and clothed with the beautiful garments of Christ's righteousness, stands faultless before God."13

How can we maintain this blood-bought robe?

By continual obedience and practicing all known duties.

"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....

"It is an evidence that a man is not justified by faith when his works do not correspond to his profession. James says, 'Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was his faith made perfect?' (James 2:22).

"The faith that does not produce good works does not justify the soul."¹⁴

"He who becomes a partaker of the divine nature will be in harmony with God's great standard of righteousness, His holy law. This is the rule by which God measures the actions of men. This will be the test of character in the judgment." ¹⁵

"The soul who sees Jesus by faith, repudiates his own righteousness. He sees himself as incomplete, his repentance insufficient, his strongest faith but feebleness, his most costly sacrifice as meager, and he sinks in humility at the foot of the cross....

"Beholding the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world, he finds the peace of Christ; for pardon is written against his name, and he accepts the word of God, 'Ye are complete in him' (Colossians 2:10)." ¹⁶

"When we submit ourselves to Christ, the heart is united with His heart, the will is merged in His will, the mind becomes one with His mind, the thoughts are brought into captivity to Him; we live His life. This is what it means to be clothed with the garment of His righteousness." ¹⁷

"The heart is to be worked, subdued, plowed, harrowed, seeded, to bring forth its harvest to God in good works. 'Ye are God's building' (1 Corinthians 3:9). You cannot build yourself. There is a Power outside of yourself that must do the building of the church, putting brick upon brick, always cooperating with the faculties

and powers given of God to man....
The Lord has provided that the soul shall receive nourishment from Him, to be given out again in the working out of His purposes. In order that there be an outflowing, there must be an income of divinity to humanity. 'I will dwell in them, and walk in them' (2 Corinthians 6:16).

"The soul temple is to be sacred, holy, pure, and undefiled. There must be a copartnership in which all the power is of God and all the glory belongs to God. The responsibility rests with us. . . .

"The law of the human and the divine action makes the receiver a laborer together with God. It brings man where he can, united with divinity, work the works of God." 18

"The faith that does not produce good works does not justify the soul "

Don't be satisfied

"We are never to rest in a satisfied condition, and cease to make advancement, saying, 'I am saved.' When this idea is entertained, the motives for watchfulness, for prayers, for earnest endeavor to press onward to higher attainments, cease to exist. No sanctified tongue will be found uttering these words till Christ shall come, and we enter in through the gates into the city of God. Then, with the utmost propriety, we may give glory to God and to the Lamb for eternal deliverance. As long as man is full of weakness-for of himself he cannot save his soul-he should never dare to say, 'I am saved.'

"It is not he that putteth on the armor that can boast of the victory; for

he has the battle to fight and victory to win. It is he that endureth unto the end that shall be saved."19

"The perishing sinner may say:
'I am a lost sinner; but Christ came to seek and to save that which was lost, He says, 'I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance' (Luke 5:32). I am a sinner, and He died upon Calvary's cross to save me. I need not remain a moment longer unsaved. He died and rose again for my justification, and He will save me now. I accept the forgiveness He has promised.' "20

Let us all say the following:

"Every soul may say: 'By His perfect obedience He has satisfied the claims of the law, and my only hope is found in looking to Him as my substitute and surety, who obeyed the law perfectly for me. By faith in His merits I am free from the condemnation of the law. He clothes me with His righteousness, which answers all the demands of the law. I am complete in Him who brings in everlasting righteousness. He presents me to God in the spotless garment of which no thread was woven by any human agent. All is of Christ, and all the glory, honor, and majesty are to be given to the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world."21 6R

- ¹ The Great Controversy, pp. 461, 462.
- ² Testimonies, vol. 5, p. 235.
- ³ Selected Messages, bk. 1, p. 394.
- ⁴ Ibid., p. 395.
- ⁵ Testimonies, vol. 4, p. 529.
- ⁶ Steps to Christ, p. 75.
- ⁷ The Signs of the Times, June 16, 1890.
- ⁸ Selected Messages, bk. 1, p. 344.
- ⁹ Ibid., p. 333.
- ¹⁰ Faith and Works, p. 24.
- ¹¹ Selected Messages, bk. 1, p. 331.
- ¹² Christ's Object Lessons, p. 310.
- ¹³ Faith and Works, p. 103.
- ¹⁴ Selected Messages, bk. 1, pp. 396, 397.
- ¹⁵ Christ's Object Lessons, p. 314.
- ¹⁶ The Signs of the Times, July 4, 1892.
- ¹⁷ Christ's Object Lessons, p. 312.
- ¹⁸ Faith and Works, pp. 26, 27.
- ¹⁹ Selected Messages, bk. 1, p. 314.
- ²⁰ The Faith I Live By, p. 112.
- ²¹ Selected Messages, bk. 1, p. 396.

Simpler (et.)

t's almost springtime in North America. Traditionally it's the time of year that we are tired of being indoors, tired of dust and darkness and ready—more than ready—for clean, bright, fresh outdoors and indoors. It's the time for spring cleaning.

Interestingly, this time of year corresponds to the yearly festival of the Jewish nation called the Passover. This important feast commemorated the deliverance of the Israelite nation from Egyptian bondage; their opportunity to be free to follow God's leading and accomplish His purposes.

"And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it And thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste: it is the Lord's passover" (Exodus 12:8, 11).

The Passover Feast was usually preceded by a thorough cleansing of the homes to make sure that there was no yeast, no leaven, found within its borders. Yeast typified sin and in order for the nation to partake of the Feast of Passover, directly followed by the Feast of Unleavened Bread, specific preparations were to be made.

"Seven days shall ye eat unleavened bread; **even the first day ye shall put away leaven out of your houses:** for whosoever eateth leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that soul shall be cut off from Israel" (Exodus 12:15).

I do not know for sure, but I am thinking that the concept of "spring cleaning" started there. I love this act of going through every nook and cranny of the home, cleaning thoroughly, sorting each box and drawer, choosing what is important to keep, purging that which is not. It is a symbol to me of the process of sanctification which God is taking us through if we are His children.

Paul spoke of this symbolism when he explained: "Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (1 Corinthians 5:6–8).

The feasts were a time of commitment, of obedience to God's instructions, a time of instruction regarding the great truths of the plan of redemption. They were the visual object lesson to lead to Christ.

Let's go back to the "spring cleaning" concept: As I have been sorting and purging, I have been asking the Lord, "how much," "how important is order," "where is the balance?" He has taken my mind to a few places that I would like to share:

The first thought was how much order is important. The more we look into the creation of God, the more detail and the more order we see. It is His very nature. God is a God of order.

Where is the balance? Should I spend all of my time and thought upon organization?

No. The Lord in His great mercy and knowledge has given us principles in His Word that help us to prioritize responsibilities and time. We are to seek first His kingdom and His righteousness.

The Lord's messenger was given a vision known as "Traveling the Narrow Way," found in the book *Life Sketches*, chapter 30. This vision gives us a picture of the process through which God will take His faithful. It's worthwhile to study the entire vision, of course, but let us consider a few points:

"While at the Battle Creek in August, 1868, I dreamed of being with a large body of people. A portion of this assembly started out prepared to journey. We had heavily loaded wagons. As we journeyed, the road seemed to ascend. On one side of this road was a deep precipice; on the other was a high, smooth, white wall, like the hard finish upon plastered rooms."

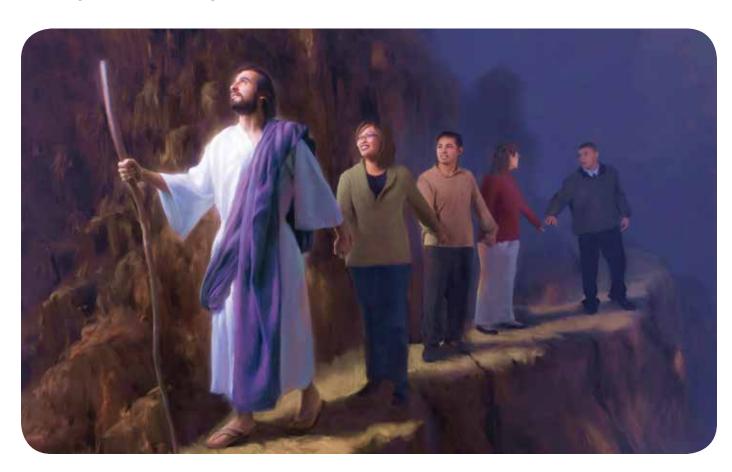
Notice that there was a large group of people but only a portion that started out prepared. They had heavily loaded wagons. What were the wagons loaded with? When people of that time went on a journey with wagons, they carried the things that they felt were necessary to have with them. They would have things to cook with, sleep with, clothe with, and shelter with—plus maybe even some extras. They took with them all the things that they thought they needed. The journey was upwards or directly downwards. If they slipped off of the path, there was no return. Let's read on:

"As we journeyed on, the road grew narrower and steeper. In some places it seemed so very narrow that we concluded that we could no longer travel with the loaded wagons. We then loosed them from the horses, took a portion of the luggage from the wagons and placed it upon the horses, and journeyed on horseback." ²

I find this very interesting. The way grew more difficult and narrow, impeding their ability to take all their stuff along. The wagons had to be left behind and even some of the "stuff." They reloaded the most important "things" onto their horses and journeyed onwards.

"As we progressed, the path still continued to grow narrow. We were obliged to press close to the wall, to save ourselves from falling off the narrow road down the steep precipice. As we did this, the luggage on the horses pressed against the wall, and caused us to sway toward the precipice. We feared that we should fall, and be dashed in pieces on the rocks. We then cut the luggage from the horses, and it fell over the precipice. We continued on horseback, greatly fearing, as we came to the narrower places in the road, that we should lose our balance, and fall. At such times, a hand seemed to take the bridle, and guide us over the perilous way."3

I see a great lesson here. Even the most important "stuff" was in danger of causing them to slip over the precipice. A decision had to be made. Would the risk be taken, or would the "stuff" be forsaken? This reminds me of the instruction that Jesus has given us: "Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of



the things which he possesseth" (Luke 12:15).

Most of us live in a world and nation that is consumed with the accumulation of things. We want and work for new homes, furniture, cars, trucks, clothing, dishes, entertainments, recreations, possessions of this world. We don't even realize how much we really are driven by this, until we think of having to cut it loose one piece at a time.

We can study and talk about the time when there will be such a definite prophetic occurrence, that we will just **know** that we have to leave the cities, leave our homes, leave our farms, our cars, our closets, maybe even our family, to be led by the hand by holy angels to protected places, and we think it will just happen with no remonstrance on our part. But think about Lot's experience. His wife physically left Sodom when the angel pulled her out by the hand, but she did not really leave that enticing city behind. Her heart was still there. Where are our hearts?

Obviously, Jesus thought this an important subject. He dealt with it in His sermon on the mount, for example:

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matthew 6:19–21). He knows that our mind can only be in one place at a time. That's why He continued His instruction:

"No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? 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? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you,

"There is a whole mindset that goes along with 'simpler yet.' It means looking at efficient, simple ways of living, of eating, of dressing, of housing, of ministering."

O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof" (Matthew 6:24–34).

What else?

But it's not just things that are our trouble. It's the busy-ness of life in general. God is calling for a simpler way.

"We must turn away from a thousand topics that invite attention. There are matters that consume time and arouse inquiry, but end in nothing. The highest interests demand the close attention and energy that are so often given to comparatively insignificant things." 4

"You have cares and burdens to bear in your family that often worry you; but if you do only those things necessary to your temporal comfort and happiness, you will find time to read your Bible with prayerful interest and to perfect a Christian character."

"Overwork sometimes causes a loss of self-control. But the Lord never compels hurried, complicated movements. Many gather to themselves burdens that the merciful heavenly Father did not place on them. Duties He never designed them to perform chase one another wildly. God desires us to realize that we do not glorify His name when we take so many burdens that we are overtasked and, becoming heart weary and brain weary, chafe and fret and scold. We are to bear only the responsibilities that the Lord gives us, trusting in Him, and thus keeping our hearts pure and sweet and sympathetic."6

I have been driven for years to simplify life—and to most people's perspective we do live simply. But the Lord has given me a new thought as I consider what is ahead. Simpler Yet! Why? The Lord's messenger continues with the vision:

"As the path grew more narrow, we decided that we could no longer go with safety on horseback, and we left the horses and went on foot, in single file, one following in the footsteps of another. At this point small cords were let down from the top of the pure white wall; these we eagerly grasped, to aid us in keeping our balance upon

the path. As we traveled, the cord moved along with us. The path finally became so narrow that we concluded that we could travel more safely without our shoes; so we slipped them from our feet, and went on some distance without them. Soon it was decided that we could travel more safely without our stockings; these were removed, and we journeyed on with bare feet.

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

We need to not only be willing to suffer hardship and privation, but must also be accustomed to **endure** hardships. This does not mean making ourselves martyrs, but I think it does mean not to get too comfortable, too secure, too used to conveniences. There is a whole mindset that goes along with "simpler yet." It means looking at efficient, simple ways of living, of eating, of dressing, of housing, of ministering. It means prioritizing what is the most important in life so that we have the time and mental ability to pray, to study, to wait before God, and then time to work with the people that the Lord has placed in our lives.

Learning from faithful men of God

Enoch chose a simple lifestyle:

"When we learn to walk by faith and not by feeling, we shall have help from God just when we need it, and His peace will come into our hearts. It was this simple life of obedience and trust that Enoch lived. If we learn this lesson of simple trust, ours may be the testimony that he received, that he pleased God." 8

Joseph, too.

"How was Joseph enabled to make such a record of firmness of character, uprightness, and wisdom?-In his early years he had consulted duty rather than inclination; and the integrity, the simple trust, the noble nature, of the youth bore fruit in the deeds of the man. A pure and simple life had favored the vigorous development of both physical and intellectual powers. Communion with God through His works and the contemplation of the grand truths entrusted to the inheritors of faith had elevated and ennobled his spiritual nature, broadening and strengthening the mind as no other study could do. Faithful attention to duty in every station, from the lowliest to the most exalted, had been training every power for its highest service. He who lives in accordance with the Creator's will is securing to himself the truest and noblest development of character."9

I have noticed that the more we have to do, the more things we have to care for, the less time we have to do the best things well. Personally, I have downscaled; not the size of our home, since we have not moved, but the size of my "to do list," the size of my chores, the size of my menu, the size of my wardrobe.

I am seeking to implement the following counsel. What about you?

"Should we dress in **plain**,

modest apparel without reference to the fashions: should our tables at all times be set with simple, healthful food, avoiding all luxuries, all extravagance; should our houses be built with becoming plainness, and furnished in the same manner, it would show the sanctifying power of the truth, and would have a telling influence upon unbelievers. But while we conform to the world in these matters, in some cases apparently seeking to excel worldlings in fanciful arrangement, the preaching of the truth will have but little or no effect. Who will believe the solemn truth for this time, when those who already profess to believe it contradict their faith by their works? It is not God who has closed the windows of heaven to us, but it is our own conformity to the customs and practices of the world.

"It was by a miracle of divine power that Christ fed the multitude; yet how humble was the fare provided—only the fishes and barley loaves that were the daily fare of the fisherfolk of Galilee.

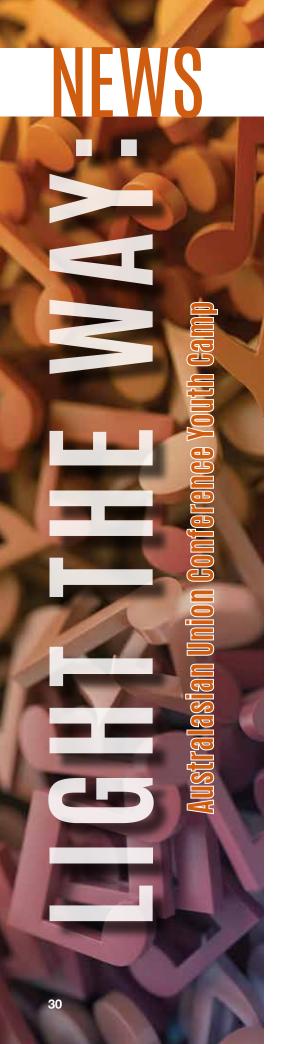
"Christ could have spread for the people a rich repast, but food prepared merely for the gratification of appetite would have conveyed no lesson for their good. Through this miracle Christ desired to teach a **lesson of simplicity.** If men today were simple in their habits, living in harmony with nature's laws, as did Adam and Eve in the beginning, there would be an abundant supply for the needs of the human family. But selfishness and the indulgence of appetite have brought sin and misery, from excess on the one hand, and from want on the other."10

"Puritan plainness and simplicity should mark the dwellings and apparel of all who believe the solemn truths for this time. All means needlessly expended in dress or in the adorning of our houses is a waste of our Lord's money. It is defrauding the cause of God for the gratification of pride." ¹¹

I have simplified life and it feels good. It is simpler yet. As I keep asking the Lord to direct my steps, more goods are taken off of the "horse" and more attention can be given to moving forward and holding onto the cords—for we don't have enough hands to carry baggage and suspend our whole weight upon those means given us to be saved.

Do not resent the Lord's gracious weaning in our lives. Rejoice that life can be better yet, as it is simpler yet. God will bless you.

- ¹ Life Sketches, p. 190.
- ² Ibid.
- ³ Ibid.
- ⁴ Mind, Character, and Personality, vol. 2, p. 795.
- ⁵ *Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 112. [Emphasis added.]
- ⁶ My Life Today, p. 81. [Emphasis added.]
- ⁷ *Life Sketches*, pp. 190, 191.
- ⁸ Conflict and Courage, p. 31.
- ⁹ Ibid., p. 77.
- ¹⁰ Counsels on Diet and Foods, p. 90 [Emphasis added.]
- $^{\rm 11}\, Testimonies$, vol. 5, p. 189.



Reformation in Music

The Australasian Union Conference [AUC] held a youth camp at Elim Heights in New South Wales, Australia, from December 22-30, 2017. The theme, was "Light the Way: Reformation in Music."

There was a large turnout of musicians—some advanced in skill and others who were experiencing a music ensemble for the first time. It was amazing to see how the program came together so beautifully and artistically. Clearly, God was leading. All were involved either in the orchestra, choir, or children's program—and all learned more about how to present an acceptable musical offering to the King of kings.

Deep spiritual messages brought a great blessing to the camp as well. Bro. Liviu Tudoroiu, leader of the GC Missionary Department, brought inspiring insights about the gospel as found in the book of Jonahpresenting how an angry prophet was transformed in the hands of a merciful God. Jonah experienced a great trial that refined and equipped him to give the present truth in his day to a wicked city that repented at his preaching. In the end, our heavenly Father was revealed as a God of great mercy, not only to Jonah and to Nineveh, but to us as well. Bro. Liviu brought this out further in additional messages especially relevant to our life today.

In addition to conducting the orchestra, Sister Barbara Montrose, a member of the GC Music Department, presented classes on the history of western music, current trends, and the principles of sacred music, providing some distinctions between the genuinely edifying vs. false, detrimental styles of music. Emphasis was made on the fact that we are living in the antitypical day of atonement and seriously need to prepare to receive the seal of God in the frontal lobe of our brain. The music we listen to can make a difference either to help or hinder this process.

Brother Peter Lausevic, GC Vice President, followed up by opening the Sabbath with additional insights into the theme of music in the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy.

The AUC Music and Youth Departments were blessed to have attentive support from their ministers and Bible workers who served as mentors for the young. An efficient media team filmed and recorded some of the items—and the crown jewel of the event was a sacred music concert held



at a public venue in the town of Wentworthville on Sabbath afternoon. There the announcer made special emphasis on the significance of the Reformation Symphony that composer Felix Mendelssohn wrote in honor of the 300th anniversary of the great Protestant reformation in his day. How fitting it was to acknowledge likewise in our day the 500th anniversary of that monumental pillar in history.

It is our prayer that the Lord may continue to bless the united efforts of the AUC team—along with similar units around the world that are seeking to involve sacred music as a way to promote the present truth and spiritual edification among our people of all ages, especially the young.—BHM.





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MOVING? Please let us know.

Royal Refugees

"In the fear of the Lord is strong confidence: and his children shall have a place of refuge" (Proverbs 14:26).

ave you ever heard of a refuge? There are many spots on earth set apart as special places to protect certain animals. For example, a wildlife refuge is a safe haven to shelter and protect wild animals from being hunted or fished. The

animals are safe in that

In times of war, sometimes an outside country not involved in the war will set up camps to shelter people trying to escape all the fighting. These places are called refugee camps. In 2016, there were over 65 million refugees around the world—the largest number on record. We should pray for those who don't want to fight and who no longer have a place to call home.

Jesus says, "My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would

my servants fight" (John 18:36). Faithful souls who follow Christ do not only come from one nation—they come from different countries all over the world, and Jesus teaches us not to fight.

There are many Bible verses that show God's tender care for His children who trust in Him. The psalmist prayed:

"Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men! Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence from the pride of man" (Psalm 31:19, 20).

"I will say of the Lord, he is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust" (Psalm 91:2).

Besides the problem of escaping violence, who is going to watch over us in times of storms, earthquakes, and famines?

"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. . . . The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge" (Psalm 46:1–3, 7).

The children of the King

of the universe are princes and princesses. They are royalty—yet in a fallen, unsafe world, they are still refugees. If we give our heart to Jesus, this includes us. We can enjoy the tender care of the Almighty both now and eternally.

"I will sing of thy power; yea, I will sing aloud of thy mercy in the morning: for thou hast been my defence and refuge in the day of my trouble. Unto thee, O my strength, will I sing: for God is my defence, and the God of my mercy" (Psalm 59:16, 17).—*BHM*.

