

THE MATCHLESS CHARMS OF CHRIST

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Chapter 1

Jesus

The Great Center of Attraction

The great center of attraction, Jesus Christ, must not be left out of the third angel's message. By many who have been engaged in the work for this time, Christ has been secondary, and theories and arguments have had the first place.[1]

The Lord in His great mercy sent a most precious message to His people ...This message was to bring more prominently before the world the uplifted Saviour, the sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. It presented justification through faith in the Surety, it invited the people to receive the righteousness of Christ, which is made manifest in obedience to all the commandments of God. Many had lost sight of Jesus. They needed to have their eyes directed to His divine person, His merits, and His changeless love for the human family.[2]

Jesus Christ was to be the great center of attraction in the message of 1888. Theories and arguments were not to have first place while Christ was made secondary. Many people had even lost sight of Jesus.

What about today? Is Christ the great center of attraction in our teaching and preaching of Christ our righteousness, or have the methods and processes of justification and the various theories and arguments about justification and sanctification been predominant? The emphasis is usually on the process and not on Christ. The disagreements that are so strongly presented seem to always focus on the method by which we are justified and not on the Person by Whom we are justified. Ellen White said:

“They needed to have their eyes directed to His divine person, His merits, and His changeless love for the human family.”[3]

How easily we miss the focus and emphasis in Christ, Our Righteousness. Jesus, The Person, The

Christ, is the heart and theme of Christ Our Righteousness. Justification and sanctification are the results, the products of His great work on our behalf. But the Producer, the Active Agency is Jesus, the Christ. The theme must always be on Christ; then secondarily, what He accomplished for us.

Intimately related to Christ, the great center of attraction and focusing on the Person of Jesus is the rest of the title: “Christ Our Righteousness.” The righteousness of Jesus is to be emphasized above all other themes. His character, His holiness, His virtues, His righteousness or merits, as Ellen White often called them, is the primary theme in “Christ Our Righteousness.” While we need to know how we are counted righteous, etc., we must first see and always behold the beauty of the character of Jesus which is His righteousness.

Ellen White described the message of Christ Our Righteousness as:

I have had the question asked, “What do you

think of this light that these men are presenting?” Why, I have been presenting it to you for the last forty-five years--the matchless charms of Christ. This is what [I] have been trying to present before your minds. When Brother Waggoner brought out these ideas in Minneapolis, it was the first clear teaching on this subject from any human lips I had heard, excepting the conversations between myself and my husband.[4]

She used this phrase, “matchless charms of Christ,” in other places such as p. 256 of *Through Crisis to Victory* and *Review and Herald*, Dec. 22, 1896. Her picturesque language (matchless charms) describes the righteousness of Jesus, His perfect character. When His beauty of character is seen it grips our attention so that our eyes are riveted upon Him. His beauty of holiness is so appealing, so attractive that we are charmed by such great beauty that we find ourselves staring at Him, transfixed in admiration, possessed by such perfection.

“Matchless charms of Christ” was her

description of the 1888 message. How different from all the legal, objective presentations which we have heard so frequently on this subject. How appealing when compared to all the theories and arguments. How simple and personal. Her descriptions of Jesus found elsewhere probably also refer to the righteousness of Christ. In Testimonies to Ministers, p. 81 she speaks of “the preciousness of Christ.” In Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing, p. 76, “the attractive loveliness of Christ.” In Testimonies to the Church, Volume 6, the righteousness of Christ is likened to “sweet music”:

The sweetest melodies that come from God through human lips--justification by faith, and the righteousness of Christ--do not call forth from them a response of love and gratitude.[5]

Perhaps many never realized that the Bible had reference to the righteousness of Christ, His character, in such well known descriptions of Jesus as the One who is “altogether lovely,” Song of Solomon 5:16; “I am the Rose of Sharon, and lily

of the valleys,” Song of Solomon 2:1; “I am ... the bright and morning star,” Revelation 22:16; “the desire of all nations,” Haggai 2: 7. This is surely a unique view of the 1888 message. Has this been our emphasis when we speak of justification by faith and Christ our righteousness? While God desires us to understand the process of justification by faith in the righteousness of Christ and sanctification and all the various aspects of this message, Christ and His righteousness is the heart of it, the power, the appeal and the beauty of that message. If we correctly understand all of it, but in our emphasis make Jesus merely secondary, we lose everything. Nothing must be permitted to supersede Jesus--the Person.

Lest we misunderstand, the “matchless charms” of Jesus does not refer to any physical, external beauty or attraction, for the Bible teaches that Jesus would not have this outward appeal. “He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.” Isaiah 53:2 NIV. It does refer to His inward character or beauty, and this beauty was reflected in the face of

Jesus, in His teachings, His treatment of people and all of His works. His inward perfection can be discerned by us. His love, purity, self-denial, humiliation, patience, holiness and, all of His virtues were constantly demonstrated.

As a result, people perceived this beauty of character called righteousness and were drawn to Him. Little children wanted to be near Him, or held by Him. Fishermen, farmers, tax collectors, Roman soldiers and the heathen gathered to Him as if by some irresistible force. Even the demoniacs, when delivered, wanted to always be with Him. These activities were a demonstration of the matchless charms of Jesus in operation.

Christ our righteousness, “the matchless charms of Jesus,” appeals to our hearts, not merely the intellect. It is an entirely different way of soul winning. All argument, selling, and logic are omitted. It is the presentation of the beauty of Christ’s character or righteousness in such a way that it has the effect of “charming” the listener or viewer.

Webster's Collegiate Dictionary has this definition of "charm" as "a trait or quality that fascinates and allures, as if by a spell;" "to affect by or as by charm or magic;" "to fascinate, bewitch, enchant;" "to attract irresistibly;" to delight exceedingly." How pleasant and enjoyable is such a work as drawing listeners irresistibly and at the same time they are delighted exceedingly.

You should search the Bible; for it tells you of Jesus. As you read the Bible, you will see the matchless charms of Jesus. You will fall in love with the Man of Calvary, and at every step you can say to the world, "His ways are ways of pleasantness, and all His paths are peace." You are to represent Christ to the world.[6]

Matchless charms! What a different message is this!

Messages bearing the divine credentials have been sent to God's people; the glory, the majesty, the righteousness of Christ, full of goodness and

truth have been presented; the fullness of the Godhead in Jesus Christ has been set forth among us with beauty and loveliness, to charm all whose hearts were not closed with prejudice.[7]

What did they preach? “The glory, the majesty, the righteousness of Christ, full of goodness and truth, have been presented, the fullness of the Godhead in Jesus Christ.” And how did they present it? “...has been set forth among us with beauty and loveliness.” And why was it presented? “ ... to charm all hearts.” With such great appeal and power in the messages of that time how could anyone resist such attraction? The answer is given in the quotation: PREJUDICE. And it can still harden our hearts today. But we may also fail to respond today for other reasons. Many of us are fearful of heart religion. Some have great difficulty with LOVE. We seem unable to handle such appeals that strike us where we are vulnerable, perhaps helpless. Many insist on making their religion coldly scientific, logical and objective, but a religion that charms me by-passes all of this and grips my heart in a subjective manner which is

often impossible to explain or understand. Mentally, we flee from such presentations and harden our hearts. But God wants our hearts and Jesus came to win them. This is a necessity if we are to be truly Christian. See Steps to Christ, page 18 and Christ's Object Lessons, page 97.

Oh what a privilege and opportunity we have to present "the matchless charms of Christ." This is the message which is so desperately needed today.

Notes:

1. Review and Herald, 3/20/1894; Selected Messages, Vol. 1, p. 383.
2. Christ Our Righteousness, p. 24; Testimonies to Ministers, p. 91, 92.
3. Testimonies to Ministers, p. 92.
4. A. V. Olson, Through Crisis to Victory, p. 48, quoted from Ms. 5, 1889.
5. Testimonies to the Church, Vol. 6, p. 426.
6. Life Sketches p. 293.
7. Review and Herald, 5/27/1890.

Chapter 2

Justification The Abiding Presence of Jesus

When we are charmed by the beauty of the righteous character of Christ, so that we find ourselves staring at Him in admiration as if we were transfixed; then we are prepared to understand Ellen White's rather unusual explanation of justification by faith in Christ.

Less than a year after the meetings in Minneapolis she described the message of that time like this:

The present message--justification by faith--is a message from God; it bears the divine credentials, for its fruit is unto holiness. Some who greatly need the precious truth that was presented before them, we fear did not receive its benefit. They did not open the door of their hearts to welcome Jesus

as a heavenly guest, and they have suffered great loss.[1]

Justification by faith as presented then is opening the door of the heart “to welcome Jesus as a heavenly guest.” This is truly a much different understanding than we hear in all the discussion of the methods of justification. But it is surely harmonious with Righteousness by Faith in Christ, when one sees the righteous life of Christ as matchless charms. When our admiration of Him and His character is so great we quite naturally want to embrace Him, receive Him and be like Him. We love Him, adore Him, and worship Him; and He takes possession of our affections and lives in our heart.

She presents a similar concept in other quotations especially two based on Matthew 12:43–45:

When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return into my

house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished: Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first.

After quoting this scripture she comments:

The parable of the man from whom an evil spirit had been cast out, who did not fill the soul with the love of Christ, illustrates the necessity of not only emptying the heart, but of supplying the vacuum with a divine occupant. The demon desired to return to the heart from which he had been expelled. He came, and though it was swept and garnished, he found it still empty, and entered in with seven other spirits more evil than himself, so that the last state of the man was worse than the first. The man in this parable refused to do the work of Satan; but the trouble with him was that after the heart was swept and garnished, he failed to invite the presence of the heavenly guests. It is not enough to make the heart empty; we must have

the vacuum filled with the love of God. The soul must be furnished with the graces of the Spirit of God. We may leave off many bad habits, and yet not be truly sanctified, because we do not have a connection with God. We must unite with Christ.[2]

In this quotation, it (justification by faith) is “inviting the presence of the heavenly guests,” “supplying the vacuum with a divine occupant,” a uniting with Christ.

The second quotation on the same parable connects all of this with the righteousness of Christ:

... We must be emptied of self. But this is not all that is required; for when we have renounced our idols; the vacuum must be supplied. If the heart is left desolate, and the vacuum not supplied, it will be in the condition of him whose house was “empty, swept, and garnished,” but without a guest to occupy it. The evil spirit took unto himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they

entered in and dwelt there; and the last state of that man was worse than the first.

As you empty the heart of self, you must accept the righteousness of Christ. Lay hold of it by faith; for you must have the mind and spirit of Christ, that you may work the works of Christ. If you open the door of the heart, Jesus will supply the vacuum by the gift of his Spirit, and then you can be a living preacher in your home, in the church, and in the world.[3]

Here she describes the filling of the vacuum as “accepting the righteousness of Christ.” All of these explanations are based on the character of Jesus described as “matchless charms.” It views justification as something much different than the intricate explanations which most of us use to describe the process or method by which Christ is our Substitute, Surety, and Example. While all of these need to be understood, they seem to neglect to some degree the person of Jesus and His perfect character. If we are not careful, we may inadvertently neglect the beauty of Jesus and

present justification as some objective, cold, impersonal, strictly legal process, which by implication portrays Christ in a totally different manner than we may have intended. While Ellen White's description is so subjective, it does establish the relationship with Christ and divinity which is most necessary for our salvation.

Of course the idea of justification as a welcoming of Christ into my heart as a heavenly guest is quite natural when one approaches justification as pardon or forgiveness. What is it like to be pardoned by another person whom we have grievously wronged, especially when we are so guilty and undeserving. Such grace and mercy and love demonstrated by Christ in the act of forgiveness of the sinner, produces violent emotions and great questions. How can He forgive me when I have been so bad? How can He treat me so kindly and so graciously when I have done nothing to convey to Him any repentance on my part? What kind of a person is this who first loves me and leads in reconciliation when He is the one who has been wronged and I am the wrong doer? It

is as I see Jesus in this act of pardon for me, individually, that I begin to view for the first time that beauty of character that has been termed “matchless charms.” Then I am so attracted to Him, so happy, so satisfied, so peaceful, that I never want to leave Him. It is then that I gladly welcome Him as a heavenly guest into my heart. Most amazing is that He desires and wants to be with me. I can hardly believe it! But this is the message of justification which she presents.

Perhaps a few other comments on the empty house will answer the problems of some. So often we have thought that if only we could get rid of all of our sins, then we would be righteous -- or as some may think, perfect. But Jesus disagrees. When our lives and bodies are swept and garnished, cleaned up and spotless, then we are only empty and very vulnerable to the enemy. Our Bibles tell us that Jesus went about doing good. It is the doing of the positive acts and not the elimination of the sinful acts that is righteousness. While our Lord said “Go and sin no more,” this does not make anyone righteous. It makes one

empty. When our Lord cleans up our lives, He wants to move in and take possession of us. What a blessed and pleasant association is this.

Other quotations, while not directly connected with justification, present similar ideas in harmony with the previous quotations.

The religion of Christ means more than forgiveness of sin; it means taking away our sins, and filling the vacuum with the graces of the Holy Spirit. It means divine illumination, rejoicing in God. It means a heart emptied of self, and blessed with the abiding presence of Christ. When Christ reigns in the soul there is purity, freedom from sin. The glory, the fullness, the completeness of the gospel plan is fulfilled in the life. The acceptance of the Saviour brings a glow of perfect peace, perfect love, perfect assurance. The beauty and fragrance of the character of Christ revealed in the life testifies that God has indeed sent His Son into the world to be its Saviour.[4]

“The abiding presence of Christ” is the way she

describes it here and she refers to the matchless charms in these words:

“The beauty and fragrance of the character of Christ,” the empty house is a Christless person. He may not realize it, but Christ’s righteousness is not his.

The garnished house represents the self-righteous soul. Satan is driven out by Christ. But he returned, in the hope of finding entrance. He finds the house empty, swept, and garnished. Only self-righteousness is abiding there.[5]

When justification by faith in the righteousness of Christ is the abiding presence of Jesus in the life, there is a divine power to prevent any entry by the evil one. Righteousness is enthroned in the indwelling of Christ, and sin is unwelcome in such a presence. This is surely a much different and more effective way to fight the enemy, for Christ has already defeated our foe and He can do the same for you and me. Perhaps the best quotation on this unique concept of justification is found in this

quotation from *Desire of Ages*:

It is not necessary for us deliberately to choose the service of the kingdom of darkness in order to come under its dominion. We have only to neglect to ally ourselves with the kingdom of light. If we do not cooperate with the heavenly agencies, Satan will take possession of the heart, and will make it his abiding place. The only defense against evil is the indwelling of Christ in the heart through faith in His righteousness. Unless we become vitally connected with God, we can never resist the unhallowed effects of self-love, self-indulgence, and temptation to sin. We may leave off many bad habits, for the time we may part company with Satan; but without a vital connection with God, through the surrender of ourselves to Him moment by moment, we shall be overcome. Without a personal acquaintance with Christ, and a continual communion, we are at the mercy of the enemy, and shall do his bidding in the end.[6]

While the primary theme here is the protection against Satan and sin by the personal presence of

Christ in our lives, the thought that we began with is repeated but in different words.

How does Christ indwell in our hearts? The answer: “through faith in His righteousness.” Therefore the indwelling of Christ and righteousness by faith are again tied together and are presented here as an explanation of each other.

This will all seem rather mysterious and vague unless we remember that the righteous character of Jesus is “matchless charms” which has great appeal to our hearts and minds; and it is only as we are charmed by His internal beauty and are thus drawn to Him, that the desire awakens in our hearts to embrace and possess Him and to always want to be with Him. Like Mary who always chose to be sitting at His feet and the freed demoniacs who wanted to remain with Him constantly, so when one sees the beauty of the attractive loveliness of the life of Jesus, and receives pardon from Him, he will choose to be with Jesus constantly.

... When the sinner has a view of the matchless

charms of Jesus, sin no longer looks attractive to him; for he beholds the Chiefest among ten thousand, the One altogether lovely.[7]

Christ and His righteousness will occupy his thoughts and mind, deep emotions will occupy his soul so that he appears as one charmed. This is justification by faith as Ellen White perceived it and described it.

Notes:

1. Review and Herald, 9/3/1889.
2. Review and Herald, 1/24/1893.
3. Review and Herald, 2/23/1892.
4. Christ's Object Lessons, p. 419–20.
5. Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentaries, Vol. 5, p. 1093.
6. Desire of Ages, p. 324.
7. Signs of the Times, 7/4/1892.

Chapter 3

Righteousness Is Love

In order to integrate the preceding chapters with the following chapters on the law in Galatians, we must briefly look at Ellen White's definition of righteousness. It is hoped that this will enable one to see how all of these explanations of Christ our righteousness fit together.

RIGHTEOUSNESS is holiness, likeness to God, and "God is love." 1 John 4:16. It is conformity to the law of God, for "all Thy commandments are righteousness," (Psalm 119:172), and "love is the fulfilling of the law," (Romans 13:10). Righteousness is love, and love is the light and the life of God. The righteousness of God is embodied in Christ. We receive righteousness by receiving Him.[1]

"Righteousness is love" and this righteousness or love is embodied in Christ. Therefore this righteousness or love can only be received by

receiving Christ. This is how Christ becomes a “heavenly guest” or an “abiding presence” in the heart. Therefore as we receive Him into our hearts, we receive righteousness which is love. By seeing how He first loved us, we see His “matchless charms” or righteousness; then as we are drawn to Him by these charms we love Him in return and love for Christ takes possession of the heart. This love is righteousness.

According to this quotation “righteousness is conformity to the law of God.” Too often we understand this conformity or obedience to be something entirely different from love. We know that Jesus described the law as:

Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.[2]

It is obvious that any obedience to the law would need to be acts of love. We also know that the Bible describes God's character as "God is love." I John 4:16. Since the law is a transcript of God's character, the law must be love. See Christ's Object Lessons, p. 315, Thoughts From the Mount of Blessings, p. 77. And Paul confirms all of this in Romans 13:10: "... love is the fulfilling of the law." With all of this information concerning the law and love, it would seem that all Christians would view the law in this manner. But so few really do. Far too many see the law as dictatorial demands, the violation of which condemn us. The law is viewed as unreasonable obligations by a severe, demanding ruler, waiting to find some disobedience in us for which we can be punished. Oh! how many are on a guilt trip because of these misconceptions of God and His law!

Obedience to the law is not some kind of works that make us righteous. True obedience to the law is an expression of love for God and our fellowmen, which is motivated by the love of

Christ which must already be in our hearts, and it is this love that is righteousness. We could not and would not have it, unless Christ were in our hearts, because righteousness or love is embodied in Him. This is why Jesus said: “If ye love me, keep my commandments.” John 14:15.

How perfectly Ellen White describes this:

But notice here that obedience is not a mere outward compliance, but the service of love. The law of God is an expression of His very nature; it is an embodiment of the great principle of love, and hence is the foundation of His government in heaven and earth. If our hearts are renewed in the likeness of God, if the divine love is implanted in the soul, will not the law of God be carried out in the life? When the principle of love is implanted in the heart, when man is renewed after the image of Him that created him, the new-covenant promise is fulfilled, “I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them.” Hebrews 10:16. And if the law is written in the heart, will it not shape the life? Obedience--the service and

allegiance of love--is the true sign of discipleship. Thus the Scripture says, "This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments." "He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." 1 John 5:3; 2:4.[3]

This is a much different kind of obedience. It is never performed to gain any merit or favor, never to escape guilt or punishment. It is motivated simply by love and lest in these modern times we define love in the worldly, secular sense which is so popular today; we must remember what Biblical love, God's love is:

... It will be seen that the glory shining in the face of Jesus is the glory of self-sacrificing love. In the light from Calvary it will be seen that the law of self-renouncing love is the law of life for earth and heaven; that the love which "seeketh not her own" has its source in the heart of God; and that in the meek and lowly One is manifested the character of Him who dwelleth in the light which no man can approach unto.[4]

This love was demonstrated in the life of Jesus. What a different picture Jesus presents of God and His law.

The earth was dark through misapprehension of God. That the gloomy shadows might be lightened, that the world might be brought back to God, Satan's deceptive power was to be broken. This could not be done by force. The exercise of force is contrary to the principles of God's government; He desires only the service of love; and love cannot be commanded; it cannot be won by force or authority. Only by love is love awakened. To know God is to love Him; His character must be manifested in contrast to the character of Satan. This work only one Being in all the universe could do. Only He who knew the height and depth of the love of God could make it known. Upon the world's dark night the Sun of Righteousness must rise, "with healing in His wings." Malachi 4:2.[5]

No force! No decrees! Only by love does He

seek to win our loyalty and service. Only Jesus who knew the love of God the Father from all eternity, only He could make known and demonstrate the true character of God's love which is also His law.

This depth of love found in Christ is the “matchless charms” that Ellen White termed it. It is righteousness. It is all found in the person of Christ and it is He who we must receive into our hearts in order to have righteousness, which is love and to be truly justified. We do not have to receive Him. There is no force exerted. He seeks to attract our attention, our interest, our affections by beholding His glorious beauty of character. We must always remember that this is all wrapped up in Jesus and wholly dependent upon Him, the righteous Person, God manifest in the flesh.

While the law is holy, the Jews could not attain righteousness by their own efforts to keep the law. The disciples of Christ must obtain righteousness of a different character from that of the Pharisees, if they would enter the kingdom of heaven. God

offered them, in His Son, the perfect righteousness of the law. If they would open their hearts fully to receive Christ, then the very life of God, His love, would dwell in them, transforming them into His own likeness; and thus through God's free gift they would possess the righteousness which the law requires.[6]

It is all in Jesus. How wonderful! How appealing! How good is our God, the Giver of "every good and perfect gift." James 1:17.

Notes:

1. Thoughts From the Mount of Blessings, p. 18.
2. Matthew 22:36–40.
3. Steps to Christ, p. 60.
4. Desire of Ages, p. 20.
5. Desire of Ages, p. 22.
6. Thoughts From the Mount of Blessings, p. 54-55.

Chapter 4

The Law In Galatians

It may appear to the reader that the theme is changed in this chapter from the love of Christ to the justice of the law; but you will not find this to be true if you read the whole chapter. It is the purpose of this chapter to establish that all that has been presented thus far is the foundation for a correct understanding of the law in Galatians.

As the students of 1888 and Christ Our Righteousness realize, the law of Galatians 3 was the specific subject around which most of the controversy of that time revolved. Both before and after 1888 it seemed to arouse controversy and severe disagreement.

Let us first review those controversial verses:

Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should

have been by the law. But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. Galatians 3:21–25.

For many years Adventists had explained, taught, and preached that the schoolmaster was only the ceremonial law and not the Ten Commandment Law. Now (1888) an Adventist minister was teaching that it was also the Ten Commandment Law. The question then is: Why teach law-keeping and Sabbath observance if we are no longer under the ten commandments? It appeared that Waggoner was destroying the law and any obligation to observe it. However, he was still a faithful Sabbath keeper and observer of the whole law. Why? If we are no longer under the law, why obey it?

Several years later Ellen White agreed with him and supported this interpretation in writing:

I am asked concerning the law in Galatians. What law is the schoolmaster to bring us to Christ? I answer: Both the ceremonial and the moral code of ten commandments.[1]

The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith (Galatians 3:24). In this scripture, the Holy Spirit through the apostle is speaking especially of the moral law.[2]

For many decades following the era of 1888, most Adventists taught that the schoolmaster was only the ceremonial law and not the ten commandment law. Somehow, this teaching on the schoolmaster was buried or neglected. In more recent years, several Adventist theologians have taught that the schoolmaster is the ten commandment law and have based their views on these quotations. By now many of our ministers have learned this interpretation.

In this process, it has not been made clear (at least from the knowledge of this writer) why we should observe the law since we are no longer under it. The attempts to explain this are rather strained and vague and not specifically an answer to this question.

Some have quoted the earlier statement of Ellen White that this debate about the schoolmaster and this interpretation were not of that degree of importance. By 1896, she apparently thought it was of the greatest importance.

An unwillingness to yield up preconceived opinions, and to accept this truth, lay at the foundation of a large share of the opposition manifested at Minneapolis against the Lord's message through Brethren (E.J.) Waggoner and (A.T.) Jones. By exciting that opposition Satan succeeded in shutting away from our people, in a great measure, the special power of the Holy Spirit that God longed to impart to them. The enemy prevented them from obtaining that efficiency

which might have been theirs in carrying the truth to the world, as the apostles proclaimed it after the day of Pentecost. The light that is to lighten the whole earth with its glory was resisted, and by the action of our own brethren has been in a great degree kept away from the world.[3]

“This truth” must be that the schoolmaster is the moral law. (See context Selected Messages, Vol. 1 p. 233.) It produced “a large share of the opposition ... at Minneapolis against the Lord’s message.” And “that opposition” “shut away” “in a great measure the special power of the Holy Spirit.” That opposition prevented them from obtaining the efficiency in carrying the truth to the world.

These words describe what many Adventists would term “the Latter Rain of the Holy Spirit and the Loud Cry of the Third Angel.” And of course as all students of the 1888 message know, Ellen White did term that message as the beginning of the Loud Cry.

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.[4]

Several have written to me, inquiring if the message of justification by faith is the third angel's message, and I have answered, "It is the third angel's message in verity." [5]

If one is to believe and accept these statements as truth, then one must conclude that the teaching that the schoolmaster is the ten commandment law is of extreme importance and great urgency. Most important of all we must find the answer to the question: if we are no longer under the ten commandment law, why the need to observe it? This is the primary reason for this book.

Obviously, if the Spirit of Prophecy fulfills the purposes for which prophets wrote, the answer should be found in her writings and the answer has been there for many years.

Strangely, before she agreed in writing with Waggoner, she wrote the answer to the question and problem which his teaching produced. Notice her criticism of the manner in which we had preached the law:

... You will meet with those who will say, “You are too much excited over this matter. You are too much in earnest. You should not be reaching for the righteousness of Christ, and making so much of that. You should preach the law.” As a people, we have preached the law until we are as dry as the hills of Gilboa that had neither dew nor rain. We must preach Christ in the law, and there will be sap and nourishment in the preaching that will be as food to the famishing flock of God.[6]

Apparently, something was wrong with the way in which we had been preaching the law. Many have read and quoted this statement for years. Some then assume that we must discontinue the emphasis on the law. It is also assumed that preaching Christ our righteousness should take the

place of it and that will fulfill Ellen White's recommendations.

But she did not express such ideas. While her suggested correction is related to Christ our righteousness, it is quite different from these suggested remedies.

Immediately following the criticism of the manner in which we preach the law is this statement:

We must preach Christ in the law, and there will be sap and nourishment in the preaching that will be as food to the famishing flock of God.[7]

The remedy for the dryness in preaching the law is to "preach Christ in the law." Here is the key. It may seem rather vague, and difficult to comprehend what she means. How does one preach Christ in the law? She explains this in other articles found in our periodicals. "The Relation of Christ to the Law Is Not Understood" is the title of her article in the Review and Herald for Feb. 4, 1890.

Scattered excerpts from this article state:

We have only glimmering light in regard to the exceeding breadth of the law of God. The law spoken from Sinai is a transcript of God's character. Many who claim to be teachers of the truth have no conception of what they are handling when they are presenting the law to the people, because they have not studied it; they have not put their mental powers to the task of understanding its significance ... they do not understand the relation of Christ to the law and cannot present it in such a way as to unfold the plan of salvation to their hearers.

Christ's relation to the law is but faintly understood. ... We should understand the relation of Christ to the moral law. ... We should dwell on the law and the gospel, showing the relation of Christ to the great standard of righteousness.

In May she wrote:

There should be deep searching of the

Scriptures that the ministers of God may declare the whole counsel of God. The relation of Christ to the law is but faintly comprehended. Some preach the law, and feel that their brethren are not doing their whole duty if they do not present the subject in the very same way in which they do. These brethren shrink from the presentation of justification by faith, but just as soon as Christ is discovered in his true position in relation to the law, the misconception that has existed on this important matter will be removed. The law and the gospel are so blended that the truth cannot be presented as it is in Jesus, without blending these subjects in perfect agreement. The law is the gospel of Christ veiled; the gospel of Jesus is nothing more or less than the law defined, showing its far reaching principles.[8]

In the Review and Herald for November 18, 1890 she wrote:

The law of God is the only genuine standard for the measurement of character. Christ displayed to the world by his life and teaching, by his divine

character; what obedience to the law means.

When one recognizes that Mrs. White understood the law to be a transcript of God's character, then we find other articles in 1890 which speak of Christ in the law such as "Christ Revealed the Father," Signs of the Times, 1/7/1890; "God Manifest in Christ," Signs of the Times, 1/20/1890.

Thus in one year at least six articles were calling attention to Christ's relationship and connection with the moral law. All of this was written within two years after the controversy over the law in Galatians at Minneapolis in 1888. What was she telling us in these articles?

Perhaps the finest explanation of what she meant came in 1895 in the article entitled "Christ The Impersonation of the Law," Signs of the Times, March 14, 1895:

The Lord Jesus came to our world to represent the character of his Father. He came to live out the law, and his words and character were daily a

correct exposition of the law of God.

... Jesus was a living manifestation of what the law was, and he revealed in his personal character its true significance.

The Lord Jesus gave to men a representation of the character of God in his life and example. The law of God is the transcript of the character of God. And in Christ they had its precepts exemplified, and example was far more effective than the precept had been.

... Jesus was a living illustration of the fulfillment of the law, but his fulfilling it did not mean its abolition and annihilation. In fulfilling the law, he carried out every specification of its claims.

... Of Christ it was written, “He will magnify the law, and make it honorable.” How did he do this?--He lived out the law in the sight of the heavenly universe, in the sight of unfallen worlds, and in the sight of sinful men.

Other articles described Jesus and the law in these terms: “He was a living representation of the law of God.”[9] From an article entitled “The Law Revealed in Christ” she writes “He was the embodiment of the law of God.”[10] Again she wrote an article, “The Law Revealed in Christ,” “His character is an expression of the law of God.”[11] “In human nature he lived the law.”[12] “He made a living application of that law.”[13]

She is telling us in all of these descriptions, that Jesus was the living law. He was not a description of the character of God as was the ten commandments on tables of stone, but a demonstration. He is the law personified; walking, breathing, talking in our humanity. While it is the same law as the law written on stone, how different it is when seen in Jesus.

So when the ten commandment law, the schoolmaster, brings me to Christ and faith is come, I am no longer under the moral law on stone, but I am under Christ, Who is the same law with a new dimension which we will see in a later

chapter.

When the schoolmaster (the ten commandment law) brings me to Christ and I am no longer under the schoolmaster, Christ, the Living Law says: “Follow Me.” Matthew 4:19. It is impossible to follow Jesus and not keep God’s law, for Jesus declared, “I have kept my Father’s commandments ...” John 15:10.

So when Ellen White spoke of putting Christ in the law, she referred to the righteousness or righteous character of Jesus which was His obedience to the law. This is what she had termed “the matchless charms of Christ.” Therefore when we put Christ in the law we put His perfect character in the law and when the moral law brings one to Christ, it brings us to Christ our righteousness, His perfect obedience to the law. When the law is received from this perspective it too is “matchless charms.” When this is discovered and experienced we too will say with David, “I delight in thy law, O how I love thy law! It is my meditation all the day.” Psalm 119:70, 97.

Notes:

1. Selected Messages, Vol. 1, p. 233.
2. Selected Messages, Vol. 1, p. 234.
3. Selected Messages, Vol. 1, p. 234-235.
4. Review and Herald, 11/22/1892; also Christ Our Righteousness, by Daniels, p. 62.
5. Review and Herald, 4/1/1890; also Christ Our Righteousness, by Daniels, p. 64.
6. Review and Herald, 3/11/1890.
7. Review and Herald, 3/11/1890.
8. Review and Herald, 5/27/1890.
9. Review and Herald, 1/7/1890.
10. Signs of the Times, 11/15/1899.
11. Signs of the Times, 7/3/ 1907.
12. Signs of the Times, 11/29/1899.
13. Review and Herald, 4/5/1898.

Chapter 5

The Righteousness of Christ in the Law

In order to better understand what Ellen White meant by Christ the Impersonation of the Law and the thought of putting Christ in the law, we must study the law and the glory of the law in Second Corinthians, Chapter 3 and her explanation of it. How often we have missed the great blessings which God put in this chapter in Corinthians by insisting that the law here was only the ceremonial law. Let us read this scripture to help our memory.

Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart... But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance;

which glory was to be done away: How shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious? For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth.

For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious. Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech: And not as Moses, which put a veil over his face, that the children of Israel could not steadfastly look to the end of that which is abolished: But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which veil is done away in Christ. 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 ... But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory even as by the Spirit of the Lord. 2 Corinthians 3:3,

7–15, 16, 18.

We must first recognize that the only law “written and engraven in stones” was the ten commandment law. Paul here describes it as a ministration of death and condemnation.

We Adventists have always believed that the moral law condemns us because of our sins and that death is the result; so we are in agreement with this teaching. But there is a contradiction here because Paul describes this law of death and condemnation as “glorious.” He finds no fault with it but speaks of its glory. He does say that its “glory was to be done away” (verse 7). How and Why? Its glory is done away because something which is rather or more glorious, which exceeds in glory and a glory that excelleth comes along. So the law is not done away, only its glory, and that is because a greater glory has come. So something more glorious would happen to the law. This speaks of improvement, of something better. Certainly nothing that lessens its importance and function is presented here.

WHY WAS THE GLORY DONE AWAY? Let us examine next the meaning of this glory from the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy.

In Exodus 33:18, Moses beseeched God to “shew me thy glory.” In Exodus 34:5–7, the Lord passes before Moses and proclaims His glory. What did Moses see? He saw God’s character described in these verses, also presented as God’s “goodness.” Exodus 33:19. The Spirit of Prophecy confirms this interpretation in Christ’s Object Lessons, p. 414: “The light of His glory--His character...” And as we have already learned, “His (God’s) law is a transcript of His own character,” Ibid., p. 315. Therefore the glory of God is His character and since the law is God’s character written down, the glory of the law is the character of God.

In 2 Corinthians 3, Paul tells us that something of greater glory than that seen in the law on stone will come. What is this? Of Jesus, John said “we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten

of the Father...” John 1:14. And John continues by saying, “the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him...” John 1:18. In other words Jesus came to show us the Father. He has displayed or manifested Him. As Jesus said to Philip, “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.” Paul describes it like this: “For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” 2 Corinthians 4:6.

Therefore, “Jesus was the outshining of His (the Father’s) glory.”[1] “Let us remember that God is love.” I John 4:8. This change or improvement in the law was predicted by Isaiah; “... He will magnify the law and make it honorable.” Isaiah 42:21.

Isaiah 42:21 RSV translates it, “and make it glorious,” and the NAS says “to make the law great and glorious.” Certainly this is good. Nothing happens to depreciate the law or to lessen its importance and obligation. Jesus so perfectly lived

out the law and therefore totally demonstrated His Father's character (or glory) that He exceeds the glory of God's character as described in the ten commandments. God was more perfectly and completely revealed in the life of Christ than had been understood by those who knew the law.

Now let us return to 2 Corinthians 3: "For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth." 2 Corinthians 3:10.

Jesus is the "glory that excelleth" and the law on stone is "that which was made glorious." Paul is stating that the law on stone had no glory of itself but was glorious because of the glory of Christ. Ellen White explains it like this:

The glory that shone on the face of Moses was a reflection of the righteousness of Christ in the law. The law itself would have no glory, only that in it Christ is embodied. It has no power to save. It is lusterless only as in it Christ is represented as full of righteousness and truth.[2]

The glory of the law on stone is the righteousness of Christ. Christ is embodied in the law on stone and it's His righteousness that makes it glorious. Moses saw this in the law and therefore his face reflected that glory. This is what Paul meant in 2 Corinthians 3:10.

Ellen White uses still stronger language to describe Christ in the law:

... And if the ministration of the dispensation to be done away was glorious, how much more must the reality be glorious, when Christ was revealed, giving His life-giving, sanctifying Spirit to all who believe?[3]

She used the same word again in Signs of the Times, August 25, 1887.

... But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance;

which glory was to be done away; how shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious? When the reality, the full blaze of midday light, should come, the dim glory which was but an earnest of the latter, should be done away, swallowed up in the greater glory.[4]

Christ is described as “the reality” of the glory or character of God as described in the ten commandments. The glory of the law or God’s character is not the reality but a description. Jesus living that beautiful righteous life is the reality of the glory or character of His Father. Notice that she never describes the law as typical, but as “an earnest” or promise of that which was to come. Nor does she say the law on stone is destroyed but she uses the term that the glory of the law is “swallowed up in the greater glory.”

It is only when we put Christ and His righteousness into the law that we discover “the reality” of the law and its glory. This is what Ellen White meant when she wrote “We must put Christ in the law” and when she said “Christ, the

Impersonation of the Law.” Jesus is the glory, the righteousness, the character of God which the law on stone describes. This is why Ellen White described the message of 1888 as “the matchless charms of Christ.” It is really the splendor, the radiance, the beaming brilliance of His Father’s beautiful character of love. When we put Christ in the law we see this splendor of God and are drawn to Him by such beauty.

Paul then discusses the veil over Moses face: “And not as Moses, which put a veil over his face, that the children of Israel could not steadfastly look to the end of that which is abolished: But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which veil is done away in Christ.” 2 Corinthians 3:13, 14.

“The veil is done away in Christ,” verse 14. When we put Christ and His righteousness in the law, and see the greater glory which the law promises, then we without a veil but with open face behold the glory of the Lord, then we are changed

from glory to glory (II Corinthians 3:18). But even we Adventists who proclaim the law so strongly, still fail to put Christ in the law. Then we wonder why our performance is so feeble. Today there is still the same fear that we are destroying the law by teaching that the schoolmaster is the moral law. (We shall answer this question more thoroughly in a later chapter.) Still others, basing their interpretation on their deficient behavior, believe that one never becomes righteous but is only pronounced or counted righteous.

But 2 Corinthians 3:18 promises that when we behold the glory of the Lord, we too are changed into the same image from glory to glory. And this is accomplished by “the Spirit of the Lord.” The success and the blessing are realized when we see Christ as the glory, the righteousness, the character of God in the law on stone. When the beauty of holiness in Christ which is the reality of the law grabs my interest and mind so that I am charmed by it; then the “beholding” Paul describes takes place. As a result of such beholding there is a change.

But what is it that most of us spend so much time beholding? Too many persist in looking at themselves and they only become like themselves. Others spend their time looking at other people and enjoying or criticizing them. Then we only become like them. Too many are continuously staring at the world in its various aspects and they become like that. Oh, to be charmed by the exceeding glory of Christ! How different will be the results.

2 Corinthians 3 arouses many perplexing questions, and a more careful reading of Selected Messages, Vol. 1, p. 236 (the chapter “The Righteousness of Christ in the Law”) helps to explain some of these questions. One quotation will suffice for now:

It was seeing the object of that which was to be done away, seeing Christ as revealed in the law, that illumined the face of Moses. The ministration of the law, written and engraved in stone, was a ministration of death. Without Christ, the transgressor was left under its curse, with no hope

of pardon. The ministration had of itself no glory, but the promised Saviour, revealed in the types and shadows of the ceremonial law, made the moral law glorious.[5]

It is when both the moral and ceremonial law are joined together that we receive a more complete picture of God's character. Since Jesus is both laws in one person, the true picture of God without distortion is visible and most glorious.

Notes:

1. Desire of Ages, p. 19.
2. Selected Messages, Vol. 1, p. 237.
3. Selected Messages, Vol. 1, p. 238.
4. Signs of the Times, 8/25/1887.
5. Selected Messages, Vol. 1, p. 237.

Chapter 6

The Effectiveness of Putting Christ in the Law

When we put Christ in the law, there is a power that is not present in the law on stone.

The scribe was near to the kingdom of God, in that he recognized deeds of righteousness as more acceptable to God than burnt offerings and sacrifices. But he needed to recognize the divine character of Christ, and through faith in Him receive power to do the works of righteousness. The ritual service was of no value, unless connected with Christ by living faith. Even the moral law fails of its purpose, unless it is understood in its relation to the Saviour. Christ had repeatedly shown that His Father's law contained something deeper than mere authoritative commands. In the law is embodied the same principle that is revealed in the gospel. The law points out man's duty and shows him his guilt. To

Christ he must look for pardon and for power to do what the law enjoins.[1]

For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. Romans 8:3, 4.

Jesus' life "condemns sin in the flesh that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us." Romans 8:4. This describes a new power and its results which were not available in the ten commandments. In an earlier chapter we quoted Review and Herald, March 11, 1890 which stated that when we preach Christ in the law "there will be sap and nourishment in the preaching that will be as food to the famishing flock of God."

... The law of God is the transcript of the character of God. And in Christ they had its precepts exemplified, and example was far more effective than the precept had been.[2]

Jesus was the law “exemplified” and His example is far more effective than the precepts of the ten commandments. The Spirit of Prophecy describes this effectiveness:

The law is an expression of God’s idea. When we receive it in Christ, it becomes our idea. It lifts us above the power of natural desires and tendencies, above temptations that lead to sin.[3]

... The law is an expression of the thought of God; when received in Christ, it becomes our thought. It lifts us above the power of natural desires and tendencies, above temptations that lead to sin.[4]

Christ bore the curse of the law, suffering its penalty, carrying to completion the plan whereby man was to be placed where he could keep God’s law, and be accepted through the merits of the Redeemer; and by His sacrifice glory was shed upon the law. Then the glory of that which is not to be done away--God’s law of ten commandments,

His standard of righteousness--was plainly seen by all who saw to the end of that which was done away ... Christ is the sinner's advocate. Those who accept His gospel behold Him with open face. They see the relation of His mission to the law, and they acknowledge God's wisdom and glory as revealed by the Saviour. The glory of Christ is revealed in the law, which is a transcript of His character, and His transforming efficacy is felt upon the soul until men become changed to His likeness. They are made partakers of the divine nature, and grow more and more like their Saviour, advancing step by step in conformity to the will of God, till they reach perfection.[5]

... The law of ten commandments is not to be looked upon as much from the prohibitory side, as from the mercy side. Its prohibitions are the sure guarantee of happiness in obedience. As received in Christ, it works in us the purity of character that will bring joy to us through eternal ages.

There is no peace in unrighteousness; the wicked are at war with God. But he who receives

the righteousness of the law in Christ is in harmony with heaven. “Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.” (Psalms 85:10)[6]

How does this new power function to produce such results? It all begins with the matchless charms of Jesus, His righteous character. When the beauty of the character of Christ charms me by its attractive loveliness, I find myself desiring to be like Him and loving Him. It is this activity that gets Christ into my heart and my affections and the more I view His matchless charms the more I love Him. Since He is the living law, when He is in my heart the law is written in my heart. Christ in my heart is the law in my heart.

Righteousness is holiness, likeness to God, and “God is love.” 1 John 4:16. It is conformity to the law of God, for “all Thy commandments are righteousness,” (Psalm 119:172), and “love is the fulfilling of the law.” (Romans 13:10). Righteousness is love, and love is the light and life of God. The righteousness of God is embodied in

Christ. We receive righteousness by receiving Him.[7]

The matchless charms of Jesus refer to His character, His virtues. These are usually seen prominently in His treatment of people. The way Jesus treated the little children when He said, “Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not for of such is the kingdom of God.” Luke 18:16. Little children were very important to Jesus and it was no waste of His time to be with them. They did not irritate or trouble Him but He enjoyed their presence. In addition, there was something about Jesus which made Him very appealing and attractive to the mothers and their children. He had such a high regard, a great concern and interest in every human being. Others saw in Him a love, a tenderness, a caring with a great power to bless, a special, personal interest and kindness which made Him most attractive.

But He also had the same interest and concern for the rich--the rich young ruler, and Nicodemus. They too were drawn to Him. What did they see in

the character of Jesus, other than His wisdom and power, etc.?

What do you see in the character of Jesus in His visit with the woman at the well, a person with five husbands and living with a man to whom she was not married? Here is Jesus, the Good Shepherd out seeking and saving the lost. All are precious to Him and individuals can detect this attitude by the manner in which He treats them and talks to them. He is non-condemning, offering hope, gently leading them into a different life, holding out the promise of salvation in Christ. He is so different. How do most people treat a woman with a past such as hers?

Spend some time studying His treatment of Judas. The strongest language He ever used with him were in those words “That thou doest, do quickly.” John 13:27. He was patient to the extreme with this traitor. Never would He chase him away, but He worked with him so tenderly, and gently trying to do something that would keep him with the Saviour.

But with Peter, the fisherman He could be much more forceful. This is why He could say to Peter, “Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me...” Matthew 16:23. He knew that this treatment would help Peter and not offend him. Jesus treated every person in the precise manner which would be the greatest help to that person and which would reveal His sensitivity to their personal dispositions.

On and on one can go observing Jesus as He worked with many different people. His grace, mercy, and gentleness are amazing; but at the same time a beautiful firmness without severity or force was manifested. His virtues which are so apparent in all His relationships, makes us envious of such perfection. The more one observes Him, the more we find ourselves saying, “Oh how wonderful it would be, to be like Jesus.” Our own crude, unkind ways in dealing with others, our selfishness and severity, our lack of grace and mercy; all become painfully wrong and unchristian by comparison with the matchless charms of Jesus.

This is putting Christ in the law. And it is this which makes Christ in the law have a powerful, new effectiveness which the law on stone lacked.

Ellen White explained beholding and its effect in these words:

... As the mind dwells upon Christ, the character is molded after the divine similitude. The thoughts are pervaded with a sense of His goodness, His love. We contemplate His character, and thus He is in all our thoughts. His love encloses us. If we gaze even a moment upon the sun in its meridian glory, when we turn away our eyes, the image of the sun will appear in everything upon which we look. Thus it is when we behold Jesus; everything we look upon reflects His image, the Sun of Righteousness. We cannot see anything else, or talk of anything else. His image is imprinted upon the eye of the soul and affects every portion of our daily life, softening and subduing our whole nature. By beholding, we are conformed to the divine similitude, even the

likeness of Christ. To all with whom we associate we reflect the bright and cheerful beams of His righteousness. We have become transformed in character; for heart, soul, mind, are irradiated by the reflection of Him who loved us and gave Himself for us. Here again there is the realization of a personal, living influence dwelling in our hearts by faith.

When His words of instruction have been received, and have taken possession of us, Jesus is to us an abiding presence, controlling our thoughts and ideas and actions. We are imbued with the instruction of the greatest Teacher the world ever knew. A sense of human accountability and of human influence gives character to our views of life and of daily duties. Jesus Christ is everything to us--the first, the last, the best in everything. Jesus Christ, His Spirit, His character, colors everything; it is the warp and the woof, the very texture of our entire being. The words of Christ are spirit and life. We cannot, then, center our thoughts upon self; it is no more we that live, but Christ that liveth in us, and He is the hope of glory. Self is

dead, but Christ is a living Saviour. Continuing to look unto Jesus, we reflect His image to all around us. We cannot stop to consider our disappointments, or even to talk of them; for a more pleasant picture attracts our sight--the precious love of Jesus. He dwells in us by the word of truth.[8]

The beholding of Jesus in His matchless charms must include more than His individual contacts and relationship with individuals. This beholding must include the great acts of Christ in obtaining our salvation; the condescension, the incarnation, the temptation and sufferings of Gethsemane and Calvary, the resurrection and ascension of Christ, His continued ministry in heaven on our behalf and the glories and triumphs of the second coming. The study, meditation, and frequent examination of these demonstrations of God's great love for us are so imprinted on the mind that we literally love God.

When the attention is fastened on the cross of Christ, the whole being is ennobled. The

knowledge of the Saviour's love subdues the soul, and lifts the mind above the things of time and sense. Let us learn to estimate all temporal things in the light that shines from the cross. Let us strive to fathom the depths of humiliation to which our Saviour descended in order to make man the possessor of eternal riches. As we study the plan of redemption, the heart will feel the throb of the Saviour's love, and will be ravished by the charms of His character.[9]

Notes:

1. Desire of Ages, p. 608.
2. Signs of the Times, 3/14/1895.
3. Selected Messages, Vol. 1, p. 235.
4. Signs of the Times, 3/29/1910.
5. Selected Messages, Vol. 1, p. 240.
6. Letter 96, 1896; Selected Messages, Vol. 1, p. 235.
7. Thoughts From the Mount of Blessings, p. 18.
8. Lift Him Up, p. 186; Testimonies to Ministers, p. 388-390.
9. Lift Him Up, p. 248; Review and Herald, May

6, 1902.

Chapter 7

Is the Law on Stone Still Necessary? Why?

“But after faith is come, we are no longer under the schoolmaster.” Galatians 3:24. Since the schoolmaster is “especially the moral law”[1] , it appears that the ten commandment law is done away as many have argued. But when does this take place? The text states that it is “after that faith is come.” When is this? Before faith is come we are under the law. “Before this faith came, we were held prisoners by the law, locked up until faith should be revealed.” Galatians 3:23 NEB.

How then do we arrive at this faith? “So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith.” Galatians 4:24 NEB. So it is the law that leads us to Christ and to faith. The King James reads “Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.” Galatians 3:24. Therefore the

law has the nice work of bringing or leading us to Christ, and we must then not find any fault with it or we may be guilty of eliminating that which God has designated to accomplish a great work for us.

We also must be careful that we do not expect the law to do something which God never planned for it. We must always remember that the law cannot make us obedient or righteous because it is weak through the flesh. Romans 8:3. It is dependent on our weak human flesh and we are incapable of performing its requirements. Does God leave us in this condition and still demand our obedience to it? No! The law which condemns us is used to lead us or bring us to Christ who has the power which enables us to obey.

The apostle Paul clearly presents the relation between faith and the law under the new covenant. He says: “Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” “Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.” “For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh”--it

could not justify man, because in his sinful nature he could not keep the law--“God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” Romans 5:1; 3:31; 8:3, 4.[2]

The purpose of the law is to bring me to Christ, but it cannot forgive me for my sins. Instead it condemns me. I cannot change my sinful heart, so it leads me to Christ who is the only one who can accomplish all of this for me.

The terms of the “old covenant” were: Obey and live --“If a man do, he shall even live in them,” (Ezekiel 20:11; Leviticus 18:5); but, “cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them.” Deuteronomy 27:27. The “new covenant” was established upon “better promises” the promise of forgiveness of sins and of the grace of God to renew the heart and bring it into harmony with the principles of God’s law. “This shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel;

After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts ... I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.” Jeremiah 31:33, 34.

The same law that was engraved upon the tables of stone is written by the Holy Spirit upon the tables of the heart. Instead of going about to establish our own righteousness we accept the righteousness of Christ. His blood atones for our sins. His obedience is accepted for us. Then the heart renewed by the Holy Spirit will bring forth “the fruits of the Spirit.” Through the grace of Christ we shall live in obedience to the law of God written upon our hearts. Having the spirit of Christ, we shall walk even as He walked.[3]

When the mind is drawn to the cross of Calvary, Christ by imperfect sight is discerned on the shameful cross. Why did He die? In consequence of sin. What is sin? The transgression of the law. Then the eyes are open to see the character of sin. The law is broken but cannot pardon the transgressor. It is our schoolmaster

condemning us to punishment. Where is the remedy? The law drives us to Christ, who was hanged upon the cross that He might be able to impart His righteousness to fallen, sinful man and thus present men to His Father in His righteous character.[4]

Only Christ can forgive, renew the heart, provide righteousness and produce in me the obedience which the law requires.

But when is faith come? When Jesus lived on this earth? When He died on Calvary? According to Paul in Galatians 3:22, “that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.” Faith comes when the law leads me to Christ for pardon, help and salvation. This is what Paul teaches. And this happens to each of us at different times, even to members of the same family. The Spirit of God working on our hearts, often for long periods of time, produces the conviction of sin and condemnation of the law, then the law which cannot help me, leads me to Christ and faith in Him for the help which I so

desperately need.

This process is described in greater detail in the Great Controversy:

Wherever the word of God has been faithfully preached, results have followed that attested its divine origin. The Spirit of God accompanied the message of His servants, and the word was with power. Sinners felt their consciences quickened. The “light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world,” illumined the secret chambers of their souls, and the hidden things of darkness were made manifest. Deep conviction took hold upon their minds and hearts. They were convinced of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment to come. They had a sense of the righteousness of Jehovah, and felt the terror of appearing, in their guilt and uncleanness, before the Searcher of hearts. In anguish they cried out, “Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” As the cross of Calvary, with its infinite sacrifice for the sins of men, was revealed, they saw that nothing but the merits of Christ could suffice to atone for their

transgressions; this alone could reconcile man to God. With faith and humility they accepted the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world. Through the blood of Jesus they had “remission of sins that are past.”[5]

Even for those who have been brought to Christ and faith in Him, the law on stone is still needed. Why? Because we can neglect Him in our busy life or grow calloused and distant by neglect of His Word and prayer. We lose contact and wander with almost no relationship to Christ. Worse still, we can backslide. But thanks to God, He does not forsake us. The Holy Spirit is still on the job and the law is still active to again bring us to Christ. When the law was proclaimed from Sinai, God made known to men the holiness of His character, that by contrast they might see the sinfulness of their own. The law was given to convict them of sin, and reveal their need of a Saviour. It would do this as its principles were applied to the heart by the Holy Spirit. This work it is still to do. In the life of Christ the principles of the law are made plain; and as the Holy Spirit of God touches the heart, as

the light of Christ reveals to men their need of His cleansing blood and His justifying righteousness, the law is still an agent in bringing us to Christ, that we may be justified by faith.[6]

As we have learned, Christ is also the moral law, the living representation of the law. In Him is found and seen the justice of the law on stone as well as the love embodied there. While we may be convicted of sin by the moral law; often this conviction and our realization of the sinfulness of sin as portrayed by the law on stone is rather minimal and superficial, but when we are brought to Christ and behold His purity and holiness, our sins suddenly appear in their vileness. But this is not discouraging or hopeless. Let us review the experience of Peter at the time when Christ performed the miracle of the great draft of fish.

Peter had known the law all of his life and was certain that he understood it well, but never did he perceive himself as a sinner. For some reason his understanding of the law did not lead him to a personal conviction of sin. On the other hand he

seemed quite confident of his righteousness.

Now, in this miracle, Peter perceives in Jesus something that enabled him to see in himself that which had eluded him.

Now when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught. And Simon answering said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net. And when they had this done, they enclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake. And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink. When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, 'Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.' Luke 5:4–9.

That hardened fisherman comprehended the enormity of the miracle of so many fish and He realized the holiness of the Christ. From his lips

poured forth spontaneously those words “Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.” Luke 5:8. Never before had Peter felt like that nor uttered such thoughts. Why?

But Peter was unmindful now of boats or lading. This miracle, above any other he had ever witnessed, was to him a manifestation of divine power. In Jesus he saw One who held all nature under His control. The presence of divinity revealed his own unholiness. Love for his Master, shame for his own unbelief, gratitude for the condescension of Christ, above all, the sense of his uncleanness in the presence of infinite purity, overwhelmed him. While his companions were securing the contents of the net, Peter fell at the Saviour’s feet, exclaiming, “Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.”[7]

It was the “presence of divinity” manifested and perceived by Peter, and the presence of infinite purity. What a contrast between the purity of Jesus and the sinfulness of man. So it is that the presence of Jesus produces a deeper, stronger conviction of

sin than the law on stone. This is how Jesus functions as the justice of the moral law.

But the best is still to be seen. The Bible tells us that Peter “fell down at Jesus knees” when he said “Depart from me.” Luke 5:8. Desire of Ages adds one thought at that point:

Peter exclaimed, “Depart from me; for I am a sinful man;” yet he clung to the feet of Jesus, feeling that he could not be parted from Him.”

Why does he cry “Depart” and then hold on to Jesus’ feet so that He cannot leave? Because Jesus is also the living ceremonial law -- the sacrifice for all of our sins, -- the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world. Peter knew this. Over and over he had seen God’s great mercy and grace demonstrated in the life of Christ. The forgiving mercy of God in the ceremonial law and the sacrificial system were a living reality in the daily life of Jesus. Therefore, Peter had faith and hope in the great mercy of Christ and he held on like Jacob of old who said, “I will not let thee go except thou

bless me.” Genesis 32:26.

How wonderful is the plan of God. In Jesus are both the justice of the law and the mercy of the ceremonial law. But they are both found in the One Great Person. In Jesus we never need feel guilty very long because the same purity which condemns me is part of the mercy and grace which forgives me, accepts me, and counts me righteous. In the old system I remained condemned and guilty until I could find or buy a proper sacrifice, come to the temple, and kill it. In the person of Jesus Justice and Mercy have kissed each other.

Notes:

1. Selected Messages, Vol. 1, p. 234
2. Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 373.
3. Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 372.
4. Selected Messages, Vol. 1, p. 341.
5. Great Controversy, p. 461.
6. Signs of the Times, 3/29/1910.
7. Desire of Ages, p. 246.
8. Ibid.

Chapter 8

Laying the Glory of Man in the Dust

When the law brings us to Christ, we behold the beauty and perfection of His character, His matchless charms. While we are strongly attracted by such holiness and are drawn to behold Him and never stop staring at such beauty, other less pleasant convictions and emotions are produced by the same perfection.

What is justification by faith? It is the work of God in laying the glory of man in the dust, and doing for man that which it is not in his power to do for himself.[1]

“Laying the glory of man in the dust”--it is the glory of Christ that lays our glory in the dust. By such contrast suddenly all my righteousness is but “filthy rags.” Isaiah 64:6. The law has already pointed out my sins and brought me to Jesus for

forgiveness, acceptance, deliverance and peace. While it is wonderful and appealing to come to Jesus, when we really see Him in His glory and righteousness, it is very humbling. This revelation of Christ makes painfully clear the vileness and sinfulness of sin. It probably has nothing to do with guilt, but is an extreme realization of how bad sin really is. It is a most humbling experience, yet not a depressing, discouraging one. No matter how vile and degraded I may appear in my own mind, Jesus is still there before me holding out as a free gift His flawless perfect righteousness. It is for me to receive by faith. The grace of Christ gives it to those who are totally undeserving. If we remember this, then the humbling exposure of my sinfulness is filled with radiant abundant hope. Like Peter by the sea, we feel like telling Jesus to depart from us, but still hold on to Him so He cannot leave. We know He is willing “to do that which we have no power to do for ourselves.” “When men see their own nothingness, they are prepared to be clothed with the righteousness of Christ.”[2]

We must be careful we do not misunderstand

this statement. Christ is not a critic or a spy seeking to point out all our failures and sins and this is not what He does in this experience. Satan is the “accuser of the brethren,” not Jesus. Let us be careful that we do not apply the work of Satan to Christ who is so unlike the enemy of man. Perhaps this experience is better described as a man with an old car which is ready for the junk yard. He has had it for so long and has become so accustomed to its rattles and jerks and appearance that it isn’t so bad. But one day, unbeknown to him, someone parks a beautiful new luxurious automobile right beside his. As he comes walking out to his old car, suddenly the comparison is appalling. While he may have been content and satisfied with his old wreck and may have even had some pride in it, it is suddenly all forgotten, replaced by the vision of that beautiful new machine.

And when he learns that the new one is all his as a free gift, he then becomes very excited. But what is the catch? How much does it cost? What must he do to have it? There is just one requirement: The Giver only asks that he give

himself and the old junker to the Giver to become His possession, that He might be given the opportunity to lead him into a new life unlike the old one.

So it is with us when we get a view of the flawless, perfect righteousness of Jesus and comprehend that it is a gift to us. It is then that we are convinced of how decrepit our righteousness has been. All that He asks in return is that we give ourselves to Him without reserve. Surely this is the greatest “deal” or bargain that anyone could imagine. Yes, God is this good; and the matchless charms of Christ produce these amazing results in such a gentle, gracious manner.

With this in mind, perhaps we can now look at some of the scriptures which were used back in 1888--especially by Waggoner:

“For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.”
Galatians 6:3.

“But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousness is as filthy rags ...” Isaiah 64:6.

“... Verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity.” Psalms 39:5.

“... Surely every man is vanity.” Psalm 39:11.

“Put them in fear, O Lord: that the nations may know themselves to be but men.” Psalm 9:20.

“All nations before him are as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity.” Isaiah 40:17.

“For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing ...” Romans 7:18.

Perhaps one scripture best describes the theme of his preaching:

“... and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.” Philippians 3:3.

The reasoning was that since sin has made me such a person as these texts describe, how can I trust myself or my thinking. Since I cannot trust self, whom can I trust? Not other men for they too have the same weaknesses that I have. This is why the Spirit and the law bring us to Christ. Surely, someone with such beauty of character as His can be totally trustworthy.

To those who have become so guilt ridden and sensitive to their own sin and failings this seems to be the worst possible solution. Many refuse to listen to it. But this is the work of Satan the accuser, not of Christ. And even though it appears too dismal and depressing, it is the road of success and peace and victory.

Nothing is apparently more helpless, yet really more invincible, than the soul that feels its nothingness and relies wholly on the merits of the Saviour. God would send every angel in heaven to the aid of such a one, rather than allow him to be overcome.[3]

Before we will ever trust in Christ and His Righteousness, we must be led to the condition where we cannot trust ourselves. This may be accomplished by a lifetime of failure and defeat but the results of that may be disastrous. The method of Jesus is much more gentle and encouraging. His plan is to bring us to Him and His matchless charms, to a revelation of His amazing grace and great love for us. While it is a humbling experience it leads one to dependence on the only righteous One.

With untold love our God has loved us, and our love awakens toward Him as we comprehend something of the length and breadth and depth and height of this love that passeth knowledge. By the revelation of the attractive loveliness of Christ, by the knowledge of His love expressed to us while we were yet sinners, the stubborn heart is melted and subdued, and the sinner is transformed and becomes a child of heaven. God does not employ compulsory measures; love is the agent which He uses to expel sin from the heart. By it He changes pride into humility, and enmity and unbelief into

love and faith.[4]

It is the attractive loveliness of Christ, not compulsory measures, which Christ uses to reveal to us our sin and helplessness and His great power and ability to bless us. Thank God for His goodness and love. To many this all appears very confusing and contradictory. Of course Satan would want it that way. Perhaps this quotation from Steps to Christ will clarify some of the conflict:

The closer you come to Jesus, the more faulty you will appear in your own eyes; for your vision will be clearer, and your imperfections will be seen in broad and distinct contrast to His perfect nature. This is evidence that Satan's delusions have lost their power; that the vivifying influence of the Spirit of God is arousing you.

No deep-seated love for Jesus can dwell in the heart that does not realize its own sinfulness. The soul that is transformed by the grace of Christ will admire His divine character; but if we do not see

our own moral deformity, it is unmistakable evidence that we have not had a view of the beauty and excellence of Christ.

The less we see to esteem in ourselves, the more we shall see to esteem in the infinite purity and loveliness of our Saviour. A view of our sinfulness drives us to Him who can pardon; and when the soul, realizing its helplessness, reaches out after Christ, He will reveal Himself in power. The more our sense of need drives us to Him and to the word of God, the more exalted views we shall have of His character, and the more fully we shall reflect His image.[5]

We need not be afraid of seeing ourselves as we really are. This is not a hopeless, discouraging situation. It is not our fault that we were born in a world of sin and have sinned. God will not blame us or condemn us for that which we could not avoid. But He desires and works to rescue us from this condition and situation. He knows that we are unable of ourselves to accomplish this, so Christ came on a rescue mission “to seek and to save that

which was lost.” But He has difficulty rescuing those who think they must rescue themselves and are able to accomplish it. It then becomes a conflict between two saviours--One who is able, and one who is helpless. What a tragedy that precious souls are lost who could have been saved, if they only would admit their inability and seek the help which God has sent to save us.

Notes:

1. Testimonies to Ministers, p. 456.
2. Testimonies to Ministers, p. 456; Christ Our Righteousness, p. 104.
3. Testimonies to the Church, Vol. 7, p. 17.
4. Thoughts From the Mount of Blessings, p. 76-77.
5. Steps to Christ, p. 64-65.

Chapter 9

Making His Righteousness Mine

When the law brings me to Jesus and by the revelation of His matchless charms, I see my own nothingness or lack of righteousness, I need not despair, for Christ stands before me offering to me as my very own His beautiful righteousness as a free gift. It is mine if I will receive it. “The righteousness of God is embodied in Christ. We receive righteousness by receiving Him.” Thoughts From the Mount of Blessings, p. 18. John 3:16--He gave us Jesus. John 1:12--“But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.” And we may receive Him. I John 5:12--“He that hath the Son ...” We may possess Him. And when we possess Jesus, we have righteousness. Jesus promised to fill us with righteousness: Matthew 5:6--“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness for they shall be filled.”

Not by painful struggles or wearisome toil, not by gift or sacrifice, is righteousness obtained; but it is freely given to every soul who hungers and thirsts to receive it. “Ho, everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat, ... without money and without price.” “Their righteousness is of Me, saith the Lord,” and “This is His name whereby He shall be called, **THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.**”
Isaiah 55:1; 54:17; Jeremiah. 23:6.[1]

The Bible calls it righteousness by faith; Romans 3:22: “... righteousness of God which is by faith.” The law brings me to Christ, the living law. There I behold His righteousness in all its perfection and beauty. Such perfection makes me realize that all my righteousness is but filthy rags. Oh, how I long to be like Him! I realize that His righteousness is a free gift, but how do I receive it? Everyone will tell you it is by faith. But here there is apparently a difference of opinion.

Ellen White used a strong word concerning

faith and its function in regard to Christ's righteousness:

It will do you no good merely to talk of the righteousness of Christ; you must appropriate it by living faith.[2]

Repeatedly, she uses this word "appropriate" in describing the activity of faith in receiving the righteousness of Christ.

Many have a nominal faith in Christ, but they know nothing of that vital dependence upon Him which appropriates the merits of a crucified and risen Saviour.[3]

Of course Christ's merits are His righteousness and here she uses that word "appropriate" again--also describing faith as a "vital dependence."

If you would stand through the time of trouble, you must know Christ, and appropriate the gift of his righteousness, which he imputes to the repentant sinner.[4]

Genuine faith appropriates the righteousness of Christ, and the sinner is made an overcomer with Christ; for he is made a partaker of the divine nature, and thus divinity and humanity are combined.[5]

The word “appropriate” has several meanings but the obvious one in this context is: “To take exclusive possession of.” Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary.

In these quotations and many more Ellen White is telling me that my faith must take possession of the righteousness of Christ, so that I can claim it as mine. Other quotations use different terms to describe the action of faith but they do emphasize the idea of taking possession of His righteousness.

In order to meet the requirements of the law, our faith must grasp the righteousness of Christ, accepting it as our righteousness.[6]

Faith is the condition upon which God has seen

fit to promise pardon to sinners; not that there is any virtue in faith whereby salvation is merited, but because faith can lay hold of the merits of Christ, the remedy provided for sin. Faith can present Christ's perfect obedience instead of the sinner's transgression and defection.[7]

Through faith we receive the grace of God; but faith is not our Saviour. It earns nothing. It is the hand by which we lay hold upon Christ, and appropriate His merits, the remedy for sin.[8]

“Grasp” and “lay hold” tell the same story as “appropriate.” Genuine faith takes possession of the righteousness of Christ. This was the teaching and understanding of Ellen White, and Jones and Waggoner as well. (See Lessons in Faith published by Pacific Union College Press.) But this is not the kind of faith which we hear about today. Much of the time it is merely a trusting in Jesus and His righteousness as our hope for justification, etc., believing that God will accept it in my place, but the concept that it is something I may possess now and that by faith I can grasp it and claim it as mine

now would probably be described as radical presumption or some peculiar fanaticism. To these messengers of 1888 and Ellen White faith was much more than some passive spectator activity. It was an active, involved participation which produced and accomplished tangible results.

But we must not forget the motivation for this type of faith. What is behind all of this? Prior to this faith performing in this manner is the action of the law bringing me to Christ where I behold His righteousness as “matchless charms” until I am so attracted to His perfection that I find myself charmed and gazing at Him. Do you recall this glory which we studied in II Corinthians 3 in Chapter V of this book? It is by beholding His glory that the changes are produced.

“But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory even as by the Spirit of the Lord.” II Corinthians 3:18. This beholding and faith seem to operate hand in hand. Notice these descriptions of faith and beholding:

... We can do this only as we grasp by faith the righteousness of Christ. By beholding Jesus we receive a living, expanding principle in the heart, and the Holy Spirit carries on the work, and the believer advances from grace to grace, from strength to strength, from character to character. He conforms to the image of Christ, until in spiritual growth he attains unto the measure of the full stature in Christ Jesus. Thus Christ makes an end of the curse of sin, and sets the believing soul free from its action and effect.[9]

Brethren and sisters, it is by beholding that we become changed. By dwelling upon the love of God and our Saviour by contemplating the perfection of the divine character and claiming the righteousness of Christ as ours by faith, we are to be transformed into the same image.[10]

Beholding is “contemplating the perfection of the divine character” and faith is “claiming the righteousness of Christ as ours.” The result of such action is a transformation into the same image.

... Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith means the contemplation of Christ, beholding Christ, ever cherishing the dear Saviour as our very best and honored friend, so that we would not in any action grieve and offend Him.[11]

Faith as here portrayed is a contemplation of the righteousness of Christ, a meditation on His perfection in all its aspects, a reviewing in the mind of His character and virtues. It is a thinking of Jesus, a mental dwelling on Him in all of His activities and teachings. As I do this, I adore and love Him, and long to be like Him and realizing that He is mine for God has given Him to all of us, then I can certainly claim Him and His righteousness as mine.

In all of this, we must be cautioned against the thinking that this activity of faith is some difficult striving and struggle or effort to be like Him. Rather it is a spontaneous response to the matchless charms of Jesus. It is an action and response stimulated by Christ and His perfection. It

is Christ working on my heart and mind producing thoughts and emotions, responses, longing and trust. Like a master musician, He is operating the heart strings of my soul producing beautiful, delightful vibrations.

This drawing and attraction of the beauty of Christ produces a love for Christ and a relationship which is but our response to His first loving us.

The faith that is unto salvation is not a casual faith, it is not the mere consent of the intellect, it is belief rooted in the heart, that embraces Christ as a personal Saviour, assured that He can save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by Him. To believe that He will save others, but will not save you is not genuine faith; but when the soul lays hold upon Christ as the only hope of salvation, then genuine faith is manifested. This faith leads its possessor to place all the affections of the soul upon Christ; his understanding is under the control of the Holy Spirit, and his character is molded after the divine likeness. His faith is not a dead faith, but a faith that works by love, and leads him to behold

the beauty of Christ, and to become assimilated to the divine character.[12]

Do you grasp the love that is here described: “Belief rooted in the heart that embraces Christ,” “place all the affections of the soul upon Christ,” “a faith that works by love, and leads him to behold the beauty of Christ”? Faith and love always must act together. How can you love your spouse if you do not have faith in him or her? So with Jesus when we view His righteousness. How can we help but love Him and also how can anyone help but trust Him? This love and relationship is described as follows:

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

this intimacy of connection and communion is formed, our sins are laid upon Christ; His righteousness is imputed to us.[13]

Again it is not something you have to do or are required to do. If His matchless charms have grabbed your heart and mind, you will be delighted to have “supreme preference, perfect reliance, and entire consecration.” These are not requirements, but rather natural responses to His great love for us as seen in His attractive character. Our faith must work by love, because of love, not because of obligation or duty. This understanding and reaction leads us to one more definition of faith found in the Spirit of Prophecy:

... The only faith that will benefit us is that which embraces Him as a personal Saviour; which appropriates His merits to ourselves. Many hold faith as an opinion. Saving faith is a transaction by which those who receive Christ join themselves in covenant relation with God. Genuine faith is life. A living faith means an increase of vigor, confiding trust, by which the soul becomes a conquering

power.[14]

“Saving faith is a transaction.” It is a two-way street. It is not only Christ giving Himself and His righteousness to me but I also give. My part is “to join myself in covenant relation with God.” Biblically, this is terminology used to describe marriage vows. Great Controversy explains it thus:

In the Bible the sacred and enduring character of the relation that exists between Christ and His church is represented by the union of marriage. The Lord has joined His people to Himself by a solemn covenant, He promising to be their God, and they pledging themselves to be His and His alone. He declares: “I will betroth thee unto Me forever; yea I will betroth thee unto Me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies.” Hosea 2:19. And again: “I am married unto you.” Jeremiah 3:14. And Paul employs the same figure in the New Testament when he says: “I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.” 2 Corinthians 11:2.[15]

Like a woman deeply in love with this man she is happy and pleased to commit herself to him promising to love, to honor, to obey and to cherish. Love produces the total commitment.

This is the kind of faith presented with the 1888 message. How encouraging to know that all of this is ours when the law brings us to Christ. Oh how much He loves us and what a pleasant plan God has devised to save us! The plan itself reveals God's great grace and love and desire that we might truly be His.

Notes:

1. Thoughts From the Mount of Blessings, p. 18.
2. Review and Herald, July 2, 1889.
3. Selected Messages, Vol. 1, p. 389.
4. Review and Herald, Nov. 22, 1892.
5. Selected Messages, Vol. 1, p. 363-364.
6. Selected Messages, Vol. 1, p. 374.
7. Selected Messages, Vol. 1, p. 366-367.
8. Desire of Ages, p. 175.

9. Selected Messages, Vol. 1, p. 395.
10. Testimonies to the Church, Vol. 5, p. 744.
11. Testimonies to Ministers, p. 387.
12. Selected Messages, Vol. 1, p. 391-392.
13. Testimonies to the Church, Vol. 5, p. 229.
14. Desire of Ages, p. 347; Ministry of Healing, p. 62.
15. Great Controversy, p. 381.

Chapter 10

Buying Righteousness

The “matchless charms of Jesus” were described by Jesus in an unusual parable: “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.” Matthew 13:45, 46.

The Spirit of Prophecy has two definitions for the pearl of great price:

... Christ Himself is the pearl of great price. ... The righteousness of Christ, as a pure, white pearl, has no defect, no stain.[1]

Christ is the pearl of great price and the righteousness of Christ is as a pure, white pearl. These are not in conflict for Thoughts From the Mount of Blessings explains “The righteousness of God is embodied in Christ. We receive righteousness by receiving Him.” Thoughts From

the Mount of Blessings, p. 18. So the righteousness of Christ, embodied in Christ is as a pure white pearl. But the key thought in Matthew 13:45, 46 is how the merchant man obtains the pearl. “He sold all that he had and bought it.” This is what Jesus himself taught. But it doesn’t seem to be in harmony with other teachings in the Bible. Buying the pearl (righteousness) sounds so worldly, so materialistic. How can such a teaching fit into the rest of the Bible?

In the book of Revelation, Jesus again speaks of buying righteousness. Revelation 1:5 describes Jesus as the faithful witness and He speaks to the Laodiceans in Revelation 3:14. His counsel to them to correct their nakedness is to buy from Him “white raiment,” which is the righteousness of Christ. Revelation 3:18. [2] Several times on that page Ellen White gives this explanation. Thus Jesus again tells us that we buy His righteousness.

Revelation 3:20 describes Jesus as knocking at doors offering to sell these precious treasures described in verse 18, one of which is

righteousness. Notice these quotations:

The great Vendor of spiritual riches is inviting your recognition. [Revelation. 3:18 quoted.] ... The Saviour comes with jewels of truth of the richest value in distinction from all counterfeits, all that is spurious. He comes to every house, to every door: He is knocking, presenting His priceless treasure, urging, “Buy of me.” [3]

Jesus is going from door to door, standing in front of every soul temple, proclaiming, “I stand at the door, and knock.” As a heavenly merchantman, He opens His treasures and cries, “Buy of me...”[4]

“Open your doors,” says the great Merchantman, the possessor of spiritual riches, “and transact your business with Me. It is I, your Redeemer, who counsels you to buy of Me.” [5]

Jesus here presents Himself as a door to door Salesman, the great Vendor, a heavenly Merchantman. He is selling. He seems to urge Laodiceans to buy these precious treasures from

Him, one of which is righteousness--the white raiment.

He urges, “Transact your business with me.” Do you recall the description of faith found in Desire of Ages quoted in our previous chapter? Saving faith is a transaction by which those who receive Christ join themselves in covenant relation with God.[6]

This transaction concept is much easier to understand when we realize that the “buying” in the Bible is much different from our modern methods of buying. Isaiah 55:1--“Buy without money and without price”.

How can you buy without money? The same way much of the world conducts its business today. It is called the “BARTER SYSTEM.” You simply trade what you have for that which you need and do not possess. No money is involved. Even the poor are able to trade what they have for what they do not have. So what do we trade in order to buy righteousness from Christ?

In the parable the pearl is not represented as a gift. The merchantman bought it at the price of all that he had. Many question the meaning of this, since Christ is represented in the Scriptures as a gift. He is a gift, but only to those who give themselves, soul, body, and spirit, to Him without reserve. We are to give ourselves to Christ, to live a life of willing obedience to all His requirements. All that we are, all the talents and capabilities we possess, are the Lord's, to be consecrated to His service. When we thus give ourselves wholly to Him, Christ, with all the treasures of heaven, gives Himself to us. We obtain the pearl of great price.[7]

The giving of ourselves to Christ is what we have to trade with Jesus. This is how we buy His righteousness. How much of self do we give to Christ? The quotation says we must give all without reserve. Jesus taught the same thing in Matthew 13:46. The merchantman sold all that he had in order to buy the pearl.

The Spirit of Prophecy describes this giving of all in the most explicit terms. Unfortunately many misunderstand these quotations. As you read them, please do not take the obvious meaning because there is an underlying meaning that changes the entire thought.

... It is obtained by willing obedience, by giving ourselves to Christ as His own purchased possession. ...The price we are required to pay is not gold or silver. ... God calls for your willing obedience. He asks you to give up your sins.[8]

There are some who seem to be always seeking for the heavenly pearl. But they do not make an entire surrender of their wrong habits. They do not die to self that Christ may live in them. Therefore they do not find the precious pearl. They have not overcome unholy ambition and their love for worldly attractions. They do not take up the cross and follow Christ in the path of self-denial and sacrifice.[9]

Many who read these thoughts say “I am going

to obey if it kills me.” They hope by a strong resolve and extreme effort that they will surrender all and truly obey. Others read it and state, “I give up. I might as well quit. I have tried and tried and all I do is fail.” Both groups have missed the theme of the whole chapter and have not discovered why the merchantman sells all to buy the precious pearl. The writer once spent a few months in a place where they have pink pearls. It was Bangladesh. From all over the world come the connoisseurs of pearls. Never have you seen addicts like pearl buyers. They would come to the little jewelry shop early in the morning and stay there all day carefully examining each pearl. Let us suppose that one buyer planned to make a beautiful necklace for his lover. He begins by looking for tiny seed pearls of the same size, and then gradually enlarges the size of each pearl, in pairs of course, until he comes to the center pearl which is to be the very largest that he can find. It is “the pearl of great price.” Perhaps he searches for it for years and at long last he discovers it. He dare not shout for joy because someone would buy it before he could. So he races home and proceeds to sell all that he possesses in

order to buy this special pearl.

But, why would anyone sell all he possesses to buy one pearl? Is he a fool, or is he wise? He certainly appears foolish. The people of Jesus' time understood why. They had seen the pearl buyers and knew their thinking. There is only one reason that he would sell all to buy the pearl of great price. It is his tremendous esteem, his great appreciation and valuation of the pearl. It is of the highest priority in his life. It supersedes all that he has ever possessed or desired and he gladly trades all his possessions in order to possess it. Perhaps we will grasp the meaning of this as we recall Jesus' other counsel concerning pearls: "... neither cast ye your pearls before swine." Matthew 7:6. Why not? Pigs just cannot appreciate pretty rocks. They have no appeal to them. They may like garbage etc., but pearls are of no value to them.

So the question is "What do we appreciate?" Jesus said, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness." Matthew 5:6. We must not forget that the pearl of great price is but a

symbol of the great luster and beauty and glory of Christ and His righteousness. What kind of longing and appreciation do we have for Him and His righteousness?

If you will recall when you read pages 117 and 118 of Christ's Object Lessons that the name and theme of the chapter is "The Pearl." How different these quotations appear. Obedience, surrender, giving up all sin and worldly desires are not then something one is forced to do or must do. The motivation for sacrificing all is the high esteem for the pearl. The pearl is so valuable that they gladly give up all to possess it. It is not torture and affliction, but happiness and joy.

When you read the parable preceding the story of the pearl buyers, you will catch the motivation. "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field." Matthew 13:44.

When he discovers the treasure, he again hides

it, and with joy (for joy thereof) goes to sell all he has in order to buy it. Why is he so happy? Because the treasure is so valuable to him; it is of greater importance than all he owns. The selling of all he owns, a symbol of giving all of ourselves to Christ without reserve, is the happiest experience of his entire life. He is having fun, great joy. He has now found the one thing that gives him everlasting satisfaction, eternal joy.

The treasure in the field, the pearl of great price are but feeble symbols of the great glory, the exalted value of Christ's righteousness. It is only when we find this great treasure in Christ and become so captivated by it that it becomes the greatest, most precious possession in all of life; that obedience, self-denial, sacrifice and the complete consecration of our all to Christ becomes a pleasure instead of a very difficult, painful task. Jesus is the joy of living. Only then does "duty become a delight and sacrifice a pleasure."

Lead them to behold the One "altogether lovely." When once the gaze is fixed upon Him,

the life finds its center. The enthusiasm, the generous devotion, the passionate ardor of the youth find here their true object. Duty becomes a delight, and sacrifice a pleasure. To honor Christ, to become like Him, to work for Him is the life's highest ambition and its greatest joy.[10]

The Bible attempts to describe the beauty and glory and attractiveness of Christ in such terms as: “the lily of the valley,” the “bright and morning star,” the “fairest of ten thousand,” “the desire of all the ages and nations.” Oh, how wonderful is Jesus! How glorious is His righteousness. This is what Ellen White meant when she spoke of “the matchless charms of Jesus.” Here is the great attraction, the magnetism, the One great hope of the Father to lure and attract us from this appeal of sin and selfishness to draw us out of the mire and hopelessness of sin.

What a trade! My filthy rags for His spotless robe of beauty and perfection. Yes! You can buy it, the greatest bargain ever offered to anyone and it will make you truly rich; for all the treasures of

Christ are for all eternity.

This exaltation of the glory and beauty of Christ as the pearl of great price produced the Pentecostal success.

... As the apostles set forth the glory of the Only-Begotten of the Father, three thousand souls were convicted. They were made to see themselves as they were, sinful and polluted, and Christ as their friend and Redeemer. Christ was lifted up, Christ was glorified. ...[11]

When Christ was exalted and glorified by the apostles, when they presented the glory of Jesus like the splendor of a great pearl shining in all its beauty, then thousands were converted. But let us remember that this glory is the righteousness of Christ--His perfect, gracious, loving character.

The latter rain and the finishing of God's work will come when again the glory of Christ is presented in the Spirit's power.

... The Spirit awaits our demand and reception. Christ is again to be revealed in His fullness by the Holy Spirit's power. Men will discern the value of the precious pearl, and with the apostle Paul they will say, "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." Philippians 3:7, 8.[12]

"Men will discern the value of the precious pearl." Then it is a joy to forsake all in order to have Jesus. Then our song will be, "Take the world but give me Jesus." For over 100 years God has been waiting for us to discover the heart of the message of 1888. We have been content with something far less than the pearl of great price and the matchless charms of Jesus. In hundreds of ways the Father and the Holy Spirit have attempted to lead us to Jesus and His righteousness. At the same time, Satan has done his utmost to detract and lead us away from the attractive loveliness of Christ, for he knows how great an effect it will have upon us and the church. At this very moment, the Spirit is

appealing to us and drawing us to this beauty of Jesus. Oh, how much we need Him! Now is the time to transact our business with Jesus and possess the heavenly treasure!

**Oh friend,
DO YOU LOVE JESUS?**

Notes:

1. Christ Object Lessons, p. 115.
2. Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, Vol. 7, p. 965.
3. Letter 66, 1894; Bible Commentary, Vol. 7, p. 964.
4. Bible Commentary, Vol. 7, p. 965.
5. Review and Herald, Aug. 7, 1894; Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, Vol. 7.
6. Desire of Ages, p. 347.
7. Christ's Object Lessons, p. 116.
8. Christ's Object Lessons, p. 117.
9. Ibid., p. 118.
10. Education, p. 297.
11. Christ's Object Lessons, p. 120.

12. Christ's Object Lessons, p. 120.