

A photograph of a garden scene. In the foreground, there are several tulips in shades of yellow and purple, along with green foliage. In the background, a white pillar stands on a red brick path. The lighting is bright, suggesting a sunny day.

SABBATH SCHOOL LESSONS

for the Second Half 2009

*The Lord
Our Righteousness*

SABBATH SCHOOL LESSONS

for the Second Half Year 2009

The Lord Our Righteousness

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INTRODUCTION

Since the beginning of time, human beings have dreamt of having a better social system, better laws, better education, and better conditions based on righteousness and justice. In the family, in society, in schools, in private circles, and in governmental institutions, the need for and call to righteousness, to respect for human rights and dignity, are increasingly imperative. What is the answer and solution to mankind's problems? Minorities, communities, groups, and individuals all suffer because of unrighteousness which is continually perpetrated by individuals and ruling segments of society.

It is not necessary to center our attention on others to see if righteousness can be achieved; it is sufficient to look at ourselves—our own life, character, nature, and behavior. Who can say that he is righteous before God and man? Who can examine his own conscience and past life and say, "I'm good; I'm satisfied with myself; I have everything in order"? If we are honest with ourselves, we have to recognize that evil begins with us, because our spiritual and moral condition is very weak and influenced by selfishness. This is why Job posed the question: "Shall mortal man be more just than God? Shall a man be more pure than his Maker?" "I know it is so of a truth: but how should man be just with God?" Job 4:17; 9:2. And not only are we impure before God; our human tendency is to be partial in our judgments, corrupt in our desires, and unbalanced in our decisions. Truly, "What is man, that he should be clean? And he which is born of a woman, that he should be righteous?" Job 15:14. To the very same degree that we may wish for and promise to be righteous, we fall into sin and unrighteousness.

But praise the Lord that we are not left to ourselves, to our weaknesses and impossibilities; the marvelous promises of His righteousness are right before us: "In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is His name whereby He shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS." Jeremiah 23:6. And the promise was repeated: "In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely: and this is wherewith she shall be called, The Lord our righteousness." Jeremiah 33:16. That very time has come; the Redeemer has brought righteousness and offers it to human beings in the gospel. "For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith." Romans 1:17. Yes, "Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference." Romans 3:22.

Think what this means! The righteousness that we have wished for and not found in this world, beginning with ourselves, is offered

to every one of us, as the gift to everyone who believes! It is wonderful. "The sweetest melodies that come from God through human lips—justification by faith, and the righteousness of Christ—... The heavenly Merchantman displays before them the richest jewels of faith and love,... He invites them to buy of Him 'gold tried in the fire,' and 'white raiment' that they may be clothed, and 'eyesalve' that they may see,..." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 426.

In 1888, the Lord sent the very special message of "Christ Our Righteousness" to His people; but instead of receiving it with joy, they made it a subject of debate. Now, after so many years, we want not only to study this wonderful truth in a humble spirit, with faith and prayer, but also to receive this gift of righteousness that the Lord is offering to us today. We need to make Jesus the center of our lives, experience, faith, and preaching.

For this reason, we suggest that this special study be integrated with other precious lessons, reading the message directly from the letters to Romans and Galatians and from other wonderful books, including:

- E.G. White, *Steps to Christ*
- E.G. White, *The Sanctified Life*
- E.G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*
- E.G. White, *The Desire of Ages*
- E.G. White, *Selected Messages*, books 1 and 3
- E.G. White, *Faith and Works*
- E.G. White, *The Faith I Live by*
- E.G. White, *A New Life*
- E.J. Waggoner, *Christ and His Righteousness*
- E.J. Waggoner, *Studies on Romans*
- A.T. Jones, *The Consecrated Way to Christian Perfection*
- A.T. Jones, *Studies in Galatians*
- A.G. Daniells, *Christ Our Righteousness*

"There can be no growth or fruitfulness in the life that is centered in self. If you have accepted Christ as a personal Saviour, you are to forget yourself, and try to help others. Talk of the love of Christ, tell of His goodness. Do every duty that presents itself. Carry the burden of souls upon your heart, and by every means in your power seek to save the lost. As you receive the Spirit of Christ—the Spirit of unselfish love and labor for others—you will grow and bring forth fruit. The graces of the Spirit will ripen in your character. Your faith will increase, your convictions deepen, your love be made perfect. More and more you will reflect the likeness of Christ in all that is pure, noble, and lovely.

"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.' Galatians 5:22, 23. This fruit can

never perish, but will produce after its kind a harvest unto eternal life.

“When the fruit is brought forth, immediately He putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come.’ Christ is waiting with longing desire for the manifestation of Himself in His church. When the character of Christ shall be perfectly reproduced in His people, then He will come to claim them as His own.” —*Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 67-69.

Let us therefore open our hearts so Jesus may enter and live in us, completely changing our nature into His holy image. The goal of these lessons is to help this happen, and we pray that it may be achieved in every one of us.

—*The brothers and sisters of the General Conference*

The Special Sabbath School Offering is for
PAPUA NEW GUINEA

*Let your offering be an expression
of your love and gratitude*

1

Sabbath, July 4, 2009

The Righteousness of God

*“... The heavens shall declare his righteousness: for God is judge himself.”
“Thy righteousness also, O God, is very high, who hast done great things: O God,
who is like unto thee?” Psalm 50:6; 71:19.*

GOD’S CHARACTER

- 1. What great, comforting truth is presented in the Holy Scriptures regarding God and His character? Psalm 11:7; Deuteronomy 32:4; Isaiah 30:18.**

“The righteousness of God is absolute. This righteousness characterizes all His works, all His laws. As God is, so must His people be. The life of Christ is to be revealed in the lives of His followers. In all His public and private acts, in every word and deed, practical godliness was seen, and this godliness is to be seen in the lives of His disciples.” —*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 198.

- 2. Although we don’t understand and are not able to explain many things, what is said regarding the foundation of His throne? How does this reflect His character? Psalm 89:14; 97:2.**

“He that ruleth in the heavens is the one who sees the end from the beginning—the one before whom the mysteries of the past and the future are alike outspread, and who, beyond the woe and darkness and ruin that sin has wrought, beholds the accomplishment of His own purposes of love and blessing. Though ‘clouds and darkness are round about Him: righteousness and judgment are the foundation of His throne.’ Psalm 97:2, R.V. And this the inhabitants of the universe, both loyal and disloyal, will one day understand. ‘His work is perfect: for all His ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is He.’ Deuteronomy 32:4.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 43.

THE RIGHTEOUSNESS AND CHARACTER OF OUR SAVIOUR

3. How did the prophet Isaiah describe the character of the Messiah? Isaiah 53:11.

“Christ is our righteousness; He goes before us in this work, and the glory of the Lord follows.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 267.

“Jeremiah also bore witness of the coming Redeemer as a Prince of the house of David: ‘Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In His days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is His name whereby He shall be called, The Lord Our Righteousness.’ And again: ‘Thus saith the Lord: David shall never want a man to sit upon the throne of the house of Israel; neither shall the priests the Levites want a man before Me to offer burnt offerings, and to kindle meat offerings, and to do sacrifice continually.’ Jeremiah 23:5, 6; 33:17, 18.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 223.

4. What does the New Testament tell us about the righteousness of Jesus? 1 Corinthians 1:30; 2 Peter 1:1.

“The law of God is the only true standard of moral perfection. That law was practically exemplified in the life of Christ. He says of Himself, ‘I have kept My Father’s commandments.’

“The law is an expression of the thought of God; when received in Christ, it becomes our thought.... God desires us to be happy, and He gave us the precepts of the law that in obeying them we might have joy.”—*The Faith I Live by*, p. 85.

“All the treasures of heaven were committed to Jesus Christ, that He might impart these precious gifts to the diligent, persevering seeker. He ‘is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.’ 1 Corinthians 1:30.”—*Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, p. 371.

“Having made us righteous through the imputed righteousness of Christ, God pronounces us just, and treats us as just. He looks upon us as His dear children. Christ works against the power of sin, and where sin abounded, grace much more abounds. ‘Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.’ Romans 5:1, 2.”—*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 394.

RIGHTEOUSNESS AND GOD’S LAW

5. What is the relationship between righteousness and God’s holy law? Psalm 119:86, 138, 172.

“The law of God, from its very nature, is unchangeable. It is a revelation of the will and the character of its Author. God is love, and His law is love. Its two great principles are love to God and love to man. ‘Love is the fulfilling of the law.’ Romans 13:10. The character of God is righteousness and truth; such is the nature of His law. Says the psalmist: ‘Thy law is the truth.’ ‘all Thy commandments are righteousness.’ Psalm 119:142, 172. And the apostle Paul declares: ‘The law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.’ Romans 7:12. Such a law, being an expression of the mind and will of God, must be as enduring as its Author.” —*The Great Controversy*, p. 467.

6. What similar principle is found in the writings of the New Testament? Romans 7:12, 14; 1 Timothy 1:8.

“Since ‘the law of the Lord is perfect,’ every variation from it must be evil. Those who disobey the commandments of God, and teach others to do so, are condemned by Christ. The Saviour’s life of obedience maintained the claims of the law, it proved that the law could be kept in humanity, and showed the excellence of character that obedience would develop. All who obey as He did are likewise declaring that the law is ‘holy, and just, and good.’ Romans 7:12.” —*The Faith I Live by*, p. 85.

“To this day there are still aspects of truth which are dimly seen, connections that are not understood, and far-reaching depths in the law of God that are uncomprehended. There is immeasurable breadth, dignity, and glory in the law of God; and yet the religious world has set aside this law, as did the Jews, to exalt the traditions and commandments of men.” —*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 238.

OUR FIRST PRIORITY

7. Considering the character of God, Jesus, and His law, what should be our prayer and greatest desire? Matthew 6:33; Psalm 51:7.

“I have come to open to you the kingdom of love and righteousness and peace. Open your hearts to receive this kingdom, and make its service your highest interest. Though it is a spiritual kingdom, fear not that your needs for this life will be uncared for. If you give yourself to God’s service, He who has all power in heaven and earth will provide for your needs.

“Jesus does not release us from the necessity of effort, but He teaches that we are to make Him first and last and best in everything. We are to engage in no business, follow no pursuit, seek no pleasure, that would hinder the outworking of His righteousness in our character and life. Whatever we do is to be done heartily, as unto the Lord.” —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 99.

“Christ perfected a righteous character here upon the earth, not on His own account, for His character was pure and spotless, but for fallen man. His character He offers to man if he will accept it. The sinner, through repentance of his sins, faith in Christ, and obedience to the perfect law of God, has the righteousness of Christ imputed to him; it becomes his righteousness, and his name is recorded in the Lamb’s book of life. He becomes a child of God, a member of the royal family.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, pp. 371, 372.

* * *

2

Sabbath, July 11, 2009

God’s Providence

“Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you.” 1 Peter 1:20.

THE EVERLASTING GOSPEL

1. What message is for everyone? Revelation 14:6.

“It is the glory of the gospel that it is founded upon the principle of restoring in the fallen race the divine image by a constant manifestation of benevolence. This work began in the heavenly courts. There God decided to give human beings unmistakable evidence of the love with which He regarded them. He ‘so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.’ John 3:16.” —*Counsels on Health*, p. 222.

“The gospel of Christ is from beginning to end the gospel of saving grace. It is a distinctive and controlling idea. It will be a help to the needy, light for the eyes that are blind to the truth, and a guide to souls seeking for the true foundation. Full and everlasting salvation is within the reach of every soul. Christ is waiting and longing to speak pardon, and impart the freely offered grace.” —*God’s Amazing Grace*, p. 339.

2. For how long has the gospel message existed? Romans 16:25; 1 Peter 1:19, 20; Ephesians 1:4.

“The plan for our redemption was not an afterthought, a plan formulated after the fall of Adam. It was a revelation of ‘the mystery which hath been kept in silence through times eternal.’ Romans 16:25, R.V. It was an unfolding of the principles that from eternal ages have been the founda-

tion of God's throne.... God did not ordain that sin should exist, but He foresaw its existence, and made provision to meet the terrible emergency. So great was His love for the world, that He covenanted to give His only-begotten Son...." —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 22.

"The atonement of Christ sealed forever the everlasting covenant of grace. It was the fulfilling of every condition upon which God suspended the free communication of grace to the human family. Every barrier was then broken down which intercepted the freest exercise of grace, mercy, peace, and love to the most guilty of Adam's race." —(MS 92, 1899) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 933.

THE LORD TOOK THE INITIATIVE

3. After Adam and Eve fell into sin, who came to meet them and speak with them? Genesis 3:8, 9.

"The Lord visited Adam and Eve, and made known to them the consequence of their disobedience. As they heard God's majestic approach they sought to hide themselves from His inspection, whom they delighted, while in their innocence and holiness, to meet. 'And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou? And he said, I heard Thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself. And He said, Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?' This question was asked by the Lord, not because He needed information, but for the conviction of the guilty pair. How didst thou become ashamed and fearful? Adam acknowledged his transgression, not because he was penitent for his great disobedience, but to cast reflection upon God." —*The Story of Redemption*, p. 39.

THE GOSPEL PROMISE

4. Who gave them the first promise of hope and redemption? Genesis 3:15.

"But man was not abandoned to the results of the evil he had chosen. In the sentence pronounced upon Satan was given an intimation of redemption. 'I will put enmity between thee and the woman,' God said, 'and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise His heel.' Genesis 3:15. This sentence, spoken in the hearing of our first parents, was to them a promise. Before they heard of the thorn and the thistle, of the toil and sorrow that must be their portion, or of the dust to which they must return, they listened to words that could not fail of giving them hope. All that had been lost by yielding to Satan could be regained through Christ.

“This intimation also nature repeats to us. Though marred by sin, it speaks not only of creation but of redemption.”—*Education*, p. 27.

- 5. Who came to reason with Cain when his offering was not accepted by God and after he had killed his brother? Genesis 4:6, 7, 9, 10.**

“Cain the murderer was soon called to answer for his crime.... Cain had gone so far in sin that he had lost a sense of the continual presence of God and of His greatness and omniscience. So he resorted to falsehood to conceal his guilt.

“Again the Lord said to Cain, ‘What hast thou done? The voice of thy brother’s blood crieth unto Me from the ground.’ God had given Cain an opportunity to confess his sin. He had had time to reflect. He knew the enormity of the deed he had done, and of the falsehood he had uttered to conceal it; but he was rebellious still, and sentence was no longer deferred. The divine voice that had been heard in entreaty and admonition pronounced the terrible words: ‘And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother’s blood from thy hand. When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth.’” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 77.

- 6. What other powerful promises revealed God’s providence? Isaiah 53:4, 5; Zechariah 9:9, 10.**

“Five hundred years before the birth of Christ, the prophet Zechariah thus foretold the coming of the King to Israel....

“That scene of triumph was of God’s own appointing. It had been foretold by the prophet, and man was powerless to turn aside God’s purpose. Had men failed to carry out His plan, He would have given a voice to the inanimate stones, and they would have hailed His Son with acclamations of praise. As the silenced Pharisees drew back, the words of Zechariah were taken up by hundreds of voices: ‘Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: He is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.’” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 569, 572, 575.

- 7. According to divine prophecy, what events would take place at the appointed time? Daniel 9:24; Isaiah 61:11; 53:11.**

“Christ’s redeemed ones are His jewels, His precious and peculiar treasure.” —*Gospel Workers*, p. 517.

“He [the Son of God] saw of the travail of His soul and was satisfied. He caught a view of the expanse of eternity and saw the happiness of those who through His humiliation should receive pardon and everlasting life. He was wounded for their transgressions, bruised for their iniquities. The chastisement of their peace was upon Him, and with His stripes they were healed. His ear caught the shout of the redeemed. He heard the ransomed ones singing the song of Moses and the Lamb.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, pp. 43, 44.

* * *

3

Sabbath, July 18, 2009

The Lord Our Righteousness

“To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.” Romans 3:26.

GOD’S RIGHTEOUSNESS PROMISED TO MEN

- 1. On what important principle are justification and life based? Habakkuk 2:4; Romans 1:16, 17.**

“When you ... in the name of Jesus your Advocate come directly to God, asking for the things you need, the righteousness of Christ will be revealed as your righteousness, the virtue of Christ as your virtue. You will then understand that justification will come alone through faith in Christ; for in Jesus is revealed the perfection of the character of God.... Through the atoning blood of Christ the sinner is set free from bondage and condemnation; through the perfection of the sinless Substitute and Surety, he may run in the race of humble obedience to all God’s commandments. Without Christ he is under the condemnation of the law, always a sinner, but through faith in Christ he is made just before God.” —*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 330.

- 2. What wonderful title is given to our Lord in the Old Testament? What is the meaning of this title? Jeremiah 23:6; 33:16.**

“This name is put upon every follower of Christ. It is the heritage of the child of God. The family are called after the Father. The prophet Jeremiah, in the time of Israel’s sore distress and tribulation, prayed, ‘We are called by Thy name; leave us not.’ Jeremiah 14:9.” —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 106.

“When we submit ourselves to Christ, the heart is united with His heart, the will is merged in His will, the mind becomes one with His mind, the thoughts are brought into captivity to Him; we live His life. This is what it means to be clothed with the garment of His righteousness. Then as the Lord looks upon us He sees ... not the nakedness and deformity of sin, but His own robe of righteousness, which is perfect obedience to the law of Jehovah.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 311.

3. What other texts affirm that righteousness is not a human prerogative but the gift of God? Isaiah 46:13; Hosea 2:19.

“In word and in deed the Messiah, during His earthly ministry, was to reveal to mankind the glory of God the Father. Every act of His life, every word spoken, every miracle wrought, was to make known to fallen humanity the infinite love of God.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 696.

JUSTIFIED AND BLESSED BY LIVING FAITH

4. On what basis was the Lord’s righteousness credited to Abram? What action on his part demonstrated righteousness? Genesis 15:6; Romans 4:3; James 2:26.

“The faith that does not produce good works does not justify the soul. ‘Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.’ James 2:24. ‘Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.’ Romans 4:3. Imputation of the righteousness of Christ comes through justifying faith, and is the justification for which Paul so earnestly contends.”—*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 397.

5. What was the reason God chose Israel as His people and gave them the promised land? Deuteronomy 7:7, 8; 9:4-6; Jeremiah 2:3.

“Although Israel had ‘mocked the messengers of God, and despised His words...’, he had still manifested Himself to them...; notwithstanding repeated rejections, His mercy had continued its pleadings. With more than a father’s pitying love for the son of his care, God had ‘sent to them by His messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because He had compassion on His people, and on His dwelling place.’ When remonstrance, entreaty, and rebuke had failed, He sent to them the best gift of Heaven; nay, He poured out all Heaven in that one gift.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 19.

HEIRS OF THE RIGHTEOUSNESS THAT IS BY FAITH

- 6. What did the Lord give His people to strengthen their faith in His promises and work? Numbers 14:11; Nehemiah 9:10; Isaiah 7:9, second part.**

“When the children of Israel were in bondage to the Egyptians, God revealed Himself as a God above all human authority, all human greatness. The signs and miracles He wrought in behalf of His people show His power over nature, and over the greatest among those who worshiped nature, who ignored the power that made nature.” —*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 1099.

- 7. What examples and events have been recorded to show the great importance of faith in life? Hebrews 11:4, 7, 24-26.**

“Our Christ was the Saviour of the ancient worthies as much as He is our Saviour. They looked forward by faith, to a Saviour to come. Adam was saved by the gospel as virtually as we are saved today. Abraham was saved by faith in Christ as the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world. Moses was saved by the merits of Christ, who was the angel that led the armies of Israel in all their travels through the wilderness.... All who have died in faith, from righteous Abel unto our day are saved by the merits of Jesus Christ.” —*The Signs of the Times*, July 18, 1878.

- 8. Why did the Jews in the time of the apostles not comprehend the importance of Jesus’ being their righteousness? Of what special importance is this to us today? Romans 9:31-33; Hebrews 1:1, 6.**

“Our faith must reach within the veil, where Jesus has entered for us.... We must have faith that will not be denied, faith that will take hold of the unseen, faith that is steadfast, immovable. Such faith will bring the blessing of heaven to our souls....

“The fact that unbelief prevails, that iniquity is increasing all around us, should not cause our faith to grow dim or our courage to waver.... If we will but seek God with all our hearts, if we will work with that same determined zeal, and believe with that unyielding faith, the light of heaven will shine upon us, even as it shone upon the devoted Enoch.... We are to live the life of faith; for ‘without faith it is impossible to please God.’ Our spiritual strength depends upon our faith.” —*My Life Today*, p. 8.

* * *

All Have Sinned

“What is man, that he should be clean? and he which is born of a woman, that he should be righteous? Behold, he putteth no trust in his saints: yea, the heavens are not clean in his sight. How much more abominable and filthy is man, which drinketh iniquity like water?” Job 15:14-16.

MAN’S FALL

1. What one prohibition did the Lord give to man at the beginning for his character and happiness? Genesis 2:17.

“There was but one prohibition that God had seen fit to lay upon them as yet. If they should transgress the will of God they would surely die. They told Adam and Eve that the most exalted angel, next in order to Christ, refused obedience to the law of God which He had ordained to govern heavenly beings; that this rebellion had caused war in heaven, which resulted in the rebellious being expelled therefrom, and every angel was driven out of heaven who had united with him in questioning the authority of the great Jehovah; and that this fallen foe was now an enemy to all that concerned the interest of God and His dear Son.” —*The Story of Redemption*, p. 30.

2. What consequences followed when Adam disobeyed this commandment? Genesis 3:19.

“God cursed the ground because of their sin in eating of the tree of knowledge, and declared, ‘In sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life.’ He had apportioned them the good, but withheld the evil. Now He declares that they shall eat of it, that is, they should be acquainted with evil all the days of their life.

“The race from that time forward was to be afflicted by Satan’s temptations. A life of perpetual toil and anxiety was appointed unto Adam, instead of the happy, cheerful labor he had hitherto enjoyed. They should be subject to disappointment, grief, and pain, and finally come to dissolution. They were made of the dust of the earth, and unto dust should they return.” —*The Story of Redemption*, p. 40.

3. How far did those consequences extend? Romans 3:23; Ecclesiastes 7:20; 1 John 1:8.

“Many are deceived concerning the condition of their hearts. They do not realize that the natural heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. They wrap themselves about with their own righteousness, and are satisfied in reaching their own human standard of character; but how fatally they fail when they do not reach the divine standard, and of themselves they cannot meet the requirements of God.” —*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 320.

SIN AND ITS EFFECTS

4. What happened to the close relationship between God and man because of sin? Romans 3:10, 11; Isaiah 59:2; Micah 3:4; Jeremiah 5:25.

“Without the atonement of the Son of God there could be no communication of blessing or salvation from God to man. God was jealous for the honor of His law. The transgression of that law caused a fearful separation between God and man. To Adam in his innocence was granted communion, direct, free, and happy, with his Maker. After his transgression God would communicate to man through Christ and angels.” —*The Story of Redemption*, p. 50.

5. What happened to the relationships between man and man as well? Romans 3:12-18.

“The human family have all transgressed the law of God, and as transgressors of the law, man is hopelessly ruined; for he is the enemy of God, without strength to do any good thing. ‘The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.’ Romans 8:7. Looking into the moral mirror—God’s holy law—man sees himself a sinner, and is convicted of his state of evil, his hopeless doom under the just penalty of the law. But he has not been left in a state of hopeless distress in which sin has plunged him; for it was to save the transgressor from ruin that He who was equal with God offered up His life on Calvary.” —*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 321.

6. What happened to the earth at the hand of man? Isaiah 24:5; Revelation 11:18; Jeremiah 51:25.

“We are standing upon the threshold of great and solemn events. Prophecies are fulfilling. Strange, eventful history is being recorded in the books of heaven. Everything in our world is in agitation. There are wars and rumors of wars. The nations are angry, and the time of the dead has come, that they should be judged. Events are changing to bring about the day of

God, which hasteth greatly. Only a moment of time, as it were, yet remains. But while already nation is rising against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, there is not now a general engagement. As yet the four winds are held until the servants of God shall be sealed in their foreheads. Then the powers of earth will marshal their forces for the last great battle.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 14.

7. Wherever sin spread, what has abounded all the more for the entire world? Romans 5:15, 20; 1 John 2:1, 2.

“This world has been visited by the Majesty of heaven, the Son of God. ‘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 came to this world as the expression of the very heart and mind and nature and character of God. He was the brightness of the Father’s glory, the express image of His person. But He laid aside His royal robe and kingly crown, and stepped down from His high command to take the place of a servant. He was rich, but for our sake, that we might have eternal riches, He became poor.” —*Medical Ministry*, p. 19.

“The grace of Christ and the law of God are inseparable. In Jesus mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other. In His life and character He not only reveals the character of God, but the possibility of man. He was the representative of God and the exemplar of humanity. He presented to the world what humanity might become when united by faith with divinity.” —*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 349.

8. What great offer has God made to all who desire to escape the corruption that is in the world? John 1:12; 3:16; 6:40.

“It would be well to spend a thoughtful hour each day reviewing the life of Christ from the manger to Calvary. We should take it point by point and let the imagination vividly grasp each scene, especially the closing ones of His earthly life. By thus contemplating His teachings and sufferings, and the infinite sacrifice made by Him for the redemption of the race, we may strengthen our faith, quicken our love, and become more deeply imbued with the spirit which sustained our Saviour.... Christ suffered humiliation to save us from everlasting disgrace. He consented to have scorn, mockery, and abuse fall upon Him in order to shield us.... He made Himself an offering for sin, that we might be justified before God through Him.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 374.

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Humanity's Great Need

*"For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time."*¹ Timothy 2:5, 6.

INABILITY OF THE WILL

- 1. What does it mean for every one of us personally that we are fallen in sin? Jeremiah 17:9; Matthew 15:19.**

"It is difficult for those who feel secure in their attainments, and who believe themselves to be rich in spiritual knowledge, to receive the message which declares that they are deceived and in need of every spiritual grace. The unsanctified heart is 'deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.' I was shown that many are flattering themselves that they are good Christians, who have not a ray of light from Jesus. They have not a living experience for themselves in the divine life. They need a deep and thorough work of self-abasement before God before they will feel their true need of earnest, persevering effort to secure the precious graces of the Spirit." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, p. 253.

- 2. Is this awareness and our desire to change enough to free us from our sinful nature? Romans 7:18, 19; Job 15:14-16.**

"The nearer we come to Jesus, and the more clearly we discern the purity of His character, the more clearly shall we see the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and the less shall we feel like exalting ourselves. There will be a continual reaching out of the soul after God, a continual, earnest, heartbreaking confession of sin and humbling of the heart before Him. At every advance step in our Christian experience our repentance will deepen. We shall know that our sufficiency is in Christ alone and shall make the apostle's confession our own: 'I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing.' 'God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.' Romans 7:18; Galatians 6:14." —*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 561.

HUMAN POWER IS INCAPABLE

3. Is there any hope of our changing our way of life by ourselves? Jeremiah 13:23; 1 Corinthians 2:14.

“The carnal mind cannot comprehend these mysteries. If questioners and doubters continue to follow the great deceiver, the impressions and convictions of God’s Spirit will grow less and less, the promptings of Satan more frequent, until the mind will fully submit to his control. Then that which appears to these bewildered minds as foolishness will be the power of God, and that which God regards as foolishness will be to them the strength of wisdom.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 585.

“We should ask the Lord to open our understanding, that we may comprehend divine truth. If we humble our hearts before God, empty them of vanity and pride and selfishness, through the grace abundantly bestowed upon us; if we sincerely desire and unwaveringly believe, the bright beams of the Sun of Righteousness will shine into our minds, and illuminate our darkened understanding.” —*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 183.

4. Is there any human being or system of man’s devising that is able to change the nature of man or one’s own nature from bad to good? The next question will ask you to explain your answer. Job 14:4; Romans 7:24.

“If you have chosen such a life, you know that you are spending money for that which is not bread, and labor for that which satisfieth not. There come to you hours when you realize your degradation. Alone in the far country you feel your misery, and in despair you cry, ‘O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?’ Romans 7:24. It is the statement of a universal truth which is contained in the prophet’s words, ‘Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord....’ Jeremiah 17:5.” —*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 201.

5. What Scriptural concept supports your answer to question 4? What is the natural response of our human flesh and mind to God and His law? Matthew 26:41; Romans 8:3, 7; 7:14.

“We are to keep our hearts with all diligence that we may not make shipwreck of faith. Those who neglect to watch and pray in these days of peril; those who neglect to unite with their brethren in seeking the Lord, but who stand aloof from God’s appointed agencies in the church, are in grave danger of strengthening themselves in their own way, following the impulses of their own minds, and of refusing to heed the admonitions of the Lord....

“Let every believer closely examine himself to ascertain what are his weak points. Let him cherish a spirit of humility and plead with the Lord for grace and wisdom and for the faith that works by love and purifies the soul. Let him cast away all self-confidence.... Self-confidence leads to a lack of watchfulness.... Those who walk humbly before God, distrustful of their own wisdom, will realize their danger and will know the power of God’s keeping care.” —*In Heavenly Places*, p. 97.

ONLY ONE REAL SOLUTION

6. What is absolutely necessary if one is to escape from this desperate condition? John 3:5, 6.

“Again: it is written, ‘But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.’ John 1:12, 13. Jesus declared, ‘Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.’ John 3:3. ‘Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.’ John 3:5. It is not a low standard that is placed before us; for we are to become the children of God. We are to be saved as individuals; and in the day of test and trial we shall be able to discern between him that serveth God and him that serveth Him not. We are saved as individual believers in the Lord Jesus Christ.” —*Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 367, 368.

7. Who is the only one who can free a person from the enslavement of sin and its horrible consequences? John 1:29; Acts 4:12.

“Jesus is the Light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world. He is the Light of the world, and He bids us come unto Him, and learn of Him. Jesus was the great Teacher.” —*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 183.

“Without the grace of Christ, the sinner is in a hopeless condition; nothing can be done for him; but through divine grace, supernatural power is imparted to the man, and works in mind and heart and character. It is through the impartation of the grace of Christ that sin is discerned in its hateful nature, and finally driven from the soul temple. It is through grace that we are brought into fellowship with Christ, to be associated with Him in the work of salvation. Faith is the condition upon which God has seen fit to promise pardon to sinners; not that there is any virtue in faith whereby salvation is merited, but because faith can lay hold of the merits of Christ, the remedy provided for sin. Faith can present Christ’s perfect obedience instead of the sinner’s transgression and defection. When the sinner believes that Christ is his personal Saviour, then, according to His unfailing

promises, God pardons his sin, and justifies him freely. The repentant soul realizes that his justification comes because Christ, as his substitute and surety, has died for him, is his atonement and righteousness.” —*Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 366, 367.

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Sabbath, August 8, 2009

God Is Calling

“And the Lord came, and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel answered, Speak; for thy servant heareth.” 1 Samuel 3:10.

THE CALL TO BLESSING AND FREEDOM

- 1. When Abram was living in Mesopotamia, who called him and gave him great promises? What were those promises? Genesis 12:1, 2; Acts 7:2, 3.**

“Today the voice of mercy is calling, and Jesus is drawing men by the cords of His love; but the day will come when Jesus will put on the garments of vengeance.... There will be no more a sacrifice for sin. The Lord cometh. Long has mercy extended a hand of love, of patience and forbearance, toward a guilty world. The invitation has been given, ‘Let him take hold of My strength....’ But men have presumed upon His mercy and refused His grace.” —*Maranatha*, p. 55.

“Calling and justification are not one and the same thing. Calling is the drawing of the sinner to Christ, and it is a work wrought by the Holy Spirit upon the heart, convicting of sin, and inviting to repentance.” —*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 389.

- 2. How wonderfully did the Lord work to take Israel out of Egypt? Exodus 3:4, 10; Isaiah 43:1.**

“The elders of Israel were taught by angels that the time for their deliverance was near, and that Moses was the man whom God would employ to accomplish this work. Angels instructed Moses also that Jehovah had chosen him to break the bondage of His people.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 245.

“The time had fully come when God would have Moses exchange the shepherd’s staff for the rod of God, which He would make powerful in accomplishing signs and wonders, in delivering His people from oppression,

and in preserving them when pursued by their enemies.” –*The Story of Redemption*, p. 111.

THE WIDEST POSSIBLE INVITATION

3. What invitation is the Lord sending to every person in every nation of the world? Isaiah 45:22; Matthew 24:14.

“In the cross all influence centers, and from it all influence goes forth. It is the great center of attraction.... This sacrifice was offered for the purpose of restoring man to his original perfection. Yea, more, it was offered to give him an entire transformation of character, making him more than a conqueror....

“Christ declares, ‘I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me.’ If the cross does not find an influence in its favor, it creates an influence. Through generation succeeding generation, the truth for this time is revealed as present truth. Christ on the cross was the medium whereby mercy and truth met together... This is the means that is to move the world.” –(MS 56, 1899) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1113.

DIRECT, PERSONAL CALL

4. How direct and personal was Jesus’ amazing invitation to His future disciples? Matthew 4:18-22.

“It was by personal contact and association that Jesus trained His disciples. Sometimes He taught them, sitting among them on the mountainside; sometimes beside the sea, or walking with them by the way, He revealed the mysteries of the kingdom of God. He did not sermonize as men do today. Wherever hearts were open to receive the divine message, He unfolded the truths of the way of salvation. He did not command His disciples to do this or that, but said, ‘Follow Me.’ On His journeys through country and cities He took them with Him, that they might see how He taught the people. He linked their interest with His, and they united with Him in the work.” –*The Desire of Ages*, p. 152.

5. Today, at the end of history, how is Jesus still coming close to us; and what is He calling? 1 Thessalonians 5:24; Revelation 3:20-22. What will you answer Him? Revelation 22:17.

“Every soul is as fully known to Jesus as if he were the only one for whom the Saviour died. The distress of every one touches His heart. The cry for aid reaches His ear. He came to draw all men unto Himself. He bids them, ‘Follow Me,’ and His Spirit moves upon their hearts to draw them to

come to Him. Many refuse to be drawn. Jesus knows who they are. He also knows who gladly hear His call, and are ready to come under His pastoral care. He says, 'My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.' He cares for each one as if there were not another on the face of the earth." —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 480.

THE DESIRED ANSWER

- 6. Considering man's sinful condition, what is God's goal as He sends His messengers to present the gospel invitation? Matthew 4:17; Acts 2:38; 2 Corinthians 5:19, 20; Mark 16:15, 16.**

"Repent, repent, was the message rung out by John the Baptist in the wilderness. Christ's message to the people was, 'Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.' Luke 13:5. And the apostles were commanded to preach everywhere that men should repent.

"The Lord desires His servants today to preach the old gospel doctrine, sorrow for sin, repentance, and confession. We want old-fashioned sermons, old-fashioned customs, old-fashioned fathers and mothers in Israel. The sinner must be labored for, perseveringly, earnestly, wisely, until he shall see that he is a transgressor of God's law, and shall exercise repentance toward God and faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ." —*Evangelism*, pp. 179, 180

- 7. What will all who truly love the truth and their Saviour answer Him? John 10:27, 28; Revelation 14:4; Isaiah 6:8.**

"... When the storm of persecution really breaks upon us, the true sheep will hear the true Shepherd's voice. Self-denying efforts will be put forth to save the lost, and many who have strayed from the fold will come back to follow the great Shepherd. The people of God will draw together and present to the enemy a united front. In view of the common peril, strife for supremacy will cease; there will be no disputing as to who shall be accounted greatest." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 401.

"Who are the subjects of the kingdom of God? All those who do His will. They have righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. The members of Christ's kingdom are the sons of God, partners in His great firm. The elect of God are a chosen generation, a peculiar people, a holy nation, to show forth the praises of Him who hath called them out of darkness into His marvelous light. They are the salt of the earth, the light of the world. They are living stones, a royal priesthood. They are in copartnership with Jesus Christ. These are they that follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth...." —*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 422.

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God's Law in Our Hearts

"The mouth of the righteous speaketh wisdom, and his tongue talketh of judgment. The law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide." Psalm 37:30, 31.

CHRIST AND THE LAW

- 1. What did the prophets state centuries in advance about Christ's relation to the moral law? What did Jesus Himself declare? Isaiah 42:21; Psalm 40:7, 8; Matthew 5:17, 18; Luke 16:17.**

Repentance is to feel sorry, guilty, or have regret. Confession is to cast away, revere, worship, assent, covenant, or acknowledge. —*Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*.

"Even before He [Christ] took humanity upon Him, He saw the whole length of the path He must travel in order to save that which was lost. Every pang that rent His heart, every insult that was heaped upon His head, every privation that He was called to endure, was open to His view before He laid aside His crown and royal robe, and stepped down from the throne, to clothe His divinity with humanity. The path from the manger to Calvary was all before His eyes. He knew the anguish that would come upon Him. He knew it all, and yet He said, 'Lo, I come: in the volume of the Book it is written of Me, I delight to do Thy will, O My God: yea, Thy law is within My heart.' Psalm 40:7, 8." —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 410.

PURPOSE OF THE LAW

- 2. What is one of the first and best known functions of God's law? Romans 3:20; 7:7; 2:18.**

"It is through the law that men are convicted of sin; and they must feel themselves sinners, exposed to the wrath of God, before they will realize their need of a Saviour.

"The Law of God reaches to those secret purposes, which, though they may be sinful, are often passed over lightly, but which are in reality the basis and the test of character. It is the mirror into which the sinner is to look if he would have a correct knowledge of his moral character. And when he sees himself condemned by that great standard of righteousness,

his next move must be to repent of his sins, and seek forgiveness through Christ. Failing to do this, many try to break the mirror which reveals their defects, to make void the law which points out the blemishes in their life and character.”—*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 219.

3. To whom does the law guide the believer to receive the promised righteousness? Romans 10:4; Galatians 3:24.

In Romans 10:4, the word “end” of some versions is translated from the Greek “télos.” This term has more meanings in the original and, according to the context, may be translated “end,” “goal,” “aim,” or “objective.” For this reason, some versions translate this verse in a different manner. An example is the Italian “diodati,” which is clear and direct: “For the goal of the law is Christ for righteousness to everyone who believes.” Thus both verses refer to the law, to Christ, and to righteousness by faith; and both present the law as a guide which has the holy goal of bringing people to Christ, the only one who can justify us through His loving, perfect sacrifice.

“As the sinner looks to the law, his guilt is made plain to him, and pressed home to his conscience, and he is condemned. His only comfort and hope is found in looking to the cross of Calvary. As he ventures upon the promises, taking God at His word, relief and peace come to his soul. He cries, ‘Lord, Thou hast promised to save all who come unto Thee in the name of Thy Son. I am a lost, helpless, hopeless soul. Lord, save, or I perish.’ His faith lays hold on Christ, and he is justified before God.”—*Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 365, 366.

4. What is the ultimate purpose or goal of God’s law? 1 Timothy 1:5.

“God’s law is not a new thing. It is not holiness created, but holiness made known. It is a code of principles expressing mercy, goodness, and love. It presents to fallen humanity the character of God, and states plainly the whole duty of man.”—*The Faith I Live by*, p. 86.

LAW AND LOVE

5. If this is the goal of the law, what will be its fulfillment? How has the Lord made it possible for the righteous requirement of the law to be fulfilled in us? Matthew 22:37-40; Romans 13:10; 8:1-4; Galatians 5:14. (See Matthew 7:12.)

“Ten precepts, brief, comprehensive, and authoritative, cover the duty of man to God and to his fellow man; and all based upon the great fundamental principle of love. ‘Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart,

and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself.' Luke 10:27." –*The Faith I Live by*, p. 86.

"In human flesh He [Christ] lived the law of God, that He might condemn sin in the flesh, and bear witness to heavenly intelligences that the law was ordained to life and to ensure the happiness, peace, and eternal good of all who obey." –(Manuscript 29, 1899) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 915.

THE LAW IN OUR HEARTS

6. In the time of the old covenant, what promise was given regarding the law? Jeremiah 31:33; Psalm 37:30, 31.

"The work Christianity is designed to achieve in the world is not to depreciate the law of God, not to detract from its sacred dignity in the slightest degree, but it is to write that law in the mind and heart. When the law of God is thus implanted in the soul of the believer, he is approaching eternal life through the merits of Jesus....

"The object of the gospel is met when this great end is achieved. Its work from age to age is to unite the hearts of His followers in a spirit of universal brotherhood, through belief of the truth, and thus establish heaven's system of order and harmony in the family of God on earth, that they may be accounted worthy to become members of the royal family above. God, in His wisdom and mercy, tests men and women here, to see if they will obey His voice and respect His law, or rebel as Satan did...." –*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 50.

7. What is confirmed in the New Testament? How is the law written in our hearts, and what does this mean? Hebrews 8:10; 10:16.

"Because the law of the Lord is perfect, and therefore changeless, it is impossible for sinful men, in themselves, to meet the standard of its requirement. This was why Jesus came as our Redeemer. It was His mission, by making men partakers of the divine nature, to bring them into harmony with the principles of the law of heaven. When we forsake our sins and receive Christ as our Saviour, the law is exalted. The apostle Paul asks, 'Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.' Romans 3:31." –*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 50.

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The Gift of Repentance

“Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.” “And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.” Acts 5:31; Luke 24:47.

GOD’S WORK IN MAN

- 1. What is the Lord’s invitation to every human being, without exception? What is the final result of sin if we do not repent? Acts 17:30, 31; Revelation 2:5.**

“Today a large part of those who compose our congregations are dead in trespasses and sins. They come and go like the door upon its hinges. For years they have complacently listened to the most solemn, soul-stirring truths, but they have not put them in practice.... The stirring testimonies of reproof and warning do not arouse them to repentance. The sweetest melodies that come from God through human lips—justification by faith, and the righteousness of Christ—do not call forth from them a response of love and gratitude. Though the heavenly Merchantman displays before them the richest jewels of faith and love,... they steel their hearts against Him, and fail to exchange their lukewarmness for love and zeal. While making a profession, they deny the power of godliness. If they continue in this state, God will reject them.” *—Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 426.

- 2. What work of great importance is taking place in the hearts and minds of the people to lead them to repentance? Romans 2:4; Acts 11:18; John 16:7, 8.**

“The Spirit is given as a regenerating agency, to make effectual the salvation wrought by the death of our Redeemer. The Spirit is constantly seeking to draw the attention of men to the great offering that was made on the cross of Calvary, to unfold to the world the love of God, and to open to the convicted soul the precious things of the Scriptures.

“Having brought conviction of sin, and presented before the mind the standard of righteousness, the Holy Spirit withdraws the affections from the things of this earth and fills the soul with a desire for holiness.” *—The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 52, 53.

WITHOUT REPENTANCE, THERE IS NO FREEDOM FROM SIN

- 3. May we expect to improve our condition if we try to cover up or justify our mistakes? What does repentance include? Psalm 32:1-3; Proverbs 28:13; 2 Corinthians 7:10.**

“Repentance includes sorrow for sin and a turning away from it. We shall not renounce sin unless we see its sinfulness; until we turn away from it in heart, there will be no real change in the life.” –*Steps to Christ*, p. 23.

“Repentance is turning from self to Christ; and when we receive Christ so that through faith He can live His life in us, good works will be manifest.” –*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 87.

- 4. What type of repentance is outside God’s sphere of response? Hebrews 12:16, 17; Numbers 32:23.**

“Esau was not shut out from the privilege of seeking God’s favor by repentance, but he could find no means of recovering the birthright. His grief did not spring from conviction of sin; he did not desire to be reconciled to God. He sorrowed because of the results of his sin, but not for the sin itself.” –*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 181.

THE RESULT OF GOD’S RESPONSE

- 5. How does the Lord guide individuals to sincere repentance? Whose life and sacrifice revealed God’s wonderful grace? Acts 5:30, 31; Romans 3:24, 25.**

“It is the virtue that goes forth from Christ, that leads to genuine repentance. Peter made the matter clear in his statement to the Israelites when he said, ‘Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.’ Acts 5:31. We can no more repent without the Spirit of Christ to awaken the conscience than we can be pardoned without Christ.” –*Steps to Christ*, p. 26.

- 6. What will be the evidence that true, sincere repentance has taken place? 2 Chronicles 7:14; Matthew 3:7-9.**

“No repentance is genuine that does not work reformation. The righteousness of Christ is not a cloak to cover unconfessed and unforsaken sin; it is a principle of life that transforms the character and controls the conduct. Holiness is wholeness for God; it is the entire surrender of heart

and life to the indwelling of the principles of heaven.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 555, 556.

“Through repentance and faith we are rid of sin, and look unto the Lord our righteousness....

“Although as sinners we are under the condemnation of the law, yet Christ by His obedience rendered to the law, claims for the repentant soul the merit of His own righteousness. In order to obtain the righteousness of Christ, it is necessary for the sinner to know what that repentance is which works a radical change of mind and spirit and action. The work of transformation must begin in the heart, and manifest its power through every faculty of the being; but man is not capable of originating such a repentance as this, and can experience it alone through Christ....” —*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 393.

7. **Therefore, what was the immediate invitation given when people responded to one of the most solemn sermons ever preached? What similar appeals must be presented to the people today? Acts 2:37, 38; 3:18.**
8. **Since sin is like deadly leprosy, what should be our first and most ardent desire? 1 Chronicles 21:8; Psalm 25:11.**

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Sabbath, August 29, 2009

Confession and Blessing

“I acknowledge my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.” Psalm 32:5.

GOD’S WILL

1. **What is the relationship between repentance and confession? Leviticus 5:5; Joshua 7:19; Ezra 10:11; Isaiah 59:12.**

“The conditions of obtaining mercy of God are simple and just and reasonable. The Lord does not require us to do some grievous thing in order that we may have the forgiveness of sin. We need not make long and wearisome pilgrimages, or perform painful penances, to commend our souls to

the God of heaven or to expiate our transgression; but he that confesseth and forsaketh his sin shall have mercy.” —*Steps to Christ*, p. 37.

2. Of what is God very aware? Jeremiah 16:17; Psalm 90:8; Proverbs 15:11.

“God is cognizant of the daily employment of the humble laborer, as well as of that of the king upon his throne. And the avarice, cruelty, secret crimes, and selfishness of men are known to Him, as well as their good deeds, charity, liberality, and kindness. Nothing is hidden from God.” —*Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 3, p. 326.

MAKE CONFESSION TO GOD AND MAN

3. To whom should we first confess our sins with an open heart? To whom else should confession be made? Ezra 9:6; Daniel 9:8; Luke 15:18, 21; James 5:16.

“If you have failed in your duty to your families, confess your sins before God. Gather your children about you and acknowledge your neglect. Tell them that you desire to bring about a reformation in the home, and ask them to help you to make the home what it ought to be. Read to them the directions found in the Word of God. Pray with them; and ask God to spare their lives, and to help them to prepare for a home in His kingdom. In this way you may begin a work of reformation; and then continue to keep the way of the Lord.” —*Child Guidance*, pp. 557, 558.

4. How specific should confession be? What else should characterize confession? Numbers 21:7; Judges 10:10; 1 Corinthians 15:9.

“Confession of sin, whether public or private, should be heartfelt and freely expressed. It is not to be urged from the sinner. It is not to be made in a flippant and careless way, or forced from those who have no realizing sense of the abhorrent character of sin. The confession that is the outpouring of the inmost soul finds its way to the God of infinite pity....

“True confession is always of a specific character, and acknowledges particular sins. They may be of such a nature as to be brought before God only; they may be wrongs that should be confessed to individuals who have suffered injury through them; or they may be of a public character, and should then be as publicly confessed. But all confession should be definite and to the point, acknowledging the very sins of which you are guilty.” —*Steps to Christ*, p. 38.

AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE

5. **Why is it so important to make confession, clear up every misunderstanding, and apologize for every wrongdoing and hurtful action? Genesis 27:35, 36, 41; Matthew 5:25, 26.**

6. **How quickly should we confess every wrongdoing? In whose name can we receive forgiveness? Ephesians 4:25-27; Matthew 5:23, 24; Acts 13:38; Luke 24:47.**

“The more he [Esau] thought upon it, the more his desire strengthened, until his birthright, which was sacred, lost its value and its sacredness. He thought, ‘Well, if I now sell it, I can easily buy it back again’.... When he sought to purchase it back, even at a great sacrifice on his part, he was not able to do so.... He sought for repentance carefully and with tears. It was all in vain. He had despised the blessing, and the Lord removed it from him forever.” —(*Review and Herald*, April 27, 1886) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 1094.

“Individually we must accept Christ as our only hope. We must know Him. He is our Daysman, and before Him we must confess and renounce our sins. He made a complete renunciation of Himself for man, and man, through Jesus, must make a complete renunciation of himself to God.” —*Signs of the Times*, February 3, 1898.

BE HUMBLE

7. **What attributes of Christ Himself underpin confession? 1 Peter 5:6; James 4:8-11; Psalm 34:18.**

“Those who have not humbled their souls before God in acknowledging their guilt, have not yet fulfilled the first condition of acceptance. If we have not experienced that repentance which is not to be repented of, and have not with true humiliation of soul and brokenness of spirit confessed our sins, abhorring our iniquity, we have never truly sought for the forgiveness of sin; and if we have never sought, we have never found the peace of God. The only reason why we do not have remission of sins that are past is that we are not willing to humble our hearts and comply with the conditions of the word of truth.” —*Steps to Christ*, pp. 37, 38.

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Forgive As God Forgives

"And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." Ephesians 4:32.

GOD'S ATTRIBUTES

- 1. What is God's attitude toward those who make confession? Ezekiel 33:14-16; Jeremiah 31:34; Micah 7:19.**

"But there is a brighter side to the picture. 'Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted.' Let this thought be kept uppermost. In labor for the erring, let every eye be directed to Christ. Let the shepherds have a tender care for the flock of the Lord's pasture. Let them speak to the erring of the forgiving mercy of the Saviour. Let them encourage the sinner to repent, and believe in Him who can pardon. Let them declare, on the authority of God's word, 'If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.' 1 John 1:9. All who repent have the assurance...." —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 806.

- 2. When the Lord presents Himself to man, what are some of the most frequently recorded and encouraging characteristics that He mentions? Exodus 34:6, 7; Psalm 86:15; 103:8. (See Nehemiah 14:18.)**

"God is Himself the source of all mercy. His name is 'merciful and gracious.' Exodus 34:6. He does not treat us according to our desert. He does not ask if we are worthy of His love, but He pours upon us the riches of His love, to make us worthy. He is not vindictive. He seeks not to punish, but to redeem. Even the severity which He manifests through His providences is manifested for the salvation of the wayward. He yearns with intense desire to relieve the woes of men and to apply His balsam to their wounds. It is true that God 'will by no means clear the guilty' (Exodus 34:7), but He would take away the guilt." —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 22.

HUMAN TENDENCIES

- 3. In great contrast to the Lord, what is the human tendency when someone has committed an offense or owes a debt? Matthew 18:23-30.**

- 4. If a person thinks he is right and maintains an irreconcilable attitude, what can be the only result before God and men? Matthew 18:31-35; James 2:13.**

“So likewise,’ said Jesus, ‘shall My Heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.’ He who refuses to forgive is thereby casting away his own hope of pardon.”
—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 247.

GOD’S PRECIOUS PROVISION

- 5. What is the wonderful divine promise concerning our burdens and sins? What great sacrifice was carried out so there could be forgiveness? Isaiah 43:25; 2 Chronicles 7:14; 1 John 1:8-10; Acts 10:43; Ephesians 1:7.**

“He who would become a child of God must receive the truth that repentance and forgiveness are to be obtained through nothing less than the atonement of Christ. Assured of this the sinner must put forth an effort in harmony with the work done for him, and with unwearied entreaty he must supplicate the throne of grace, that the renovating power of God may come into his soul. Christ pardons none but the penitent, but whom He pardons He first makes penitent. The provision made is complete, and the eternal righteousness of Christ is placed to the account of every believing soul. The costly, spotless robe, woven in the loom of heaven, has been provided for the repenting, believing sinner, and he may say: ‘I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness.’ Isaiah 61:10.” —*Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 393, 394.

FORGIVENESS AMONG BRETHREN

- 6. How did Jesus tell us to treat an erring brother? How many times should we forgive? Matthew 18:15, 21, 22; Luke 17:3, 4.**

“If your brethren err, you are to forgive them. When they come to you with confession, you should not say, I do not think they are humble enough. I do not think they feel their confession. What right have you to judge them, as if you could read the heart? The word of God says, ‘If he repent, forgive him. And if he trespasses against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him.’ Luke 17:3, 4. And not only seven times, but seventy times seven—just as often as God forgives you.

"We ourselves owe everything to God's free grace. Grace in the covenant ordained our adoption. Grace in the Saviour effected our redemption, our regeneration, and our exaltation to heirship with Christ. Let this grace be revealed to others." —*Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 249, 250.

7. How should we emulate the Father and express our supreme gratitude for the sacrifice of His Son, Jesus Christ? James 5:16; Matthew 6:12-15; Luke 6:36.

"Christ is our example.... His mercy was not weakness, but a terrible power to punish sin ... yet a power to draw to it the love of humanity. Through Christ Justice is enabled to forgive without sacrificing one jot of its exalted holiness....

"We are to have a spirit of pity, of compassion toward those who have trespassed against us, whether or not they confess their faults. If they fail to repent and make confession, their sins will stand registered in the books above to confront them in the day of judgment; but if they say, 'I repent,' then ... we are freely to forgive from the heart their trespasses against us.

"True happiness does not consist in the possession of wealth or position, but in the possession of a pure, clean heart, cleansed by obedience to the truth.... To everyone is given the opportunity to carry out the principles of heaven. The forgiving of injuries, not the avenging of them, is an exhibition of that wisdom which is true goodness." —*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 153.

RESPONSIBILITY FOR OUR BROTHER

8. What does the Word tell us is our responsibility when we become aware that a brother or sister is living in sin? Think about how Jesus came to our world! Leviticus 19:16, 17; Galatians 6:1.

"He bids us, in dealing with the tempted and the erring, consider 'thyself, lest thou also be tempted.' With a sense of our own infirmities, we shall have compassion for the infirmities of others." —*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 166.

"We become overcomers by helping others to overcome." —*Review and Herald*, February 25, 1909.

9. What is God willing to forget, and what does He always remember? Psalm 103:10-14.

“God will always accept confession if the evil that has been done is repented of. Our heavenly Father makes the declaration, ‘As I live,... I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked should turn from his way and live’ (Ezekiel 33:11). Over every sinner that repents the angels of God rejoice with songs of joy. Not one sinner need be lost. Full and free is the gift of saving grace.” —(*Review and Herald*, May 31, 1906) *In Heavenly Places*, p. 50.

Let us remember:

Without repentance there is no desire or power to confess.

Without confession there is no hope of forgiveness.

Without forgiveness there is no peace or spiritual progress.

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11

Sabbath, September 12, 2009

Justification in Christ

“But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid.” Galatians 2:17.

CONSCIOUSNESS OF ONE’S UNWORTHINESS

- 1. Looking honestly at themselves and at the lives of people around them, what advice did some men of God offer? Psalm 143:2; Proverbs 20:9; Ecclesiastes 7:20. (See Psalm 130:3.)**

“While He extends to all the world His invitation to come to Him and be saved, He commissions His angels to render divine help to every soul that cometh to Him in repentance and contrition, and He comes personally by His Holy Spirit into the midst of His church. ‘If Thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared. I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait, and in His word do I hope. My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning.... Let Israel hope in the Lord: for with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption. And He shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.’” —*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 15.

“There is no one living who fully realizes the grievous character of sin.” —*1888 Materials*, p. 1677.

- 2. After recognizing their sinful condition, what do God’s people do? 2 Chronicles 12:6; Psalm 116:5. (See Psalm 25:8.)**

“But while God can be just, and yet justify the sinner through the merits of Christ, no man can cover his soul with the garments of Christ’s righteousness while practicing known sins, or neglecting known duties. God requires the entire surrender of the heart, before justification can take place; and in order for man to retain justification, there must be continual obedience, through active, living faith that works by love and purifies the soul.”—*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 366.

WHO IS ABLE TO PROVIDE JUSTIFICATION

- 3. Who alone lived on the earth without committing sin and maintained righteousness? Luke 23:47; Acts 3:14. (See 1 John 2:1.)**

“But when you exercise repentance toward God because you have transgressed His law, then your only hope is to have faith in Jesus Christ. If we sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. Come to Jesus by living faith.”—*The Youth’s Instructor*, August 18, 1886.

“Seek to practice the life that Christ has presented to us, that is a righteous life.”—*The Paulson Collection of E.G. White Letters*, p. 181.

- 4. Therefore, in whom alone can we find righteousness and justification? Acts 13:38, 39; Galatians 2:17; Romans 3:21, 22.**

“If you fall under temptation, do not become discouraged. This promise comes ringing down along the line to our time: ‘If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.’ I feel that for this one promise a continual song of thanksgiving ought to go forth from the lips of mortals. Let us gather up these precious jewels of promise, and when Satan accuses us of our great sinfulness, and tempts us to doubt the power of God to save, let us repeat the words of Christ, ‘Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out.’”—*Historical Sketches of the Foreign Missions of the Seventh-day Adventists*, p. 158.

“The only hope for fallen man is to look to Jesus, and receive Him as the only Saviour.”—*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 367.

JUSTIFICATION IS FORGIVENESS

- 5. What is the very first meaning of justification, and how is this connected to one’s relationship with God? Luke 18:14; Acts 13:38, 39.**

“Pardon and justification are one and the same thing. Through faith, the believer passes from the position of a rebel, a child of sin and Satan, to the position of a loyal subject of Christ Jesus, not because of an inherent goodness, but because Christ receives him as His child by adoption. The sinner receives the forgiveness of his sins, because these sins are borne by his Substitute and Surety. The Lord speaks to His heavenly Father, saying: ‘This is My child, I reprove him from the condemnation of death, giving him My life insurance policy—eternal life—because I have taken his place and have suffered for his sins. He is even My beloved son.’ Thus man, pardoned, and clothed with the beautiful garments of Christ’s righteousness, stands faultless before God.” —*Faith and Works*, p. 103.

“The grace of Christ is freely to justify the sinner without merit or claim on his part. Justification is a full, complete pardon of sin. The moment a sinner accepts Christ by faith, that moment he is pardoned. The righteousness of Christ is imputed to him, and he is no more to doubt God’s forgiving grace.” —*The Faith I Live by*, p. 107.

JUSTIFICATION IS ACQUITTAL OR ABSOLUTION

6. What else is included in the concept of justification? Matthew 12:37; Isaiah 50:8; Romans 8:33, 34.

“Justification is the opposite of condemnation. God’s boundless mercy is exercised toward those who are wholly undeserving. He forgives transgressions and sins for the sake of Jesus, who has become the propitiation for our sins. Through faith in Christ, the guilty transgressor is brought into favor with God and into the strong hope of life eternal.” —*Faith and Works*, p. 104.

JUSTIFICATION IS A DECLARATION OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

7. Is there an even deeper meaning to the concept of justification? Luke 7:20; Romans 3:4; Matthew 12:37; 1 Timothy 3:16.

“The great work that is wrought for the sinner who is spotted and stained by evil is the work of justification. By Him who speaketh truth he is declared righteous. The Lord imputes unto the believer the righteousness of Christ and pronounces him righteous before the universe. He transfers his sins to Jesus, the sinner’s representative, substitute, and surety. Upon Christ He lays the iniquity of every soul that believeth. ‘He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.’ 2 Corinthians 5:21.” —*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 392.

“All our transgressions are transferred to Christ. While He who knew no sin was made sin for us, and the sinless is accounted sinful, the righteousness of Christ is placed upon the undeserving, so that the repenting sinner is declared to be sinless before God.” —*The Signs of the Times*, January 16, 1896.

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Justification by Faith

“Who through faith ... wrought righteousness, obtained promises...” Hebrews 11:33.

JUSTIFICATION—IMPUTED RIGHTEOUSNESS

- 1. Is justification more than forgiveness? Although we are transgressors and debtors, what does the Lord impute or credit to us? Romans 4:3, 6, 9, 10; 5:9, 10.**

“This spiritual relation can be established only by the exercise of personal faith. This faith must express on our part supreme preference, perfect reliance, entire consecration. Our will must be wholly yielded to the divine will, our feelings, desires, interests, and honor identified with the prosperity of Christ’s kingdom and the honor of His cause, we constantly receiving grace from Him, and Christ accepting gratitude from us.

“When this intimacy of connection and communion is formed, our sins are laid upon Christ; His righteousness is imputed to us. He was made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. We have access to God through Him; we are accepted in the Beloved.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 229.

GOD’S FORGIVENESS IS MORE THAN A JUDICIAL ACT

- 2. Through God’s grace, what will reign in the sinner in the place of sin and death? Romans 5:20, 21; 8:1-4; 2 Corinthians 5:21. (See Romans 8:31-39.)**

“But forgiveness has a broader meaning than many suppose. When God gives the promise that He ‘will abundantly pardon,’ He adds, as if the meaning of that promise exceeded all that we could comprehend: ‘My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.’ Isaiah 55:7-9. God’s forgiveness is not merely a judicial act by which He sets us free from condemnation. It is not only forgiveness for sin, but reclaiming from sin. It is the outflow of redeeming love that transforms the heart. David had the true conception of forgiveness when he prayed, ‘Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.’ Psalm 51:10. And

again he says, "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us." Psalm 103:12." *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 114.

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH

- 3. Why does the Bible speak not simply of "justification," but of "justification by faith"? What vital element will be in us when we receive the blessing of justification? Romans 5:1; Galatians 3:24; John 3:16.**

"The only way in which he can attain to righteousness is through faith. By faith he can bring to God the merits of Christ, and the Lord places the obedience of His Son to the sinner's account. Christ's righteousness is accepted in place of man's failure, and God receives, pardons, justifies, the repentant, believing soul, treats him as though he were righteous, and loves him as He loves His Son. This is how faith is accounted righteousness; and the pardoned soul goes on from grace to grace, from light to a greater light. He can say with rejoicing, 'Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that being justified by His grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.' Titus 3:5-7." *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 367.

- 4. What did Jesus find in the people who came to Him for healing and received spiritual healing as well? Matthew 15:28; Mark 2:5; Luke 7:9.**

"... The centurion was tenderly attached to his servant, and greatly desired his recovery. He believed that Jesus could heal him. He had not seen the Saviour, but the reports he heard had inspired him with faith.... In the teaching of Christ, as it had been reported to him, he found that which met the need of the soul. All that was spiritual within him responded to the Saviour's words." *The Desire of Ages*, p. 315.

THE NATURE OF SAVING FAITH

- 5. In what way was this faith more than a simple conviction of the mind? How does this apply to us today? James 1:6; 2:19; Mark 1:24. (See Matthew 8:29.)**

“But when the suffering woman put forth her hand to touch Him, believing that she would be made whole, she felt the healing virtue. So in spiritual things. To talk of religion in a casual way, to pray without soul hunger and living faith, avails nothing. A nominal faith in Christ, which accepts Him merely as the Saviour of the world, can never bring healing to the soul. The faith that is unto salvation is not a mere intellectual assent to the truth. He who waits for entire knowledge before he will exercise faith, cannot receive blessing from God. It is not enough to believe about Christ; we must believe in Him. The only faith that will benefit us is that which embraces Him as a personal Saviour; which appropriates His merits to ourselves. Many hold faith as an opinion. Saving faith is a transaction by which those who receive Christ join themselves in covenant relation with God. Genuine faith is life. A living faith means an increase of vigor, a confiding trust, by which the soul becomes a conquering power.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 347.

“There is danger in regarding justification by faith as placing merit on faith. When you take the righteousness of Christ as a free gift you are justified freely through the redemption of Christ. What is faith? ‘The substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen’ (Hebrews 11:1). It is an assent of the understanding to God’s words which binds the heart in willing consecration and service to God, Who gave the understanding, Who moved on the heart, Who first drew the mind to view Christ on the cross of Calvary. Faith is rendering to God the intellectual powers, abandonment of the mind and will to God, and making Christ the only door to enter into the kingdom of heaven.” —*Faith and Works*, p. 25.

6. What must we consider in order to understand the nature of effective faith? Romans 8:24; 4:18; Hebrews 11:1; Galatians 5:6.

“If you are willing to drift along with the current of evil, and do not cooperate with the heavenly agencies in restraining transgression in your family, and in the church, in order that everlasting righteousness may be brought in, you do not have faith. Faith works by love and purifies the soul. Through faith the Holy Spirit works in the heart to create holiness therein; but this cannot be done unless the human agent will work with Christ. We can be fitted for heaven only through the work of the Holy Spirit upon the heart; for we must have Christ’s righteousness as our credentials if we would find access to the Father. In order that we may have the righteousness of Christ, we need daily to be transformed by the influence of the Spirit, to be a partaker of the divine nature.” —*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 374.

AN INCREASING GIFT

7. Since faith is a gift of God, what request will echo in our own hearts? Ephesians 2:8; Luke 17:5; Mark 9:23, 24.

“In order for man to be justified by faith, faith must reach a point where it will control the affections and impulses of the heart; and it is by obedience that faith itself is made perfect.” —*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 366.

“You have to talk faith, you have to live faith, you have to act faith, that you may have an increase of faith; and thus exercising that living faith you will grow to strong men and women in Christ Jesus.” —(Manuscript 1, 1889) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1121.

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***Please read the Report from the
General Conference Ministerial Department
on page 46***

13

Sabbath, September 26, 2009

Justification by Grace

“And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.” John 1:16.

NOT BY OUR WORKS

- 1. Is justification something that we somehow acquire through our efforts or merits? Titus 3:5; Ephesians 2:8, 9; Romans 11:6.**

“Our acceptance with God is sure only through His beloved Son, and good works are but the result of the working of His sin-pardoning love. They are no credit to us, and we have nothing accorded to us for our good works by which we may claim a part in the salvation of our souls. Salvation is God’s free gift to the believer, given to him for Christ’s sake alone. The troubled soul may find peace through faith in Christ, and his peace will be in proportion to his faith and trust. He cannot present his good works as a plea for the salvation of his soul.” —*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1122; *Selected Messages*, book 3, p. 199.

NOT BY WORKS OF THE LAW

- 2. How should we consider our obedience or performance of works required by the law? Do they make us righteous? Romans 3:20. (See Galatians 2:16.)**

“He who is trying to reach heaven by his own works in keeping the law, is attempting an impossibility. Man cannot be saved without obedience, but his works should not be of himself; Christ should work in him to will and to do of His good pleasure. If a man could save himself by his own works, he might have something in himself in which to rejoice. The effort that man makes in his own strength to obtain salvation, is represented by the offering of Cain. All that man can do without Christ is polluted with selfishness and sin; but that which is wrought through faith is acceptable to God. When we seek to gain heaven through the merits of Christ, the soul makes progress. Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, we may go on from strength to strength, from victory to victory; for through Christ the grace of God has worked out our complete salvation.”
—Selected Messages, book 1, p. 364.

3. How alone can we say that good works are not worthless and are appreciated by the Lord? Galatians 5:22, 23; Matthew 5:16; 19:17. (See Ephesians 5:9.)

“The character of the Christian is shown by his daily life. Said Christ, ‘Every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.’ Matthew 7:17. Our Saviour compares Himself to a vine, of which His followers are the branches. He plainly declares that all who would be His disciples must bring forth fruit; and then He shows how they may become fruitful branches. ‘Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in Me.’ John 15:4.

“The apostle Paul describes the fruit which the Christian is to bear. He says that it ‘is in all goodness and righteousness and truth.’ Ephesians 5:9. And again, ‘The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.’ Galatians 5:22, 23. These precious graces are but the principles of God’s law carried out in the life.”
—The Sanctified Life, p. 80.

“In order to meet the requirements of the law, our faith must grasp the righteousness of Christ, accepting it as our righteousness. Through union with Christ, through acceptance of His righteousness by faith, we may be qualified to work the works of God, to be colaborers with Christ.”
—Selected Messages, book 1, p. 374.

JUSTIFIED FREELY

4. What will it take to grasp and appreciate fully the greatest gift in the universe, the Son of God—all heaven poured out for our redemption? Romans 3:24; 6:23; Ephesians 1:7.

“Faith is the condition upon which God has seen fit to promise pardon to sinners; not that there is any virtue in faith whereby salvation is merited, but because faith can lay hold of the merits of Christ, the remedy provided for sin. Faith can present Christ’s perfect obedience instead of the sinner’s transgression and defection. When the sinner believes that Christ is his personal Saviour, then, according to His unfailing promises, God pardons his sin, and justifies him freely. The repentant soul realizes that his justification comes because Christ, as his substitute and surety, has died for him, is his atonement and righteousness.” —*Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 366, 367.

JUSTIFICATION BY GRACE

- 5. Thanks to what attribute of God’s character do we receive the gifts of forgiveness, imputed righteousness, and the power of grace? Titus 3:7; Ephesians 2:8, 9; Romans 4:16.**

“Here the truth is laid out in plain lines. This mercy and goodness is wholly undeserved. The grace of Christ is freely to justify the sinner without merit or claim on his part. Justification is a full, complete pardon of sin. The moment a sinner accepts Christ by faith, that moment he is pardoned. The righteousness of Christ is imputed to him, and he is no more to doubt God’s forgiving grace.” —*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1071.

GOD’S PRESENT OFFER

- 6. If you were locked up in prison awaiting the execution of your sentence, and a pardon would be granted to you, or someone else would offer to take your place, what would you feel for that person? What do you feel now that this grace and substitution is offered personally to you by the Saviour of the world? Hebrews 3:7, 13-15.**

“Without the grace of Christ, the sinner is in a hopeless condition; nothing can be done for him; but through divine grace, supernatural power is imparted to the man, and works in mind and heart and character. It is through the impartation of the grace of Christ that sin is discerned in its hateful nature, and finally driven from the soul temple. It is through grace that we are brought into fellowship with Christ, to be associated with Him in the work of salvation.” —*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 366.

7. How highly has God exalted Jesus because of the great love and sacrifice He poured out for our justification and salvation? How highly do we exalt Him in our hearts and lives? Acts 5:31; Philippians 2:9-11; Hebrews 12:2.

“Our only hope is perfect trust in the blood of Him who can save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him. The death of Christ on the cross of Calvary is our only hope in this world, and it will be our theme in the world to come. Oh, we do not comprehend the value of the atonement! If we did, we would talk more about it. The gift of God in His beloved Son was the expression of an incomprehensible love. It was the utmost that God could do to preserve the honor of His law, and still save the transgressor. Why should man not study the theme of redemption? It is the greatest subject that can engage the human mind. If men would contemplate the love of Christ, displayed in the cross, their faith would be strengthened to appropriate the merits of His shed blood, and they would be cleansed and saved from sin.” —(*The Signs of the Times*, December 30, 1889) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, pp. 1132, 1133.

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MISSIONARY REPORT
FROM THE
GENERAL CONFERENCE
MINISTERIAL DEPARTMENT

To be read on Sabbath, September 26, 2009

***The Special Sabbath School Offering
will be gathered on Sabbath, October 3, 2009***

Immediately after beginning to preach the gospel of repentance, Jesus proceeded to call His disciples to prepare them to become His co-workers. Walking beside the Sea of Galilee, He saw two brothers working and called them to follow Him. He continued on, saw two other brothers, and called them also to follow Him and become His witnesses. One after another they heeded His call, until the messengers were twelve, all called to be educated for the gospel ministry. They needed to follow Him, work with Him, and learn from Him. The entire tenth chapter of the Gospel of Matthew is a report about the wonderful instruction that Jesus gave them.

Their training included going from village to village and from house to house to preach the coming of God's kingdom and the good news of salvation. The message of liberty was accompanied by providential healing and even miracles. In time, the number of messengers increased to seventy two, and they were all sent to preach in the cities and towns. Going in the name of Jesus and with His blessing, their mission had wonderful results; and they returned, joyfully exclaiming: "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name." Luke 10:17, *New King James Version*.

But what were twelve or even seventy-two witnesses, compared with the great harvest of the world? Truly it was a very limited number. For this reason, on another occasion, Jesus observed: "The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few." Matthew 9:37, *NKJV*. It was so in His days, and what about today? How many workers are there in relation to a world population of billions? May we say that there are enough? The need was and still is so great that He instructed them, "Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest, to send out laborers into His harvest." Matthew 9:38, *NKJV*.

Yes, the fields are ripe for harvest, but there is a great lack of workers! In Europe, the Americas, Asia, Africa, and the Pacific Islands, the need is the same. There are countries where we have some Bible workers and ministers, but there are entire countries where there are no

workers at all and not even members! In light of the great mission God has given us, sending workers into the harvest becomes one of our greatest tasks. During committee meetings and delegates' or workers' sessions, in group or personal conversations, this topic is constantly the subject of discussion. We are reminded constantly: "Workers are needed now. As a people, we are not doing one fiftieth of what we might do as active missionaries. If we were only vitalized by the Holy Spirit, there would be a hundred missionaries where there is now one." —*Counsels on Health*, p. 507.

"God calls for laborers; but He wants those who are willing to submit their wills to His, and who will teach the truth as it is in Jesus. One worker who has been trained and educated for the work, who is controlled by the Spirit of Christ, will accomplish far more than ten laborers who go out deficient in knowledge and weak in the faith. One who works in harmony with the counsel of God, and in unity with the brethren, will be more efficient to do good than ten will be who do not realize the necessity of depending upon God and of acting in harmony with the general plan of the work." —(*Review and Herald*, May 29, 1888) *Evangelism*, p. 474.

"The third angel is represented as flying in the midst of heaven, showing that the message is to go forth throughout the length and breadth of the earth. It is the most solemn message ever given to mortals, and all who propose to connect themselves with the work should first feel their need of an education and the most thorough training. Plans should be made and efforts put forth for the improvement of all who anticipate entering any branch of the work." —*Gospel Workers*, p. 290.

In some places, where young people feel called to go into the vineyard of the Lord, missionary schools are active; but often their efforts are hampered by a lack of funds. In others, seminars can be conducted only occasionally, again because of the need for funding. Therefore, you can see that the need for workers and funds is very great. You have the possibility to send the wonderful light of the gospel to people in darkness. That light may shine so brightly that it reaches the most remote corner of the world! Precious souls for whom Jesus gave His life are waiting and praying for messengers to tell them of the heavenly kingdom. His mission and sacrifice showed how precious every soul is to Him. Let the Lord therefore move our hearts to give generously for His kingdom, for it is the most sacred thing on earth. For this reason the divine promises are given: "It is more blessed to give than to receive." "He who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully." Acts 20:35; 2 Corinthians 9:6, *NKJV*.

—Antonino Di Franca
General Conference Ministerial Department Leader

The Special Sabbath School Offering is for the
GENERAL CONFERENCE
MINISTERIAL DEPARTMENT

*Let your offering be an expression
of your love and gratitude!*

14

Sabbath, October 3, 2009

Converted to the Lord

“Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.” Acts 3:19.

WE MUST BE BORN AGAIN

- 1. What great, longing desire does the Lord have for every one of us? Therefore, what is His personal invitation to every person on earth? Ezekiel 18:32; Isaiah 55:7. (See Ezekiel 33:11.)**

“God does not deal with us as finite men deal with one another. His thoughts are thoughts of mercy, love, and tenderest compassion. He says, ‘Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.’ ‘I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins.’ Isaiah 55:7; 44:22.”
—*Steps to Christ*, p. 53.

- 2. With what clear picture did Jesus present the need of conversion, or turning to the Lord, so as to be able to enter His kingdom? John 3:3. (See Matthew 18:3.)**

“He may conjecture and imagine, but without the eye of faith he cannot see the treasure. Christ gave His life to secure for us this inestimable treasure; but without regeneration through faith in His blood, there is no remission of sins, no treasure for any perishing soul.” —*Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 112, 113.

“It is not theoretical knowledge you need so much as spiritual regeneration. You need not to have your curiosity satisfied, but to have a new heart.

You must receive a new life from above before you can appreciate heavenly things. Until this change takes place, making all things new, it will result in no saving good for you....” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 171.

GOD’S WORK IN US

- 3. What type of work is the new birth, and who brings it about? How is this transformation accomplished? John 1:13; 3:5-8. (See 1 John 4:7.)**

“The fountain of the heart must be purified before the streams can become pure. He who is trying to reach heaven by his own works in keeping the law is attempting an impossibility. There is no safety for one who has merely a legal religion, a form of godliness. The Christian’s life is not a modification or improvement of the old, but a transformation of nature. There is a death to self and sin, and a new life altogether. This change can be brought about only by the effectual working of the Holy Spirit.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 172.

“The power of Christ alone can work the transformation in heart and mind that all must experience who would partake with Him of the new life in the kingdom of heaven.... In order to serve Him aright, we must be born of the divine Spirit. This will lead to watchfulness. It will purify the heart and renew the mind, and give us a new capacity for knowing and loving God. It will give us willing obedience to all His requirements.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 156.

INCREDIBLE TRANSFORMATIONS

- 4. What happens to our “old man”? What amazing changes are produced in our nature when we receive the new divine heart? Romans 6:6; Galatians 2:20; Ephesians 4:22-24; Ezekiel 36:26. (See 2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 6:15.)**

“The apostle admonishes his brethren, in the name and by the authority of the Lord Jesus, that after having professed the gospel they should not conduct themselves as did the Gentiles, but should show by their daily deportment that they had been truly converted....

“Once they were corrupt, degraded, enslaved by lustful passions; they were drugged by worldly opiates, blinded, bewildered, and betrayed by Satan’s devices. Now that they had been taught the truth as it is in Jesus, there must be a decided change in their life and character.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 171, 172.

- 5. After such a powerful transformation takes place, what miraculous results will be seen in one's life? Romans 6:12, 13; Ezekiel 11:19, 20; Galatians 5:22, 23. (See 1 John 2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:1, 2, 4.)**

"The man who loves God meditates on the law of God day and night. He is instant in season and out of season. He bears the fruit of a branch vitally connected with the Vine. As he has opportunity, he does good; and everywhere, at all times and in all places, he finds opportunity to work for God. He is one of the Lord's evergreen trees; and he carries fragrance with him wherever he goes. A wholesome atmosphere surrounds his soul. The beauty of his well-ordered life and godly conversation inspires faith and hope and courage in others. This is Christianity in practice."—(*Review and Herald*, August 24, 1897) *My Life Today*, p. 50.

- 6. Therefore, what is the meaning of conversion, that complete turnaround of nature and life? 1 Thessalonians 1:9. (See Ephesians 5:8.)**

"To walk in the light means advancement and progress in spiritual attainments. Paul declared, 'Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but ... forgetting those things which are behind,' constantly beholding the Pattern, I reach 'forth unto those things which are before.' To walk in the light means to 'walk uprightly,' to walk 'in the way of the Lord,' to 'walk by faith,' to 'walk in the Spirit,' to 'walk in the truth,' to 'walk in love, to 'walk in the newness of life.' It is 'perfecting holiness in the fear of God.'"—*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 200.

AN INEXPLICABLE WORK

- 7. Can we explain or even understand this divine work of regeneration which is done by the Holy Spirit in us? John 3:7, 8.**

"A person may not be able to tell the exact time or place, or trace all the chain of circumstances in the process of conversion; but this does not prove him to be unconverted.... Like the wind, which is invisible, yet the effects of which are plainly seen and felt, is the Spirit of God in its work upon the human heart. That regenerating power, which no human eye can see, begets a new life in the soul; it creates a new being in the image of God. While the work of the Spirit is silent and imperceptible, its effects are manifest. If the heart has been renewed by the Spirit of God, the life will bear witness to the fact. While we cannot do anything to change our hearts or to bring ourselves into harmony with God; while we must not trust at all to

ourselves or our good works, our lives will reveal whether the grace of God is dwelling within us. A change will be seen in the character, the habits, the pursuits. The contrast will be clear and decided between what they have been and what they are. The character is revealed, not by occasional good deeds and occasional misdeeds, but by the tendency of the habitual words and acts.” —*Steps to Christ*, pp. 57, 58.

TOTALLY BY FAITH IN JESUS

8. What is man’s part in the powerful experience of the new birth? John 1:12; 3:16. (See Galatians 3:26.)

“Divine sonship is not something that we gain of ourselves. Only to those who receive Christ as their Saviour is given the power to become sons and daughters of God. The sinner cannot, by any power of his own, rid himself of sin. For the accomplishment of this result, he must look to a higher Power. John exclaimed, ‘Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.’ Christ alone has power to cleanse the heart. He who is seeking for forgiveness and acceptance can say only, ‘Nothing in my hand I bring; Simply to Thy cross I cling.’ But the promise of sonship is made to all who ‘believe on His name. Everyone who comes to Jesus in faith will receive pardon.’” —*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 12.

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15

Sabbath, October 10, 2009

The Repentant Son Justified

“But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For He is our peace,...” Ephesians 2:13, 14.

A SON GOES HIS OWN WAY

1. Following the inclinations of his carnal nature, what request did the son in Jesus’ parable make of his father? How did he use the means that his father had worked so hard to obtain? Luke 15:11-13.

“The prodigal son was not a dutiful son, not one who would please his father, but one who desired his own way. He wished to follow the dictates of his own inclination, and was tired of counsel and advice from the father who loved him, and who only wished him to act in such a way that his

happiness would be insured. The tender sympathy and love of his father were misinterpreted, and the more patient, kind, and benevolent the father acted, the more restless the son became. He thought his liberty was restricted, for his idea of liberty was wild license, and as he craved to be independent of all authority, he broke loose from all the restraint of his father's house, and soon spent his fortune in riotous living." —*The Signs of the Times*, January 29, 1894.

- 2. What suffering came upon the prodigal son, giving him a completely different perspective on his initial decision? What does this tell us about adversities—whether they are a blessing or a curse? Luke 15:14-16.**

"Starvation stared him in the face, and he joined himself to a citizen of the place. He was sent to do the most menial of work—to feed the swine. Although this to a Jew was the most disreputable of callings, yet he was willing to do anything, so great was his need. Miserable and suffering, he sat in the fields doing his task. Because he had been unwilling to submit to the restraint of home, he now had the place of the lowest of servants. He had left home for liberty, but his liberty had been turned into the lowest of drudgery." —*The Signs of the Times*, January 29, 1894.

THE DIVINE PATH TO REPENTANCE

- 3. How did his thought processes change when he faced the most critical and humiliating situation of his life? Luke 15:17-19.**

"Where now is his riotous joy? Stilling his conscience, benumbing his sensibilities, he had thought himself happy in scenes of revelry; but now, with money spent, with pride humbled, with his moral nature dwarfed, with his will weak and unreliable, with his finer feelings seemingly dead, he is the most wretched of mortals. He is suffering keen hunger, and cannot fill his want, and, under these circumstances, he remembers that his father has bread enough and to spare, and resolves to go to his father." —*The Signs of the Times*, January 29, 1894.

- 4. What change of mind came as a result of his repentance and decision? What beautiful picture of heaven is seen in the father's response when the young man returned home? Luke 15:20, 21.**

"We are to surrender our hearts to God, that He may renew and sanctify us, and fit us for His heavenly court. We are not to wait for some special

time, but today we are to give ourselves to Him, refusing to be the servants of sin. Do you imagine you can leave off sin a little at a time? Oh, leave the accursed thing at once! Hate the things that Christ hates, love the things that Christ loves. Has He not by His death and suffering made provision for your cleansing from sin? When we begin to realize that we are sinners, and fall on the Rock to be broken, the everlasting arms are placed about us, and we are brought close to the heart of Jesus. Then we shall be charmed with His loveliness, and disgusted with our own righteousness. We need to come close to the foot of the cross. The more we humble ourselves there, the more exalted will God's love appear. The grace and righteousness of Christ will not avail for him who feels whole, for him who thinks he is reasonably good, who is contented with his own condition. There is no room for Christ in the heart of him who does not realize his need of divine light and aid."—*Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 327, 328.

THE ROBE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

- 5. What clothing did the father order to be brought to his repentant son? In accordance with the subject we are studying, what did this rich robe represent? Luke 15:22.**

"There is fullness of grace in God, and we may have His spirit and power in large measure. Do not feed on the husks of self-righteousness, but go to the Lord. He has the best robe to put upon you, and His arms are open to receive."—*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 328.

"Your heavenly Father will take from you the garments defiled by sin. In the beautiful parabolic prophecy of Zechariah, the high priest Joshua, standing clothed in filthy garments before the angel of the Lord, represents the sinner. And the word is spoken by the Lord, 'Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him He said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment.... So they set a fair miter upon his head, and clothed him with garments.' Zechariah 3:4, 5. Even so God will clothe you with 'the garments of salvation,' and cover you with 'the robe of righteousness.' Isaiah 61:10. 'Though ye have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold.' Psalm 68:13."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 206.

A FEAST OF JOY

- 6. Did the father berate his son for his foolishness and for wasting his money? What moment of enormous joy was this for the father? Luke 15:24.**

"There is no taunting, no casting up to the prodigal of his evil course. The son feels that the past is forgiven and forgotten, blotted out forever. And so God says to the sinner, 'I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy

transgressions, and as a cloud thy sins.' Isaiah 44:22. 'I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.' Jeremiah 31:34." —*In Heavenly Places*, p. 10.

SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS VS. GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS

7. Who was not at all happy about the prodigal's return and the great rejoicing that took place? What would our reaction have been under similar circumstances? Luke 15:25-30.

"Then is revealed in the elder brother selfishness, pride, envy, and malignity. He feels that favor to the prodigal is an insult to himself, and the father remonstrates with him, but he will not look upon the matter in the right light, nor will he unite with the father in rejoicing that the lost is found. He gives the father to understand that, had he been in the father's place, he would not have received the son back, and forgets that the poor prodigal is his own brother. He speaks with disrespect to his father, charging him with injustice to himself, while he shows favor to one who has wasted his living. He speaks of the prodigal to his father as 'this thy son.' Yet, notwithstanding all this unfilial conduct, his expressions of contempt and arrogance, the father deals patiently and tenderly with him." —*The Signs of the Times*, January 29, 1894.

8. Who is represented by the young man who was lost and dead in sin? Who does the elder brother represent? Describe the rejoicing in the father's house after the prodigal son's return. Luke 15:31, 32, 23.

"Heaven is waiting and yearning for the return of the prodigals who have wandered far from the fold. Many of those who have strayed away may be brought back by the loving service of God's children.

"Think of the Father subjecting Himself to sorrow, sparing not His own Son, but freely delivering Him up for us all.... O that we had a better understanding of His love!" —*In Heavenly Places*, p. 10.

"The prodigal made a full confession of his sin. He made no excuse for his wrong-doing, and he was forgiven, and reestablished in his father's house." —*Review and Herald*, March 5, 1889.

"By the elder son were represented the unrepenting Jews of Christ's day.... They claimed to be sons in God's house, but they had the spirit of the hireling. They were working, not from love, but from hope of reward. In their eyes, God was an exacting taskmaster. They saw Christ inviting publicans and sinners to receive freely the gift of His grace—the gift which the rabbis hoped to secure only by toil and penance—and they were offended. The prodigal's return, which filled the Father's heart with joy, only stirred them to jealousy." —*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 209.

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Clean Garments for Joshua

“... A few names ... have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy.” *Revelation 3:4.*

THE HUMAN CONDITION SHOWN IN VISION

1. **In what difficult position was the high priest Joshua, who was portrayed as the representative of God’s people in Zechariah 3:1? How does that relate to us?**

“The fact that the acknowledged people of God are represented as standing before the Lord in filthy garments should lead to humility and deep searching of heart on the part of all who profess His name. Those who are indeed purifying their souls by obeying the truth will have a most humble opinion of themselves. The more closely they view the spotless character of Christ, the stronger will be their desire to be conformed to His image, and the less will they see of purity or holiness in themselves. But while we should realize our sinful condition, we are to rely upon Christ as our righteousness, our sanctification, and our redemption. We cannot answer the charges of Satan against us. Christ alone can make an effectual plea in our behalf.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 471, 472.

2. **What was his condition? What are the possibilities for anyone in that condition? Zechariah 3:3; Isaiah 64:6. (See Matthew 22:11-13.)**

“The high priest cannot defend himself or his people from Satan’s accusations. He does not claim that Israel is free from fault. In filthy garments, symbolizing the sins of the people, which he bears as their representative, he stands before the Angel, confessing their guilt, yet pointing to their repentance and humiliation, and relying upon the mercy of a sin-pardoning Redeemer. In faith he claims the promises of God.” —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 583.

THE ENEMY’S ACCUSATIONS AND THE LORD’S DEFENSE

3. **Describe the accuser. What are his motives and methods? Who is represented by the advocate who defends the accused? Zechariah 3:1, 2; 1 John 2:1, 2.**

“This represents the attitude of Satan toward every soul whom Christ is seeking to draw unto Himself. The enemy leads us into sin, and then he accuses us before the heavenly universe as unworthy of the love of God.” —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 116, 117.

“How careful is the Lord Jesus to give no occasion for a soul to despair. How He fences about the soul from Satan’s fierce attacks. If through manifold temptations we are surprised or deceived into sin, He does not turn from us and leave us to perish. No, no, that is not our Saviour. Christ prayed for us. He was tempted in all points like as we are; and having been tempted, He knows how to succor those who are tempted.

“Our crucified Lord is pleading for us in the presence of the Father at the throne of grace. His atoning sacrifice we may plead for our pardon, our justification, and our sanctification.” —(Letter 33, 1895) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 948.

- 4. When we do not try to justify, excuse, or cover up our transgressions, but confess them willingly to the Lord, what will happen to us? What is the meaning of this change of garments? Zechariah 3:4, first part; Revelation 7:13, 14. (See Revelation 19:8.)**

“But Jesus our Advocate presents an effectual plea in behalf of all who by repentance and faith have committed the keeping of their souls to Him. He pleads their cause and vanquishes their accuser by the mighty arguments of Calvary. His perfect obedience to God’s law, even unto the death of the cross, has given Him all power in heaven and in earth, and He claims of His Father mercy and reconciliation for guilty man.... Those who rely upon Him in faith receive the comforting assurance: ‘Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment.’ All that have put on the robe of Christ’s righteousness will stand before Him as chosen and faithful and true. Satan has no power to pluck them out of the hand of Christ. Not one soul that in penitence and faith has claimed His protection will Christ permit to pass under the enemy’s power.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 470.

- 5. How long does it take for the Lord to remove the filthy clothes and do the amazing exchange? Did the high priest pay something for this? Zechariah 3:4, 9.**

“As the intercession of Joshua is accepted, the command is given, ‘Take away the filthy garments from him,’ and to Joshua the Angel declares, ‘Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment.’” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 469.

“Without the grace of Christ, the sinner is in a hopeless condition; nothing can be done for him; but through divine grace, supernatural power

is imparted to the man and works in mind and heart and character.... When the sinner believes that Christ is his personal Saviour, then according to His unfailing promises, God pardons his sin and justifies him freely.” —*Faith and Works*, p. 100.

THE FINE WHITE CLOTHING

- 6. What is symbolized by the “fine clothing” that the high priest received? What does the change of garments make possible? Zechariah 3:5.**

“No sin can be tolerated in those who shall walk with Christ in white. The filthy garments are to be removed, and Christ’s robe of righteousness is to be placed upon us. By repentance and faith we are enabled to render obedience to all the commandments of God, and are found without blame before Him. Those who shall meet the approval of God are now afflicting their souls, confessing their sins, and earnestly pleading for pardon through Jesus their Advocate.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 472.

“Through His sacrifice, human beings may reach the high ideal set before them, and hear at last the words, ‘Ye are complete in Him,’ not having your own righteousness, but the righteousness that He wrought out for you. Your imperfection is no longer seen; for you are clothed with the robe of Christ’s perfection.” —(Manuscript 125, 1902) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 907.

- 7. What other great privileges are promised in this prophecy? What will be the final condition of those who now receive clean garments? Zechariah 3:6, 7, 10.**

“Here is revealed the hope of Israel. It was by faith in the coming Saviour that Joshua and his people received pardon. Through faith in Christ they were restored to God’s favor. By virtue of His merits, if they walked in His ways and kept His statutes, they would be ‘men wondered at,’ honored as the chosen of heaven among the nations of the earth. Christ was their hope, their defense, their justification and redemption, as He is the hope of His church today.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 469, 470.

- 8. To what time and experience does the vision of Zechariah especially apply? Revelation 12:17.**

“Zechariah’s vision of Joshua and the Angel applies with peculiar force to the experience of God’s people in the closing up of the great day of atonement. The remnant church will be brought into great trial and distress. Those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus will

feel the ire of the dragon and his hosts. Satan numbers the world as his subjects, he has gained control of the apostate churches; but here is a little company that are resisting his supremacy. If he could blot them from the earth, his triumph would be complete.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 472, 473.

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17

Sabbath, October 24, 2009

The Guest without a Wedding Garment

“I counsel thee to buy of me ... white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear;...” Revelation 3:18.

THE DIVINE INVITATION REPEATED

- 1. What special object lesson did Jesus use to illustrate the gospel invitation? What responses were received from the invitees? Matthew 22:1-3.**

“The spiritual banquet has been set before us in rich abundance. We have had presented to us by the messengers of God the richest feast—the righteousness of Christ, justification by faith, the exceeding great and precious promises of God in His Word, free access to the Father by Jesus Christ, the comforts of the Holy Spirit, and the well-grounded assurance of eternal life in the kingdom of God. We ask, What could God do for us that He has not done in preparing the great supper, the heavenly banquet?” —(*Review and Herald*, Jan. 17, 1899) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1097.

- 2. How did the invitees respond when they were again called to attend the king’s feast? In what various ways were the king’s messengers treated? Consider carefully how this applies in our own circles and in society today. Matthew 22:4-7.**

“... Children, come to Jesus. Give to God the most precious offering that it is possible for you to make; give Him your heart. He speaks to you saying, ‘My son, my daughter, give me thine heart. Though your sins be as scarlet, I will make them white as snow; for I will cleanse you with My

own blood. I will make you members of My family—children of the heavenly King. Take My forgiveness, My peace which I freely give you. I will clothe you with my own righteousness—the wedding garment—and make you fit for the marriage supper of the Lamb. When clothed in My righteousness, through prayer, through watchfulness, through diligent study of My Word, you will be able to reach a high standard. You will understand the truth, and your character will be molded by a divine influence; for this is the will of God, even your sanctification.” —(*The Youth’s Instructor*, June 30, 1892) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 1162.

NEW GUESTS INVITED

3. Why were the first invitees so indifferent, unwilling, and even insolent? Whom did they represent? Matthew 22:8.

“Among the Jews the sacred feast was connected with all their seasons of national and religious rejoicing. It was to them a type of the blessings of eternal life. The great feast at which they were to sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, while the Gentiles stood without, and looked on with longing eyes, was a theme on which they delighted to dwell. The lesson of warning and instruction which Christ desired to give, He now illustrated by the parable of a great supper. The blessings of God, both for the present and for the future life, the Jews thought to shut up to themselves. They denied God’s mercy to the Gentiles. By the parable Christ showed that they were themselves at that very time rejecting the invitation of mercy, the call to God’s kingdom.” —*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 219.

4. What would we have done if we were in the king’s place? What did he do? Matthew 22:9, 10; Mark 16:15, 16.

“In the providence of God, we are daily brought into connection with the unconverted. By His own right hand God is preparing the way before us.... As colaborers with Him, we have a sacred work to do. We are to have travail of soul for those who are in high places; we are to extend to them the gracious invitation to come to the marriage feast.” —(*Southern Watchman*, March 15, 1904) *Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 186.

REQUIREMENT OF THE WEDDING GARMENT

5. Although some people had been called directly from the street and had no time for preparation, what was made available to them all and required? What does the wedding garment represent? Matthew 22:11.

"Only those were accepted who had obeyed his requirements and put on the wedding garment. So it is with the guests at the gospel feast. All must pass the scrutiny of the great King, and only those are received who have put on the robe of Christ's righteousness." —*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 312.

"A banquet has been prepared for us. The Lord has spread before us the treasures of His Word. But we must not come to the repast clothed in citizen's dress. We must have on the white robe of Christ's righteousness, which has been prepared for all the guests." —(Manuscript 70, 1901) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1097.

"By the wedding garment in the parable is represented the pure, spotless character which Christ's true followers will possess.... The fine linen, says the Scripture, 'is the righteousness of saints.' Revelation 19:8. It is the righteousness of Christ, His own unblemished character, that through faith is imparted to all who receive Him as their personal Saviour....

"Only the covering which Christ Himself has provided can make us meet to appear in God's presence. This covering, the robe of His own righteousness, Christ will put upon every repenting, believing soul." —*Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 310, 311.

6. How can it be explained that, although many had been called from the street, only one did not have the wedding garment? What did the king's question to the man imply? Matthew 22:12.

"In the parable of Matthew 22..., the investigative judgment is clearly represented as taking place before the marriage. Previous to the wedding the king comes in to see the guests, to see if all are attired in the wedding garment, the spotless robe of character washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb. Matthew 22:11; Revelation 7:14. He who is found wanting is cast out, but all who upon examination are seen to have the wedding garment on are accepted of God and accounted worthy of a share in His kingdom and a seat upon His throne. This work of examination of character, of determining who are prepared for the kingdom of God, is that of the investigative judgment, the closing of work in the sanctuary above." —*The Great Controversy*, p. 428.

"This robe, woven in the loom of heaven, has in it not one thread of human devising. Christ in His humanity wrought out a perfect character, and this character He offers to impart to us. 'All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.' Isaiah 64:6. Everything that we of ourselves can do is defiled by sin.... But Christ was obedient to every requirement of the law.... By His perfect obedience He has made it possible for every human being to obey God's commandments. When we submit ourselves to Christ, the heart is united with His heart, the will is merged in His will, the mind becomes one with His mind, the thoughts are brought into captivity to Him; we live His life. This is what it means to be clothed with the garment of His

righteousness. Then as the Lord looks upon us He sees ... His own robe of righteousness, which is perfect obedience to the law of Jehovah.” —*Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 311, 312.

- 7. Who was represented by the man who did not have the garment of grace and righteousness? Consider the value of one’s own merits, without the garment of righteousness given by God. Why do you think such a character could never enter the heavenly kingdom? Matthew 22:13, 14.**

“Remember that every one who shall be found with the wedding garment on will have come out of great tribulation.” —(*Review and Herald*, April 17, 1894) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1097.

“It is not enough to believe the theory of truth. It is not enough to make a profession of faith in Christ and have our names registered on the church roll. ‘He that keepeth His commandments dwelleth in Him, and He in him.’... 1 John 3:24; 2:3. This is the genuine evidence of conversion. Whatever our profession, it amounts to nothing unless Christ is revealed in works of righteousness.” —*Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 312, 313.

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18

Sabbath, October 31, 2009

What Righteousness?

“Not for thy righteousness, or for the uprightness of thine heart, dost thou go to possess their land:... Understand therefore, that the Lord thy God giveth thee not this good land to possess it for thy righteousness;...” Deuteronomy 9:5, 6.

TWO WORSHIPERS

- 1. To whom did Jesus direct the parable of the two worshippers? What kind of righteousness did the Pharisee have? What similarities to this parable are visible today? Luke 18:9.**

“The Pharisee goes up to the temple to worship, not because he feels that he is a sinner in need of pardon, but because he thinks himself righteous and hopes to win commendation. His worship he regards as an act of merit that will recommend him to God. At the same time it will give the people a high opinion of his piety. He hopes to secure favor with both God and man. His worship is prompted by self-interest. —*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 150.

2. Although both were worshipers of God and both went to the same temple, how did they differ outwardly? Luke 18:10.

“For each of the classes represented by the Pharisee and the publican there is a lesson in the history of the apostle Peter. In his early discipleship Peter thought himself strong. Like the Pharisee, in his own estimation he was ‘not as other men are.’ When Christ on the eve of His betrayal forewarned His disciples, ‘All ye shall be offended because of Me this night,’ Peter confidently declared, ‘Although all shall be offended, yet will not I.’ Mark 14:27, 29. Peter did not know his own danger. Self-confidence misled him. He thought himself able to withstand temptation; but in a few short hours the test came, and with cursing and swearing he denied his Lord.” —*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 152.

3. What does the Bible reveal about the Pharisees? How did Jesus regard the publicans? Matthew 3:7; 16:6; 9:11; Luke 5:30.

MAN’S SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS

4. What characterized the Pharisee’s prayer? What was his basic attitude? Luke 18:11.

“And he is full of self-praise. He looks it, he walks it, he prays it. Drawing apart from others as if to say, ‘Come not near to me; for I am holier than thou’ (Isaiah 65:5), he stands and prays ‘with himself.’ Wholly self-satisfied, he thinks that God and men regard him with the same complacency.

“‘God, I thank Thee,’ he says, ‘that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.’ He judges his character, not by the holy character of God, but by the character of other men. His mind is turned away from God to humanity. This is the secret of his self-satisfaction.” —*Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 150, 151.

“Self-righteousness is the danger of this age; it separates the soul from Christ. Those who trust to their own righteousness cannot understand how salvation comes through Christ. They call sin righteousness and righteousness sin. They have no appreciation of the evil of transgression, no understanding of the terror of the law; for they do not respect God’s moral standard. The reason there are so many spurious conversions in these days is that there is so low an appreciation of the law of God. Instead of God’s standard of righteousness, men have erected a standard of their own by which to measure character.” —*Faith and Works*, p. 96.

5. After telling God what he had not done, what testimony did he give of himself? What do the Scriptures say about those who exalt themselves? Luke 18:12; Proverbs 27:2; 2 Corinthians 10:12, 18.

“He proceeds to recount his good deeds: ‘I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.’ The religion of the Pharisee does not touch the soul. He is not seeking God-likeness of character, a heart filled with love and mercy. He is satisfied with a religion that has to do only with outward life. His righteousness is his own—the fruit of his own works—and judged by a human standard.

“Whoever trusts in himself that he is righteous, will despise others. As the Pharisee judges himself by other men, so he judges other men by himself. His righteousness is estimated by theirs, and the worse they are the more righteous by contrast he appears. His self-righteousness leads to accusing. ‘Other men’ he condemns as transgressors of God’s law. Thus he is making manifest the very spirit of Satan, the accuser of the brethren. With this spirit it is impossible for him to enter into communion with God. He goes down to his house destitute of the divine blessing.” —*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 151.

GOD’S RIGHTEOUSNESS

6. What completely different picture is seen in the publican’s attitude and prayer? How did he see himself in comparison with others? Luke 18:13.

“The publican had gone to the temple with other worshipers, but he soon drew apart from them as unworthy to unite in their devotions. Standing afar off, he ‘would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast,’ in bitter anguish and self-abhorrence. He felt that he had transgressed against God, that he was sinful and polluted. He could not expect even pity from those around him, for they looked upon him with contempt. He knew that he had no merit to commend him to God, and in utter self-despair he cried, ‘God be merciful to me, a sinner.’ He did not compare himself with others.

“Overwhelmed with a sense of guilt, he stood as if alone in God’s presence. His only desire was for pardon and peace, his only plea was the mercy of God. And he was blessed. ‘I tell you,’ Christ said, ‘this man went down to his house justified rather than the other.’” —*Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 151, 152.

7. According to Jesus’ parable, where does justification, or forgiveness, come from? What makes it possible? Luke 18:14, first part.

“No man can of himself understand his errors. ‘The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?’ Jeremiah 17:9.... We must behold Christ. It is ignorance of Him that makes men so uplifted in their own righteousness. When we contemplate His purity and excellence, we shall see our own weakness and poverty and defects as they really are. We shall see ourselves lost and hopeless, clad in garments of self-righteousness, like every other sinner. We shall see that if we are ever saved, it will not be through our own goodness, but through God’s infinite grace.” —*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 159.

“Righteousness within is testified to by righteousness without. He who is righteous within is not hard-hearted and unsympathetic, but day by day he grows into the image of Christ, going on from strength to strength. He who is being sanctified by the truth will be self-controlled, and will follow in the footsteps of Christ until grace is lost in glory. The righteousness by which we are justified is imputed; the righteousness by which we are sanctified is imparted. The first is our title to heaven, the second is our fitness for heaven.” —(*Review and Herald*, June 4, 1895) *Messages to Young People*, p. 35.

8. What principle of the heavenly kingdom makes justification possible? Matthew 11:29; Luke 18:14; Proverbs 29:23; James 4:6.

“Those who accept Christ, and in their first confidence say, ‘I am saved,’ are in danger of trusting to themselves. They lose sight of their own weakness and their constant need of divine strength. They are unprepared for Satan’s devices, and under temptation many, like Peter, fall into the very depths of sin. We are admonished, ‘Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.’ 1 Corinthians 10:12. Our only safety is in constant distrust of self, and dependence on Christ.” —*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 155.

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19

Sabbath, November 7, 2009

Sanctification by Faith

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.” Romans 12:1.

JUSTIFICATION AND SANCTIFICATION

1. Besides our justification and redemption, what else did Jesus Christ become for us? 1 Corinthians 1:30.

“Justification means the saving of a soul from perdition, that he may obtain sanctification, and through sanctification, the life of heaven. Justification means that the conscience, purged from dead works, is placed where it can receive the blessings of sanctification.” —(Manuscript 113, 1902) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 908.

“All the treasures of heaven were committed to Jesus Christ, that He might impart these precious gifts to the diligent, persevering seeker. He ‘is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.’ 1 Corinthians 1:30.” —*Counsels to Parents, Teachers and Students*, p. 371.

“No one can be a successful soul winner till he himself has settled the question of surrender to God. We are individually to put on the Lord Jesus Christ. To each one of us He must become wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. When our faith lays hold upon Christ as our personal Saviour, we shall place Him before others in a new light. And when the people behold Christ as He is, they will not wrangle over doctrines; they will flee to Him for pardon, purity, and eternal life.” —*Colporteur Ministry*, p. 49.

2. After justifying them, what does the Lord bring about in His redeemed children? Romans 6:22; John 15:4, 5.

“Our crucified Lord is pleading for us in the presence of the Father at the throne of grace. His atoning sacrifice we may plead for our pardon, our justification, and our sanctification. The lamb slain is our only hope. Our faith looks up to Him, grasps Him as the One who can save to the uttermost, and the fragrance of the all-sufficient offering is accepted of the Father.” —*God’s Amazing Grace*, p. 71.

“Your strength is from Him. He will be your wisdom, your righteousness, your sanctification, your redemption. Wear the yoke of Christ, daily learning of Him His meekness and lowliness. He will be your Comfort, your Rest.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 7, p. 272.

“‘By their fruits ye shall know them.’ All the followers of Christ bear fruit to His glory. Their lives testify that a good work has been wrought in them by the Spirit of God, and their fruit is unto holiness. Their lives are elevated and pure. Those who bear no fruit have no experience in the things of God. They are not in the Vine. Read John 15:4, 5: ‘Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in Me. I am the Vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without Me ye can do nothing.’” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 289.

God’s WILL

3. What was the earnest prayer of Jesus for His disciples just before His own supreme sacrifice? John 17:17, 19.

“The sanctifying power of truth is to abide in the soul and be carried with us to our business, there to apply its continual tests to every transaction of life, especially to our dealings with our fellow men. It is to abide in our households, having a subduing power upon the life and character of all its inmates.

“I must ever urge upon those who profess to believe the truth the necessity of practicing the truth. This means sanctification, and sanctification means the culture and training of every capability for the Lord’s service.” —*My Life Today*, p. 261.

“It is in doing the works of Christ, ministering as He did to the suffering and afflicted, that we are to develop Christian character. It is for our good that God has called us to practice self-denial for Christ’s sake, to bear the cross, to labor and sacrifice in seeking to save that which is lost. This is the Lord’s process of refining, purging away the baser material, that the precious traits of character which were in Christ Jesus, may appear in the believer. All dross must be cleansed from the soul, through the sanctification of the truth....” —*Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 165.

- 4. Therefore, what high standard does the Lord present frequently in His Holy Word? Leviticus 11:44, 45; 1 Thessalonians 4:3, 7.**

“God has chosen men from eternity to be holy. ‘This is the will of God, even your sanctification.’ God’s law tolerates no sin, but demands perfect obedience. The echo of God’s voice comes to us, ever saying. Holier, holier still. And ever our answer is to be, Yes, Lord, holier still. Holiness is within the reach of all who reach for it by faith, not because of their good works, but because of Christ’s merits. Divine power is provided for every soul struggling for the victory over sin and Satan.” —*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 908.

SANCTIFICATION EQUATED WITH PURIFICATION

- 5. What is one of the most basic meanings of sanctification? 2 Corinthians 7:1; Ephesians 5:26; Hebrews 13:12; 2 Chronicles 29:5; 1 Corinthians 6:11.**

“The truth we claim to believe should make us better men and women in our home life, in our church relations, in our business, and in our intercourse with our friends and neighbors. Unless this result is manifested, we should examine ourselves to see what is hindering the sanctifying influence of the truth from accomplishing its work of purification in our lives. ‘This is the will of God, even your sanctification.’ Our characters must be

moulded after the divine model, that we may have an elevating influence on all with whom we associate. 'If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his.'" –*The Signs of the Times*, January 13, 1888.

SANCTIFICATION AND CONSECRATION

6. What additional meaning for sanctification is frequently found in the Scriptures? John 10:36; Jeremiah 1:5; Exodus 13:2.

"The sanctification set forth in the Sacred Scriptures has to do with the entire being—spirit, soul, and body. Here is the true idea of entire consecration. Paul prays that the church at Thessalonica may enjoy this great blessing. 'The very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.' 1 Thessalonians 5:23." –*My Life Today*, p. 248.

SANCTIFICATION RECEIVED BY FAITH

7. As with justification, what do we need to have to receive sanctification? Acts 15:9; 26:18.

"Would you become assimilated to the divine image?... Would you drink of the water which Christ shall give you, which shall be in you a well of water springing up into everlasting life? Would you bear fruit to the glory of God? Would you refresh others? Then with heart hungering for the bread of life, the Word of God, search the Scriptures, and live by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. Your soul's sanctification and righteousness will result from faith in the Word of God, which leads to obedience of its commands. Let the Word of God be to you as the voice of God instructing you, and saying, 'This is the way, walk ye in it.' Isaiah 30:21. Christ prayed, 'Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth.' John 17:17." –*The Faith I Live by*, p. 21.

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Sanctification in Christ

“Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” Titus 2:14.

NECESSITY OF SANCTIFICATION

1. **What did the apostle Paul explain concerning the eternal kingdom and those who will be part of it? 1 Corinthians 6:9, 11; Hebrews 12:14.**

“The sanctification of the soul is accomplished through steadfastly beholding Him [Christ] by faith as the only-begotten Son of God, full of grace and truth. The power of truth is to transform heart and character. Its effect is not like a dash of color here and there upon the canvas; the whole character is to be transformed, the image of Christ is to be revealed in words and actions. A new nature is imparted. Man is renewed after the image of Christ in righteousness and true holiness.... The grace of Christ is essential every day, every hour. Unless it is with us continually, the inconsistencies of the natural heart will appear and the life will present a divided service. The character is to be full of grace and truth. Wherever the religion of Christ works, it will brighten and sweeten every detail of life with more than an earthly joy and a higher than earthly peace.” —(Letter 2a, 1892) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1117.

“Day by day, and hour by hour, there must be a vigorous process of self-denial and of sanctification going on within; and then the outward works will testify that Jesus is abiding in the heart by faith. Sanctification does not close the avenues of the soul to knowledge, but it comes to expand the mind, and to inspire it to search for truth, as for hidden treasure; and the knowledge of God’s will advances the work of sanctification.” —*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, pp. 136, 137.

THE PROCESS OF A LIFETIME

2. **Describe the work of sanctification in terms of time, experience, and character. Hebrews 10:1, 14; 12:14; 2 Corinthians 7:1; 1 Thessalonians 5:23.**

“Sanctification means habitual communion with God.” –(*Review and Herald*, March 15, 1906) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 908.

“Sanctification is not the work of a moment, an hour, a day, but of a lifetime. It is not gained by a happy flight of feeling, but is the result of constantly dying to sin, and constantly living for Christ. Wrongs cannot be righted nor reformations wrought in the character by feeble, intermittent efforts. It is only by long, persevering effort, sore discipline, and stern conflict, that we shall overcome. We know not one day how strong will be our conflict the next. So long as Satan reigns, we shall have self to subdue, besetting sins to overcome; so long as life shall last, there will be no stopping place, no point which we can reach and say, I have fully attained. Sanctification is the result of lifelong obedience.” –*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 560, 561.

SEPARATION FROM SIN AND OBEDIENCE TO RIGHTEOUSNESS

3. What else does the divine work of sanctification encompass? Romans 6:19, 22.

“The sanctification of the church is God’s object in all His dealings with His people. He has chosen them from eternity, that they might be holy. He gave His Son to die for them, that they might be sanctified through obedience to the truth, divested of all the littleness of self. From them He requires a personal work, a personal surrender. God can be honored by those who profess to believe in Him, only as they are conformed to His image and controlled by His Spirit. Then, as witnesses for the Saviour, they may make known what divine grace has done for them.” –*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 559, 560.

SANCTIFIED IN CHRIST

4. What is man’s part in sanctification? Ephesians 2:4, 5, 8.

“As the plan of redemption begins and ends with a gift, so it is to be carried forward. The same spirit of sacrifice which purchased salvation for us will dwell in the hearts of all who become partakers of the heavenly gift.” –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 730.

“It is our work today to yield our souls to Christ, that we may be fitted for the time of refreshing from the presence of the Lord—fitted for the baptism of the Holy Spirit.” –*Evangelism*, p. 701.

“Our work is to place our will on the side of God’s will. Then, through the blood of the atonement, we become partakers of the divine nature; through Christ we are children of God, and we have the assurance that

God loves us even as He loved His Son. We are one with Jesus. We walk where Christ leads the way; He has power to dispel the dark shadows which Satan casts across our path; and, in place of darkness and discouragement, the sunlight of His glory shines into our hearts.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 741.

- 5. What enormous price was paid by the Lord for our sanctification? In what name are we sanctified? Hebrews 10:10, 14; 13:12; 1 Corinthians 1:2.**

“Yet this glorious Being loved the poor sinner and took upon Himself the form of a servant, that He might suffer and die in man’s behalf. Jesus might have remained at His Father’s right hand, wearing His kingly crown and royal robes. But He chose to exchange all the riches, honor, and glory of heaven for the poverty of humanity, and His station of high command for the horrors of Gethsemane and the humiliation and agony of Calvary. He became a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, that by His baptism of suffering and blood He might purify and redeem a guilty world. ‘Lo, I come,’ was the joyful assent, ‘to do Thy will, O My God.’” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 121.

- 6. What amazing work is accomplished in the process of sanctification? 1 Corinthians 6:11; Titus 3:5; 1 Peter 1:22, 23.**

“Their robes must be spotless, their characters must be purified from sin by the blood of sprinkling. Through the grace of God and their own diligent effort, they must be conquerors in the battle with evil. While the investigative judgment is going forward in heaven, while the sins of penitent believers are being removed from the sanctuary, there is to be a special work of purification, of putting away of sin, among God’s people upon earth.” —*The Faith I Live by*, p. 337.

THE WHITE GARMENT

- 7. What illustration is presented in Scripture to portray the sanctification or holiness God brings about in His children? Revelation 3:4, 5; 7:9, 13; 19:7, 8.**

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Walking with God

“As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.” Colossians 2:6, 7.

A FORERUNNER WHO WALKED WITH GOD

1. **What is the meaning of the phrase, “walked with God,” as used in the Holy Scriptures? Ephesians 5:1; Colossians 1:10; 1 Thessalonians 2:12; 4:1.**

2. **What is the report of one who truly made the experience of walking with God, or sanctification? How long did this experience continue? How was this possible? Genesis 5:22.**

“Enoch walked with God. He honored God in every affair of life. In his home and in his business he inquired, ‘Will this be acceptable to the Lord?’ And by remembering God and following His counsel, he was transformed in character, and became a godly man, whose ways pleased the Lord. We are exhorted to add to godliness, brotherly kindness. O how much we need to take this step, to add this quality to our characters!... We should have that love for others that Christ has had for us. A man is estimated at his true value by the Lord of heaven. If he is unkind in his earthly home, he is unfit for the heavenly home. If he will have his own way, no matter whom it grieves, he would not be content in heaven, unless he could rule there. The love of Christ must control our hearts.... Seek God with a broken and contrite spirit, and you will be melted with compassion toward your brethren. You will be prepared to add to brotherly kindness, charity, or love....

“It will bring heaven nearer to us. We may have the sweet peace and consolation of God in doing this work. These steps will take us into the atmosphere of heaven.” —*My Life Today*, p. 98.

ONE LIKE US

3. **Picture Enoch and the way he lived his life. Compare what you know about him and the society in which he and his family lived with what you experience today. Genesis 5:22, 23.**

"We are living in an evil age. The perils of the last days thicken around us. Because iniquity abounds, the love of many waxes cold. Enoch walked with God three hundred years. Now the shortness of time seems to be urged as a motive to seek righteousness. Should it be necessary that the terrors of the day of God be held before us in order to compel us to right action? Enoch's case is before us. Hundreds of years he walked with God. He lived in a corrupt age, when moral pollution was teeming all around him; yet he trained his mind to devotion, to love purity. His conversation was upon heavenly things."—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, pp. 121, 122.

4. On what list of honor do we find his name? In accordance with his life and experience with God, where else is his name registered? Luke 3:23, 37; Revelation 3:5.

"The overcomer is to be clothed in the white raiment of Christ's righteousness, and of him it is written: 'I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.' O, what a privilege it is to be an overcomer, and to have our names presented before the Father by the Saviour Himself!"—*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 369.

"The spotless robe of Christ's righteousness is placed upon the tried, tempted, faithful children of God.... Their names are retained in the Lamb's book of life, enrolled among the faithful of all ages. They have resisted the wiles of the deceiver; they have not been turned from their loyalty by the dragon's roar. Now they are eternally secure from the tempter's devices. Their sins are transferred to the originator of sin. A 'fair miter' is set upon their heads."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 591.

SURROUNDED BY MORAL AND SPIRITUAL CORRUPTION

5. According to information provided in the letter of Jude, what can be said about Enoch? What was the spiritual and moral condition in the world at the time in which he lived? Jude 14, 15.

"He educated his mind to run in this channel, and he bore the impress of the divine. His countenance was lighted up with the light which shineth in the face of Jesus. Enoch had temptations as well as we. He was surrounded with society no more friendly to righteousness than is that which surrounds us. The atmosphere he breathed was tainted with sin and corruption, the same as ours; yet he lived a life of holiness. He was unsullied with the prevailing sins of the age in which he lived. So may we remain pure and uncorrupted. He was a representative of the saints who live amid the perils and corruptions of the last days. For his faithful obedience to God he was translated. So, also, the faithful, who are alive and remain, will

be translated. They will be removed from a sinful and corrupt world to the pure joys of heaven.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 122.

A LIFE OF FAITH

6. What is the short but inspiring record of his life? Did it end as have the lives of all other mortals? What conclusion must we therefore reach when we ask if it is possible for us to walk and live with God today? Genesis 5:24.

“We can have what Enoch had. We can have Christ as our constant companion. Enoch walked with God, and when assailed by the tempter, he could talk with God about it. He had no ‘It is written’ as we have, but he had a knowledge of his heavenly Companion. He made God his Counselor, and was closely bound up with Jesus. And Enoch was honored in this course. He was translated to heaven without seeing death. And those who will be translated at the close of time, will be those who commune with God on earth. Those who make manifest that their life is hid with Christ in God will ever be representing Him in all their life practices. Selfishness will be cut out by the roots.” —(Manuscript 38, 1897).

“This is the desire that filled Enoch’s heart. And we read that he walked with God. He studied the character of God to a purpose. He did not mark out his own course, or set up his own will, as if he thought himself fully qualified to manage matters. He strove to conform himself to the divine likeness.” —(Letter 169, 1903) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 1087.

7. What was the great source of his constantly advancing spiritual life? Hebrews 11:5.

“Did he [Enoch] see God by his side? Only by faith. He knew that the Lord was there, and he adhered steadfastly to the principles of truth. We, too, are to walk with God. When we do this, our faces will be lighted up by the brightness of His presence, and when we meet one another, we shall speak of His power, saying, Praise God. Good is the Lord, and good is the word of the Lord.” —(Manuscript 17, 1903)

“While trusting in your heavenly Father for the help you need, He will not leave you. God has a heaven full of blessings that He wants to bestow on those who are earnestly seeking for that help which the Lord alone can give. It was in looking in faith to Jesus, in asking of Him, in believing that every word spoken would be verified, that Enoch walked with God. He kept close by the side of God, obeying His every word.... His was a wonderful life of oneness. Christ was his Companion. He was in intimate fellowship with God.” —(Manuscript 111, 1898) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 1087.

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Transformed by Grace

“If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth.” 1 John 1:6.

BEFORE JOHN’S TRANSFORMATION

- 1. What is known about the work and calling of John, the son of Zebedee? How willing was he to follow Jesus? What is recorded of him? Matthew 4:21, 22.**

“After the ascension of Christ, John stands forth as a faithful, earnest laborer for the Master. With the other disciples he enjoyed the outpouring of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, and with fresh zeal and power he continued to speak to the people the words of life, seeking to lead their thoughts to the Unseen. He was a powerful preacher, fervent, and deeply in earnest. In beautiful language and with a musical voice he told of the words and works of Christ, speaking in a way that impressed the hearts of those who heard him. The simplicity of his words, the sublime power of the truths he uttered, and the fervor that characterized his teachings, gave him access to all classes.” —*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 546.

- 2. How did he react when Jesus was not accepted? With what special request did he and his brother come to the Master? Luke 9:54-56.**

“The defects in John’s character came strongly to the front on several occasions during his personal association with the Saviour....

“The confiding love and unselfish devotion manifested in the life and character of John present lessons of untold value to the Christian church. John did not naturally possess the loveliness of character that his later experience revealed. By nature he had serious defects. He was not only proud, self-assertive, and ambitious for honor, but impetuous, and resentful under injury. He and his brother were called ‘sons of thunder.’ Evil temper, the desire for revenge, the spirit of criticism, were all in the beloved disciple. But beneath all this the divine Teacher discerned the ardent, sincere, loving heart. Jesus rebuked this self-seeking, disappointed his ambitions, tested his faith. But He revealed to him that for which his soul longed—the beauty of holiness, the transforming power of love.” —*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 539, 540.

THE GREAT CHANGE

- 3. What name were these two young men given by the Master, and what did it mean? But how did this change after John was truly linked with Jesus? Mark 3:17; John 13:23, 25; 21:20.**

“John is distinguished above the other apostles as ‘the disciple whom Jesus loved.’ John 21:20. He seems to have enjoyed to a preeminent degree the friendship of Christ, and he received many tokens of the Saviour’s confidence and love. He was one of the three permitted to witness Christ’s glory upon the mount of transfiguration and His agony in Gethsemane, and it was to his care that our Lord confided His mother in those last hours of anguish upon the cross....

“The Saviour’s affection for the beloved disciple was returned with all the strength of ardent devotion. John clung to Christ as the vine clings to the stately pillar. For his Master’s sake he braved the dangers of the judgment hall and lingered about the cross, and at the tidings that Christ had risen, he hastened to the sepulcher, in his zeal outstripping even the impetuous Peter.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 539.

- 4. Many years later, what did John write about himself? Describe what is particularly inspiring to you about his experience. Revelation 1:9.**

“The history of John affords a striking illustration of the way in which God can use aged workers. When John was exiled to the Isle of Patmos, there were many who thought him to be past service, an old and broken reed, ready to fall at any time. But the Lord saw fit to use him still. Though banished from the scenes of his former labor, he did not cease to bear witness to the truth. Even in Patmos he made friends and converts. His was a message of joy, proclaiming a risen Saviour who on high was interceding for His people until He should return to take them to Himself. And it was after John had grown old in the service of his Lord that he received more communications from heaven than he had received during all the former years of his life....

“Among the cliffs and rocks of Patmos, John held communion with his Maker. He reviewed his past life, and at thought of the blessings he had received, peace filled his heart. He had lived the life of a Christian, and he could say in faith, ‘We know that we have passed from death unto life.’ 1 John 3:14.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 572, 573, 571.

MORE ABOUT SANCTIFICATION

- 5. What is the reality if we ignore our sins or consider them inconsequential? What allows forgiveness and cleansing to take place? 1 John 1:8-10.**

“Sanctification is not the work of a moment, an hour, a day, but of a lifetime. It is not gained by a happy flight of feeling, but is the result of constantly dying to sin, and constantly living for Christ. Wrongs cannot be righted nor reformations wrought in the character by feeble, intermittent efforts. It is only by long, persevering effort, sore discipline, and stern conflict, that we shall overcome. We know not one day how strong will be our conflict the next. So long as Satan reigns, we shall have self to subdue, besetting sins to overcome; so long as life shall last, there will be no stopping place, no point which we can reach and say, I have fully attained. Sanctification is the result of lifelong obedience.” —*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 560, 561.

6. Having made the experience himself, what counsel did the apostle give concerning purification from sin? 1 John 3:3; 2:6.

“In the life of the disciple John true sanctification is exemplified. During the years of his close association with Christ, he was often warned and cautioned by the Saviour; and these reproofs he accepted. As the character of the Divine One was manifested to him, John saw his own deficiencies, and was humbled by the revelation. Day by day, in contrast with his own violent spirit, he beheld the tenderness and forbearance of Jesus, and heard His lessons of humility and patience. Day by day his heart was drawn out to Christ, until he lost sight of self in love for his Master. The power and tenderness, the majesty and meekness, the strength and patience, that he saw in the daily life of the Son of God, filled his soul with admiration. He yielded his resentful, ambitious temper to the molding power of Christ, and divine love wrought in him a transformation of character.” —*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 557.

7. According to the inspired teaching of John, on what is sanctification based? 1 John 2:4, 5; 3:24.

“John did not teach that salvation was to be earned by obedience; but that obedience was the fruit of faith and love.... If we abide in Christ, if the love of God dwells in the heart, our feelings, our thoughts, our actions, will be in harmony with the will of God. The sanctified heart is in harmony with the precepts of God’s law....

“True sanctification comes through the working out of the principle of love. ‘God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.’ 1 John 4:16. The life of him in whose heart Christ abides, will reveal practical godliness. The character will be purified, elevated, ennobled, and glorified. Pure doctrine will blend with works of righteousness; heavenly precepts will mingle with holy practices.” —*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 563, 560.

“Sin could be resisted and overcome only through the mighty agency of the Third Person of the Godhead, who would come with no modified energy, but in the fullness of divine power. It is the Spirit that makes effectual what has been wrought out by the world’s Redeemer. It is by the Spirit that the heart is made pure. Through the Spirit the believer becomes a partaker of the divine nature. Christ has given His Spirit as a divine power to overcome all hereditary and cultivated tendencies to evil, and to impress His own character upon His church.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 671.

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23

Sabbath, December 5, 2009

Interceding for Our Purification

“Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.” Hebrews 10:22.

THE CROSS AND VICTORY

- 1. After Jesus’ severe conflict in the desert and in Gethsemane, where did He achieve the greatest triumph over sin? Colossians 1:20; 1 Peter 2:24.**

“Without the cross, man could have no connection with the Father. On it hangs our every hope. In view of it the Christian may advance with the steps of a conqueror; for from it streams the light of the Saviour’s love. When the sinner reaches the cross, and looks up to the One who died to save him, he may rejoice with fullness of joy; for his sins are pardoned. Kneeling at the cross, he has reached the highest place to which man can attain. The light of the knowledge of the glory of God is revealed in the face of Jesus Christ; and the words of pardon are spoken: Live, O ye guilty sinners, live. Your repentance is accepted; for I have found a ransom.” —*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1133.

- 2. What great result did Jesus achieve in the relationship between God and man through His tremendous sacrifice? Romans 5:10, 11; Colossians 1:22. (See Ephesians 2:16.)**

“The apostle exalted Christ before his brethren as the One by whom God had created all things and by whom He had wrought out their re-

demption. He declared that the hand that sustains the worlds in space, and holds in their orderly arrangements and tireless activity all things throughout the universe of God, is the hand that was nailed to the cross for them.... 'And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy and unblamable and unreprouvable in His sight.'" —*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 471, 472.

JESUS' MINISTRY IN THE HEAVENS

- 3. Following His sacrifice on the cross, what ministry did Jesus take up in the heavenly sanctuary? Hebrews 7:17; 8:1, 2; 7:25, 26.**

"As our intercessor, Christ's office work is to introduce us to God as His sons and daughters. He intercedes in behalf of those who receive Him. With His own blood He has paid their ransom. By virtue of His own merits He gives them power to become members of the royal family, children of the heavenly King. And the Father demonstrates His infinite love for Christ by receiving and welcoming Christ's friends as His friends. He is satisfied with the atonement made. He is glorified by the incarnation, the life, death, and mediation, of His Son." —*Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, p. 14.

- 4. What wonderful work is Jesus doing in the heavenly sanctuary constantly for us? Romans 8:34; 1 John 2:1, 2.**

"What is Christ doing in heaven? He is interceding for us. By His work the threshold of heaven is flushed with the glory of God which will shine upon every soul who will open the windows of the soul heavenward. As the prayers of the sincere and contrite ones ascend to heaven Christ says to the Father, 'I will take their sins. Let them stand before You innocent.' As He takes their sins from them, He fills their hearts with the glorious light of truth and love." —(Manuscript 28, 1901) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 930.

A WORK OF JUDGMENT

- 5. What is Jesus' ministry, beyond that of forgiveness? 2 Corinthians 5:10; Romans 14:10; Acts 17:31.**

"Now is our time to prepare to meet Christ. God has given us this time, and if we use it in self-gratification instead of in helping others and honoring God, we shall come up to the judgment unprepared. In that day many will plead as an excuse that they did not know that Christ's coming was

near. But the excuse will not be accepted. They did not know simply because they did not want to know. God gave them abundant opportunity for knowing, but they closed their eyes, that they might not see, and stopped their ears, that they might not hear.” —*The Signs of the Times*, April 12, 1905.

6. Depending on our attitude and action, what can God do? Isaiah 43:25; Exodus 32:32, 33; Deuteronomy 9:14; Hebrews 9:23. (See Psalm 51:1, 9.)

“Beginning with those who first lived upon the earth, our Advocate presents the cases of each successive generation, and closes with the living.... Names are accepted, names rejected. When any have sins remaining upon the books of record, unrepented of and unforgiven, their names will be blotted out of the book of life, and the record of their good deeds will be erased from the book of God’s remembrance...

“All who have truly repented of sin, and by faith claimed the blood of Christ as their atoning sacrifice, have had pardon entered against their names in the books of heaven; as they have become partakers of the righteousness of Christ, and their characters are found to be in harmony with the law of God, their sins will be blotted out, and they themselves will be accounted worthy of eternal life....” —*The Faith I Live by*, p. 212.

PURIFICATION OF GOD’S PEOPLE

7. In the past, just as in the present, what is God’s desire for His people? Titus 2:14.

“God is leading out a people to stand in perfect unity upon the platform of eternal truth. Christ gave Himself to the world that He might ‘purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.’ This refining process is designed to purge the church from all unrighteousness and the spirit of discord and contention, that they may build up instead of tear down, and concentrate their energies on the great work before them. God designs that His people should all come into the unity of the faith.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 17.

8. If we will not permit God to purify us from every sin, what consequence will we eventually face? Revelation 22:11.

“When the work of the investigative judgment closes, the destiny of all will have been decided for life or death. Probation is ended a short time before the appearing of the Lord in the clouds of heaven. Christ in the Revelation, looking forward to that time, declares: ‘He that is unjust, let

him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. And, behold, I come quickly; and My reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be.' Revelation 22:11, 12." *—The Great Controversy*, pp. 490, 491.

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24

Sabbath, December 12, 2009

The Time of Trouble

"Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame." Revelation 16:15.

A SPECIAL TIME OF TROUBLE

- 1. According to prophecy, what will come in the very last days of earth's history? What will God's people pass through? Daniel 12:1.**

"When the third angel's message closes, mercy no longer pleads for the guilty inhabitants of the earth. The people of God have accomplished their work. They have received 'the latter rain,' 'the refreshing from the presence of the Lord,' and they are prepared for the trying hour before them. Angels are hastening to and fro in heaven. An angel returning from the earth announces that his work is done; the final test has been brought upon the world, and all who have proved themselves loyal to the divine precepts have received 'the seal of the living God.' Then Jesus ceases His intercession in the sanctuary above. He lifts His hands and with a loud voice says, 'It is done;' and all the angelic host lay off their crowns as He makes the solemn announcement: 'He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.' Revelation 22:11. Every case has been decided for life or death. Christ has made the atonement for His people and blotted out their sins." *—The Great Controversy*, pp. 613, 614.

JACOB'S TROUBLE AND VICTORY

- 2. What will be the final time of distress that God's people pass through? Jeremiah 30:6, 7.**

“Jacob’s night of anguish, when he wrestled in prayer for deliverance from the hand of Esau (Genesis 32:24-30), represents the experience of God’s people in the time of trouble.” –*The Great Controversy*, p. 616.

3. What did Jacob face the night before meeting his brother? What did he plead? Genesis 32:6-12.

“Because of the deception practiced to secure his father’s blessing, intended for Esau, Jacob had fled for his life, alarmed by his brother’s deadly threats. After remaining for many years an exile, he had set out, at God’s command, to return with his wives and children, his flocks and herds, to his native country. On reaching the borders of the land, he was filled with terror by the tidings of Esau’s approach at the head of a band of warriors, doubtless bent upon revenge. Jacob’s company, unarmed and defenseless, seemed about to fall helpless victims of violence and slaughter. And to the burden of anxiety and fear was added the crushing weight of self-reproach, for it was his own sin that had brought this danger. His only hope was in the mercy of God; his only defense must be prayer. Yet he leaves nothing undone on his own part to atone for the wrong to his brother and to avert the threatened danger.” –*The Great Controversy*, p. 616.

4. What happened as Jacob was praying alone by the Jabbok? How did his struggle end? Genesis 32:24, 26-28.

“... Jacob remains alone to intercede with God. He confesses his sin and gratefully acknowledges the mercy of God toward him while with deep humiliation he pleads the covenant made with his fathers and the promises to himself in the night vision at Bethel and in the land of his exile. The crisis in his life has come; everything is at stake. In the darkness and solitude he continues praying and humbling himself before God. Suddenly a hand is laid upon his shoulder. He thinks that an enemy is seeking his life, and with all the energy of despair he wrestles with his assailant. As the day begins to break, the stranger puts forth His superhuman power; at His touch the strong man seems paralyzed, and he falls, a helpless, weeping suppliant, upon the neck of his mysterious antagonist. Jacob knows now that it is the Angel of the covenant with whom he has been in conflict. Though disabled and suffering the keenest pain, he does not relinquish his purpose.... What confidence, what firmness and perseverance, are here displayed!... His was the assurance of one who confesses his weakness and unworthiness, yet trusts the mercy of a covenant-keeping God.” –*The Great Controversy*, pp. 616, 617.

GOD’S PEOPLE TESTED

5. When will God’s people pass through a similar experience? What will be their spiritual situation? Revelation 22:11.

"Then I saw Jesus, who had been ministering before the ark containing the ten commandments, throw down the censer. He raised His hands, and with a loud voice said, 'It is done.'... Every case had been decided for life or death." —*Early Writings*, pp. 279, 280.

"... The anguish which they [God's people] suffer is not a dread of persecution for the truth's sake; they fear that every sin has not been repented of, and that through some fault in themselves they will fail to realize the fulfillment of the Saviour's promise: I 'will keep thee from the hour of temptation....' They afflict their souls before God.... Their faith does not fail because their prayers are not immediately answered. Though suffering the keenest anxiety, terror, and distress, they do not cease their intercessions. They lay hold of the strength of God as Jacob laid hold of the Angel; and the language of their souls is: 'I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me.'" —*The Great Controversy*, pp. 619, 620.

6. What will sustain the believers at that time? What is the purpose of their special experience? James 1:12.

"As Jesus moved out of the most holy place,... a cloud of darkness covered the inhabitants of the earth. There was then no mediator between guilty man and an offended God. While Jesus had been standing between God and guilty man, a restraint was upon the people; but when He stepped out from between man and the Father, the restraint was removed and Satan had entire control of the finally impenitent.... In that fearful time, after the close of Jesus' mediation, the saints were living in the sight of a holy God without an intercessor. Every case was decided, every jewel numbered." —*Early Writings*, p. 280.

"So will the righteous, in the day of their anguish, be tested, proved, and tried, to manifest their strength of faith, their perseverance and unshaken confidence in the power of God to deliver them." —*Spiritual Gifts*, book 3, pp. 132, 133.

"Those who exercise but little faith now, are in the greatest danger of falling under the power of satanic delusions and the decree to compel the conscience. And even if they endure the test they will be plunged into deeper distress and anguish in the time of trouble, because they have never made it a habit to trust in God. The lessons of faith which they have neglected they will be forced to learn under a terrible pressure of discouragement." —*The Great Controversy*, p. 622.

7. What preparation is needed today to prepare for that critical time? 1 John 3:3; 2 Peter 3:14.

"The 'time of trouble, such as never was,' is soon to open upon us; and we shall need an experience which we do not now possess and which many are

too indolent to obtain.... Now, while our great High Priest is making the atonement for us, we should seek to become perfect in Christ.... It is in this life that we are to separate sin from us, through faith in the atoning blood of Christ. Our precious Saviour invites us to join ourselves to Him, to unite our weakness to His strength, our ignorance to His wisdom, our unworthiness to His merits. God's providence is the school in which we are to learn the meekness and lowliness of Jesus. The Lord is ever setting before us, not the way we would choose, which seems easier and pleasanter to us, but the true aims of life. It rests with us to cooperate with the agencies which Heaven employs in the work of conforming our characters to the divine model. None can neglect or defer this work but at the most fearful peril to their souls." —*The Great Controversy*, pp. 622, 623.

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25

Sabbath, December 19, 2009

Meeting the Bridegroom

"That He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That He might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." Ephesians 5:26, 27.

PREPARATION

- 1. What parable did Jesus give to underscore the need to be constantly alert? What special significance for today is contained in the concept of the virgins? Matthew 25:1, 2.**

"In the parable, all the ten virgins went out to meet the bridegroom. All had lamps and vessels for oil. For a time there was seen no difference between them. So with the church that lives just before Christ's second coming. All have a knowledge of the Scriptures. All have heard the message of Christ's near approach, and confidently expect His appearing." —*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 408.

- 2. How did He describe the virgins and their preparation? Matthew 25:2-4; Luke 12:35, 36.**

"Be dressed in readiness, and keep your lamps lit. Be like men who are waiting for their master when he returns from the wedding feast, so that

they may immediately open the door to him when he comes and knocks.” Luke 12:35, 36, *New American Standard Bible*.

“The class represented by the foolish virgins are not hypocrites. They have a regard for the truth, they have advocated the truth, they are attracted to those who believe the truth; but they have not yielded themselves to the Holy Spirit’s working. They have not fallen upon the Rock, Christ Jesus, and permitted their old nature to be broken up. This class are represented also by the stony-ground hearers. They receive the word with readiness, but they fail of assimilating its principles. Its influence is not abiding. The Spirit works upon man’s heart, according to his desire and consent implanting in him a new nature; but the class represented by the foolish virgins have been content with a superficial work. They do not know God. They have not studied His character; they have not held communion with Him; therefore they do not know how to trust, how to look and live. Their service to God degenerates into a form.” —*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 411.

SLEEPING AND CAUGHT OFF GUARD

3. What happened after the virgins waited for a very long time for the bridegroom? What was the joyful proclamation that woke them at midnight? Matthew 25:5, 6; Mark 14:37, 38.

“It is in a crisis that character is revealed. When the earnest voice proclaimed at midnight, ‘Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him,’ and the sleeping virgins were roused from their slumbers, it was seen who had made preparation for the event. Both parties were taken unawares; but one was prepared for the emergency, and the other was found without preparation. So now, a sudden and unlooked for calamity, something that brings the soul face to face with death, will show whether there is any real faith in the promises of God. It will show whether the soul is sustained by grace. The great final test comes at the close of human probation, when it will be too late for the soul’s need to be supplied.” —*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 412.

4. In what grave predicament did the foolish virgins find themselves? Could the wise virgins give them oil? What does the oil represent in terms of our spiritual life? Matthew 25:7-9; Proverbs 13:9.

“The oil is a symbol of the Holy Spirit....

“Without the Spirit of God a knowledge of His word is of no avail. The theory of truth, unaccompanied by the Holy Spirit, cannot quicken the soul or sanctify the heart. One may be familiar with the commands and promises of the Bible; but unless the Spirit of God sets the truth home, the character will not be transformed. Without the enlightenment of the

Spirit, men will not be able to distinguish truth from error, and they will fall under the masterful temptations of Satan....

“This is the class that in time of peril are found crying, Peace and safety. They lull their hearts into security, and dream not of danger. When startled from their lethargy, they discern their destitution, and entreat others to supply their lack; but in spiritual things no man can make up another’s deficiency.... But character is not transferable. No man can believe for another. No man can receive the Spirit for another. No man can impart to another the character which is the fruit of the Spirit’s working.” —*Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 407, 410-412.

SEPARATION AND DISAPPOINTMENT

5. When the foolish virgins returned, what did they find? Matthew 25:10; Luke 12:24, 25.

“Let none follow the example of the foolish virgins and think that it will be safe to wait until the crisis comes before gaining a preparation of character to stand in that time. It will be too late to seek for the righteousness of Christ when the guests are called in and examined. Now is the time to put on the righteousness of Christ—the wedding garment that will fit you to enter into the marriage supper of the Lamb. In the parable, the foolish virgins are represented as begging for oil and failing to receive it at their request. This is symbolic of those who have not prepared themselves by developing a character to stand in a time of crisis.... Character is not transferable. It is not to be bought or sold; it is to be acquired. The Lord has given to every individual an opportunity to obtain a righteous character..., but He has not provided a way by which one human agent may impart to another the character which he has developed....” —*That I May Know Him*, p. 350.

6. What terrible disappointment met the virgins who were too late? What did it mean that the bridegroom did not know them and therefore could not admit them to the feast? Matthew 25:11, 12; Luke 13:25, 26.

“The ten virgins are watching in the evening of this earth’s history. All claim to be Christians. All have a call, a name, a lamp, and all profess to be doing God’s service. All apparently wait for Christ’s appearing. But five are unready. Five will be found surprised, dismayed, outside the banquet hall.

“At the final day, many will claim admission to Christ’s kingdom,... In this life they have not entered into fellowship with Christ; therefore they know not the language of heaven, they are strangers to its joy. ‘What man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even

so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.' 1 Corinthians 2:11."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 412, 413.

PREPARED FOR THE WEDDING FEAST

7. What does this parable teach us who are living so near to the coming of the Bridegroom? Matthew 25:13.

"Now, while probation lingers, while mercy's voice is still heard, is the time for us to put away our sins...."—*Maranatha*, p. 79.

"The Lord wants all to understand His providential dealings now, just now, in the time in which we live. There must be no long discussions, presenting new theories in regard to the prophecies which God has already made plain. Now the great work from which the mind should not be diverted is the consideration of our personal safety in the sight of God. Are our feet on the rock of ages? Are we hiding ourselves in our only refuge? The storm is coming, relentless in its fury. Are we prepared to meet it? Are we one with Christ as He is one with the Father? Are we heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ? Are we working in copartnership with Christ?"—(Manuscript 32a, 1896) *Evangelism*, p. 199.

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Please read the Missionary Report from Liberia on page 90

26

Sabbath, December 26, 2009

Glorification

"For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God." *Romans 8:18, 19.*

A PROMISE OF GLORY

1. What prophecies were given to Israel concerning the future? Isaiah 58:8; 60:1-3; Zechariah 2:4, 5.

"To those who go out to meet the Bridegroom is this message given. Christ is coming with power and great glory. He is coming with His own glory and with the glory of the Father. He is coming with all the holy an-

gels with Him. While all the world is plunged in darkness, there will be light in every dwelling of the saints. They will catch the first light of His second appearing.... In them the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ has been reflected. Now they rejoice in the undimmed rays of the brightness and glory of the King in His majesty. They are prepared for the communion of heaven; for they have heaven in their hearts.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 420, 421.

2. What other promises have been given to God’s church? Romans 5:2; 9:23; 2 Corinthians 3:18.

“Efficiency to believe comes from God to the heart, and the sinner accepts the evidence of God’s word. Through the gracious influence of the Holy Spirit he is changed and becomes one with Christ in spirit and purpose. His affection for God increases, he hungers after righteousness and longs to be more like his Master. By beholding Christ, he is changed from glory to glory, from character to character, and becomes more and more like Jesus. He is imbued with love for Christ and filled with a deep, unresting love for perishing souls, and Christ is formed within, the hope of glory. ‘As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name.’” —*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 221.

JUSTIFICATION AND GLORIFICATION

3. How are the future glory, justification, and sanctification linked? Romans 8:30.

“The work of redemption involves consequences of which it is difficult for man to have any conception. ‘Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him.’ 1 Corinthians 2:9. As the sinner, drawn by the power of Christ, approaches the uplifted cross, and prostrates himself before it, there is a new creation. A new heart is given him. He becomes a new creature in Christ Jesus. Holiness finds that it has nothing more to require. God Himself is ‘the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.’ Romans 3:26. And ‘whom He justified, them He also glorified.’ Romans 8:30. Great as is the shame and degradation through sin, even greater will be the honor and exaltation through redeeming love.” —*Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 162, 163.

GLORIFICATION AND JESUS’ COMING

4. What greatest of all events encompasses the glorification of God’s people? Titus 2:13; Colossians 3:4.

“To have fellowship with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ is to be ennobled and elevated, and made a partaker of joys unspeakable and full of glory. Food, clothing, station, and wealth may have their value; but to have a connection with God and to be a partaker of His divine nature is of priceless value. Our lives should be hid with Christ in God; and although it ‘doth not yet appear what we shall be,’ ‘when Christ, who is our life, shall appear,’ ‘we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is.’ The princely dignity of the Christian character will shine forth as the sun, and the beams of light from the face of Christ will be reflected upon those who have purified themselves even as He is pure. The privilege of becoming sons of God is cheaply purchased, even at the sacrifice of everything we possess, be it life itself.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 357.

TRANSFORMATION OF OUR BODIES

5. What change will take place in our mortal bodies? 1 Corinthians 15:42-44.

“The resurrection of Jesus was a sample of the final resurrection of all who sleep in Him. The risen body of the Saviour, His deportment, the accents of His speech, were all familiar to His followers. In like manner will those who sleep in Jesus rise again. We shall know our friends even as the disciples knew Jesus. Though they may have been deformed, diseased, or disfigured in this mortal life, yet in their resurrected and glorified body their individual identity will be perfectly preserved, and we shall recognize, in the face radiant with the light shining from the face of Jesus, the lineaments of those we love.” —(*Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 3, p. 219) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1092.

“The seed dies, to spring forth into new life. In this we are taught the lesson of the resurrection. Of the human body laid away to molder in the grave, God has said: ‘It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power.’ 1 Corinthians 15:42, 43.” —*Education*, p. 110.

6. In addition to sin and temptation, what will be finally and totally eliminated from our bodies? 1 Corinthians 15:26, 54.

“From the prison house of death they come, clothed with immortal glory.... But all arise with the freshness and vigor of eternal youth.... Christ came to restore that which had been lost. He will change our vile bodies and fashion them like unto His glorious body. The mortal, corruptible form, devoid of comeliness, once polluted with sin, becomes perfect, beautiful, and immortal. All blemishes and deformities are left in the grave.... The last lingering traces of the curse of sin will be removed, and Christ’s faithful ones will appear in ‘the beauty of the Lord our God,’ in mind and soul and body reflecting the perfect image of their Lord.” —*The Great Controversy*, pp. 644, 645.

7. Into whose likeness will our mortal bodies be transformed? Philippians 3:20, 21.

“Do we, by our lives and holy conversation, show to those around us that we are looking for the glorious appearing of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who shall change these vile bodies and fashion them like unto His glorious body? I fear that we do not believe and realize these things as we should. Those who believe the important truths that we profess, should act out their faith.” —*Early Writings*, p. 111.

8. As we wait for that day when the Saviour will transform our physical bodies, what transformation will we be pleading with Him to bring about now? 1 John 3:2, 3; Ephesians 4:13.

“... When the children of God shall have put on immortality, they will ‘see Him as He is.’ 1 John 3:2. They will stand before the throne, accepted in the Beloved. All their sins have been blotted out, all their transgressions borne away. Now they can look upon the undimmed glory of the throne of God.... My brother, my sister, I urge you to prepare for the coming of Christ in the clouds of heaven. Day by day cast the love of the world out of your hearts. Understand by experience what it means to have fellowship with Christ. Prepare for the judgment, that when Christ shall come, to be admired in all them that believe, you may be among those who will meet Him in peace. In that day the redeemed will shine forth in the glory of the Father and the Son.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 285.

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MISSIONARY REPORT

FROM
LIBERIA

To be read on Sabbath, December 26, 2009

***The Special Sabbath School Offering
will be gathered on Sabbath, January 2, 2010***

“Sell that ye have and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that fadeth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” Luke 12:33, 34.

In the name of our blessed Redeemer and Lord Jesus Christ, we greet all our fellow brothers and sisters in the entire world. By God’s providence, the message of reformation is progressing well in Africa and recently entered the Republic of Liberia.

Geographically, Liberia is located on the west coast of Africa. It borders Ivory Coast to the east, Sierra Leone to the west, Guinea to the north, and the Atlantic Ocean to the south. Several native dialects are spoken in this country, but English is the main national language.

Africa’s first republic, Liberia was established in 1822 as a result of the efforts of the American Colonization Society to settle freed American slaves in West Africa. Over the course of forty years, about 12,000 former slaves voluntarily relocated to this country. Originally called Monrovia, the colony became the Free and Independent Republic of Liberia in 1847. The English-speaking Americo-Liberians, descendants of former American slaves, make up only 5% of the population but have historically dominated the intellectual and ruling class. In 1980, the government was overturned in a military coup led by Samuel Doe, an indigenous Liberian, which ushered in a decade of authoritarian rule. In December 1989, Charles Taylor launched a rebellion against Doe’s regime, which led to two bloody civil wars displacing hundreds of thousands of people and devastating the country’s economy. An August 2003 peace agreement ended the war, and a civilian elected government came to power under the supervision of the United Nations. After two years of rule by a transitional government, democratic elections in late 2005 brought President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf to power. Thank the Lord that now, under the civilian government and with the help of the international community, the economy of this country is being revived.

About 40% of Liberians are Christian, 40% are traditional animist, and 20% are Muslim. Seventh-day Adventist missionaries from Ger-

many entered Liberia in 1926 and introduced the Adventist message; in 1945, after World War II, they were replaced by American SDA missionaries. The prophesied reformation of the International Missionary Society of the SDA Church Reform Movement was introduced for the first time in October 2005. Discouraged by corruption and inconsistencies in the SDA Church in the Liberian Mission, Pastor Vangarral Chengbe was impressed to search the Internet, looking for Adventist groups which practice and preach the reform message. He came across information about the IMS SDA Church Reform Movement and immediately made a Macedonian call. The General Conference commissioned me to visit them, and the seed of reformation was planted.

Within two years, that seed bore fruit. A group of leaders who heard the message shared it with other leaders as well as church members; and by December 2007, a good number of interested souls throughout the country, including pastors, embraced the concepts of true Reformation. About 500 laymen, eight pastors who gave up their previous positions, and several church elders took their stand with the remnant church of God. Since that time, they have experienced persecution and intimidation from their former associates. By God's grace, they are still strong in the faith and pressing forward with the truth.

This newly born mission field has great potential for spreading the gospel, as an increasing number of people from unreached parts of the country are asking to hear the reformation message. As a result, there is a great need of funds for missionary outreach, equipment for a public address system, and also a headquarters office. We, therefore, earnestly appeal to all the brothers, sisters, and friends of the Reform Movement worldwide to extend a helping hand to the Liberian Field through your generous Sabbath School offerings next week.

May the words of Jesus recorded in Matthew 6:19-21 inspire your heart: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

—Parmenas N. Shirima
General Conference Second Vice President

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CA, San Francisco Bay Area
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CA, Vista Church
For information call Oscar Valles: 951-907-0611

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Denver, CO 80247-1927
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"Metropolitan Memorial United Methodist Church"
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Washington, DC 20016
Phone: 571-212-5488

FL, Miami Church
"First Hungarian United Church"
2230 NW 14th Street
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FL, Orlando Church
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FL, West Palm Beach Church

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GA, Cedartown Church
625 West Avenue
Cedartown, GA 30125
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GA, Clayton Church
"Presbyterian Church"
150 N. Church St.
Clayton, GA 30525
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ID, Caldwell Church
House next to Lutheran Church
2915 S. Montana Ave.
Caldwell, ID 83605-5728
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For information call Rufo Samano: 847-221-2362

KY, Campbellsville Church
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2808 Middletown Road
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Barrio "Cibao," Sec., Cuchillas Carretera 456 (Km. 6.5 interior)
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