



Open Face

We Can Be Truly Free

David Clayton



In studying the truth about God we have received blessings which have transformed our lives. Our understanding of Scripture has been greatly enhanced and our appreciation of the love of our heavenly Father and His Son have filled us with wonder and happiness. Somehow we have all sensed that this message holds the key to the greatest experience possible to man in this sphere of human existence, that is, that we might be “filled with all the fullness of God.” (Eph. 3:19)

I must confess however, that there is one aspect of this truth which I did not fully grasp and as a result I failed to receive the fullness of the blessing which is wrapped up in the truth about God. I daresay that this has been true of most, if not all of us who have received this message. I had the idea that when I understood the love of God in His Son, I would love Him so much in return that I would automatically stop sinning against Him. There are some verses of Scripture which seem to give that impression, for example John 14:15, but these need to be understood and

balanced in the light of the teaching of the rest of the Scriptures.

The fact is, my love alone, by itself, no matter how great it is or how motivated I am, will never ever enable me to serve God perfectly and I found that out in my own experience. While my heart overflowed with the wonder of God’s love as I explored and even spoke on topics such as, “the heart of God,” I found to my chagrin that the euphoria and the mountain-top experiences which I enjoyed at such times did not enable me to have complete and continuous victory over sin. Have you found this to be true in your experience?

Oh praise God, there is a solution to the problem!!

TWO VITAL TRUTHS

In exploring the doctrine of the godhead we have learned two vital things.

- a. Jesus is the literal, true, only begotten Son of the one true God.
- b. The holy spirit is literally an extension of the very life of God the Father and Jesus, His Son.

The first of these two truths, has made us appreciate the amazing height and depth and length and breadth of the love of God in giving His Son for us. However, it is the second of these truths which holds the key to the life of perfect victory and it is this truth which many of us have failed to fully grasp

and appreciate. As Ellen White puts it,

“... The Holy Spirit is Himself (Christ) divested of the personality of humanity and independent thereof. He would represent Himself as present in all places by His Holy Spirit, as the Omnipresent.” {14MR 23.3}

The first truth teaches me that God loves me so much that He gave His Son **FOR** me. When I appreciate this, love for God is born in my heart. I want to serve Him, I am motivated to give my life completely to Him. The goodness of God leads me to repentance (Rom. 2:4).

The second truth teaches me that God gave His Son **TO** me, and that literally, the very life of His Son becomes my own life. When I understand, appreciate and believe this, total victory over sin becomes my reality!! (John 14:17; 2 Cor. 3:17; John 17:23)

I know that this is an extravagant claim, but brothers and sisters, we have known for some time that we held the pearl of great price in our hands, didn’t we? Can there ever be any message which may truly be called a message of deliverance if it does not set us wholly free from sin’s dominion? (Rom. 6:14). Did not the early apostles enjoy not just the manifestation of the gifts of the spirit but also an experience of constant victory over sin? Did not God make us know in 1888 that the message which He then sent to the church was the very message which

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Open Face is dedicated to the promotion of the truths committed to the Advent movement, as believed and taught by the early Adventist pioneers. In particular to the restoration of those truths which have been cast down to the ground and trampled underfoot by the papacy, and adopted by her daughters.

Our purpose is to motivate our readers to commit themselves wholly to the task of personal preparation for the coming of the Lord, and to the taking of the final warning message to every nation, kindred, tongue and people.

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would perfect His people?

As I began to look more closely at the subject, I began to understand more clearly what Jones and Waggoner had been teaching in 1888 and subsequent years. Seventh-day Adventists have dissected the history of that period, examining it in great detail in an attempt to discover the critical elements of that message which had called forth such extravagant praise and recommendation from Ellen White, one whom they regarded as a messenger of God. But though I have read many of the books dealing with the issue, I must say that for the most part, all they did was tantalize me with the promise of something wonderful, only to leave me hanging and empty.

But now I finally understand that the real impact of that message was to be found in the fact that both Jones and Waggoner emphasized the reality of an experience which would lead to ***immediate and total victory over every known sin!*** They spoke with power and conviction of God's ability to deliver His people completely from sin's dominion, in Jesus, and His willingness and purpose to do it ***NOW!!*** When I understood this, then I saw why Ellen White had been so enthusiastic about

the message and why she had anticipated such a glorious and immediate climax to God's work in the world. After all, what is the purpose of the whole gospel if not to deliver men from sin? What other reason is there for the long delay in the finishing of the great controversy, except the continuation of sin in the experience of God's people?

Thank God, in the truth that the holy spirit is the very life of God and His Son, we have laid hold on the treasure which will bring all these realities together into perfect harmony and which will set the world alight with the glory of God!! Extravagant words! Amazing claims! But can they be supported? Read on and judge for yourself.

The foundation of this experience had been laid on my last visit to Australia when a sister shared some ideas with me concerning the 1888 message. Though I disagreed with some of the ideas presented, some of the points made remained in my mind and later helped me, in conjunction with the truth about God, to see and understand more clearly than I ever had before, and more importantly, to believe and enter into, an experience which has, so far, been one of the greatest blessings of my life.

IS VICTORY POSSIBLE

Thirty years ago I was converted and found the Lord in an experience that changed me overnight. Back in those days all I lived for was to please the Lord. My eyes were continually turned towards Him and in the wonder of this new birth experience I found victory over sin. But as the years passed, the victorious life became more of a struggle, sin began to conquer me more frequently and the Christian life became more of an uphill climb. I prayed and studied, I fought and repented and truly, sometimes I would rediscover the beauty of that earlier experience, but with aching heart I would notice that this did not remain with me for more than a few days. Then the bitter struggle and the defeats would begin again.

It is true that there were periods when

the revelation of some tremendous truth would transport me into heavenly places. The understanding of the truth about God was one such event and the blessings I have received in understanding this truth have been known to all. Nevertheless, I have to testify that even though understanding this truth has filled me with love and admiration for God and His Son, I still found that I had not fully come to grips with the practical benefits of the message, because I found myself still reaching for a higher mark, a life of perfect victory over sin which remained out of my reach and still eluded my grasp.

My sins were not gross sins for the most part. I was very respectable and hated sin with all my heart, but inside it mocked me and continued to master my thoughts, my desires, my motives, my feelings. I convinced myself that these inward pollutions were not sin as long as I did not allow them to come out, but sometimes that was impossible. At unwary moments they would reveal themselves and prove that inwardly there was corruption. Even when I managed to restrain these inward impulses, my conscience condemned me and each morning or at the end of each day, my prayer was often focused on the confession of sins committed.

My great hope lay in the fact that I was absolutely sure of the love and goodness of the Lord. Understanding the truth about God had filled me with this knowledge and in this love, I always took hope. The thing is, I thought that since I understood that love, I would love the Lord in return so much, that a hatred of sin would be developed which would drive sin out of my life.

But something was missing from the formula.

I knew that there was a better way because, firstly, I remembered my early experience during the years after my conversion when I was daily walking in the joy and victory of the first-love experience. Secondly (and more importantly) I saw that the New Testament clearly teaches that the life of the

born-again Christian is a life of victory. Texts such as the following burnt into my heart like fire each time I read them and they kept me seeking.

For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. (Rom 6:14)

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

In addition to these texts and many others, the testimony of the apostles of Christ was that they did live victorious lives. They were not slaves to sin, but conquered it in the strength of Christ. Paul could say,

“For I know nothing against myself, yet I am not justified by this; but He who judges me is the Lord. (1 Cor 4:4, NKJV).

In his final moments he could say,

“I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. (2 Tim 4:7)

It is true that nobody can overcome sins unless he is aware that his actions are wrong, and the Bible makes it plain that God does not consider us to be guilty in performing wrong actions if we truly believe that in doing these actions we are doing God’s will. True Christians may, and do commit sin unknowingly, however, such sins are not imputed to them and these sins do not make them rebels or sinners in God’s eyes.

For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. (Rom 5:13)

However, it is certainly the will and purpose of the righteous God that all His children should immediately overcome every **known** sin and then walk continuously in that life of perfect victory as long as they live.

When a Christian today suggests that it is possible to live without committing sin, one of the first questions he is likely

to be asked is, “do you know of anybody who is perfect? Have you overcome sin?” Inevitably, all he can do is hang his head and confess that though the Bible says that it is possible, he has not found the way and he knows of nobody who has found the way. Oh what a smear on the name of our God and the gospel of His Son Jesus Christ!

One morning I went to pray, and I was again feeling guilty and frustrated. But this morning, in bemoaning my sinful condition, I suddenly saw what I had never seen before. My mind was enlightened and I understood the true condition of the human race as I had never understood it before. I realized that **I myself** would never ever be better, that all my efforts, all my prayers, all my moanings and groanings, all my attempts at obedience would never ever accomplish what I was expecting, that is, that I would become a better person! I saw with wonder that God did not expect me to be better and He had never expected **me** to get better. All my years of fighting and struggling would never get me one step nearer to the life of victory and perfection.

My expectation had been that if I fought and prayed and asked for help and exercised the will hard enough, then one day I would become perfect, but the truth was that each day sin returned with greater strength and the promise of perfection seemed a receding fantasy. Now with a great sense of relief I realized that my behaviour was not surprising to God and that in truth, He, God, had never ever expected anything different from me!! I felt like a weight had been lifted from my shoulders. This was the beginning of what has proven to be a genuine revival of true godliness in my life. Let me explain the truth as the Lord unfolded it to me that morning.

IN ADAM

In speaking of the creative work of God, the Bible tells us that “*on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made*” (Gen. 2:2). We have no record that God ever again deliberately created anything from that time

until today. It is true that in a secondary sense God created all things which exist on the earth at the present moment, every seed, every blade of grass, every human being and in fact, God does claim several times in the Bible that He has “formed” or made something or somebody which came into being long after that original creation was completed (Jer. 1:5). However, we should understand this in the same way that we understand the statement that God “created evil” (Isa. 45:7), that is, that God is sovereign and that nothing happens without His permission and even His supervision. Nothing can happen outside of His will. God created all things in six days and all living things which have come into existence since then have been the product or the extension of that original creation. The living things which God created back there at the beginning have passed on their lives from one generation to the next.

When we understand this, then we can see that when God created Adam, He created all mankind in him. God does not, today, create each one of us individually, but He created us all in that one man. The life of every human being on the earth is simply an extension of the life of that original man, Adam (Acts 17:26). We can easily see the truth of this when we consider that some children are born deformed, sometimes mentally as well as physically. If God creates each person individually, then obviously we would have to blame God for creating deformed people. But this is not so. God created us all, when He created Adam. That one life of Adam is now extended into six billion people on the earth today. This is a very important truth and we need to understand it thoroughly, for in the light of this knowledge we may come to know ourselves as we really are. Romans 5:12 tells us:

Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: (Rom 5:12)

In verse 19 it says,

. . . . by one man's disobedience many were made sinners . . . (Rom 5:19)

Do these verses tell the truth? What are their implications? How did we become sinners by one man's disobedience. Logical thinking would say, "he sinned, I didn't sin. How could his action make me a sinner?"

If we are speaking of the **guilt** of sin, then no man's sin can make another guilty. In order to become guilty a person needs to have made a conscious and individual choice to transgress. However, when the Bible says that Adam's sin made us sinners, it is not speaking of guilt, it is speaking of nature. All Adam's descendants became sinners by nature, they became a kind of being called "sinners," and irrespective of whether or not we are guilty, the fact is that all sinners are unfit to live.

In the General Conference session held in 1891, E.J. Waggoner presented a series of studies on the book of Romans. In commenting on this very question he had this to say:

"Why did death pass upon all men? Because that all had sinned! By one man sin came into the world. There are many who will stop at this point and philosophize and question as to how this could be and try to figure out for themselves the justice of it. They will query why it is that we are here in this sinful condition without having had any choice or say in the matter ourselves. Now we know that there was one man in the beginning, and he fell. We are his children, and it is impossible for us to be born in any higher condition than he was.

Some will shut themselves out of eternal life because they cannot figure that thing out to a nicety and see the justice of it. The finite mind of man cannot

do this, so it is better for him to leave it alone and devote himself to seeking for the proffered salvation. That is the important point for all to consider. We know that we are in a sinful condition, and that this sinful condition is a lost condition. Seeing then that we are in a lost condition, is it not best for us to devote our energies to seeking to attain to that state whereby we may be in a saved condition." (E.J. Waggoner - Studies on Romans, Study No. 9: - 1891 GC lectures)

When Adam sinned, he polluted the stream of human life at its very source, he corrupted humanity in its very origins and infected his descendants with a disease far more incurable than aids. The life we possess today is that same life of Adam, passed on through different human bodies, but the **same life** and all of us today are partakers of that same depraved life! While we are each individuals with a mind of our own, yet the stream of life which was passed on to us from parent to child for six thousand years was a polluted life and none of us can, or ever have escaped the power of that pollution.

The apostle Paul (and all of us) encountered the power of that disease and found out how helpless he was to resist and overcome it. His testimony was,

For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. (Rom 7:14)

I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. (Rom 7:21)

But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. (Rom 7:23)

Here he acknowledges that he was a slave, helpless, chained, ruled by another master named "**sin**," having no power to control his own actions. This

is our heritage, our destiny as the seed of Adam.

Let us take careful note of the fact that we have suffered the consequences of Adam's sin, not because we copy Adam, not because Adam is here to influence us personally, and not even because we have made a choice to be like Adam. It is strictly and purely by inheritance that we have become like Adam. All we had to do in order to have his actions impact upon us was that we had to be born. Though his sin was committed six thousand years ago, yet the full effect of that sin controls and dictates the behaviour of the billions of people on earth today.

The word of God declares that there is only one sentence for such as we are. "*...the wages of sin is death . . .*" (Rom. 6:23) Brothers and sisters, can we escape this sentence? Is there any way that we can avoid it? All my life I was taught that there is a way, but now, thank God, I realize that I was wrong, I was taught wrongly. There is no escape. There is no other destiny for the life of Adam, there is no cure for a disease that even God cannot cure. The destiny of all, in Adam is that we **must** die! You see, God never intended to salvage the old human life. That life is unsavable. God refers to it using terms such as, "*the old man*," "*the carnal mind*," "*the flesh*" etc. and He says that it is, "*dead in trespasses and sin*." The essence of that life is self-seeking, self-preservation, self-exaltation and the only destiny of such an existence is eternal death.

THE NEW CREATION

What God did was that He sent a second Adam, one in whom was the perfect life of a new human race (1 Cor. 15:45). This second Adam of course, is Jesus Christ, and just as the entire human race was created in that one man, the first Adam, so the life of a new human existence was in that second Adam, Jesus Christ.

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath

before ordained that we should walk in them. (Eph 2:10)

Consider the life which has been given to those who receive Christ: In this life of Jesus there is absolutely no sin. This life is a life which is perfect in every way. It is a life of untainted righteousness, one which is full of the good works of God, and wholly acceptable to God.

What we need to thoroughly understand is that these two lives are in stark contrast to each other. In one there is only depravity- there is absolutely nothing good and this cannot be changed, no matter how hard we may try or how cleverly we may disguise the pollution. In the other life there is only righteousness – there is pure unadulterated goodness and this cannot be diluted or tainted. When we understand this properly we will see very clearly that what we need is not education, not greater will power, not help, not reformation, not church fellowship – none of these things can make the life of the first Adam into a good life. All they can do is disguise the inward pollution and deceive us! The only hope, the only hope is if somehow the life of the first Adam can be destroyed and the life of the second Adam can become mine. That is absolutely the **only** hope. Outside of this we are all dead creatures, doomed for eternity. This, brothers and sisters, is exactly what God has done for us in the glorious gospel of His Son Jesus Christ.

Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. (19) For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. (Rom 5:18-19)

Jesus has told us plainly that no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again (John 3:3). The problem is that very few of us have understood the full implications of what it means

to be born again. The new birth is a total and complete transfer from the dead, depraved life of Adam to the living, pure, mighty existence, the very life of the Lord Jesus Christ. **This is a real experience, not just figurative, or something vicariously achieved.** We have always believed that God gives us the righteousness of Christ, but the truth is, we have believed that this was only imputed to us at conversion, and that as we subsequently struggled with sin, it would be gradually **imparted** to us. But this is a great deception and it has kept us in the wilderness of frustration and defeat. God does not give us “merely” the righteousness of Christ. It is Christ’s own life, His very existence which becomes mine in the new birth!! This is how Ellen White described this literal union between Christ and His people:

“Christ became one flesh with us, in order that we might become one spirit with Him. It is by virtue of this union that we are to come forth from the grave,--not merely as a manifestation of the power of Christ, but because, through faith, His life has become ours. Those who see Christ in His true character, and receive Him into the heart, have everlasting life. It is through the Spirit that Christ dwells in us; and the Spirit of God, received into the heart by faith, is the beginning of the life eternal.” {DA 388.1}

We have had this concept that as we trust in God and believe, He would help us, He would regard us as righteous (even though we are not). He would give us of His virtues as we struggled and prayed and little by little we would become like Him. Oh how we tried and oh how we failed! But as A.T. Jones said, God is a Creator, not an evolutionist! He does not require years to perform His perfect work. He speaks and it is done, He commands and it stands fast. Here is the testimony of one who truly experienced the new birth:

Therefore if any man be in

Christ, he is a new creature (new creation): old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. (2 Cor 5:17)

You see, this is the same principle as with the life which we received from the first Adam. We did not try to receive that life, neither did we try to copy the life of Adam. It was ours strictly by **inheritance**. In the same way, the life which we receive in Christ is not ours by trying to imitate Him. There is only one way in which we can receive it and that is by inheritance. It must be passed on to us by the new birth. We are born into this new existence. When this happens then we receive the qualities of this new Adam, just as we received the qualities of the old Adam when we were born the first time.

For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. (1 Cor 12:13)

When we understand the truth of this reality, then we will recognize that our **only** need is to understand and to find the way how to move from the life and existence of the first Adam to the life and existence of the last Adam. We will recognize that all our struggles and efforts are vain and will produce nothing but frustration and despair, or else induce a mask of hypocrisy. We will know that all sinners share the same depraved life of Adam and that therefore no sinner is better than the other.

The child-molester, the rapist, the serial killer, the pornography addict, the con-artist, the homosexual etc. are condemned and abhorred by society in general and religious people in particular. But if those who condemn these sinners, harbour malice and practice evil-speaking and have fits of rage and lustful thoughts and are covetous, what is the difference between both classes of people?

For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. (James 2:10)

There is no sin in the life of Jesus Christ and any, and every sin is simply a revelation of the fact that we are outside of Christ and that we share the depraved, helpless, lost life of Adam and are only fit to be destroyed. Because of our breeding and the circumstances of our birth some of us are able to resist the more abhorrent sins, but it does not change the fact that we all share the same polluted life which cannot be repaired and has been sentenced to death!

So God gave us, in His Son, the new creation. In this life of the second Adam there is everything which we could ever possibly need. There is wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption (1 Cor. 1:30), in fact, in Him is all the fullness of the godhead (the divine nature) and the word of God tells us that we are **complete** in Him. (Col. 2:9,10). What is the meaning of this word, "complete?" It means that in Jesus, we have absolutely everything that we have ever needed, need presently or will ever need. In Ephesians 1:3 it tells us that God has blessed us with **all** spiritual blessings in heavenly places, in Christ Jesus.

Brothers and sisters, what an unspeakably great privilege that I should receive the very life of the Son of God! Do we realize what this means? Do we understand that God has accepted us in the Beloved (Eph. 1:6)? Can we grasp the reality that Christ is indeed our very life (Col. 3:4)? Oh how wonderful is the love of our Father towards the sons of men! What a wonderful gift He has given us in the glorious gospel of His Son Jesus Christ! Now we are, in Christ, the sons and daughters of God Himself. We may come to God knowing that in Jesus, our lives of sin and frustration and guilt, our dysfunctional existences are dead, crucified with Christ. Now we may approach the Father of glory in full confidence and freedom knowing that whatsoever we ask, it is in His Son's name – with the full recognition that in Him we are the beloved children of God, having been given **every** privilege which belongs to Jesus Christ!!

We may believe the truth that we have become a part of the body of Christ, partakers of the very life of Jesus, an existence in which sin has been conquered and crucified, a life of pure righteousness which is lived wholly for God. (Rom. 6:22)

ONE MAN

Let me make this a little clearer. There is only one person who is righteous and therefore there is only one who is fit to be saved. This is the fact which God's wisdom took into account from the very beginning, and it was His plan, His hidden purpose that all salvation would be in that one Man (Eph. 1:10). That man is Jesus Christ and all who are saved will be saved only if they become a part of Jesus, only if His very life and existence become their life and existence because He is the only one who is savable. There is no other way,

"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:12)

The problem has been that many of us have tried to reform the old Adamic life. We have been baptized, we have decided to make a new beginning, we have even prayed earnestly and asked the Lord for help and for the power of the holy spirit. We have even acknowledged that we can do nothing and have tried to depend on the Lord to do it for us. But in all this, what we were trying to do was to reform the adamic life. We hoped that by the grace of God and our own diligent efforts we would be able to overcome our inborn vices and someday become perfect, but in Adam, it was an impossibility. The only way is that we must die and be resurrected or born again into the life of Christ. This is the only way to escape our adamic reality.

I MUST DIE

In Romans chapter 7, verses 1-3, the apostle Paul speaks of a woman who is bound to her husband by the law. There is another man whom she wants to marry, but she cannot, because the

law forbids it, and as long as her first husband is alive, marriage to the second husband is impossible. Verse 4 makes it clear that the second man (the one the woman wishes to marry) is Christ.

Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God. (Rom 7:4)

Who then is the first husband? Who is the person to whom this woman is married and who must die before she can marry Christ? We find the answer in Chapter 6 verse 6.

Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. (Rom 6:6)

The first husband represents the "body of sin," the "flesh," or the "old man," or the adamic nature. According to Paul we cannot be married to the second man (Christ) unless the first man (Adam or the flesh) first dies. The problem has been that many of us have been attempting to commit spiritual bigamy. We have been trying to be married to both the flesh and the spirit at the same time! We have been attempting to be united with Christ while the flesh was still alive. The word of God says this is impossible.

The only way that we can receive the life of Christ is if in faith, we first surrender to Him in wholehearted and true repentance so that in Him we may die to the old life. Only then can we experience the power of His resurrection and enter His own life in which sin and death have been abolished. E.J. Waggoner had this to say:

That which is destroyed is the body of sin, and it is destroyed only by this personal presence of the life of Christ. It is destroyed in order that we may be freed from its power, and may no longer need to serve it. It is

destroyed for everybody, for Christ in His own flesh has abolished "the enmity," the carnal mind; not His own, for He had none, but ours. (Glad Tidings - page 81-83)

Of course, it is not the physical body which dies. Hopefully, nobody would be foolish enough to misunderstand this truth. The physical, sinful body will be with us until Jesus comes again to change it. However, this physical body is not the real root of our sin problem and it is not what Jesus has destroyed, or put to death. The real problem is what is called "the carnal mind." This is the self-centered life, the self-seeking, self-preserving attitude. This is something which resides in the mind of man, but is a very real part of our existence. It is this which Jesus put to death when He died to His own will and made the supreme sacrifice of His life, in choosing the Father's will. Now, through the mighty power of the holy spirit, His own life and power, Jesus enters our mind in the new birth and crucifies the self-centered life so that from then on, we no longer live for self, but only for God.

Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. (7) For he that is dead is freed from sin. (Rom 6:6-7)

For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. (11) Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Rom 6:10-11)

Oh brothers and sisters, can we see how clear the Scriptures are on this matter? The Bible knows nothing of a mongrel faith, we are either dead or alive, in the flesh or in the spirit, in Adam or in Christ, sinners or saints. To be one, is to be a slave of sin and to be free from righteousness, to be the other is to be the slave of righteousness and free from sin (Romans 6:20,22).

The Christian world today has come to accept sin as the natural way of life for the believer. They have found a refuge for their constant failure by belittling the standard of righteousness, God's law, so they could convince themselves that they were not so bad after all, or else they have consoled themselves with the thought that "if any man sin we have an advocate with the father (1 John 2:1)." So in the majority of cases the only difference between professing Christians and open unbelievers, is the kinds of sin and the degrees of sin which they commit. They have convinced themselves that God can give immediate victory to the drunkard, Sabbath-breaker and the adulterer, but that He must move more slowly in the case of the "respectable" sins such as covetousness, anger, wrath, malice, evil-speaking, criticism, lack of love, etc.

However, when people seem to overcome one sin, or some sins, but not **all** sins, it is simply an indication that they have not truly overcome and that the power by which they have "overcome" is not God's power, but rather, will-power. They are able by diligent effort to gain the mastery of themselves in particular actions, but the heart remains under the control of self and in rebellion against God and this is manifested in the failure to overcome all sin. Such a person is still a slave and only deceives himself that he is overcoming sin. The result of such "victory" is that we end up commending ourselves for the victories which we have attained and condemning those whose sins are more gross or more obvious than ours.

HOW TO OBTAIN THIS LIFE

The great question is, how can we obtain this life which is in Jesus only? How can we escape from the existence of the first Adam? How can we die to the flesh and be resurrected to a life of righteousness? Are we involved in the process? Is it something which we do? If the life of righteousness is found only in Jesus and is fully available in Jesus, then surely the greatest question of all for the sinner must be,

"how may I obtain that life? How can I enter into the existence of Jesus?"

Men have sought earnestly and diligently to attain to such a life. Years of hard work, self-denial, self-affliction have been invested in the search for righteousness and many schemes have been invented to deliver men from sin. Only one plan has ever worked or can ever work and it is the plan devised by God and His Son. A plan so wonderfully perfect and beautiful in its simplicity that vast numbers of religious people have refused to accept it. Here is how the apostle Paul explained the process.

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. (Eph 2:8-10)

Paul says it is by faith (only). Works are not involved. It is the **gift** of God, and here is how it happens:

We are His workmanship. What does that mean? It means that He made us, we were crafted by His hands, but does this refer to when we were born or conceived in our mother's womb? Absolutely not. He is referring to our lives as Christians, the lives of those who are saved by grace through faith. We are God's workmanship and we were **created in Christ Jesus**. Think about this. Where does this life of the new creation originate? Why do we live as we live? It is because we were created **in Christ Jesus**. The life which we now live originated in Him. All we do is receive it, by grace through faith. It is the gift of God. **The life of righteousness, the life of victory over sin is not something which we produce or work to achieve, it is an inheritance!** It is something which we receive as a gift when we receive the life of Christ! Oh praise His name!!

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John Wesley's Conversion

One of the reformers who believed in the doctrine of Christian Perfection was John Wesley. The following account of his life leading up to the time of his conversion has been slightly edited with some modernization of the language to make it more readable.

Ellen White had this to say of John Wesley: "*Workers were raised up who ably defended the faith once delivered to the saints. ... The Waldenses, John Wycliffe, Huss and Jerome, Martin Luther and Zwingli, Cranmer, Latimer, and Knox, the Huguenots, John and Charles Wesley, and a host of others brought to the foundation material that will endure throughout eternity. ...*"{AA 598}

1. During the first ten years of my life I had been strictly educated and carefully taught, that I could only be saved "by total obedience, that is, by keeping all the commandments of God;" I was diligently taught what these commandments meant, and I gladly received those instructions, so far as outward obedience was concerned, and I often thought of them. But all that was said to me of inward obedience, or holiness, I neither understood nor remembered. So I was just as ignorant of the true meaning of the Law, as I was of the Gospel of Christ.

2. The next six or seven years were spent at school where, away from the restrictions of my parents, I was much more negligent than before, even of outward duties, and almost continually guilty of outward sins, which I knew to be sins, though they might not have been seen as such in the eyes of the world. However, I still read the Scriptures, and said my prayers, morning and evening. And what I now hoped to be saved by, was,

- a.. Not being so bad as other people.
- b. Still having a good attitude towards religion.
- c. Reading the Bible, going to church,

and saying my prayers.

3. Next, I went to University for five years. I still said my prayers both in public and in private, and read, along with the Scriptures, several other books of religion, especially comments on the New Testament. Yet all this while I had not even the faintest idea of what inward holiness meant. I went on habitually, and, for the most part, very contentedly, in some or other known sin: It is true that sometimes I stopped for a while and had short struggles, especially before and after the holy communion, which it was necessary for me to take three times a year. I do not know what I hoped to be saved by now, because I was continually sinning against that little light I had. The only hope I had was that maybe because now and then I repented, this would be enough.

4. When I was about twenty-two, my father encouraged me to become a minister. At the same time, the providence of God led me to the book by Kempis entitled, "Christian Pattern." I began to see, that true religion was seated in the heart, and that God's law extended to all our thoughts as well as words and actions. I was, however, very angry at Kempis, because he was too strict; Yet I frequently had much comfort in reading from his book. At the same time I met with a religious friend, which I had never had before and I began to change my conversation, and I set out to live a new life. I set apart an hour or two each day for prayer and study. I took communion every week. I watched against all sin, whether in word or deed. I began to aim at, and pray for, inward holiness. So that now, "doing so much, and living so good a life," I had no doubt in my mind that I was a good Christian.

5. Soon after I moved to another College, and there I carried out a resolution which I was before convinced was of the utmost importance, that is, giving up at once all my worldly friends. I

began to see more and more the value of time. I applied myself more closely to study. I watched more carefully against actual sins; I advised others to be religious, according to that idea of religion by which I lived my own life. But now I encountered some books by William Law, entitled, "Christian Perfection" and "Serious Call." Although I was much offended at many parts of both, yet they convinced me more than ever of the exceeding height and breadth and depth of the law of God. The light flowed in so mightily upon my soul, that every thing appeared in a new view. I cried to God for help, and resolved as I had never done before that I would not put off the time of obeying Him, and I was persuaded that by my continued endeavor to keep His whole law, inward and outward, to the utmost of my power, I should be accepted of Him, and that I was even then in a state of salvation.

6. In 1730 I began visiting the prisons; assisting the poor and sick in town; and doing what other good I could to the bodies and souls of all men, either by my presence, or by my little money. With this goal in mind I put away all excesses, and many of the things that are called the necessities of life. I soon became a cause for scornful comment because of what I was doing, and I rejoiced that my name was cast out as evil. The next spring I began fasting on Wednesday and Friday as they commonly used to do in the ancient Church; I would taste no food till three in the afternoon. And now I did not know how to go any farther. I diligently strove against all sin. I left out no sort of self-denial which I thought was lawful: In public and in private, I used all the means of grace available at every opportunity. I omitted no occasion of doing good: For that reason I suffered evil. Yet I knew all this to be nothing, unless it was directed toward inward holiness. Accordingly, the image of God, was what I aimed at in all, by doing his will, not my own. But after

continuing some years in this course, I thought myself to be near death, and I could not find that all this gave me any comfort, or any assurance of acceptance with God. When I discovered this, I was very surprised, not imagining I had been all this time building on the sand, nor considering that “other foundation can no man lay, than that which is laid” by God, “even Christ Jesus.”

7. Soon after, a thoughtful man convinced me still more than I was convinced before, that outward works are nothing. We spoke together several times and he instructed me, how to pursue inward holiness, or a union of the soul with God. At the time, I received his instructions as the words of God, but now thinking back I have to note a couple of negative things,

1. He spoke so strongly against trusting in outward works, that he discouraged me from doing them at all.

2. He recommended *mental prayer*, and similar exercises, as the most effective means of purifying the soul, and uniting it with God.

8. Now these were, in truth, as much my own works as visiting the sick or clothing the naked; and the union with God which I was pursuing in this way, was just as really my own righteousness, as everything else I had done before. In this refined way of trusting to my own works and my own righteousness, I dragged on heavily, finding no comfort or help in them, till the time of my leaving England. On shipboard, however, I was again active in outward works; where it pleased God in his mercy to give me twenty-six of the Moravian brethren for companions, who endeavored to show me “a more excellent way.” But I understood it not at first. I was too learned and too wise, so that it seemed foolishness unto me. And I continued preaching, and following after, and trusting in, that righteousness whereby no flesh can be justified.

9. All the time I was at Savannah I was thus beating the air. Being igno-

rant of the righteousness of Christ, which, through a living faith in Him, bringeth salvation “to every one that believeth.” I sought to establish my own righteousness; and so labored in the fire all my days. I was now properly “under the law;” I knew that “the law” of God was “spiritual; I consented to it that it was good.” Yea, “I delighted in it, after the inner man.” Yet was I “carnal, sold under sin.” Everyday I was compelled to cry out, “What I do, I allow not: For what I would, I do not; but what I hate, that I do. To will is “indeed” present with me: But how to perform that which is good, I find not.”

10. In this vile, abject state of bondage to sin, I was indeed fighting continually, but not conquering. Before this, I had willingly served sin; now it was unwillingly; but still I served it. I fell, and rose, and fell again. Sometimes I was overcome, and in heaviness: Sometimes I overcame, and was in joy. Just as in my earlier condition I had some foretaste of the terrors of the law, so now I had some foretaste, of the comforts of the Gospel. During this whole struggle between nature and grace, which had now continued above ten years, I had many remarkable times when I returned to prayer; especially when I was in trouble: I had many real moments of comfort which are indeed just a preview of the life of faith. But I was still “under the law,” not “under grace.” (The state most who are called Christians are content to live and die in:) For I was only striving with sin, I was not free from it. Neither had I the witness of the Spirit with my spirit, and indeed could not; for I “sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law.”

11. In my return to England, January, 1738, being in danger of death, and very uneasy because of it, I was strongly convinced that the cause of that uneasiness was unbelief; and that gaining a true, living faith was the “one thing needful” for me. But still I did not focus this faith on its right object: I was seeking to have only faith in God, not faith in or through Christ. Again, I did not know that I had none of this faith;

but I thought that I only did not have enough of it. But as soon as I came to London, Peter Bohler was there, prepared for me by God, and he spoke to me clearly of the one true faith in Christ. He explained that it had two fruits always attending it, “Dominion over sin, and constant Peace from a sense of forgiveness.” I was quite amazed, and looked upon it as a new Gospel. I knew that if this was so, it was clear I had not faith. But I was not willing to be convinced of this. Therefore, I contradicted him with all my might, and tried hard to prove that faith might be present without those two fruits, and especially that it could be there without a sense of forgiveness. There are many Scriptures which said the opposite to what I believed, but long ago I had been taught to explain them away. Besides, I could see very clearly that, no one could have such a sense of forgiveness, and not *feel* it. But I felt it not so if there was no faith without this sense of forgiveness, it was clear to me that, all my pretence that I had faith had to be dropped at once.

12. When I met Peter Bohler again, he agreed to settle the dispute using the authority that I desired to use, which was, the teaching of Scripture and personal experience. I first consulted the Scripture. But when I set aside the ideas of men, and simply considered the words of God, comparing them together, endeavoring to understand the vague passages by using the plainer passages; I found they all testified against me, and I was forced to take refuge in my last defense. I began to argue that if we interpreted the Scriptures literally, then we would have a problem, because we would find that our experience was never in harmony with the Scriptures. Furthermore, I could not accept that it was true, until I found some living witnesses of it.” He replied that he could show me such witnesses at any time if I desired it and accordingly, the next day he came again with three others, all of whom testified, on the basis of their own personal

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WE CAN BE TRULY FREE

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Many sincere Christians have stumbled at these verses. The thought that *their only input into their salvation is faith*, or believing has been a hard pill for some to swallow. While they will agree that we are declared righteous by God because of our faith only (who can deny that), they feel that we must actually develop righteous characters by works!! They believe in justification by faith only, but sanctification by faith and works. Yet the apostle Paul is emphatic on this point; it is not just at the beginning of the Christian journey that we depend on faith only, but at every step of the way. We are to continue to walk in the same way as we received the Lord (Col. 2:6). The battle which we must fight is called the “good fight of faith” (1 Tim. 6:12). Paul, writing to the Galatians expresses astonishment at their obsession with works, and asks the question,

This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh? He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? (Gal 3:2-5)

Some would answer, “well, you see, Paul was speaking of the ceremonial laws such as circumcision which have no merit in the life of the Christian.” Well then, do the other works (non-ceremonial) such as charitable deeds, Sabbath-keeping, healthful living etc. etc. have anything to do with whether or not we receive the spirit, work miracles or receive any of the blessings promised to God’s people in Christ? Is it by faith only, or is it by faith, plus good works? Paul’s words above would indicate that the *only* qualification which enabled the receiving of the spirit and the working of miracles was the “hearing of faith!!”

Let us spend a little time on this issue because it is critical. A failure to properly understand this point will leave us wallowing in the mire of a wretched, miserable religion.

THE WAY TO RIGHTEOUSNESS

How does God make a man righteous? Is it by an act of creation which is wholly the work of God, or is it a long drawn-out process which involves many failures and bitter struggles before sin can be overcome? Is it a gift from God or is it the work of God and man? Is it something for which God alone must be glorified or is there some element of the work which leaves room for man to get some credit? Let us deal fairly and faithfully with the words of Scripture. Let us abandon the evidence of our experience, the counsel of others and simply look at the word of God. Firstly, how is sin overcome?

And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. (Gal 5:24)

a. It is by crucifixion - by death

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

b. It is through the process of being born again.

If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed. (John 8:36)

c. It is the work of the Son

We cannot kill ourselves so that we can be born again. Both this process of crucifixion and the new birth are entirely the work of Christ, the Son who makes us “free indeed.” Dare we deny or modify these plain statements of Scripture to justify our own experiences? This work of God in Christ, produces a “new creation” (2 Cor. 5:17), a new man created in the image of Christ, filled with the life of Christ,

a part of Christ’s own existence, whose only desire is to do the righteous will of God. More than that, just as his former nature made him a slave of sin with a constant inclination to evil, so now his new nature (the nature of Christ) makes him a slave of righteousness with a constant inclination to do what is good. This is the work of God and it is entirely the work of God. In this character, this garment of righteousness there is “not one thread of human devising.” (COL - 311)

All that man can do is to receive the gift so freely given by God in Christ. There is absolutely nothing more that he can do. The apostle Paul is so emphatic on this point that he says,

But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. (Rom 4:5)

ABANDON SELF

When we recognize the utter depravity of our adamic nature, when we see our utter helplessness and worthlessness, then we will turn away from all self-effort, all self-dependence. Then we will *truly repent*, not just of our sins, but of the root of our sin problem – the self-life. We will then understand and believe that our only hope of ever living right lies in God’s gift alone. All self-effort will be abandoned and we will cast ourselves upon Christ. It is then, and only then that true righteousness will appear in our lives as we allow Him full control, as we, by faith, accept and live by the reality that His life has become our life and that we are a part of His own righteous existence, thus we will live His perfect life. This is the truth, the simple truth of the word of God. It is the pure truth which God gave to A.T. Jones and E.J. Waggoner in 1888 as the only hope for a dying church and a dying world.

PERFECTION

My heroes have always been men like Elijah, Enoch, Daniel, Paul and Moses.

Many times I prayed and asked God to help me to be like them. I have spent many days and nights in prayer and fasting, seeking an experience which would make me taste a little of the relationship which they had with God and find the life of victory which they obviously lived.

Suddenly I realize how many years and how much effort was wasted! I recognize now that I spent all that time and energy in seeking for an experience which is immediately and fully available to every single child of God who is in Jesus Christ, from the least to the greatest! What did Jesus say?

Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. (Mat 11:11)

Can you see the wonder of it brethren? In one stroke, simply by receiving the perfect life and existence of Jesus Christ, we enter into a relationship with God where we are given the gift of perfect righteousness and a perfect life!! All the barriers between us and God are totally removed. There is not a single reason why God should not listen to and respond to our prayers. In Jesus we have literally and truly partaken of the very life of God Himself! (1 Cor. 6:17,19). We have been made

partakers of the divine nature and it is no wonder that the Bible says that we are "joint-heirs with Jesus." (Rom. 8:17)

What a glorious truth. Oh may God help us to believe it, to know that it is nothing but the pure truth. When we believe it, not only will our lives be a revelation of the glory of God (not someday in the distant future, but this very day) but every moment our lips and our hearts will sing the praises of God and His Son for the great, perfect and complete salvation which they have wrought for us.

You see then that there is nothing to stand in the way of God immediately healing the sick, raising the dead or manifesting the gifts of the spirit among us, as soon as we accept His gift of the righteous life of Christ. The latter rain for which we have waited so many decades is immediately at hand for those who are in Christ. it is no wonder that when this exact message came to the SDA Church in 1888, God's messenger to that church declared,

"The time of test is just upon us, for the loud cry of the third angel has already begun in the revelation of the righteousness of Christ, the sin-pardoning Redeemer. This is the beginning of the light of the angel whose

glory shall fill the whole earth. (RH, November 22, 1892 par. 7)

The question is, shall we embrace this truth with all our hearts? Will we accept in full faith, the wonderful reality that God has given us, in Jesus, the complete answer to the problem of sin? Will we acknowledge and live by the reality that it is His work and involves nothing of man's own work and that our only need is to believe and to keep on believing? Let me end this article with some pertinent words from the apostle Paul.

What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith. But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone; (Rom 9:30-32)

We hope to say a lot more on this subject in the future. We are offering an audio tape on the topic entitled, "Becoming What You Are." Write or call now for your copy.

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JOHN WESLEY'S CONVERSION

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experience, that a true living faith in Christ comes with a sense of pardon for all past sins, and freedom from all present, sins. They unanimously agreed that this faith was the gift, the free gift of God; and that he would surely bestow it upon every soul who earnestly and perseveringly sought for it. I was now thoroughly convinced; and, by the grace of God, I resolved to seek it unto the end. This I would do by,

1. absolutely renouncing all dependence, whether wholly or partially,

upon *my own* works or righteousness; on which I had really grounded my hope of salvation from my youth up although I had not known it.

2. In addition to all the other means of grace, I would be continually praying for this very thing, that is, justifying, saving faith, a full reliance on the blood of Christ shed for *me*; a trust in Him, as *my* Christ, as *my* only justification, sanctification, and redemption.

13. I continued thus to seek it, (though

I found myself with a strange indifference, dullness, and coldness, and unusually frequent relapses into sin,) until Wednesday, May 24. I think it was about five this morning, that I opened my New Testament on those words, "There are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, even that ye should be partakers of the divine nature." (2 Peter 1:4.) Just as I went out, I opened it again on those words, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God." In the afternoon I was asked to go to St. Paul's. The anthem was, "Out

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JOHN WESLEY'S CONVERSION

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of the deep have I called unto thee, O Lord: Lord, hear my voice. O let thine ears consider well the voice of my complaint. If thou, Lord, wilt be extreme to mark what is done amiss, O Lord, who may abide it? For there is mercy with thee; therefore shalt thou be feared. O Israel, trust in the Lord: For with the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption. And He shall redeem Israel from all his sins."

14. In the evening I went very unwillingly to a religious meeting in Aldersgate-Street, where somebody was reading Martin Luther's article, entitled, "preface to the Epistle to the Romans." About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation: And an assurance was given me, that he had

taken away *my* sins, even *mine*, and saved *me* from the law of sin and death.

15. I began to pray with all my might for those who had despitefully used me and persecuted me. I then testified openly to all there, what I now felt in my heart. But it was not long before the enemy suggested, "This cannot be faith; for where is thy joy?" Then was I taught, that peace and victory over sin are two things which always come when we have faith in the Captain of our salvation: But as for the great joy that usually comes at the beginning of it, especially in those who have mourned deeply, God sometimes gives, and sometimes withholds it, according to the counsels of his own will.

16. After my return home, I was much buffeted with temptations; but cried out, and they fled away. They returned again and again. Every time I lifted up my eyes, and He "sent me help from his

holy place." I found out that the difference between this and my former state was that, I was striving, yea, fighting with all my might under the law, as well as under grace. But under the law I was sometimes, if not often, conquered; now, I was always victorious.

17. *Thur. 25.* — The moment I awakened, "Jesus, Master," was in my heart and in my mouth; and I found all my strength lay in keeping my eye fixed upon him, and my soul waiting on him continually. ... Yet the enemy injected a fear into me, "If thou dost believe, why is there not a more obvious change?" I answered, (yet not I,) "That I know not. But this I know, I have 'now peace with God.' And I sin not today, and Jesus my Master has forbidden me to take thought for the morrow."



Open Face

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