



2 Cor. 3:18

Open Face

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Life in Christ



Righteousness by faith in Christ is one of the simplest truths, and certainly one of the most beautiful in the Bible. Why then does it seem to cause friction and confusion?

I believe there are several answers to this question. One of them is, of course, that we all have so many wrong ideas deeply embedded in our minds that it is difficult for us to see with perfect clarity. Everything which we view, has got to be matched against the database of ideas which is stored in our minds. If any of those ideas is wrong then it will usually have an effect on how we view the particular issue in question. Many times it is our deep-rooted ideas which need to be changed. Often, there is something fundamentally wrong with them, but because they are a part of the belief structure around which we have built our entire philosophy, we refuse to even consider the idea of changing them. They must remain, therefore the truth being considered

must be rejected. For us, the truth becomes a lie, because of our pre-conceived ideas.

A LOGICAL SEQUENCE

Truth always follows a logical sequence. There is always a chain of ideas with one thing linked to another to form a beautiful whole. This is always true. It is equally true that error must create a chain of false ideas to support its shaky structure with one error leading to another, until there is a confusing web of false ideas. (*This is why it is so interesting to see that the Roman Catholic Church claims the doctrine of the Trinity as the foundation of all her beliefs*).

Sometimes we hear ideas presented which are so illogical that all we can do is laugh at them. Ideas do not fit together in a reasonable way and we can see clearly that the persons presenting such views are not balanced in their minds. In contrast to this, there are times when we may disagree with an idea, but we can see, logically why a person may believe it. We see one idea linking to another idea in a reasonable way, yet as we trace these ideas backwards, we find one basic false idea which lies at the root of all the other wrong ideas which followed. These ideas may follow a pattern of logic, but will still be very wrong because they started on a false premise.

It is important that we consider these things. Truth does not contradict itself, so if we find contradictions between what we believe, and the word of truth (the Bible) then something must be adjusted. Some people set out to adjust the Bible, but in every such case, it is our beliefs rather than the Bible

which need modification. In this article, as I will try to show one connection between righteousness by faith and the truth about God, I trust that we may be able to see the logic that ties one truth to another in a perfect sequence.

WHAT IS LIFE?

There is no human being who can give a perfect answer to this question. If man could answer this question, then probably he would have already produced life, but the best that he can do is describe the characteristics of life and show how it manifests itself.

Yet this is an important question, because over and over in the Bible, man's problem is said to be the absence of life. He is described as being dead and in need of life. We are told that this life is what we have been given in Christ Jesus. The question is, have we truly, literally, in actuality been given something, or is this just a figurative way in which the Bible speaks?

When a person receives life, what does he receive? For example, let us consider Lazarus when he was dead. What was there missing from him? What made him senseless, what shut down all his mind and body functions so that he was no better than a piece of dirt? What was missing? Was it a spark of electricity, was it a puff of air absent from his lungs? We know better than

Also in this issue:

- Campmeeting Report 6
- Thoughts on faith and Works 8
- Christ and Divine Powers 10

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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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that. All the electricity and all the air in the universe will not bring a dead person back to life. Life is an element that ONLY GOD possesses and which only He is able to impart. We may not know what it is, but we know that it exists and that it is something very, very real.

As soon as an entity is born, we know whether or not it is alive because there are certain indicators we look for. In the case of animals we look for independent movement, response to stimulus – something to indicate that this individual has the ability to perform certain functions. If these functions are manifested, then we say the thing is alive, if these functions are not present then we say it is dead.

DIFFERENT KINDS OF LIFE

Whatever life is, plants, humans, animals, insects, birds, fishes, microbes all share it alike. Maybe when we come down to the basic fundamental definition of it, all life is the same. It is the same spark of energy existing in the ant which also imparts life to the hu-

man. One thing is certain, however, and it is that life manifests itself differently in different organisms and in this sense we can say that there are different kinds of life.

From the moment of birth, a bird will behave like a bird, a fish like a fish, a dog like a dog and a human like a human. There are certain kinds of behaviour which do not need to be learned, they are inherent in the life, they are an integral part of the organism which receives such life. In other words, life is not something which is learned or developed. It is something which is inherited, which is present at birth and which has in it, the characteristics which will determine how the organism will behave, what kind of creature it will be. No matter how it tries and how it learns, a dog will never be a cat. At best, educating a dog in cat behaviour will only result in a very confused and poorly adjusted dog!

SPIRITUAL AND PHYSICAL LIFE

Spiritual life may be understood in more than one way so let us define what we mean when we speak of spiritual life. It may refer to the state of existence of spirit beings – the kind and the quality of life in which they exist. By this definition, all spirits possess spiritual life including God, the angels and even demons. It is a kind of existence which is non-physical. However, this is not the kind of spiritual life which I want to discuss here.

It is possible for human beings, in our physical state, here and now, to receive a certain kind of life that we refer to as spiritual life and this is what we are talking about. How do we define this spiritual life? In this context what we are speaking about is a certain kind of life which God imparts to those who yield to Christ. This life affects us on the spiritual level, that is, it affects our minds rather than our bodies and this is why we refer to it as spiritual life. This life is a gift from God through Jesus Christ, and can be obtained in no other way.

As my understanding of righteousness

in Christ has grown, I have come to realize that one of the most important things which we need to understand is, what is the nature of this life and how real is it? I will also add another question. How can this life be received, how do we obtain it?

ARE SPIRIT AND LIFE THE SAME?

“For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also” (James 2:26)

What is it that makes a person dead? The Bible says it is the absence of the spirit. This agrees with what we are told in Genesis 2:7 concerning how man first received life. It says that God breathed into man’s nostrils the “breath”, or the “spirit” of life and this is what made man become a living soul.

The word translated as “breath” is the Hebrew word “*Ruach*” which also means “spirit.” Some might say, “all that it means is that God started the breathing process because it says that “God breathed into his nostrils.” Notice however, that in John 20:22, Jesus again breathed on his disciples saying, “receive the holy spirit.” Was it breath that He imparted to them at that moment? Of course not! It was life. In this case it was spiritual life, something far more than literal breath – much more than air, more than new thoughts and ideas. However, the action which He used to represent this impartation of life was breathing on the disciples, just as God did when He gave Adam life.

The Bible consistently represents the spirit as being the key ingredient which makes a person alive. The following verses illustrate this very clearly.

“And her spirit came again, and she arose straightway: and he commanded to give her meat.” (Luke 8:55)

“and having said thus he gave up the ghost (spirit) (Luke 23:46)

“Saying, Lord Jesus receive my spirit (Acts 7:59)

In these, and many other verses we see the clear teaching that the spirit (whatever it is) is the vital ingredient which makes a person alive. When the spirit is gone, a person is dead, when the spirit returns, the person comes back to life.

Of course there are many Christians who believe that the spirit is an actual individual entity which may continue to exist on a conscious level after an individual is dead. They believe that even though the body ceases to function, the spirit continues to live and function in a non-physical realm. This is a false idea which is not supported by the Bible and it lays the foundation for many false beliefs such as the teaching that at death man goes immediately to his reward in heaven or an eternally burning hell, or that it is possible to communicate with dead people, or, the equally dangerous idea that God's spirit is an individual person, independent of God and Jesus.

In an attempt to counter these false beliefs, some of those who have embraced the truth about God have gone to an extreme in the other direction. They limit the spirit to simply, thoughts and ideas, and deny that the spirit is an actual component made up of some kind of energy, some literal element which we cannot define. Both extremes are false and deny what the Bible says. Embracing one or the other will lead us onto a path which will eventually force us to take a direction which will diverge further and further from the way of truth.

So, although we cannot define life, we know that we do possess life, a very real and literal thing and that this life is referred to as our spirit. This is also true of God. God's life is also referred to as the spirit of God. In fact, Ellen White referred to the holy spirit as the "Soul of" Christ's life.

Christ declared that after his ascension, he would send to his church, as his crowning gift, the Comforter, who was to take his place. This Comforter is the Holy Spirit,--the soul of his life, the

efficacy of his church, the light and life of the world. With his Spirit Christ sends a reconciling influence and a power that takes away sin. {RH, May 19, 1904 par. 1}

THE NATURE OF MAN

One of the main reasons why there is misunderstanding and disagreement on the subject of righteousness by faith is that there is confusion concerning the nature of man and therefore, confusion also concerning man's real problem. Some believe that man's problem is really a physical one and consequently, they also believe that the solution is a physical one. They believe that the real reason why man commits sin is because he has a weak, fallen, sinful body which he inherited from Adam. They believe that if, with Christ's help we are able to bring these bodies under discipline, then we will be able to stop committing sin.

But the truth is, there are two sides to man's nature. There is the physical and the spiritual. Man possesses spirit as well as flesh, a mind as well as a body. What is man's real problem? What is it that really makes him a slave of sin and an enemy of God, is it his flesh or is it his spirit? Is it his body or is it his mind? Notice what God tells us in His word:

"For the carnal mind is enmity against God for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." (Rom. 8:7)

This is very plain. Man's problem is that he has a carnal mind, he has a corrupt spirit which is incapable of good. The very thoughts of sinful man are evil and therefore it is impossible for him to do good. The problem is not his body, but his mind. Man's problem is not a physical one, but a spiritual one and it must be solved on the spiritual level, not the physical.

For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, (Mark 7:21)

Now it is true that the Bible often speaks of the "flesh" or the body as being the problem. For example in Romans 8:8 it says that those in the "flesh" cannot please God. However the very next verse, Romans 8:9 shows us that it is not speaking of the literal flesh and blood, but rather the fleshly mind or the carnal spirit for we are told,

"But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." (Rom 8:9)

Likewise, Romans 6:6 tells us that the "body of sin" has been destroyed by our union with Christ. But it is obvious that we still have our flesh and blood bodies and they are still weak and suffering the effects of sin even after we become Christians. So it is evident that the Bible is not speaking of our literal bodies when it speaks of "body of sin," but again it is speaking of the carnal mind, the spiritual part of us which is our real problem.

THE NATURE OF MAN'S LIFE

What is the nature of man's life, or man's spirit? By nature man has a life which is weak, carnal and inherently corrupt. There is nothing which man can do about this of himself. It is something which he inherited, it is the life which was passed on to him, transferred from generation to generation across 6000 years. Our nature is tied to our lives and when we receive life at conception, we also receive our natures, therefore a dog behaves like a dog, a pig behaves like a pig, because of the life which they inherited. In the same way, a man will always behave as a sinner, with a tendency to always do wrong, because this is the way he was born. It has to do with the life or the spirit which he inherited.

When we understand this, then we can see that man's problem is his nature, or, that which produces the nature which is, the life which he inherited, or, the spirit which he inherited. As long as man possesses the carnal spirit or

nature, or life which he was born with, he will never be able to resist sin. It is impossible for any creature in the universe to behave in a way which is contrary to his nature.

FALSE RELIGION

The mark of all false religion is that it attempts to solve man's problems on the physical level. Always there is an effort to change man's behaviour by external means.

Through affliction of the body, strict discipline, rites and ceremonies, outward observances, man tries to solve the problem of his depraved nature. But this is a concept which is very, very wrong. It lies at the foundation of legalism (that is, religion which is based on rules), because it leads to the idea that all man needs to do in order to overcome sin is to bring his body into obedience to a set of prescribed laws.

It needs to be said again and again, man's problem is not on the outside. It is not his flesh which needs to change, but his spirit or his mind. He needs a new spirit, he needs the mind of Christ. So can we see? If what we need is a new spirit, where shall we obtain it? Shall we create it? Shall we develop it? Shall we produce it by a lifetime of effort? No, no, no! The Bible says that we can receive it ONLY as a gift from God. This is a *supernatural* work, it is something totally outside of man's ability and if we desire to obtain this new mind, we must receive it as a gift from Christ, purely by faith! There is absolutely no other way. No effort of man can make a sinner into a saint, no amount of discipline can change a carnal mind into a spiritual mind. It must be the exclusive work of God in Christ.

"...Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God ... Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." (John 3:3-5)

This is the answer to man's sin problem. It is the only answer. Every man who hopes to have eternal life must be

born again because it is the only way that sin can be overcome. He must be born again of the spirit. What does this mean? Remember that the spirit is life. *Man's spirit is man's life and God's spirit is God's life.* What Jesus was saying was that the only way man can escape the power of sin and be qualified for God's kingdom, is if he receives God's own life or God's own spirit. A life which is completely different from his own corrupt one.

There are many people who stumble at this wonderful truth. Some resist the idea that man may literally partake of the very life of God. To them, it seems a blasphemous idea to suggest that man and God may actually share the very same life. They fear that it may lead men to self-exaltation or that it may cause us to drift towards the teaching of pantheism. But when the word of God teaches something very clearly we need not be afraid of it. Rather we should be afraid of rejecting it. It is our misconceptions which must be cast aside rather than the words of God.

"... I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." (John 10:10)

"... your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?" (1 Cor 6:19)

"But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit." (1 Cor 6:17)

"I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one" (John 17:23)

There are dozens of these verses in the Bible which all teach the same great truth. The Christian becomes an actual child of God, literally, because he literally receives the very life of God. Isn't this what happens when we parents have children? They become our sons and daughters because they receive our very life and this is the reason why they behave like us in so many ways. So the word of God tells us that this is the reason why we behave like God. It is because we have this life in

us, and this is a life that does not commit sin.

"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)

This is the truth, brothers and sisters. Men do not overcome sin because they try hard to do what is right. They do not gain the victory by striving and struggling against temptation.

"For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not." (Rom 7:18)

Such methods are vain and frustrating. They can never lead to victory, because we cannot resist our natures. The only hope is that we may receive a new nature or a new life and this is what God gives us when He gives us His Holy Spirit. It is His own nature, His own perfect life which cannot be touched by sin.

"For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." (Rom 8:2)

THE WORD OR THE SPIRIT?

There is one other important question which needs to be answered. What is it which changes a sinner into a saint, is it the word of God or is it the spirit of God? Or is it that the word of God is the same as the spirit of God? Of course Jesus said, *"the words I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life."* (John 6:63) This may lead to the belief that Christ does not literally live in His people and that it is not actually God's life which literally is united to the life of the Christian. Some Christians believe that it is by reading the words of the Bible that we are changed. We receive the thoughts from the Bible and they change our thoughts so that our thoughts become LIKE the thoughts of God and this is what it means to say that we have the life of

Christ. It really means that we think in the same way that he thinks.

In John 5:39 Jesus said,

Search the scriptures for (because) in them ye think ye have eternal life...” (John 5:39)

Sometimes we read this verse and think that Jesus was here giving the Jews a command to study the Scriptures. But the meaning of this statement is better understood when we read it in a version other than the King James. We see that what Jesus was really saying was, “*you search the Scriptures ...*” He was commenting on the Jews’ habit of searching the Scriptures rather than commanding them to study them.

Here we see that the Jews loved to read the scriptures. What was their purpose in doing this? They thought that eternal life was in the scriptures. They thought that by feeding on these words they would obtain the blessing of God. But Jesus went on to show the true purpose of the scripture,

“...and they are they which testify of me...” (John 5:39)

This is the purpose of the scriptures; to testify of Christ. The Jews read the scriptures thinking that in reading and memorizing these words they would obtain life. However, words can never give us life. The purpose of these words is to direct us to Christ, the one who is the true life, the only one who can give us everlasting life. As Paul says in Gal. 3:24, “*the law was our school master to bring us unto*

Christ.”

So Jesus continued by saying,

“And ye will not come to me that ye might have life.” (John 5:40)

“I am the way, the truth and the life (John” 14:6).

What a tragic picture? The Jews studied and studied the scriptures, they could explain every doctrine and they made sure to memorize passages of the word, even writing out sections and sewing them into the very garments they wore, or posting them to the walls of their homes. But they missed the whole point of what they were reading! All this body of knowledge had only one point, one purpose and it was to lead them to Christ, Yet while they embraced the words which spoke of Christ, they rejected Christ Himself, the living reality to which those words were directing them. Paul tell us,

“...if there had been a law given which could have give life, verily righteousness should have been by the law.” (Gal. 3:21)

But this is not possible. Words cannot give us life. No matter how we memorize them, no matter how we think about them, no matter how beautifully they express the truth, words cannot give us life. It is only Christ Himself, the living word of God who can Himself give us life, not by counseling us or educating us or stirring up our thoughts, but by implanting in us the seed of His very own life, His own life-force, the holy spirit, thereby making us a partaker of the very life of God,

or the divine nature. Therefore, again Paul tell us, “*the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.*” (2 Cor. 3:6) and, “*the Lord (Jesus) is that spirit*” (2 Cor. 3:17)

I certainly am not saying that the word is not important. We must study that word, we must understand it, but only because this enables us to find and to hold on to Christ. It is He and He alone who can give us life.

In sharing these truths we have lost a few friends (although we have also made a few). What a pain this has been! It hurts to lose friends, but especially when they become upset at the plain teaching of the word of God. Traditional thinking is so deep-rooted in many that they either cannot, or will not think outside of the common mold. They reject the most wonderful truth in the word of God because it does not fit with the way they have seen things all these years.

“But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart. Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away.” (2 Cor. 3:15, 16)

May God our Father, grant us the wisdom, honesty, open-mindedness and understanding that we may turn to the Lord so that this veil of misunderstanding may be taken away.



The Nature of Righteousness

Our latest publication is a little booklet entitled, “The Nature of Righteousness.” This is one chapter of what we hope will eventually be a book on the subject of Righteousness by Faith. In this present booklet we examine the nature of true righteousness comparing it with some of the false concepts which exist. As we read this booklet it will become clear why there is only one possible way in which righteousness can be obtained.

If you would like to have a copy of this booklet, then write or call us at:

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REFLECTIONS

2007 Jamaican Campmeeting Report

*“And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.”
(John 12:32)*

Perhaps none of us understands fully



Tamasha & Sister Zaidie

what it means to truly lift up Christ. His statement is that when this is done, then all men will be drawn unto Him



The Chapel

and it is true that we do not see this happening on a wide scale anywhere today. Nevertheless the theme of the 2007 Jamaican campmeeting was, “Lift Him Up,” and this is what each



“Daddy” Clayton

speaker endeavoured to do during the four days of the campmeeting.

Undoubtedly, our expressions and ideas were severely limited by our feeble understandings and our human language. Nevertheless It was wonder-



Alanda

ful to hear sermon after sermon where the theme was “Christ and Him crucified,” and several persons were deeply stirred by the spirit of God during the presentations to the extent that three persons requested baptism at the end of the campmeeting.

Our speakers this year included Brother Erwin Zoor, who came from Germany with his wife Claudia,



Brother David

Brother Ken Corklin from Pennsylvania, USA, and we were also blessed with a moving testimony from brother Mateusz Kilinski (Matti) who came all the way from Denmark with his wife Justyna, just to attend this campmeeting. Of course, the presence of these brethren

from so far away was an unusual thing for us here in Jamaica and we not only appreciated the fact that they had come so far, but we enjoyed the fellowship immensely. These humble and sincere brethren gave us some idea of how the work was progressing in other parts of the world and gave us a



Peter

living example of the power of the gospel to produce good fruit in the life.

One thing is guaranteed at a campmeeting in Jamaica and it is that there will be lots of music. As usual the people sang enthusiastically during song services, but in addition, the special items by the choir and individuals were a source of rich blessing to all of us. Those who attended were especially delighted by the presentations of Erwin and Claudia from Germany who sang a song in German “Jesus Kommt Bald,” (Jesus is coming soon), and Matti and Justyna from Denmark who sang a song, which, when translated has the title, “Sing Hallelujah to the Lord.”

It is true that at every spiritual meet-



Blosson, Tracey & David



Brother Ken

vailed at the end was, “we are so happy that we came.”

The surroundings, as always, were beautiful and relaxing. The YWAM campgrounds are in a rural area and there are no human dwellings visible from the campsite. Last year Jamaica was going through a dry spell at campmeeting time and the trees and the foliage had a yellow-brown tinge



Alathea

ing, each person receives what he expects to receive. Even though Christ is always in the midst of those who convene to worship Him, minds are often distracted and because we reunite with friends whom we have not seen for a while, attention is sometimes directed more to fellowshipping and socializing than on the presence of



Matti

“prayer garden.” It was here on the final night that we had these testimonies as we gathered around a warm bonfire. Praise and thanksgiving flowed from sincere hearts and now, more than at any other time there were tears and expressions of repentance as the blessings of the campmeeting came to a climax.



Sania

as the drought sapped the moisture from the plants. But this year, everything was lush and green. The plants were bursting with new life and it was a fitting symbol of the renewal and revival many felt in their hearts.

Of course, campmeeting could not end without the people having to opportunity to express themselves in the usual testimony time. There is a place on the campground where the ground seems to fall away into a very wide hole. Actually, I don’t know how else to de-

It was such a pity that it had to come to an end. Such occasions make us long for the better land indeed! In the light of Christ’s love, in seeing the reality of our oneness in Him, how could we not



Members of the Combined Children’s and Adult Choir

Christ. Perhaps this element was present here also, but it was not evident in the response of the people to the messages. On occasion there were heartfelt tears. The truth of the love and forgiveness of our God and His Son, mingled with the realization of the completeness of the deliverance, redemption and victory which they have provided and the sentiment which pre-



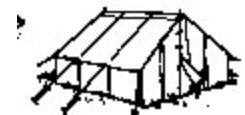
Shona

want to stay together forever? Separating from one another at the end of the campmeeting was like dislocating from an arm or a leg, it was like saying goodbye to a part of oneself. But we know that next year is coming and we can hardly wait! The path and the way of truth grows ever brighter and ever sweeter and so we know that if our Lord tarries, next year will be even better. I look forward to seeing you there.



Erwin & Claudia

scribe it. However, this “hole,” has become a secluded garden where people retire from time to time to pray in solitude or just to meditate. There are trees and flowers here and there are steps which lead down into this



Thoughts on Faith and Works

Kendra Beachy

For a while now people have been arguing over the issue of salvation by faith versus salvation by works. The questions are these: Is salvation truly a free gift? If we believe that it is truly free then why do so many Christians seem to feel that they must do things to be worthy of it—things that they often don't seem to enjoy doing? apart from choosing to accept the gift, is there anything else God requires me to do to be acceptable to Him?

Of course we all know that faith is dead without works, but what are the works that faith is dead without? What is it that makes a true Christian different from the “good” people of the world?

Personally, I've always been a salvation by faith kind of person, but the verse always bugged me, “Faith without works is dead.” (James 2:19) It seems like I've usually been around people who believe that the works of faith are things like eating right, dressing right, worshiping in a certain manner, using proper names for God, keeping holy days and “witnessing” to others by telling them that they also should be doing these things in order to be perfect and acceptable before God.

The problem for me, has been all those who have been turned away from the truth, by the manner or the character of those who claim to be doing the works of God. Many times I have felt saddened by the comments of sincere “Christians” who, in my opinion, miss out on seeing the character of many beautiful people by focusing on the externals in another's life. It makes me sad for two reasons: First, unwittingly, they have hurt a person by not truly seeing them as God does (the Bible says that man looks on the outward appearance but the Lord looks on the heart – (1 Samuel 16:7). Second, if the focus for them is on the externals in someone else, then I can be pretty sure that this is their focus in their own life as well, and they have missed out on the

most important part, which is a heart, broken, made whole and filled with Christ.

So, I ask myself, “Am I attempting to do the holy Spirit's job by trying to convict another of my idea of sin?” If I am, then I have to say that something is wrong!

Someone recently said to me, “I think I've figured something out about religious people. They're all so concerned with their salvation that they become very self-absorbed.” In other words, they are so caught up in thinking about whether or not they are doing enough to please God so they can go to heaven that they forget to truly care about others. How sad is that! All of a sudden, the verse that says, “He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it”. (Matthew 10:39) became much clearer to me. I think it's time to ask ourselves, as professed followers of Christ, some tough questions.

When the world looks at me what do they see? Do they see God's love shining bright in all of my dealings with them or do they see someone who is constantly worried about bringing myself and them up to a certain standard of behaviour, while never meeting the needs of their heart.

“For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.” (Luke 19:10)

As a follower of Christ shouldn't it be my goal to help Him in that quest for lost souls? Am I willing to let my neighbor die in despair while I am too busy trying to figure out all the things I'm doing wrong as a Christian, to do what my Lord has asked? Are all those works that I do in order to be pleasing enough to gain entrance into the kingdom, more important than another for whom Christ died to save? Do they see me as self-absorbed in my desire for salvation, or do they see someone intent on doing the will of my Father even

if it doesn't always seem like the right way to others? Again, we have come to the question, What are the works of faith? Are they REALLY all of those things that WE try to do?

WORKS WITHOUT FAITH

I have come to believe that the works of faith *cannot* be works that can be done without faith. There are many people in the world who do their best to eat a healthful diet, dress modestly, but they worship themselves, or nature, and have no concept of God or, if they do, it is only a very limited concept. I have met some of these people. Some see auras, some meditate, some have been “channels” for some power. Generally I have found them to be very easy to approach, very easy to talk to and to become friends with.

But, are these people truly pleasing God? How can they be when they basically deny God altogether and are not interested in forming a friendship with Him. They've never given Him the chance to change their hearts. But they do “good works”—without Faith. And “without faith it is impossible to please” God. (Hebrews 11:6)

WORKS OF FAITH

So, what are the works of faith? Well, what are works? Aren't they the results or, could we say, fruits of the knowledge we have? The works of faith would have to be something that can only come by having the Spirit of God in our hearts. In my opinion they would have to be the fruit of the Spirit. Without Christ in me “the hope of glory” (Colossians 1:27)—without faith, can I truly have love for my brother who has hurt me? Will I be able to have that deep, abiding joy that bubbles up and be unable to hide the fact that I have found something special and wonderful? Can I have the peace that passes all understanding in the midst of the terrible storm (emotional or elemental)? Can I be longsuffering with my difficult neighbor? Will I be gentle

with someone who is hurting or lacks understanding? Is there any goodness in me outside of Christ? Can I have faith, and can it grow? Will I be meek when the world honors pride? Will I have the power to be temperate?

Looking at the context in Galatians I find that prior to listing the fruit of the Spirit it says, "and the works of the flesh are these..." (Galatians 5:19) To me, it seems that Paul is showing the contrast between the works that come from having an experience with the world, and having an experience with Christ.

I am not saying that the externals are not important. But there are many different views on what manner of dress is modest. There are an equal number of views on what makes up a healthy diet, and there are many differing views on how to properly say the name of Jesus, and the list goes on. I am not prepared to delve into my personal beliefs on these subjects here. However, I do encourage people to do the things they believe that God is personally asking of them while recognizing that God may not be asking that particular thing of someone else at this point in their relationship with Him. I do believe that we will grow in grace and in knowledge and that the Spirit will convict us of sin and lead us into all truth.

So, while I do believe that some of these things are important I do not believe that they are MOST important nor do I believe that we can make these

decisions for another. Our first work is with the heart and it doesn't matter how much doctrinal knowledge we pass on to a person if we have neglected the heart. If we don't know who they are and what they are struggling with deep down inside, then we have missed the MOST important part of that person and they may still be in a lost condition.

Another point is this, when they do share themselves with me, if I can't accept them, where they are at that point and LOVE them, then how can I expect them to really believe that God will accept them as they are if they choose to come to Him? A friend once told me that she hung out with druggies because they accepted her AS SHE WAS. Could my heavenly Father accept her AS SHE WAS? I hope so because she is no different than I am without Christ in me. But, "Christians" were showing her the opposite, some being downright cruel towards her. I have to believe that the Bible means what it says, when it says that He looked on me with nothing good in me, in my lost condition and in my sin, and said, "Live." (Ezekiel 16:6,8-9) He covered me with His love, but He didn't leave me under His love still dirty. He then began a good work in me which He will be faithful to perform until the day of Jesus Christ. (Philippians 1:6) He changed my life and gave me a new and clean heart. Outside of Christ I can have or do no good thing.

Yes, faith without works is definitely

dead. However the works of faith must be living, like I must be, in Christ. There is nothing in me, about me, or that I have done or can do that can make me acceptable to God until I make the choice to confess my wicked, sinful condition and ask Him to live within me. And, even that is only because He gave me the measure, that He has given to all men, of faith that responded to His Spirit and reached out to Him. So, now I want to jump up and scream to all – "LIVE." Yet, I must recognize that some will choose death, and that God has given us all the right to choose and I must respect that.

I also like to remember that Jesus was condemned for spending time with sinners – where there is sin there is a greater need of the Savior. Even the thief on the cross made the choice for Christ in the end. Where there is life there is hope.

My choice is to LIVE. For you... the ball is in your court. Maybe you're not ready to make that choice today. Maybe you've seen too many grumpy, judgmental, superficial Christians that have soured you on life. Maybe you are one. I do pray that you will soon see what a life of faith is all about. I hope you'll see what makes it so awesome and the best decision I ever made in my life.

I hope you choose life – heaven sure wouldn't be the same without you there.



Available Materials



Our message to be mailed out in June is entitled, "**The Judgment of Christ**" This sermon was presented at the Ochala campmeeting in March of this year.

If you would like to have a copy of this uplifting and enlightening presentation on CD or audio tape, but you are not on our regular tape-mailing list, then write to us or call and we will be sure to include you in our next mailing.

From Jamaica call: (876) 603-0821

From elsewhere call: (304) 932-4543

This message may also be obtained on DVD by writing to:

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Did Christ possess of Himself Divine Powers?

It seems that no matter what aspect of religion we become involved in, there is always some disagreement, some controversial point. Unfortunately, these areas of disagreement sometimes become so prominent in the minds of believers that they become not only points of contention, but also a reason for schisms and divisions. Unhappily this is equally true of the movement which has been striving for the past few decades to restore the truth about God to Seventh-day Adventism and the world.

Among the several vexing issues which have arisen, is the question of whether or not Jesus did, in Himself, possess all the powers and abilities of divinity while He lived on this earth.

Some brethren are certain that He did of Himself still possess all these powers, but chose not to use them while He was here. They recognize that all His miracles were the work of the Father, but claim that if He had wanted to He could have done these things without the Father's intervention, because He possessed of Himself the same power, only that He chose to keep it subdued.

I do not agree with these brethren. I agree with those who say that He was fully divine in terms of His nature and His character, but not in terms of the powers and abilities which He possessed. These were left behind when He became flesh and He did not have access to them, except as the Father chose to perform these mighty acts through Him.

Some time ago I had some correspondence with one of these brethren where I endeavoured to show him some of the reasons why I believe as I do and why I believe his position is wrong. I have reproduced here the points which I shared with him in that correspondence, in the hope that it will help us to understand the issue more clearly and to see where the weight of

biblical evidence lies.

The Bible says that as a boy, "Jesus increased in wisdom and stature." Now clearly this cannot be true of God, as God. God cannot improve or learn, or else He would not be truly omniscient (all knowing). Those who believe that Jesus was, in Himself always possessed of the fullness of divine power while He was in human flesh on this earth will have to conclude that at this moment as He was increasing in wisdom, He was already omniscient as well as omnipresent. In fact, even as a newborn baby, and even while in the womb, they must believe that Jesus was even then, omnipresent and omniscient. But can there be omniscience without intelligence? The answer must be no. There cannot be omniscience without conscious intelligence. Omniscience indicates a knowledge of all things but if there is not conscious intelligence there cannot be knowledge. One cannot know and not know at the same time. So there we have a picture of a googling baby, totally ignorant of all things, while at the same time knowing **all** things and **everywhere** present at the same time.

There is only one way in which this could have been possible. Jesus would have had to be two different and distinct persons at one and the same time. He would have had to have two different and distinct minds. One single person with one mind cannot know and yet not know at the same time.

Most of us will agree that in Gethsemane and on the cross, Jesus could not see beyond the portals of the tomb, yet astonishingly, we insist at the same time that He was possessed of all the attributes of divinity (including omniscience). This is confusing. If we make omniscience and omnipotence etc. inseparable attributes of divinity. If one cannot be divine unless he possesses these attributes, then what shall

we conclude? That when Jesus was forsaken of God He was not divine? Was He then not God? And when God forsook Him, does it mean that He forsook Himself? If He forsook Himself, then who was He? Which was the real Jesus, the one who was forsaken or the one who did the forsaking?

I notice that you stated, "*You may say the Divine Spirit was the Spirit of the Father, I agree but it is also the Spirit of His Son, whom the Father gave without measure.*"

Maybe here is the root of the difference of opinion which you and I have. I believe, as I think you believe, that the spirit of a person is His true identity, that it is that part of the person which makes him the individual that he is. This is true of God as well as of all His creatures. This being the case, Jesus possessed a spirit, separate and distinct from the Father's spirit, His own personal identity which made Him a distinct individual from God the Father. If they both possessed only one spirit, then it would mean that they are both only one person. They would both be one person in two different bodies (something like the Trinitarians believe, except that it would be two instead of three). The body which Jesus possessed on earth was not really who He was. He said, "a body hast thou prepared me (Heb. 10:5)." The "me" was Jesus. The body is the thing which was prepared for Him. In harmony with this, Ellen White states that the spirit of Christ slept in the tomb with His body. This was Christ's personal spirit, His own identity, who He was. This was not the Father's spirit. The Father's spirit has never slept and if it ever did, the universe would be instantly in chaos.

It seemed to me at one point that you were equating the spirit of the Father, present in the Son with the divine powers which you state that Christ had of

Himself? Am I correct in understanding you this way? I am not sure that I read you correctly. If this is what you believe and what you mean when you say that Jesus did not leave His divine powers behind, if what you mean is that He was always indwelt by the Father's almighty spirit then I agree with you. Jesus Himself said, "the Father that dwelleth in me, He doeth the works." However, if you mean that Jesus in and of Himself possessed these powers, independently of the Father's spirit, then I feel that your position is both scripturally incorrect, and, yes, that it flies in the face of reason.

When He died, Jesus' spirit slept in the tomb. How could it then be of itself, omnipresent and omniscient while it was sleeping (dead)?

But if we accept that Jesus' omnipresence while He was on earth was the Father's spirit (which was united with His spirit, thus giving Him access to the powers of the Father), then the contradictions become no longer contradictions. The difficulties are cleared up.

I could not follow your reasoning with respect to the statement by Ellen White which says, "*The Holy Spirit is Christ's representative, but divested of the personality of humanity, and independent thereof. Cumbered with humanity, Christ could not be in every place personally. Therefore it was for their interest that He should go to the Father, and send the Spirit to be His successor on earth. No one could then have any advantage because of his location or his personal contact with Christ. By the Spirit the Saviour would be accessible to all. In this sense He would be nearer to them than if He had not ascended on high.*" {DA 669.2}

"**Cumbered with humanity,**" this means that Jesus was weighted down, was hampered by humanity (meaning evidently, the limitations of His human body).

"**Christ could not be in every place**

personally." It was not possible for Him to be in America and Australia at the same time while He was hampered by His human body. Was it possible for Him to be omnipresent by His spirit while He was "cumbered with humanity?" If this was so, why then was it necessary, (expedient) for Him to go away? It would contradict Ellen White's words that He could not be in every place personally because He would be omnipresent while here, by His spirit, just as He was omnipresent while in heaven, by His spirit.

For their (and our) sakes, He had to go so that He could come back again in a form where He would be accessible to all. What is the conclusion which we may draw from this? While He was here, He did not have that capability. If He did, then He need not have gone since He would still have been equally available to all, even though His bodily form might have been in one place (as it now is in heaven). This seems to me to be a clear indicator of the fact that Jesus Himself could not be in every place while He was here. The statement says very clearly that while He was cumbered with humanity, **Christ could not be in every place personally.** Again it is difficult for me to understand how He could be in every place and not be in every place at the same time.

My brother, I believe you have allowed your ideas to cloud the way you have interpreted certain passages of Scripture. For example you quoted several times the verse that says, "in him dwelleth all the fullness of the godhead bodily," and in quoting it, you applied it to the time when He was in the flesh. You also used it to prove that He was possessed then, of all the powers of God almighty. I think you have misunderstood the point of the verse. The line which follows immediately after the verse which you quoted says, "and we are complete in Him." The point which Paul is making is that in Christ, we are lacking in nothing which is necessary for salvation. Look at the context of

the passage and you will see what I mean. He says we are circumcised by the holy spirit in putting off the sins of the flesh, we do not need the rituals and ceremonies which some were advocating because in Jesus there is the fullness of the godhead (divinity or the divine nature – this is what we really need) and in Christ, we are already complete (in being partakers of the divine nature, so we need nothing else). I believe that after His resurrection Jesus was indeed possessed of all the powers of divinity because He was glorified with the Father's own self (John 17:6). That is the time of which this passage was speaking. It is certainly not correct to apply it to the time when He was here on earth.

Over and over I have heard it said that Jesus did not use His divine powers on His own behalf though He possessed them. I know there are quotations which are used to prove this, but as we have seen many times and particularly in the godhead debate, there are more questions than answers, more quotes than explanations. I could certainly quote as well, but what would be the point? At the end, who would have proven the point, the one with the most quotes? What we often seem to suggest is that the source of our quotes is confused.

It is said that He could not use these divine powers because He had something to prove to Satan. As you put it, "*but He covenanted not to use Divine power for His own benefit. And this is where Satan tempted Him most.*" But let me ask you, if Jesus had used them, how would Satan have known? What was there to tell Satan that Christ had not secretly used these powers? After all, you say they were His, He had access to them as God almighty. Who could discover His trick if He secretly used them? If He resisted Satan's temptations by His own divine power, how could Satan have known the difference? Was Satan expected to take the word of God for it when His whole purpose was to prove

that God was a liar? With whom did He make this covenant not to use His divine powers? Whoever it was, He had a point to prove, but how did He prove it since there cannot possibly be anyway of proving that God had not broken the rules unless one has almighty powers and is able to see into all the ways of God?

The basic flaw which I see in your reasoning is that you have made an assumption as to what constitutes divinity. It is the same assumption which all the denominations have made down the ages. You have quoted some passages which reveal the almighty abilities of God, but though God has these powers, are they the attributes which define divinity? These do indeed describe attributes which God possesses, but they are not what define divinity. A man may be fair of skin, may be very

strong, may be able to sing beautifully but these qualities are not what define humanity. By the same rule, although you have quoted scripture to demonstrate that God does have almighty abilities, you have not quoted scriptures which prove that they are the definitive mark of divinity. It is character and nature which define divinity, not power.

Jesus must meet my need. I need a Saviour who is fully human and fully divine, why? Because being fully human, He took my sins and infirmities upon Himself so that He could destroy them. Being fully divine, He is able to impart to me a life in which infinite purity, perfect righteousness is a natural reality. Where harmony with the law is my natural state. This is what I need.

This is the point of Jesus' incarnation and these are the qualities which He had to have to be a Saviour of man-

kind. One with the sinful flesh of Adam and the infinite righteousness of the Almighty God. So Jesus needed to have the nature and character of divinity, but not the powers of divinity. If Jesus had all the powers of the almighty God, of Himself, while He was in the flesh, then there is no way that He could be said to have been fully human.

These are the things which our faith needs to lay hold on. The understanding which I have gleaned from the word of God presents a Saviour who perfectly meets this need. Now, glorified with the Father's own self, (the almighty spirit) with all power given unto Him in heaven and earth, He is able to impart this life to all who will believe in Him.



Open Face

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