



*It Is Still A
Most Precious
Message*

Mustard Seed Flower

1888 MESSAGE STUDY
COMMITTEE

NEWSLETTER
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MESSAGE STUDY
COMMITTEE



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The purpose of this newsletter is to share the good news of Jesus Christ as the foundation of effective personal and public evangelism to the world, to encourage the use of and share more effective methods and resources.

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Different Kinds of Righteousness

The Signs of the Times, February 24, 1888 E. J. Waggoner,

The Bible recognizes two classes of righteousness. In his sermon on the mount, Christ said to his disciples, and to the multitude, "For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." Matt. 5:20. The Pharisees were the best people in the Jewish nation, and it may be said, in the world. That is, so far as outward acts were concerned. The name Pharisee signifies "separated;" and they took this name because they were separated from the common people by their superior goodness. They were full of zeal for the law, yet Jesus said to his hearers, and to us, "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of Heaven."

Some have erroneously concluded from these words that Jesus was finding fault with them for keeping

the law so strictly, and that he would have us ignore it. But on the contrary, he says that our righteousness must exceed theirs. That is, it must go as far as theirs, and farther still. Then we must keep as much of the law as they did, and more. How can that be? Matt. 23:27, 28 explains: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity." The Lord wants righteousness that comes from the heart. He did not object to having the scribes and Pharisees outwardly righteous; he would not have us openly break the law; but he wants outward service, and inward service, too.

These two degrees of righteousness are really two kinds of righteousness.

These two kinds of righteousness are named by Paul in Phil. 3:8, 9: "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, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."

In these words Paul recognizes his own righteousness as a righteousness entirely distinct from the righteousness which is of God by faith. The former was such righteousness as the scribes and Pharisees find; the latter is the kind which we must have, -a kind far exceeding that of the Pharisees, -if we would enter into the kingdom of Heaven.

On one occasion Jesus said to the Pharisees, "Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of God before you." Matt. 21:31. How could it be that the publicans and harlots, the scum of the earth, could get to Heaven more readily than those strict Pharisees? One would naturally think, "Surely the publicans and harlots have a great deal more to do to get ready for Heaven, than the Pharisees have." Luther has explained this matter in the following words:-

"Wherefore they that seek to be quickened and justified by the law, are much further off from righteousness and life than the publicans,

sinners, and harlots. For they cannot trust to their own works, seeing they be such that they cannot hope to obtain grace and forgiveness thereby. For if righteousness done according to the law do not justify, how can sins justify, which are committed contrary to the law? Therefore in this case they are in far better ease than the justiciaries; for they have no affiance in their own works; which greatly hindereth true faith in Christ, if it do not utterly take it away.

Contrariwise, the justiciaries, which abstain outwardly from sins, and live holily and without blame in the sight of the world, cannot be without the opinion of their own righteousness, with which the true faith in Christ cannot stand. And for this cause they be more miserable than the publicans and harlots, who offer not their good works to God in his displeasure, that for the same he may recompense them with everlasting life, as the justiciaries do, for they have none to offer; but desire that their sins may be pardoned for Christ's sake."-Luther on Galatians, chap. 5.

Christ's statement in Matt. 21:31, is repeated by Paul, in other words, in Rom. 9:30, 31: "What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith. But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness." Then in answer to the question, "Wherefore?" he continues: "Because they sought

it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law." Verse 32. "For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God." Rom. 10:3.

Now we have the whole thing before us. The Jews followed the law, and so far as anybody could see, they kept it strictly. Then they trusted to their own works, and did not submit to the righteousness of God. But the Gentiles, and the publicans and harlots, had no good works to trust in, and therefore they willingly accepted the righteousness which is of God by faith. Thus the publicans and harlots receive the blessing of God more readily than the Pharisees.

But why is it that the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees could not count for something? and why could they not be counted as nearer the kingdom of God than those who were openly vicious? For the reason given in Rom. 14:23: "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin." How can this be? Just this way: Simple outward righteousness is as much righteousness as any man can attain by himself; but this is so far below the righteousness that God requires that it is indeed sin. It isn't real righteousness at all. Thus Isaiah says: "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away." Isa. 64:6. Anyone who has any just concep-

tion of God, must acknowledge the truth of this. Whose righteousness can bear any comparison to the righteousness of God? Compared with the spotlessness of his character, the righteousness of the best of men (that is, their own natural or acquired righteousness), must be acknowledged to be but filthy rags.

Then what will be the condition of the man who looks at his own good works with complacency, and who thinks to atone for his shortcomings by his own good deeds? He is simply trying to cover one filthy, ragged garment by putting on some more filthy rags. Instead of making himself better, he is in a worse plight.

To like import Paul says: "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident; for, The just shall live by faith." Gal. 3:10, 11. That is, a curse is pronounced upon all who do not keep the whole law. But "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23), and moreover, no man is able of himself to keep the law, no matter how hard he may try. Gal. 5:17. Therefore, all who trust in their own works, are necessarily under the curse of the law.

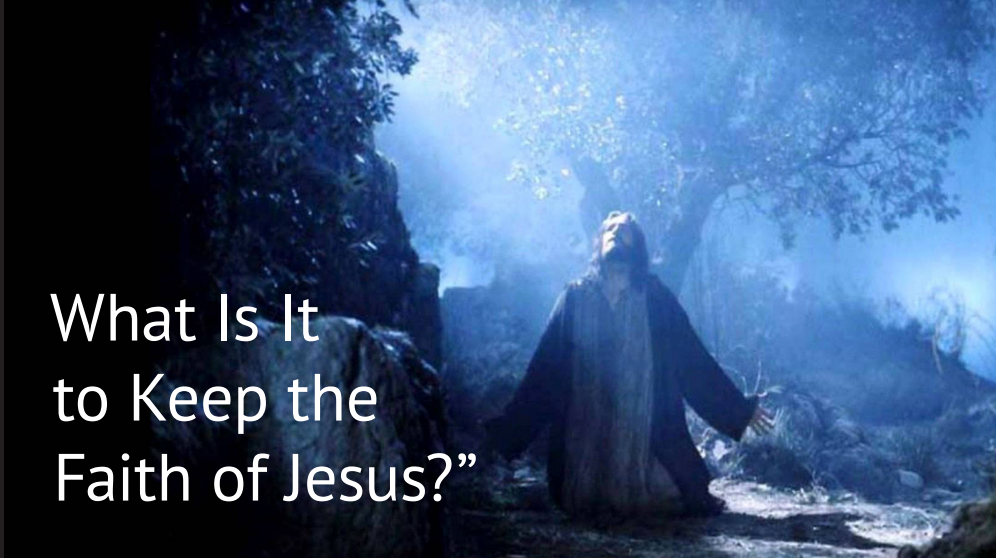
How foolish then for one sinner to compare himself with another; for one to think that he has not so great

a work to do to be saved, as some other one has, because he has not lived so wicked a life as that other one has! Both have been wicked, although perhaps not to the same degree; and therefore both need the cleansing blood of Christ. They cannot be saved without Christ “for there is none other name under Heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” Acts 4:12. There is nothing but the blood of Jesus that can wash away sin. Therefore sinners, both great and small, must all do the same thing; they must go to Christ for cleansing. There is just as much for one to do as for another. And since the love of God in Christ is infinite, it is just as easy for him to cleanse the vilest sinner as the most scrupulous Pharisee.

And when the sinner has been justified by faith, what then? Then “the just shall live by faith.” “This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.” 1 John 5:4. “For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth.” Rom. 10:4. Then

the one who has the most faith, will live the most upright life. Of course, for human righteousness is of no more worth after a man is justified than it was before. Says Christ, “Without me ye can do nothing.”

“For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.” Rom. 12:3. How highly ought a man to think of himself? Just as much as upright Job did after he had seen the righteousness of God. Said he, “I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.” Job. 42:6. Then how much have we to do, to prepare to meet Christ in peace? We have to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, and to exercise much faith,-the real faith that works by love. Then will Christ be made unto us “wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption.” “And this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.”



What Is It to Keep the Faith of Jesus?"

A.T. Jones

Advent Review and Sabbath Herald, November 6, 1900

WHEN the young man came to Jesus, asking, "Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" Jesus answered, "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments," and cited the second table of the ten commandments. The young man replied: "All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet? Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me."

As the record says that Jesus "looking upon him loved him," and as Jesus asked him to follow him, it is evident that the young man was a person of good intentions and honesty of purpose, and he undoubtedly supposed that he had really kept the commandments. But it is not our own estimate

that is the standard of what constitutes obedience to the law; it is God's estimate that is the standard. We might conform so strictly to the law that, according to our own estimate, we could see no point of failure; yet when our actions should be measured by God's estimate, weighed in the balances of the sanctuary, we should be found utterly wanting

It is not according as we see, but according as God sees, that the question of our keeping the commandments of God is to be decided. And as God sees it, it has been recorded: "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." No doubt the young man, when measured by his own standard, stood at the full stature of moral character. But God's standard declares that he had "come short."

Even granting all the

righteousness that the young man might claim by the keeping of the commandments alone,—and there are yet many like him,—yet to him to all who, like him, expect righteousness by the law, the word of Christ is, “One thing thou lackest yet.” All such lack the justifying blood: they lack the sanctifying power of the perfect obedience of the Son of God. In short, they lack “the faith of Jesus;” and so must ever come short until, by accepting Christ, they attain to the righteousness of God which is by faith.

It is in Christ alone that man can reach the full stature of moral character in the sight of God. “Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” Eph. 4:13. However hard a man may strive for righteousness by keeping the law, yet, until he accepts Christ and finds in him the righteousness which is of God by faith, against him the word will ever stand, Thou hast “come short of the glory of God,” “one thing thou lackest yet.”

So we see that Jesus taught that those who would be his disciples must keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.

Again: in his sermon on the mount, Jesus said, “Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them,

the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.” Matt. 5:19, 20.

Happily we have the record of the best Pharisee that ever lived, and in his experience we have the inspired illustration of these words of Jesus: Paul says of himself, “As touching the law, a Pharisee; . . . touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.” Yet this was not enough; for as he says in another place, “I know nothing against myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord.” 1 Cor. 4:4. So even though he might, so far as he could see, be blameless, yet that was not proof that he was justified; for it is God who judges: it is God’s standard of righteousness, and not our own, that we must meet, to be justified; and that standard is the righteousness of Christ, to which we can attain only by faith.

So Paul says, “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: . . . and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.” Phil. 3:7-9. This is a righteousness which he had not when he was a Pharisee. This, then, is the righteousness which exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees: and this righteousness

of faith we must have while doing and teaching the commandments. In his sermon on the mount, therefore, Christ positively taught the keeping of the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.

James says, "My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons. . . . If ye fulfill the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, ye do well: but if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors. For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. For he that said ["that law which said," margin], Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law. So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty. . . . What doth it profit, my brethren, thou a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? . . . Even so faith, if IT hath not works, is dead, being alone."

Thus James shows that the faith of Jesus is manifested in works, and that these works are the keeping of the law of God. He excludes the very idea that anyone can have the faith of Jesus with respect of persons; and respect of persons he declares to be sin, the transgression of the law. Therefore the faith of Jesus can not be held with the conscious breaking of the commandments of God, even in a single point. In other words, James

teaches as strongly as it is possible to teach, that those who have the faith of Jesus keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.

John says: "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and everyone that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous. For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" 1 John 5:1-5. The beloved disciple therefore also teaches that Christianity, the love of God, is the keeping of the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.

The Lord Jesus himself, referring to God, said: "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. Blessed are they that do HIS [God's] commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." Rev. 22:13, 14. He also said, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Christ said, "If thou wilt enter into life, kept the commandments;" he also said, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life."

The Third Angel's Message, the last message from God that the world will ever hear, embodies in a single sentence these sayings of Christ: "Here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus."

The Third Angel's Message is the embodiment of the very gospel of Christ, wherein "is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith." Rom. 1:16, 17.

When the Third Angel's Message shall be finished, then the mystery of God—the gospel—shall be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets.

And those who truly obey the Third Angel's Message will get the victory over the Beast and over his Image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name; they will, at the last, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God; and they will be without fault before the throne of God. And it will all be through "him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood." Unto him be glory and dominion forever and ever.

We thank God for the message which calls upon all men to "keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus."



KIDS CORNER

In Jesus

By Sharon Pergerson

Lazarus was really sick. When they saw that he was nearing death, his sisters sent a messenger to Jesus to tell Him, “the one You love is sick”. After Jesus received the news, He told those around Him that this sickness would not end in death, but would show the glory of God. Jesus loved Lazarus and his sisters, Martha and Mary. He had spent many comfortable times in their home. He felt every pang of their sorrow at this great loss. Two days later He and His disciples finally made their way to Bethany to

see Lazarus. On the way He let them know that Lazarus was asleep, meaning, he was dead.

Just to remind you, there are two deaths mentioned in the Bible. What Lazarus experienced is the first death. It is the one where someone dies and is buried in a grave. Jesus calls this death, a sleep. The second death is the death of hell’s fire. The Bible calls it eternal death, because it is forever. Your parents can tell you more about that. Let’s get back to our story.

By the time Jesus got close to their town, Lazarus had been

dead and buried for four days. Martha came out to meet Him. Her heart was hurting and broken, yet her love for Jesus was still strong. His grace had been with her and Mary. After a short conversation, Jesus reminded her that Lazarus would rise again. He wasn't trying to give Martha a hint of what He was about to do. He saw that Martha needed to place her trust in Him, alone. Martha knew about the resurrection. She probably learned it from her parents, the Scriptures, and her church. That's how we learned about it too.

Yes, at the second coming, "the dead in Christ will rise first" (I Thessalonians 4:16). But then, Jesus said something most of us have never thought much about, "I am the Resurrection, and the Life". Read that phrase over again. What Jesus said to Martha, and to all of us, is a very important, yet much overlooked fact. Jesus Himself, is the resurrection and the life. God's prophet says, "In Christ is life, original, unborrowed, underived." (DA 530). He is the source of all resurrection and life. The Bible says, "For in Him we live, and move, and have our being". (Acts 17:48). Apart from Jesus, meaning without Him, there is no first resurrection and there is no life. Everything we need, including life; everything we long for, everything we hope for, is

found in Jesus. For without Jesus, there would be no life; not now, not eternally. AND, all Bible truths we believe in as Christians have power, beauty, meaning, and importance, only, in Jesus.

Jesus needed Martha and all his children across the ages to understand that we are to put our trust in Him, alone. Even the resurrection is a symbol of the life giving power that is, in Jesus Christ. That's why we can never let go of Jesus, no matter what Satan does to us. He is everything to us. Jesus said it very clearly, "He that believeth on Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; And whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die". (John 11:25-26). Never die? Yes, never die. Some of God's children will sleep as did Lazarus, but they will never die eternally. All those who believe in Jesus and hold on to Him until the end of their lives, or until the end of time will live forever, and this only because Jesus is "the resurrection and the life." If we would just believe Jesus, one day soon we will have the joy of seeing the glory of God. I believe, how about you?

Easy to be Saved and Hard to be Lost? REALLY???

ERROR: It's easy to be saved, and hard to be lost.

TRUTH: It's easy to be saved, and hard to be lost, **WHEN**, you **UNDERSTAND** and **BELIEVE** the gospel.

Many times when I've encountered opposition to the idea that it is easy to be saved and hard to be lost – including the opposition of my own self-talk at times – the opposition leaves out or ignores the vital and critical last part of the phrase that this is only ever true when one understands and believes the gospel. It is in fact true, that it is hard to be saved and easy to be lost when one doesn't understand or doesn't believe the gospel. This is what Jesus was describing in Matt. 23:4 when describing the “gospel” of the Pharisees – a gospel that we have all experienced personally and observed around us – “For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders;” It was hard to be saved as a Jewish believer in the first century, living in the old covenant perceptions of what they thought God was looking for.

This explains why when Jesus spoke, the testimony of His opponents was, “nobody ever said things like this guy!” Whether Jewish or pagan, the ideas that Jesus promoted were completely opposed to all the thinking and teaching

and experience of the people of His day. Instead of “heavy burdens, hard to bear”, Jesus said, “my yoke is EASY, and my burden is LIGHT!” From infancy, the experience and teaching of all peoples – pagan or Jewish – was that true, zealous, observant religion, was a very difficult and arduous task. And now Jesus said that His way was easy and light. Couldn't be – could it?

At our recent 1888 Message Study Committee board retreat, our theme was, “Broader and Deeper”. The intent of the weekend was to re-examine and re-appreciate the material that our spiritual mentors in the 1888 message – such as Elders Wieland, Short, Snyman, etc – had understood, studied out, and passed on to us. Did they get it right? Ellen White never sat down and listed out the points that constituted the 1888 message in any discrete way. ATJones and EJWaggoner also never wrote out what they considered the “essential” points of what they were communicating. So it was left to later generations to look at the material endorsed and reiterated by Ellen White, and draw out or pull together, different streams of thought that fell under certain “categories” of ideas or truths.

In some ways this is similar to what Seventh-day Adventism has done with its 28 fundamental beliefs.

For example, there is no passage or section of the Bible that lists our 28 fundamental beliefs. There is no, “state of the dead” section, and no “soon second coming” section, and no “the Sabbath is the seventh day of the week” section. We have pulled together points from multiple portions of the Biblical narrative that fall naturally together as they relate to a common theme, and called that a doctrine – or fundamental belief. Similarly, Elders Wieland, et al, did similar work with Jones and Waggoner – and then found further support for those ideas in the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy.

So at our recent retreat, we took it as our responsibility to re-examine the “10 points” of the 1888 message, and affirm for ourselves if these ideas were a significant enough part of Jones and Waggoner’s material to describe as part of the 1888 message, and then to see if there was further support for these ideas in the Bible, Spirit of Prophecy, and the writings of Jones and Waggoner. Had Elders’ Wieland, et al, exhausted the references of the above in relation to these 10 points, or had they just “scratched the surface”, and there was much to see with further study. I can tell you, unequivocally, that each of the presentations brought out new material from the Bible, Spirit of Prophecy, and Jones’ and Waggoner’s material, related to each of the 10 points, that none of us had seen before. I would encourage you to listen to the presentations to enhance and broaden your study of the 1888 message.

I was tasked with re-studying the 1888 message point of “easy to be

saved, and hard to be lost”. Was Wieland correct to make this a point of the 1888 message? Did it have further Biblical and EGW support beyond what was written in “1888: An Introduction”, for example? And was there more in Jones’ and Waggoner’s material to be dug up?

If you want a review of this topic, I would encourage you to (re) read chapter 10 of Elder Wieland’s book, “The 1888 Message: An Introduction”. It is a superb book on the 1888 message. But let’s look briefly at some evidence for this truth that, “it’s easy to be saved and hard to be lost when you understand and believe the gospel”, that aren’t in that wonderful book.

The first, and I would say most significant, piece of evidence that it is easy to be saved and hard to be lost when you understand and believe the gospel (ESHL), is the overwhelming tenor of the Biblical narrative. Meaning, as you look back at the story(ies) of the Bible, are they supportive of or undermining of this idea of ESHL? For example, the fall of Lucifer in heaven. Was it easy or hard for Lucifer to choose to stay on God’s side? Did Lucifer have evidence – a lot of evidence – overwhelming evidence – that God was trustworthy and was worthy of worship and support, OR, was it quite difficult for Lucifer to see and appreciate God’s goodness? In fact, the evidence was overwhelming that God was good and trustworthy. Starting with all the beauty and talents that God had invested in Lucifer, that alone should have convinced him of God’s generosity. The happiness and

beauty and pleasure that surrounded all the angelic host in heaven was convincing. The creative power and generosity of God as Lucifer observed Him creating the universe. All this and much more that we could articulate, were evidences to Lucifer, that should have made it easy for him to be saved, to trust God, and maintain his position in heaven.

How about the fall of Adam and Eve in Eden? Was it easy for them to be saved – to believe and trust God, OR, was it hard for them to believe God and therefore easy to be lost? Again, signs of God's generosity and desire for their happiness were all around them. God came to them in the cool of the day – they didn't have to go to Him. The pleasure of their companionship with each other that God had given to them, the enjoyment of the Garden and all the animals, the freedom to eat of every tree of the garden – save one. Again, the evidence was overwhelming that it was easy for them to be saved and hard for them to be lost if they has just believed the evidence of God's goodness that was right before them. It was actually hard to turn away from all that and believe Satan's lies about God.

How about Cain and Abel? Did God demand some very long and arduous and difficult pilgrimage from them? Did God demand a complex ritual to satisfy Him? No. All God asked was a simple sacrificial reminder, that was for their benefit and remembrance, to steer them away from sin and towards goodness. God didn't ask for the sacrifice of 90% of their substance. He didn't ask for 90% of their time. He merely

instituted a simple service involving and innocent victim to remind them that sin is a destroyer, and that God in His innocence would experience that destruction to deliver them from it. It was ESHL for Cain and Abel.

How about the antediluvians? Easy or hard to saved? They had the witness of the Garden of Eden with its angelic guards, the witness of the disappearance of Enoch, the preaching of Noah, the testimony of Adam and Eve about the origin of things. And all they had to do was get on a boat. It was ESHL for the antediluvians.

We could go on story after story. Was it hard or easy for Abraham to have a son with Sarah? All he had to do was believe a God who had repeatedly shown Himself trustworthy. Was it hard or easy for Jacob to receive the birthright? All he had to do was wait and believe, and the birthright would have been his. Was it hard for the Israelites to enter and conquer Canaan? All they had to do was believe the goodness of God as manifested in their exodus from Egypt, in their wanderings in the wilderness, etc, and God would have pushed out the Canaanites before them. Namaan – was he told something hard to do or easy to do? Dip seven times in the Jordan – easy or hard?

The Jews in Jesus day – was the evidence that Jesus was the Messiah limited or overwhelming? Should it have been easy or hard to believe on Jesus?

All through the Biblical narrative – again and again – we see that God has worked tirelessly to make it as

easy as possible for us to believe and be saved, and has made it as hard as possible for us to be lost. EGW talks about, “evidence upon evidence and light upon light”, to characterize how much effort and energy God has put into helping us end up on the right side. Lack wisdom? God gives LIBERALLY! God is for us – who can be against us! God gives His Spirit without measure! He does exceedingly abundantly above all that we can ask or think! He did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all! There has not failed one of all His good promises! He will NEVER leave us or forsake us! He’ll write His law in our hearts! And on and on!! In Isaiah five, God asks for a judgment between Him and His vineyard – was there ANYTHING more He could have done? Over and over the Biblical story reminds us that God – because He is constrained by His agape love – that He has done and is doing all He possible can short of coercion and manipulation – to see that we are saved.

Another line of Biblical evidence I like to call “The LET principle”. Repeatedly in Scripture, the command is given to us to “LET” something happen. The implication of the word “let” is that there is a force that is about to cause something to occur, and the only thing holding it back is another force that is resisting it. So when God enjoins us to “let” something happen, the implication is, that the natural course of events will be that the event will occur unless we are actively opposing it. So in this scenario, our “response” should be to get out of

the way, and “let” the influence of God’s spirit do its work. We need to stop opposing what God is already trying really hard to do. Look at a few examples of what God is trying to do if we will just “let” Him!!

- “let” your light shine – Matt.5:16
- “let” this mind be in you – Phil.2:5
- “let” the peace of God rule in your hearts – Col.3:15
- “let” the word of Christ dwell in you – Col.3:16
- “let” brotherly love continue – Heb.13:1
- “let” patience have her perfect work – James 1:4

Imagine – all those things are about to occur in your life – if you will just “LET” them! Is it easy or hard to “let”? Well – it actually depends on knowing and believing the gospel. But if you believe – it will be easy.

Time and space don’t permit us to delve further into the Biblical evidence further, but there is much more. Let’s look briefly at some wonderful Spirit of Prophecy quotations on this topic.

“There is need of constant watchfulness and of earnest, loving devotion, but these will come naturally when the soul is kept by the power of God through faith. . . . Love springs up in the heart. There may be no ecstasy of feeling, but there is an abiding, peaceful trust. Every burden is light; for the yoke which Christ imposes is easy. Duty becomes a delight, and sacrifice a pleasure.” {CCH 49.3}

Notice, there is a role we play. We are not passive bystanders in the salvation process. We are called

to “constant watchfulness” and “earnest, loving devotion”. Is that hard to do, or easy? She goes on to articulate that they will come naturally – “through faith” – just like all the Biblical stories – all we need to do is believe in God’s goodness and power, and then, “duty becomes a delight, and sacrifice a pleasure”.

“Instead of toiling to prepare set rules and regulations, you might better be praying and submitting your own will and your ways to Christ. He is not pleased when you make hard the thing He has made easy. He says, “Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light.” {Ev 117.3}

God has made it easy. May we not make it hard – for ourselves or others.

“The yoke that binds to service is the law of God. The great law of love revealed in Eden, proclaimed upon Sinai, and in the new covenant written in the heart, is that which binds the human worker to the will of God.” {DA 329.3}, AND, “The yoke is easy, for Christ carries the weight. As you lift the burden of the cross, it will become light;” {ISM 242.2}

“When the heart is fully surrendered to God, love springs up in the soul, and the yoke of Christ is easy, and his burden light. The will is swallowed up in God’s will, and that which was a cross, becomes a pleasure.” {GW92 440.2}. Hard or easy?

And one final EGW quote that sums up the reality that it is

Christ’s love for us – understood and appreciated – that makes the yoke of service easy. “His constant forgiving love is binding up our soul’s interest with Himself. O the mightiness of the love of Jesus overwhelms me as I consider it. The yoke of Christ is easy and His burden is light.” {FE 282.1}

And finally – let’s read from the writings of ATJones and EJWaggoner – to re-emphasize that this truth of ESHL is part of the 1888 message.

“It is commonly supposed that the Christian life is all hardship, and that the easy way is the way of sin. Like most popular suppositions, this is a mistake. The Bible assures us that “The way of transgressors is hard.”

Prov. 13:15. True, it often seems most pleasant, but that is because of the hallucination that Satan is able to produce. He intoxicates the senses, so that the dangers of the way seem to be comforts. On the other hand, Jesus says, “Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light.” Matt. 11:28-30. {November 23, 1893 EJW, PTUK 544.12}

“Again, the slave of Christ is the only free man in the world. Paul says: “For he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord’s freeman; likewise also he that is called, being free, is Christ’s servant. Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men.” 1 Cor. 7:22, 23. David says: “O Lord, truly I am Thy servant; I am Thy servant, and

the son of Thine handmaid; thou hast loosed my bonds." Ps. 116:16. Here we have bondage and freedom. The man out of Christ is an abject slave; he is "holden with the cords of his sins." But the moment he yields himself unconditionally to Christ to be His servant, the body of sin is destroyed, and henceforth, if he continues to be the Lord's servant, sin has no more dominion over him. He is free to do right. His bondage is the bondage of love, and he finds the yoke easy." {June 4, 1891 EJW, PTUK 184.13}

"Peter said, "Why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?" There are two yokes,--the yoke of sin (Satan's yoke), and the yoke of Christ. The yoke of sin is hard to bear,--Satan is a hard master; but the yoke of Christ is easy, and His burden is light. He sets us free from sin, that we may serve Him by bearing His mild yoke." Matt. 11:29, 30. {1888 EJW, GBG 15.1}

"There is infinite power in the Word of God. By it we are made clean. John xv. 3. Here is infinite comfort and encouragement for the believer. The way of life is not hard, but easy. Jesus says, "My yoke is easy." It is the way of the transgressor that is hard. The Lord in His infinite mercy has made it as easy to do right as to do wrong, provided we trust Him absolutely; yea, far easier, inasmuch as His power is infinitely greater than all the power of sin. Well may this be spoken of as a "great salvation." {October 6, 1898 EJW, PTUK 630.7}

"O, it is not hard to find the Lord! for he is not far from every one of us; he is so near that but to feel after him is to find him. It is not hard to be saved; for "whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." By doubts, and queries, and unbelief generally, people make it hard to be saved; but in the Lord's way it is not hard. "My yoke is easy." Take it upon you. . . . Abraham is evidence that every heathen can find the Lord." {February 11, 1896 ATJ, ARSH 88.7-8}

Again, just like with the Bible and the writings of EGWhite, we could share many, many more quotes, but time and space preclude us from listing them all. ATJones and EJWaggoner, had a lot to say about ESHL. Elder Wieland was accurate in seeing this concept in their writings, as well as the Bible and the writings of EGWhite. In a future article, it would be well for us to look at other verses and quotes that some interpret as contradicting Christ's statement that His yoke is easy and His burden is light.

I will close with one illustration that I think helps to clarify the relationship between ESHL, and other verses and statements that might appear to contradict ESHL. When I was in academy, I was a member of the academy basketball team – not here to discuss competition today! I really liked basketball a lot. I like playing it. I like watching it. I liked practicing it. It was the only sport that I really really liked, although I played several others. Basketball practices were from 5:30-7:00am! Now, remember, this is high school age boys. How

likely are you to get high school boys out of bed at 5:30am for almost anything? Now – let me ask you a question – was it hard or easy for me to get of bed and practice/play basketball at 5:30 in the morning? Did it require discipline? Did it require effort? Did it require will power? Did it require struggle, energy, and determination to get out of bed at 5:30 to practice and play basketball? The answer to all of those questions is “yes”! But, it was easy! I liked it – I loved it!

Does the Christian life and walk require discipline, effort, will power, struggle, energy, and determination? Does that mean that Christ’s yoke is hard and His burden heavy? NO! Yes, all of those characteristics are required, but because we like Jesus, because we love Jesus – hopefully

much much more than I loved basketball – it is easy to exert effort and to exercise discipline.

While we may fall short at times, and may let the fallen nature have sway, may we always remember to “let” the mind of Christ dwell in us. As we grow in our understanding and appreciation for the gospel, the motivating power of the gospel will grow proportionally. It is my prayer for you and for me, that we will truly experience the power of the gospel – the love of God in Christ – and demonstrate to the world that God’s narrow way is the better, and easier way.



Looking Back at Minneapolis

E. G. White. 1888 Materials, pp. 201-229

It was by faith I ventured to cross the Rocky Mountains for the purpose of attending the General Conference held in Minneapolis. We left Oakland for Minneapolis, Minnesota, October 2. A number of friends were on the same train and it was a pleasure for me to visit with them, but it was too much for my strength. I needed entire rest. I had a spasm of the heart that night and for several hours I suffered much with exhaustion. This illness so prostrated me that I was obliged, because of severe pain in my heart, to keep my berth nearly all the time through the entire journey. [1888 203.1]

We changed cars at Kansas City. The train that would take us to Minneapolis was gone and we had

to wait over for several hours. The babble of confusion in the depot was almost unendurable. I could not remain there with any safety, and went out into the open air. A vacant place was found for me, and a trunk provided me a seat, but in a few minutes the heavy trucks loaded with baggage were rolled up and unloaded and the words, "Move, if you please, we must have this space," were so often repeated, wherever I might go, that I knew not what to do next. W. C. White, accompanied by a brother, went in search of some trace of our brethren living in that place, while Elder Jones and other brethren watched the baggage.

I was becoming exhausted when my hand was grasped, and I heard

these words: "Why this is Sister White! How glad I am to see you once more! You have been at my father's house. My name is Mal-lory. We were to take the train for our home, but I must find my father for he will be pleased to see you." I was grateful to meet with friends, and for the warm clasp of a friendly hand. Soon we were surrounded with brethren and sisters who were glad to see us and we to see them.

We were informed that this was to be the last day of their meeting. [THE KANSAS CAMP MEETING WAS SCHEDULED FOR OCTOBER 3-8. SEE REVIEW AND HERALD, SEPTEMBER 11, 1888, PAGE 592.] The campground was about six miles away, on the outskirts of the city. Quite a number who had long distances to go had left to return to their homes, but a large number were still on the encampment. We were urged to go out on the streetcar and speak to them that night and in the morning. My son returned, accompanied by Brother Shireman, and after consulting together we decided to tarry overnight upon the encampment.

Elder Dan Jones and his wife kindly gave us their tent and we were made comfortable. We here met many friends whom we had not seen since the death of my husband. Elder Haskell spoke in the evening. That night messengers were sent miles through the city and into the country, riding the entire night, to inform those who had left of the arrival of friends from the Pacific coast, and that they would speak at the campground. Believ-

ers and unbelievers responded to the call. I was surprised to see so large a number assembled.

I stood before the people in great weakness, but the Lord, who has been my support and strength in all my labors, was my helper on this occasion. I felt the blessing of the Lord resting upon me as I presented the message the Lord gave me for them—the necessity of practical Bible religion, religion brought into their homes, the truth sanctifying the soul temple. I felt urged to reprove and rebuke and encourage souls.

There has come a double-mindedness and indecision, a halting, wavering instability among those who have had great light, many advantages, and rich opportunities. If they only would improve these advantages and opportunities by showing zeal, steadfastness, and devotion to God corresponding with the greatness of light that shines upon our pathway! God calls for men of decided purpose, of determined character, to do His work in these last days.

Great light shines upon this generation. Decided piety and pure living unto God will distinguish the people of God from the world. The Lord would not have His people looking down in discouragement, but looking up to the things that are not seen, which are eternal. Then as His people by faith follow in the path where Christ leads the way, there will be no backsliding but advancing, keeping pace with the opening providence of God. Then shall we have fellow-

ship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. The world and its treasures sink into insignificance when our eyes are fastened upon the imperishable treasure. Let God be the object of our supreme love. Then a decided influence will go forth from those who believe the truth, upon the household and upon the neighborhood, and it will be as far-reaching as eternity.

Brother A. T. Jones spoke to the people, also Brother E. J. Waggoner, and the people heard many precious things that would be to them a comfort and a strength to their faith. They appreciated this, to them, all-important privilege.

The meeting closed and we were obliged to make a hasty farewell. We were unable to speak at all to a large number of our brethren and sisters, for our time was short and we were compelled to take the cars for the Kansas City depot. We regretted that we could not have been with our people at the earlier stage of the meeting. We had many things of great importance we would have been glad to present to them.

At Minneapolis we met a large delegation of ministers. I discerned at the very commencement of the meeting a spirit which burdened me. Discourses were preached that did not give the people the food which they so much needed. The dark and gloomy side of the picture was presented before them to hang in memory's hall. This would bring no light and spiritual freedom, but discouragement.

I felt deeply moved by the Spirit of

the Lord Sabbath afternoon to call the minds of those present to the love God manifests to His people. The mind must not be permitted to dwell on the most objectionable features of our faith. In God's Word, which may be represented as a garden filled with roses and lilies and pinks, we may pluck by faith the precious promises of God, appropriate them to our own hearts, and be of good courage--yes, joyful in God--or we may keep our attention fastened on the briars and thistles and wound ourselves severely and bemoan our hard lot.

God is not pleased to have His people hanging dark and painful pictures in memory's hall. He would have every soul plucking the roses and the lilies and the pinks, hanging memory's hall with the precious promises of God blooming all over the garden of God. He would have us dwelling upon them, our senses sharp and clear, taking them in in their full richness, talking of the joy that is set before us. He would have us living in the world, yet not of it, our affections taking hold of eternal things. He would have us talking of the things which He has prepared for those that love Him. This will attract our minds, awaken our hopes and expectations, and strengthen our souls to endure the conflicts and trials of this life. As we dwell on these scenes the Lord will encourage our faith and confidence. He will draw aside the veil and give us glimpses of the saints' inheritance.

As I presented the goodness, the love, the tender compassion of our heavenly Father, I felt that the Spirit

of the Lord was resting not only upon me but upon the people. Light and freedom and blessing came to the hearers and there was hearty response to the words spoken. The social meeting that followed evidenced that the Word had found lodgment in the hearts of the hearers. Many bore testimony that this day was the happiest of their lives, and it was indeed a precious season for we knew the presence of the Lord Jesus was in the assembly and that to bless. I knew that the special revealing of the Spirit of God was for a purpose, to quell the doubts, to roll back the tide of unbelief which had been admitted into hearts and minds concerning Sister White and the work the Lord had given her to do.

This was a season of refreshing to many souls, but it did not abide upon some. Just as soon as they saw that Sister White did not agree with all their ideas and harmonize with the propositions and resolutions to be voted upon in that conference, the evidence they had received had as little weight with some as did the words spoken by Christ in the synagogue to the Nazarenes. Their hearts were touched by the Spirit of God. They heard, as it were, God speaking to them through His Son. They saw, they felt, the divine influence of the Spirit of God and all witnessed to the gracious words that proceeded from His mouth. But Satan was at their side with his unbelief and they admitted the questioning and the doubts, and unbelief followed. The Spirit of God was quenched. In this madness they would have hurled Jesus from the

precipice had not God protected Him that their rage did not harm Him. When Satan once has control of the mind he makes fools and demons of those who have been esteemed as excellent men. Prejudice, pride, and stubbornness are terrible elements to take possession of the human mind.{1888 207.2}

I had received a long epistle from Elder Butler, which I read carefully. I was surprised at its contents. I did not know what to do with this letter, but as the same sentiments expressed in it seemed to be working and controlling my brother ministers I called a few of them together in an upper room and read this letter to them. They did not, any of them, seem to be surprised at its contents, several saying they knew this was the mind of Elder Butler for they had heard him state the same things. I then explained many things. I stated that which I knew was a right and righteous course to be pursued, brother toward brother, in the exercise of investigating the Scriptures. I knew the company before me were not viewing all the things in a correct light, therefore I stated many things. All my statements set forth correct principles to be acted upon, but I feared that my words made no impression upon them. They understood things in their way, and the light which I told them had been given me was to them as an idle tale.

I felt very much pained at heart over the condition of things. I made most earnest appeals to my brethren and sisters when assembled in the morning meetings, and entreated that we should make this occasion

a season of profit, searching the Scriptures together with humility of heart. I entreated that there should not be such freedom in talking in regard to things of which they knew but little. All needed to learn lessons in the school of Christ. Jesus has invited, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30). If we daily learn the lessons of humility and lowliness of heart, there will not be the feelings which exist at this meeting.

There are some differences of views on some subjects, but is this a reason for sharp, hard feelings? Shall envy and evil surmisings and imaginings, evil suspicion, hatred and jealousies become enthroned in the heart? All these things are evil and only evil. Our help is in God alone. Let us spend much time in prayer and in searching the Scriptures with a right spirit—
anxious to learn and willing to be corrected or undeceived on any point where we may be in error. If Jesus is in our midst and our hearts are melted into tenderness by His love we shall have one of the best conferences we have ever attended.

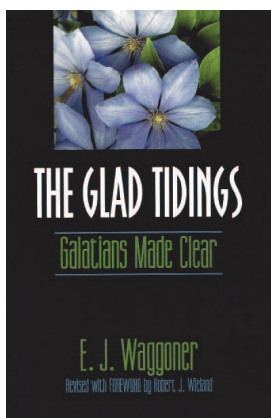
There was much business to be done. The work had enlarged. New missions had been opened and new churches organized. All should be in harmony freely to consult together as brethren at work in the great harvest field, all working interestedly in the different branches of the

work, and unselfishly considering how the Lord's work could be done to the best advantage. If ever there was a time when, as a conference, we needed the special grace and enlightenment of the Spirit of God, it was at this meeting. There was a power from beneath moving agencies to bring about a change in the constitution and laws of our nation, which will bind the consciences of all those who keep the Bible Sabbath, plainly specified in the fourth commandment as the seventh day.

The time has come when every man should be found doing his duty to the utmost of his ability to hold up and vindicate the law of God before our own people and the world, working to the limit of his capacity and entrusted talents. Many are blinded, deceived by men who claim to be ministers of the gospel, and they influence very many to consider they are doing a good work for God when it is the work of Satan. Now, Satan had a council as to how he should keep pen and voice of Seventh-day Adventists silent. If he could only engage their attention and divert their powers in a direction to weaken and divide them his prospect would be fair.

Satan has done his work with some success. There has been variance of feelings, and division. There has been much jealousy and evil surmising. There have been many unsanctified speeches, hints, and remarks. The minds of the men who should be heart and soul at work, prepared to do mighty strokes for God at this very time are absorbed

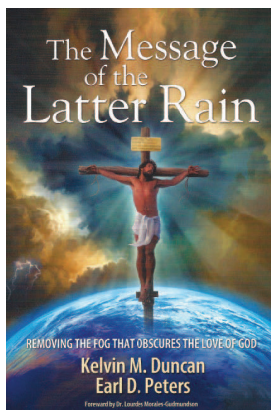
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The Glad Tidings: Galatians Made Clear Ellet J. Waggoner

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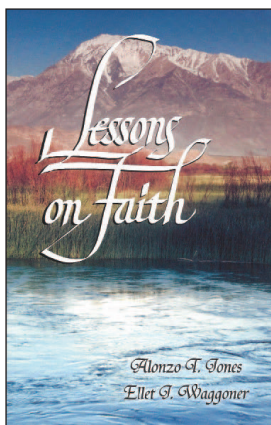
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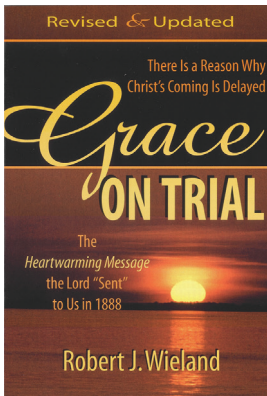
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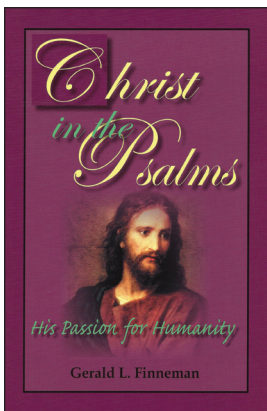
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Looking Back at Minneapolis
Continued from Page 25

in matters of little consequence. Because the ideas of some are not exactly in accordance with their own on every point of doctrine involving minor ideas and theories which are not vital questions, the great question of the nation's religious liberty, now involving so much, is to many a matter of little consequence.

Satan has been having things his own way; but the Lord has raised up men and given them a solemn message to bear to His people, to wake up the mighty men to prepare for battle, for the day of God's preparation. This message Satan sought to make of none effect, and when every voice and every pen should have been intensely at work to stay the workings and powers of Satan there was a drawing apart; there were differences of opinion. This was not at all the way of the Lord. At this meeting the subject of the law in Galatians was brought before the ministers. This subject had been brought into the conference three years before. We have a letter, extracts from which we will here present, which letter was written while in Basel, Switzerland, and sent to Brethren A. T. Jones and E. J. Waggoner.

We know that if all would come to the Scriptures with hearts subdued and controlled by the influence of the Spirit of God, there would be brought to the examination of the Scriptures a calm mind, free from prejudice and pride of opinion. The light from the Lord

would shine upon His Word and the truth would be revealed. But there should be prayerful, painstaking effort and much patience, to answer the prayer of Christ that His disciples may be one as He is one with the Father. The earnest, sincere prayer, will be heard and the Lord will answer. The Holy Spirit will quicken the mental faculties and there will be a seeing eye to eye. "The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple" (Psalm 119:130).

Elder E. J. Waggoner had the privilege granted him of speaking plainly and presenting his views upon justification by faith and the righteousness of Christ in relation to the law. This was no new light, but it was old light placed where it should be in the third angel's message. What is the burden of that message? John sees a people. He says, "Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus" (Revelation 14:12). This people John beholds just before he sees the Son of man "having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle" (verse 14).

The faith of Jesus has been overlooked and treated in an indifferent, careless manner. It has not occupied the prominent position in which it was revealed to John. Faith in Christ as the sinner's only hope has been largely left out, not only of the discourses given but of the religious experience of very many who claim to believe the third angel's message. At this meeting I bore testimony that the most precious light had been

shining forth from the Scriptures in the presentation of the great subject of the righteousness of Christ connected with the law, which should be constantly kept before the sinner as his only hope of salvation. This was not new light to me for it had come to me from higher authority for the last forty-four years, and I had presented it to our people by pen and voice in the testimonies of His Spirit. But very few had responded except by assent to the testimonies borne upon this subject. There was altogether too little spoken and written upon this great question. The discourses of some might be correctly represented as like the offering of Cain--Christless.

The standard by which to measure character is the royal law. The law is the sin detector. By the law is the knowledge of sin. But the sinner is constantly being drawn to Jesus by the wonderful manifestation of His love in that He humiliated Himself to die a shameful death upon the cross. What a study is this! Angels have striven, earnestly longed, to look into this wonderful mystery. It is a study that can tax the highest human intelligence, that man, fallen, deceived by Satan, taking Satan's side of the question, can be conformed to the image of the Son of the infinite God--that man shall be like Him, that, because of the righteousness of Christ given to man, God will love man, fallen but redeemed, even as He loved His Son. Read it right out of the living oracles.

This is the mystery of godliness. This picture is of the highest value. It is to be meditated upon, placed in

every discourse, hung in memory's hall, uttered by human lips, and traced by human beings who have tasted and known that the Lord is good. It is to be the groundwork of every discourse. There have been dry theories presented and precious souls are starving for the bread of life. This is not the preaching that is required or that the God of heaven will accept, for it is Christless. The divine picture of Christ must be kept before the people. He is that Angel standing in the sun of heaven. He reflects no shadows. Clothed in the attributes of Deity, shrouded in the glories of Deity, and in the likeness of the infinite God, He is to be lifted up before men. When this is kept before the people, creature merit sinks into insignificance. The more the eye looks upon Him, the more His life, His lessons, His perfection of character are studied, the more sinful and abhorrent will sin appear. By beholding, man can but admire and become more attracted to Him, more charmed, and more desirous to be like Jesus until he assimilates to His image and has the mind of Christ. Like Enoch he walks with God. His mind is full of thoughts of Jesus. He is his best Friend.

We have been pained to see, when ministers are much together and laboring together, that one catches the ways and the attitudes and the gestures, the manner of address, the very tones of the voice, of another, until his identity is lost in that of his associate. This causes me pain of heart, because I know that if he had been looking to Jesus, thinking of Jesus, talking of His love and

imitating His character, the stamp of Jesus would be upon him and not the human impress of finite beings who, in words, manners, and spirit, but faintly represent the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world. If every minister who claims to love Jesus will only be filled with His charms and become assimilated to His image, what an example would he give to his brethren and to the world! The more ministers are in the company of Christ by communing with Him, the more they will be fastened to Christ. Catching His holy looks and copying His holy ways, they will be transformed into His image. They may be truly said to represent Jesus Christ.

“Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus” (Hebrews 3:1). Study Christ. Study His character, feature by feature. He is our Pattern that we are required to copy in our lives and our characters, else we fail to represent Jesus, but present to the world a spurious copy. Do not imitate any man, for men are defective in habits, in speech, in manners, in character. I present before you the Man Christ Jesus. You must individually know Him as your Saviour before you can study Him as your pattern and your example. Said Paul, “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live

by faith. . . . Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them” (Romans 1:16-19).

We felt deeply and solemnly grateful to God that minds were being stirred by the Spirit of God to see Christ in the living oracles and to represent Him to the world, but not in words merely. They see the Scripture requirements that all who claim to be followers of Christ are under obligation to walk in His footsteps, to be imbued with his Spirit, and thus to present to the world Jesus Christ, who came to our world to represent the Father. In representing Christ we represent God to our world. “If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His” (Romans 8:9). Let us inquire, Are we reflecting in the church and before the world the character of Jesus Christ? A great deal deeper study is required of us in searching the Scriptures. Placing the righteousness of Christ in the law distinctly reveals God in His true character and reveals the law as holy, just, and good, glorious indeed when seen in its true character.{1888 214.2}

If all our ministering brethren could have come to their Bibles together, with the spirit of Christ, respecting each other, and with true Christian courtesy, the Lord would have been their instructor. But the Lord has no chance to impress minds over which Satan has so great power. Everything that does not harmonize with their mind and their human judgment will appear in shadows and dark outlines.

Self has far more to do with our religious experience than we imagine. When self is crucified, when the stubborn will is subdued, then the language of the heart will be, "Not my will, but Thine, be done, O God, whose I am and whom I serve." "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." None will be as fixed stars, cold and immovable. This selfish, worldly dignity will no longer be maintained. There will be a beautiful blending of purity, elevation and nobility, which is wisdom from above and the meekness and lowliness of Jesus Christ. An innocent lamb was chosen as a representation of Christ.

Selfishness is written on the human heart in plain, unmistakable characters. Just as soon as the love of God takes its place, there is the image and superscription of Jesus Christ. His entire life amid a world filled with pride and selfishness was without an exception an embodiment of that charity that suffereth long, and is kind: that envieth not; that "vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things" (1 Corinthians 13:4-7). Here is presented before us the fruits of the grace of God which every follower of Christ will manifest in his life and reveal in his character. If these manifestations are wanting, there must be most earnest seeking in God. By repentance and faith in Jesus Christ we may receive the spirit

of Christ here specified, and then we may indeed be called children of God and not children of the wicked one. We must have greater faith; then we shall have more of Christ.

My burden during the meeting was to present Jesus and His love before my brethren, for I saw marked evidences that many had not the spirit of Christ. My mind was kept in peace, stayed upon God, and I felt sad to see that a different spirit had come into the experience of our brother ministers, and that it was leavening the camp. There was, I knew, a remarkable blindness upon the minds of many, that they did not discern where the Spirit of God was and what constituted true Christian experience. To consider that these were the ones who had the guardianship of the flock of God was painful. The destitution of true faith, the hands hung down, because not lifted up in sincere prayer! Some felt no need of prayer. Their own judgment, they felt, was sufficient, and they had no sense that the enemy of all good was guiding their judgment. They were as soldiers going unarmed and unarmored to the battle. Can we marvel that the discourses were spiritless, that the living water of life refused to flow through obstructed channels, and that the light of heaven could not penetrate the dense fog of lukewarmness and sinfulness.

I was able to sleep but a few hours. I was writing all hours of the morning, frequently rising at two and at three a.m. and relieving my mind by writing upon the subjects that were presented before me. My heart was pained to see

the spirit that controlled some of our ministering brethren, and this spirit seemed to be contagious. There was much talking done.

When I stated before my brethren that I had heard for the first time the views of Elder E. J. Waggoner, some did not believe me. I stated that I had heard precious truths uttered that I could respond to with all my heart, for had not these great and glorious truths, the righteousness of Christ and the entire sacrifice made in behalf of man, been imprinted indelibly on my mind by the Spirit of God? Has not this subject been presented in the testimonies again and again? When the Lord had given to my brethren the burden to proclaim this message I felt inexpressibly grateful to God, for I knew it was the message for this time.

The third angel's message is the proclamation of the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus Christ. The commandments of God have been proclaimed, but the faith of Jesus Christ has not been proclaimed by Seventh-day Adventists as of equal importance, the law and the gospel going hand in hand. I cannot find language to express this subject in its fullness.

"The faith of Jesus." It is talked of, but not understood. What constitutes the faith of Jesus, that belongs, to the third angel's message? Jesus becoming our sin-bearer that He might become our sin-pardoning Saviour. He was treated as we deserve to be treated. He came to our world and took our sins that we might take His righ-

teousness. Faith in the ability of Christ to save us amply and fully and entirely is the faith of Jesus.

The only safety for the Israelites was blood upon the doorposts. God said, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you" (Exodus 12:13). All other devices for safety would be without avail. Nothing but the blood on the doorposts would bar the way that the angel of death should not enter. There is salvation for the sinner in the blood of Jesus Christ alone, which cleanseth us from all sin. The man with a cultivated intellect may have vast stores of knowledge, he may engage in theological speculations, he may be great and honored of men and be considered the repository of knowledge, but unless he has a saving knowledge of Christ crucified for him, and by faith lays hold of the righteousness of Christ, he is lost. Christ "was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5). "Saved by the blood of Jesus Christ," will be our only hope for time and our song throughout eternity.

When I plainly stated my faith there were many who did not understand me and they reported that Sister White had changed; Sister White was influenced by her son, W. C. White, and by Elder A. T. Jones. Of course such a statement coming from the lips of those who had known me for years, who had grown up with the third angel's message and had been honored by the confidence and faith of our

people, must have influence. I became the subject of remarks and criticism, but no one of our brethren came to me and made inquiries or sought any explanation from me. We tried most earnestly to have all our ministering brethren who were rooming in the house meet in an unoccupied room and unite our prayers together, but did not succeed in this but two or three times. They chose to go to their rooms and have their conversation and prayers by themselves. There did not seem to be any opportunity to break down the prejudice that was so firm and determined. We had no chance to remove the misunderstanding in regard to myself, my son, and E. J. Waggoner and A. T. Jones.

I tried to make another effort. I had that morning at an early hour written matter that should come before our brethren, for then my words would not be misstated. Quite a number of our leading responsible men were present, and I deeply regretted that a much larger number were not taken into this council, for some of those present, I knew, began to see things in a different light, and many more would have been benefited had they had the opportunity to hear what I had to say. But they did not know and were not benefited with my explanations and with the plain "Thus saith the Lord" which I gave them.

Questions were asked at that time. "Sister White, do you think that the Lord has any new and increased light for us as a people?" I answered, "Most assuredly. I do not only think so, I but can speak

understandingly. I know that there is precious truth to be unfolded to us if we are the people that are to stand in the day of God's preparation."

Then the question was asked whether I thought the matter better drop where it was, after Brother Waggoner had stated his views of the law in Galatians. I said, "By no means. We want all on both sides of the question." But I stated that the spirit I had seen manifested at the meeting was unreasonable. I insisted that there should be a right spirit, a Christlike spirit manifested, such as Elder E. J. Waggoner had shown all through the presentation of his views; and that this matter should not be handled in a debating style. I urged that this matter should be handled in a Christlike spirit and that there should be no thrust made against the brethren who differed with them. As Elder E. J. Waggoner had conducted himself like a Christian gentleman they should do the same, giving the arguments on their side of the question in a straightforward manner.

I told them I had been shown that some of our brethren had educated themselves as debaters. The process of this education and the mold received by such an education were not after God's order, neither did they meet the approval of God. In many respects men trained in this kind of school unfitted themselves to become pastors of the sheep and lambs; and in combating an opponent, as in the way of discussions, usually harm is done with but little good results. The combative spirit is raised in both parties, and a defiant,

hard spirit becomes habitual when their track is crossed. They become criticizers and do not always handle the Scriptures fairly, but wrest the Scriptures to make their point.

The remark was made, "If our views of Galatians are not correct, then we have not the third angel's message, and our position goes by the board; there is nothing to our faith." I said, "Brethren, here is the very thing I have been telling you. This statement is not true. It is an extravagant, exaggerated statement. If it is made in the discussion of this question I shall feel it my duty to set this matter before all that are assembled, and whether they hear or forbear, tell them the statement is incorrect. The question at issue is not a vital question and should not be treated as such. The wonderful importance and magnitude of this subject has been exaggerated. For this reason--through misconception and perverted ideas--we see the spirit that prevails at this meeting, which is unchristlike, and which we should never see exhibited among brethren. There has been a spirit of Pharisaism coming in among us which I shall lift my voice against wherever it may be revealed."

Again, a brother said, "Perhaps you think nothing should be said on the other side of the question." My son Willie and I spoke decidedly that we would not have the matter end here by any means, but we desired that they should bring out all the evidence on both sides of the question for all we wanted was the truth, Bible truth, to be brought before the people.

What was my astonishment to learn the next morning that a meeting was called where the statement was made that they felt bad, for Sister White was opposed to the other side of the question being discussed! One in the meeting went for my son, W. C. White, who was entirely ignorant of the meeting, and advised him to come in. Apparently there was a very mournful presentation of the case, which created great sympathy for the brethren who were crippled and not allowed a chance to set forth their ideas. My son said he would speak in behalf of his mother, who was just as desirous--and more so now that Elder Waggoner had spoken--to hear all that was to be said on the other side of the question; and she had spoken thus decidedly in the council of the ministers the night before. Thus the matter was set before them in the correct light.

When they came into the meeting in the morning I was surprised to hear Elder _____ make the kind of speech he did before a large audience of believers and unbelievers--a speech which I knew could not be dictated by the Spirit of the Lord. He was followed by Elder _____, who made remarks of the same order, before Brother _____ began his talk, which was all calculated to create sympathy which I knew was not after God's order. It was human but not divine. And for the first time I began to think it might be we did not hold correct views after all upon the law in Galatians, for the truth required no such spirit to sustain it.

Brother _____, who first spoke

in decided, unqualified language, deplored the introduction of the subject of the law in Galatians. He stated, over and over again, that he greatly deplored the introduction of this question and that he was so sorry it should be introduced at a time when Elder Butler was sick and could not be present to manage this matter. With emphasis he stated that it was a cowardly thing to broach this matter when Elder Butler could not be present, as he was best prepared to handle this question. There were many things said which astonished me, both by Elder _____ and Elder _____. These men were speaking these things before a mixed congregation. The house was full. And these were the ones who felt that it was not the thing to do to bring this subject for investigation before any but the ministering brethren!{1888 222.1}

Elder Waggoner had taken a straightforward course, not involving personalities, to thrust anyone or to ridicule anyone. He conducted the subject as a Christian gentleman should, in a kind and courteous manner. This was acknowledged to be the case by those who were holding opposite views. If only Elder _____ had done the same, and had entered, upon the work without these preliminaries before a large congregation, many not of our faith being present! Their course of action and their expressed ideas and objections against presenting these subjects before even our own people did not harmonize.

I could see a great want of wise discrimination and of good judg-

ment. The evil of such things has often been presented before me. The difference of opinion was made apparent to both believers and unbelievers. These things made such an impression upon my mind that I felt that my brethren had met with a great change. This matter had been set before me while I was in Europe, in figures and symbols, but the explanation was given me afterwards so that I was not left in the dark in regard to the state of our churches and of our ministering brethren.

Language cannot express the burden and distress of my soul. I had been passing through deep and painful exercise of soul in Switzerland as the conference held in Battle Creek three years before was presented before me. The same distress and anguish of mind were upon me. I had not one doubt or question in regard to the matter. I knew the light which had been presented to us in clear and distinct lines.

The brethren had all the evidence they would ever have the words of truth were spoken in regard to the righteousness of Christ. I knew that if they had distinguished the voice of the true Shepherd, if they had opened their hearts to receive the light, such speeches would never be made to create sympathy and leave the impression upon the congregation that we were at variance and at enmity one with the other.

Had my efforts that I made before some of the prominent men in responsible positions done any good? Certainly my labors seemed to be in vain. There was a spirit

upon our brethren that I never met in them before.{1888 223.3}

I returned to my room questioning what was the best course for me to pursue. Many hours that night were spent in prayer in regard to the law in Galatians. This was a mere mote. Whichever way was in accordance with a "Thus saith the Lord," my soul would say, Amen, and Amen. But the spirit that was controlling our brethren was so unlike the spirit of Jesus, so contrary to the spirit that should be exercised toward each other, it filled my soul with anguish.

In the next morning's meeting for the ministers I had some plain things to say to my brethren, which I dared not withhold. The salt had lost its savor, the fine gold become dim. Spiritual darkness was upon the people and many evidenced that they were moved with a power from beneath, for the result was just such as would be the case when they were not under the illumination of the Spirit of God. What pages of history were being made by the recording angel! The leaven had indeed done its sharp work, and nearly leavened the lump. I had a message of reproof and warning for my brethren, I knew. My soul was pressed with anguish. To say these things to my brethren caused me far greater anguish than they caused those to whom they were addressed. Through the grace of Christ I experienced a divine compelling power to stand before my ministering brethren, in the name of the Lord, hoping and praying that the Lord would open the blind eyes. I was strengthened to say the words which my secretary

took in shorthand. (Here comes in Morning Talk, October 24.

I thought I had done all that I could do to present the light which the Lord had given me and that I would quietly withdraw from the meeting and answer the earnest solicitation of my brethren and sisters to speak to them in Kansas City. There was firm and decided resistance to anything that I might say that did not harmonize with the ideas of those present in regard to their treatment of Brethren A. T. Jones and E. J. Waggoner and those who did not fully harmonize with their own views. Conjectures, much talk, and hard speeches gave evidence of what kind of a spirit was in those who made them. False statements and surmisings were current, but no one came to me to ask if there was any truth in these things. I was in their midst. I would have talked freely with any of them and would have enlightened their minds if they had had any desire to be enlightened.

It was evident that a spirit had been at work for years to bring about this state of things. It was no sudden work. Our brethren never did have and never will have any greater evidence that God was with me, working with me and by me for the benefit of His people, than they had at that conference. It was evident that a delusion was upon our brethren. They had lost confidence in Sister White, not because Sister White had changed but because another spirit had taken possession and control of them. Satan's purpose is, through his devices, to

make of none effect the testimonies of the Spirit of God. If he can lead the minds of the people of God to see things in a perverted light, they will lose confidence in the messages God sends through His servants; then he can the more readily deceive, and not be detected.

If our brethren had been divested of prejudice, if they had had the Spirit of Christ and spiritual discernment, reasoning from cause to effect, they would not have borne false witness against me. They would not have made the statement that Sister White was influenced by W. C. White, A. T. Jones, and E. J. Waggoner.

The charge of my being influenced has been brought against me by First-day Adventists and by those to whom the Lord has sent warnings, cautions, and reproof. "Someone has influenced Sister White," they have said, "Someone has told her these things." This I have had to meet from the very first day of my labors. Everyone who has been reproofed and has apostatized has had these things to say.

One thing many did know, and that is that they were guilty of the very things for which they were reproofed, but rather than humble their proud hearts and confess their sins, they threw themselves fully on Satan's ground to work wickedness. They are of that class of whom Christ said, "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life" (John 5:40). "Every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds

should be reproofed" (John 3:20).

The Lord was testing and proving His people who had had great light, whether they would walk in it or turn from it under temptation, for but few know what manner of spirit they are of until circumstances shall be of a character to test the spirit which prompts to action. In many the natural heart is a controlling power, and yet they do not suppose that pride and prejudice are entertained as cherished guests, and work in words and actions against light and truth.

Our brethren who have occupied leading positions in the work and the cause of God should have been so closely connected with the Source of all light that they would not call light darkness and darkness light. They had the example of those before them who had claimed to believe the truth but who, when mercifully reproofed for sin and errors, gave loose rein to their own natural temperament and opposed the work of the Spirit of the Lord. They had seen these go farther and farther in darkness until they became apostates to the truth. And they do not discern that they are in the greatest peril, if, notwithstanding the course and marked example of others, they blindly stumble into the same path of doubt, unbelief, and rejection of light sent of God, because it does not coincide with their ideas. They do not seem to understand that if the Lord sent them reproof it was because He loved them.

A Christian is the highest type of a man because he is Christlike, and

when he departs from the principles that are after Christ's order he is often ignorant that he has done wrong. The Lord sets the case before him as it is, as he is. He does not specify all his wrongs, but gives him a chance to manifest that he is a true child of God by his repentance and confession, not only of the sins specified but of those which conscience sets in order before him.

In doing this work [becoming Christlike] he reveals he has made an open rupture with Satan and with sin. He feels his weakness, he lays hold with earnest purpose and living faith upon the strength of God, and is an overcomer. Great becomes his peace, his joy, for it comes from the Lord, and there is nothing more acceptable in the sight of God than the continual humiliation of the soul before Him. These evidences are unmistakable proofs that the Lord has touched hearts by His Holy Spirit. More wonderful than miracles of physical healing is the miracle wrought in the child of God in wrestling with natural defects and overcoming them. The universe of God looks upon him with joy far greater than on any splendid outward display. The inward character is molded after the divine Pattern.

But when men in high positions of trust will, when under pressure, say that Sister White is influenced by any human being, they certainly have no more use for messages that come from such a source. This was freely spoken at the Minneapolis meeting, and it came from the lips of men who were acquainted with me, with my manner of life, and

the character of my labor, men who had made the most of the testimonies in times past in correcting existing evils in the churches, who had felt no hesitancy in declaring their authenticity--that they bore the Divine credentials. Was it all contrary to the Lord's manner of working to send messages to ministers and churches? Has it not been His way of dealing with His people in the past?

Why were not these men, who knew of these things, afraid to lift their hand against me and my work for no reason except their imagination that I was not in harmony with their spirit and their course of action toward men whom they and I had reason to respect? These men were just as sincere as those who criticized, men of correct principles--but who did not harmonize with their views concerning the law in Galatians. I knew how the Lord regarded their spirit and action and if they did thus in ignorance, through perverted ideas, they have had all the opportunity God will ever give them to know He has given these men [A. T. Jones and E. J. Waggoner] a work to do, and a message to bear which is present truth for this time. They knew that wherever this message comes its fruits are good. A vigor and a vital energy are brought into the church, and where the message is accepted, there hope and courage and faith beam in the countenances of all those who open their eyes to see, their understanding to perceive and their hearts to receive the great treasure of truth.

Holding up Christ as our only

source of strength, presenting His matchless love in having the guilt of the sins of men charged to His account and His own righteousness imputed to man, in no case does away with the law or detracts from its dignity. Rather, it places it where the correct light shines upon and glorifies it. This is done only through the light reflected from the cross of Calvary. The law is complete and full in the great plan of salvation, only as it is presented in the light shining from the crucified and risen Saviour. This can be only spiritually discerned. It kindles in the heart of the beholder ardent faith, hope, and joy that Christ is his righteousness. This joy is only for those who love and keep the words of Jesus, which are the words of God. Were my brethren in the light the words that the Lord gave me for them would find a response in the hearts of those for whom I labored.

As I saw that the hearts with which I longed to be in harmony were padlocked by prejudice and unbelief, I thought best for me to leave them. My purpose was to go from Minneapolis the first of the week. Brother Kilgore came with a request that I should speak the next day, but I said, "No, my brother, I can say nothing that many of my ministering brethren consider to be of any value to them. I must not work and exhaust my strength needlessly. I must go away and see what the Lord has for me to do elsewhere, for I know I have a message to bear to His people."

I wished to meditate, to pray, [that I might know] in what manner we

could work to present the subject of sin and atonement in the Bible light before the people. They were greatly needing this kind of instruction that they might give the light to others and have the blessed privilege of being workers together with God in gathering in and bringing home the sheep of His fold. What power must we have from God that icy hearts, having only a legal religion, should see the better things provided for them--Christ and His righteousness! A life-giving message was needed to give life to the dry bones.--Ms. 24, 1888. ("Looking Back at Minneapolis," written in November or December, 1888.)



PETER AND FORGIVENESS: PART 5

Fred Bischoff

In our previous stories, we traced Peter's encounters with the motive in Jesus' life that is the heart of forgiveness. In the six stories from Matthew 16 to 19, Jesus planted seeds in a heart given to Him in love, but yet contaminated, and thus restricted, confused, and blinded by a motive opposite to the unselfish, giving love of Jesus.

We move now to two more stories of Peter that unfolded as Jesus neared Calvary.

Story #7: Matthew 26 (1): Peter's Blindness--Needing the Persistence of Forgiveness

The Story

Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad.

But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee.

Peter answered and said unto him, Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended.

Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.

Peter said unto him [per Mark 14:31 “the more vehemently,”], Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. Likewise also said all the disciples. (verses 31-35)

Commentary with Notes

After the hymn [following the Lord’s Supper], they went out. Through the crowded streets they made their way, passing out of the city gate toward the Mount of Olives. Slowly they proceeded, each busy with his own thoughts. As they began to descend toward the mount, Jesus said, in a tone of deepest sadness, “All ye shall be offended because of Me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad.” Matthew 26:31. The disciples listened in sorrow and amazement. They remembered how in the synagogue at Capernaum, when Christ spoke of Himself as the bread of life, many had been offended, and had turned away from Him. But the twelve had not shown themselves unfaithful. Peter, speaking for his brethren, had then declared his loyalty to Christ. Then the Saviour had said, “Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?” John 6:70. In the upper chamber Jesus said that one of the twelve would betray Him, and that Peter would deny Him. But

now His words include them all.

Now Peter’s voice is heard vehemently protesting, “Although all shall be offended, yet will not I.” In the upper chamber he had declared, “I will lay down my life for Thy sake.” Jesus had warned him that he would that very night deny his Saviour. Now Christ repeats the warning: “Verily I say unto thee, That this day, even in this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny Me thrice.” But Peter only “spake the more vehemently, If I should die with Thee, I will not deny Thee in anywise. Likewise also said they all.” Mark 14:29, 30, 31. In their self-confidence they denied the repeated statement of Him who knew. They were unprepared for the test; when temptation should overtake them, they would understand their own weakness. (The Desire of Ages, page 673.1&2)

Note: In Story #2 we encountered the offence Peter’s selfishness was to Jesus. Here Jesus stated, using the verb form of the same word, that His unselfishness would offend them all. Peter’s rejection of Jesus’ warning showed he had not entered into the repentance that should have flowed from that earlier rebuke. Defending self prevents the denial of self that includes an ever-deepening repentance. But Jesus embraced that denial and that repentance, on behalf, as the principle always does, of others. Observe the contrast, and the length to which Jesus’ giving will go, as He walks the path ever closer to the ultimate act of giving.

When Peter said he would follow

his Lord to prison and to death, he meant it, every word of it; but he did not know himself. Hidden in his heart were elements of evil that circumstances would fan into life. Unless he was made conscious of his danger, these would prove his eternal ruin. The Saviour saw in him a self-love and assurance that would overbear even his love for Christ. Much of infirmity, of unmortified sin, carelessness of spirit, unsanctified temper, heedlessness in entering into temptation, had been revealed in his experience. Christ's solemn warning was a call to heart searching. Peter needed to distrust himself, and to have a deeper faith in Christ. Had he in humility received the warning, he would have appealed to the Shepherd of the flock to keep His sheep. When on the Sea of Galilee he was about to sink, he cried, "Lord, save me." Matthew 14:30. Then the hand of Christ was outstretched to grasp his hand. So now if he had cried to Jesus, Save me from myself, he would have been kept. But Peter felt that he was distrusted, and he thought it cruel. He was already offended, and he became more persistent in his self-confidence. (The Desire of Ages, page 673.3)

Note: Sincerity and deception can co-exist in selfish sinners who have begun a walk with Jesus! Self-love battles with love for Jesus. But observe what the self focus of this "self-love" and "self-confidence" does--the tender warning is rejected, the diagnosis denied, the faith of Jesus which motivated the confrontation is accounted "distrust,"

while distrust of self and "deeper faith in Christ" are both lost, for there is no need perceived for such. The prediction is immediately fulfilled--the caution of a pending offence proves itself correct in the faithless response of offended self! But Jesus' faith does not fail. We should here note that while the faith of Jesus sees the best potential of another, it does not ignore or fail to warn about what will be in lost potential, based on that one's unbelief. Having done that, Jesus' faith perseveres in still projecting a way out of the consequences of that unbelief. Let's observe where that faith goes in giving.

Jesus looks with compassion on His disciples. He cannot save them from the trial, but He does not leave them comfortless. He assures them that He is to break the fetters of the tomb, and that His love for them will not fail. "After I am risen again," He says, "I will go before you into Galilee." Matthew 26:32. Before the denial, they have the assurance of forgiveness. After His death and resurrection, they knew that they were forgiven, and were dear to the heart of Christ. (The Desire of Ages, page 674.1)

Note: From this story we must see how the faith of Jesus, humbled in the midst of the painful reality of our unbelief, comes across as "distrust" because our self-focused unbelief sees not the "I will go before you," but rather only the "thou shalt deny me." But the out-workings of our unbelief are not expressions of His faith. His

warnings regarding our faithlessness are an essential dimension of His faith, and thus are not cruel expressions of distrust, because the faith of Jesus must be set in the midst of unbelief for it to be seen for what it is in its fullness. Jesus in essence is saying, “I will not give up on you even though you will give up on me. I will keep giving for you when you pull back on giving for Me.” Our unbelief denies the possibility of our failure, when our trembling faith should instead exclaim in amazement, “You won’t give up on us? You would give that much? Is your forgiveness without measure?” We must not warp this forgiveness into a spiritualistic “God does not condemn.” For what is the cost of God’s condemning our denial while justifying us--of condemning our sin while justifying us sinners? He bears the full weight, the full cost, of that denial. He does not ask that we pay for it; He does. Only the cross measures such unbelief and such faith fully.

But note carefully that this commentary takes verses 31 (673.1) and 32 (674.1) and wraps verses 33-35 (673.2&3) within them! Note further the great significance of the time prepositions and the verb tenses used, as highlighted in this table:

BEFORE the denial, they have the assurance of forgiveness.

AFTER His death and resurrection, they knew that they were forgiven, and were dear to the heart of Christ.

Jesus’ look of compassion, assurance, love and forgiveness would be used again a few hours

later, focused fully on Peter.

Reflections: Their later faith experience did not create the reality of Jesus’ forgiveness. The reality, through the faith of Jesus, existed in the midst of their unbelief. The verb is clear, and the present tense is used to emphasize the present reality. Buried in their faithlessness, they “have” it, though the blindness of unbelief saw no need for it, and denied any future need. Nevertheless, the “have” preceded the “knew.” They “have” the reality before they “knew” it. They had the gift by virtue of His giving, His forgiving. They would know it--that is, they would enter more fully into the experience of it--only when the scales fell from their unbelieving eyes by:

- (1) their own selfish taking being revealed, each taking self away from Jesus and running when they “forsook Him, and fled” (Matthew 26:56),
- (2) their selfish plans of earthly greatness being destroyed by His cross, and
- (3) their unselfish plans finally beginning to be constructed on a firm foundation by His resurrection and what followed. But we are not yet at those points in the story. We are still “before the denial.” And another story of Peter comes before that.

Luke’s Addition to the Story: Luke recorded an amazing gift Jesus gave Peter just before Jesus’ prediction of the triple denial and Peter’s pledge of loyalty till death.

And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat:

But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren. (22:31, 32)

This warning wrapped in a declaration of personal intercession and future duties gives a wonderful window into the faith of Jesus that lies behind our faltering faith. Can we see better how justification (forgiveness in all its dimensions) is by faith, the “faith of Jesus”? (See Galatians 2:16, a declaration of Paul in another story involving Peter.)

Story #8: Matthew 26 (2): Peter’s Defense--Blocking the Path of Forgiveness

The Story: Compare our Matthew passage with John 18: Matthew 26 John 18

And Jesus said unto him [Judas], Friend, wherefore art thou come? Then came they, and laid hands on Jesus, and took him.

And, behold, one of them which were with Jesus stretched out his hand, and drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high priest’s, and smote off his ear. Then Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest’s servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant’s name was Malchus.

Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into

the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?

Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?

But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?

In that same hour said Jesus to the multitudes, Are ye come out as against a thief with swords and staves for to take me? I sat daily with you teaching in the temple, and ye laid no hold on me.

But all this was done, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled.

Then the band and the captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus, and bound him.

(verses 50-56) (verses 10-12)

Reflections: The verb “took” in John 18:12 is from same root as the verb of “took” in Matthew 16:22 in Story #2. Both Peter earlier and these Jews now “took” Jesus, one to prevent the cross, the others to hasten it. Neither saw “the cup” as something desirable--to drink what the Father “hath given.” Peter had failed to see how such giving was compatible with “the Son of the living God.” The Jews actually wanted Jesus to drink it, thinking in a similar vein that such would prove He was not that Son.

But Jesus desired the cup, because it was the outworking of His divine identity and character, of the plan from eternity to meet the

need of the taking of sin. Here we should see better the root of forgiveness. It involves giving. The “hath given” of the Father here is the same verb “gave” in John 3:16. Ponder what the Father gave! On earth Jesus continually faced the choice to embrace that identity-- an only-begotten Son given. Such was His walk of faith, given by the Father, given to men, nothing for self. “The cup” was a metaphor of something that was His destiny, but something that was not inevitable. He had to take it willingly into His being. Love is always voluntary. And His rhetorical question here to Peter indicated that He was willing. But Jesus’ drinking what was given would involve Him in a depth of giving hitherto unseen by the universe. His experience over the next few hours would demonstrate the massive struggle over the cup. His faith and love would triumph in the conflict with self, and His Father’s will and the needs of sinners would win. Self would be sacrificed. But how would Peter come to see such a cup as something desirable, something to embrace? If Peter could but see that, he would actually encourage Jesus in His choice, and would also accept his own unselfish identity and destiny. Without seeing that, Peter would only inevitably draw back from the demand on him to give.

Peter’s drawing the sword was clearly not just to cut off an ear or any other small appendage. He was willing and ready to take life. But that path has no future. Those who do it “shall perish with the sword,”

for no such implement of war has a future in the eternity of giving. In Story #7 Peter had boldly affirmed he was willing to “die with” Jesus-- to give his life. But here we see that Peter’s giving was really a form of taking. At that point he was willing to give only in the act of taking. And so his plan to go “with” Jesus would also prove an impossibility. He with the other 10 “forsook Him, and fled” in yet another demonstration of self-preservation, of their inability to continue to give as Jesus was giving.

Transition

In these two stories we have noted Peter’s path of being offended with Jesus’ warning of the disciples’ self-focus and where it would lead, and with Jesus’ willingness to give Himself to His arrestors with no resistance, but instead His strong rebuke of Peter’s vain attempt to resist. With the other ten, he fled, but was drawn back to the vicinity of Jesus. Without knowing it (though precisely warned by Jesus of it), he had another, most painful lesson to experience. His winding, undulating path would lead to one more crisis, the ultimate one he would face in this real-life school on forgiveness. It came as that long night that began in the upper room, unfolded in the garden, and ended in a judgment hall, near the dawn of a new day, the day of Jesus’ greatest giving, and the day when Peter would be forced to process the intense encounter of his own inability to give. In that next story we will see yet again Peter hanging on the unbreakable arm of Jesus’ forgiveness.



The Lord Our Righteousness

by Jerry Finneman

Introduction and

Background: Before the first deportation of Israelites into Babylonian captivity, the message to Judah, “The just shall by His faith,” was proclaimed by Habakkuk. So, before Daniel and others were taken to Babylon in that first deportation in 606/605 the saving message of justification by faith was presented to God’s people, but to no avail.

The second deportation was in 598/597 during Jehoiachin’s reign (Jer 23:1). This was the year Jeremiah gave his message, “The Lord our Righteousness” (Jer 23:6). Finally, the second message of “The Lord our Righteousness” was given about a year before the third and final deportation. (Jer 33:16). This was in 587, the year the temple was destroyed.

What Judah refused to learn in

times of prosperity was learned in adversity. Judah lost heart religion with God and in its place accepted religious forms rather than its substance. So God took away their forms of religion that they might receive a heart religion.

Judah spurned the experience of righteousness that comes by faith, and consequently turned to heathen practices. One of the first things was rejection of the Word of God – Jer 8:9-12, 5 (608 B.C.) and the Sabbath – Jer 17: 24-27. Judah turned to worldly practices such as the wearing of adornment—Isa 3:14-25 (about 150 years before the captivity). And then during the reign of Zedekiah the men turned their backs to the temple of the Lord and worshipped the Sun – Eze 8:16, while the women sat at the north gate of the temple and wept for Tammuz, v. 14. Before

this they backslid so far on health reform that they were eating swine's flesh and mice. This was less than 100 years before the Babylonian captivity – Isa 65:1-5; 66:17.

At the time of king Hezekiah's sickness Isaiah told him to prepare to die. The king wept and pled with God for his life and God gave him 15 more years. He was healed by the God of heaven and was given the opportunity to preach the gospel of Him Who heals diseases and forgives iniquities. The opportunity came especially when Babylonian officials arrived to see and to hear him tell of the wondrous mercy and power of God. But instead the king exalted himself and showed them his treasures of gold and silver (see Isa 38 and 39). This caused the Babylonians to covet this wealth and eventually they took it from God's people.

Manasseh (c. 687-642 B.C.) was the son and successor to the throne of Judah after the death of his father, Hezekiah. Manasseh erected altars to Baal and brought astral worship into Judah (2 Chron 33:1-10). He also worshipped Moloch in the camp of God's people. One of the terrible features of this religion was that of sacrificing living children on the fiery hot arms of a furnace statue of Moloch. This practice is known by the phrase to "pass through the fire to Moloch" (Lev 18:21). Moloch was the national deity, the god of the Ammonites (from Lot's son Ben-Ammi by his youngest daughter). The Israelites frequently followed the practice of worshipping Moloch (Jer 7:31; 19:4, 5; 32:35; Eze 16:21; 23:37, 39, KJV). Solomon, during his apostasy worshipped

Moloch under the Name Milcom—1 Kings 11:5,33; 2 Kings 23:13. Ahaz and Manasseh burned their children at the high place of Topheth in the Valley of Hinnom, south of Jerusalem (2 Chron 28:1, 3; 33:1, 6).

Not only did God send warning after warning to His people; He sent messages of salvation from Isaiah's time for about 150 years until the Babylonian captivity. Here are some of the messages:

- Isa 1:10-20—"Come let us reason together" (150 yrs. pre-captivity).
- Isa 53—Christ was offered to, and for, them.
- Jer 3:20, 22—A plea to return to God and a God-given prayer from God by which they could return to Him (627 B.C.).
- Hab. 2:1-4—"The just shall live by his faith." About 4/5(?) years before the first deportation to Babylon.
- Jer 23:6—"The Lord Our Righteousness." (about ten years before the temple was destroyed and the last deportation).
- Jer 33:16—"The Lord Our Righteousness." (about one year before the final deportation to Babylon. It was during this year the temple was destroyed).

Because God's chosen people were in bondage inwardly to willful sin, He sent them into physical slavery which, of course, was simply the extension of their inward bondage and consequent corruption.

They could have been delivered from their inward slavery and their corruption healed. But because Judah rejected the message of righteousness by faith in Christ alone – which sets and

keeps one free, she went into Babylonian captivity for 70 years.

The term “THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS” (Jer. 23:6; 33:16) is the message of justification or righteousness by faith and is an Old Testament teaching and experience. Today we sometimes hear: “I’m a New Testament Christian.” But a New Testament Christian is an Old Testament Christian also.

I was involved in an evangelism field school with students from Andrews, Columbia Union college (name at the time; now a university) and Southern. One student in particular was outspoken in his beliefs and unbelief. And then, sometime later he left the church, he informed me: “I am a New Testament Christian.” Not so. A person is a Bible Christian or none at all. This includes the Old Testament as well as the New.

Two Guiding Principles for the Study of the Old Testament.

1. The Old Testament reveals Christ.

2. All the principles of the promises and commands of the Old Testament were given to mankind (not to Jews only) in Christ: 2 Cor. 1:20 – All the promises of God are in Christ; and Christ is in all the promises of God. The promises the New Testament Church were from the Old Testament.

We Have the Testimony of Jesus Himself

1. The Old Testament testifies of Christ: “You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they

which testify of Me” (John 5:39).

2. John 5:46-47. “For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote about Me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?”

The Lord Our Righteousness Returning to Jeremiah 23:6, we read: “In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell safely; now this is His name by which He will be called: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.”

Notice in his second message of righteousness, Jeremiah presented a change from the masculine gender to the feminine: “In those days Judah will be saved, and Jerusalem will dwell safely. And this is the name by which she will be called: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS” (Jer 33:16).

Jeremiah made a significant change in the wording in this passage to give it a new meaning. In 23:6 Jeremiah pictured the safety of God’s people through the ministry of the Messiah, “The LORD Our Righteousness.” After this, the Spirit of God moved on Jeremiah to change a couple of words as observed in 33:16 from “Israel” to “Jerusalem” and also by changing the pronouns “He” in 23:6 to “she” in 33:16. The title, The Lord Our Righteousness is applied to the city of Jerusalem, representing God’s people, rather than to Christ Himself. This is Christ’s righteousness and it is more than enough for His bride who is called by His name. The promises to Jeremiah transcend anything that Israel has experienced

throughout her long history. The promises will find their ultimate fulfillment only when the kingdom of the Messiah is established.

We entertain the idea that One person's – Christ's – righteousness is able to restore a race of humanity after losing its righteousness, if they would only believe the gospel and accept the Lord as their righteousness. His people will take on the same characteristics as the Lord who will dwell within, as Paul wrote concerning the "riches of the glory of this mystery [of the gospel] among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." (Col 1:26 – 27).

Christ's righteousness is more than enough for the whole race of fallen humanity. Everyone could be saved if they would be! But the majority spurn His mercy and His righteousness. E.J. Waggoner put it this way: "The Judgment will reveal the fact that every one who has in hardness of heart rejected the Lord, has done so in the face of the revelation of His mercy." *The Everlasting Covenant* (1900) p. 189.

Personal Experience

We need a personal relationship with Jesus. Here we discuss faith and experience as it relates to Christ. We are counseled to "consider Him" – Heb. 3:1. How shall we consider Him? Just as He reveals Himself to us in the Bible. And as we prayerfully consider Him, continually, we will be transformed into His likeness. Do you want to have this kind of experience? Look to Jesus (by

beholding Him) you will become changed. (Heb 12:2, 3; 2 Cor 3:18).

Isaiah 45:22–25. 22"Look to Me, and be saved, All you ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other. 23I have sworn by Myself; The word has gone out of My mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, that to Me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall take an oath. 24He shall say, 'Surely in the LORD I have righteousness and strength. To Him men shall come, and all shall be ashamed who are incensed against Him. 25In the LORD all the descendants of Israel shall be justified, and shall glory.' "

Who are included in the "all" of verse 22? The sweetness of the gospel lay mostly in personal pronouns such as me, my, mine, yours, ours and us. Jesus is one who is not "afar off," but "nigh unto us."

Christ is the Lord Our Righteousness (Jer 23:5, 6). What does the word our imply? This is the possessive plural form of the personal pronoun I. It means belonging to us individually and personally. Are you included in the "our?" Are you able to say "He is the Lord my righteousness"? Does He belong to you? If so, you may say He "is my salvation" (Isa 12:2, 3) and "my Lord" (Phil 3:8–10).

Notice the personal pronouns in the following passages and insert your name where the pronouns are located:

Rom 5:6–11. 6 "For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. 7For scarcely for a righteous man will

one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. 8But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. 9Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. 10For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. 11And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.

Again in Rom 4:20–25 – Imputation of righteousness was written for us...if we believe... delivered because of our offenses...raised again because of our justification.

And again, 2 Cor 5:21 – Christ was “made to be sin for us... that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.”

What an exchange! : “He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him.’ Isaiah 53:5. Christ was treated as we deserve, that we might be treated as He deserves. He was condemned for our sins, in which He had no share, that we might be justified by His righteousness, in which we had no share. He suffered the death which was ours, that we might receive the life which was His. ‘With His stripes we are healed.’” (DA 25).

Acts 4:12 – there is not another name of anything given “whereby

we” can be saved. Since there is no salvation in any other name given, whereby we can be saved, why lean on anyone or anything instead of Him? And if there is anyone or anything else, why depend on Him at all? Since there is no other name than Jesus given to save us, it follows that to depend on anything except Christ for righteousness is a rejection of Him.

His righteousness given to others does not make me righteous, does it? And His righteousness given to me personally will make me righteous and not someone else. He is the Lord my righteousness. Is He the Lord your righteousness?

The Lord is His name and His name is what He is: “I AM WHO (or WHAT) I AM” (Ex 3:13, 14). Whatever is your need, that is precisely what He is to you – Mercy, Grace, Goodness, Truth, Forgiveness, etc. This is His name, for this is what He is (Ex 34:5-7).

1 Cor 1:30 sums up what Christ is to you and to me: God placed “you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption.” Are you ignorant and foolish? He is your wisdom. Are you guilty and unrighteous? He is your righteousness. Are you unholy? He is your sanctification. Are you lost, or are you a slave – dominated by some sin? He is your redemption.

In closing we may say: He is “The Lord our righteousness.” He is the Lord my righteousness. Is He the Lord your righteousness?

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