

JUSTIFIED

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Introduction

As a teacher on college and university campuses, I have seen many friendships develop between young men and women. I have also noticed what often happens when a friendship breaks up. The two young people who have previously sought and cherished each other's company begin to shun each other. If one of them notices that the other is walking on a path on which they will meet, he or she actually turns off a side path to avoid the meeting. After their friendly relationship ruptures, they are uncomfortable in each other's presence.

Men and women in sin suffer from a fractured or broken relationship with God. As a result, they often run away from Him. Adam and Eve, in God's own garden, were the first to do this. Ever since, men and women have been running away from God, because they are uncomfortable in His presence.

The message of the Bible aims to mend the

broken relationship between God and man. We speak of it as "putting a person right with God" or justification, or simply as redemption through Jesus Christ.

The Old Testament points forward to Christ's first coming and His sacrificial death for all mankind on Calvary, so that the chasm between God and man might be bridged and the friendship restored. The New Testament presents the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies about Christ's bridging the gap between God and man by dying on Calvary. It also presents Him as our intercessor, seated now in glory at the right hand of God. Soon He will return to this earth, accompanied by His angels, to gather all those who have chosen to be brought back into a lasting friendship with Him. These have experienced the atonement, or atonement with God, and are the redeemed.

The Bible has no one concept, or model, of the atonement, nor does it present it only one way the beginning of Christian life in Christ and remaining

in Him. It presents both under many different models, or symbols. Each of the different theories, both of the atonement and the beginning of Christian life, usually employs but one symbol—or illustration and makes that symbol or illustration determinative. But biblical theology uses many symbols. These different symbols are necessary to present "the manifold wisdom of God" (Eph. 3:10) displayed in the many-faceted plan of restoration and salvation.

Jesus usually presents the way of salvation by the use of parables: the lost coin, the lost sheep, the prodigal son, the wedding garment, the branches abiding in the vine, the childlike condition of a believer, and the new birth, to mention hut a few. John teaches that through faith sinners become children of God. Paul uses the symbols of graftage and adoption, among others.

But Paul's best-known method of showing how a sinner becomes a child of God is with the model of justification and justification by faith. More specifically, justification is the model he employs

in his epistles to the Galatians and Romans to explain how a sinner is granted time to be put into a harmonious relationship with God. Paul drew the illustration of justification from the court of law. As such, it is a forensic illustration. But this illustration by itself, cannot, any more than any other New Testament metaphoric illustration, adequately portray the total range of New Testament teachings on the beginning of Christian Life and the plan of salvation.

Ever since Martin Luther brought the teaching of justification by faith to the attention of men and women, its ramifications have been eagerly discussed and even heatedly debated. This has been true also during the comparatively short history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

This short hook reexamines some of the facets of justification so that we, as believers in the manifold mercy of God, may come into and remain in a friendly relationship with God and finally be with Him in His kingdom. But in order to understand how a sinner—as everyone is—can be

put right with God, or justified, we must first understand what sin is. We ought also to have a clear concept of Christian perfection. With that as its purpose, this book begins with a discussion of sin and ends with a fathoming of Christian perfection.

It is the author's hope and prayer that the words of this book may be not only intellectually enlightening, but that also they may help and enable men and women to know Jesus better, love Him more devotedly, and follow Him more gladly. In this way they can experience both temporal and eternal salvation.

Chapter 1

The Battle for the Will

An unfortunate remark that I heard in my early teens still rankles in my mind. An unwed teenage girl in our neighborhood had become pregnant and given birth to a baby boy. The girl's father, more submissive than wise, commented, "God's way is the best way."

Through that remark the father gave the erroneous impression that God had actively willed this pregnancy. But this pregnancy and birth were not the result of God's will. They were rather a result of the unwise choices of the young couple. But although mistaken the father was still mindful of God. Today, on the other hand, most people believe there is no relationship between personal misfortune, or natural calamity, and moral wrongdoing, or sin. The reason for this is that ours is a post-Christian era in which "sin is a concept which belongs entirely to the religious realm."

Man's vertical, or religious, orientation has almost vanished. Rather than speak about sin, with its implications of moral accountability, we use expressions such as estrangement, alienation, isolation, lostness, maladjustment, meaninglessness, and brokenness. We tend to blame heredity, social conditions, ignorance, and particularly economics, for personal delinquency and crime. Moderners hardly ever interpret their plight with any reference to a personal Creator and Upholder of a moral universe. Man's scapegoat is seldom self. But as John R. W. Scott says: "The problem of evil is located in man himself, not merely in his society."

The apostle Paul and Luther, among others, had a keen awareness of a personal God and their accountability to Him. When Paul was smitten blind on the Damascus road, his thoughts turned instantly to God and he cried out: "What shall I do, Lord?" (Acts 22:10). Even after his conversion Paul called himself the foremost of sinners" (1 Tim. 1:15).

While Luther was in the Augustinian monastery at Erfurt, his constant cry was "How can I find a gracious God?" The Reformers, and theologians up to our time, spoke of sin. But today the zeitgeist, or the spirit of the age, is vastly different; we are living in a new intellectual and spiritual climate from which God is largely absent.

Paul, the foremost of sinners," found Jesus and salvation on the Damascus road. The despairing Augustinian monk Luther discovered a gracious God in the Pauline teaching of justification by faith.

When using the term justification, we apply it to sinners. Justification presupposes criminality, or sin. There is no need for justification or salvation apart from wrongdoing. Nor can there be any appreciation of a gracious God without awareness of personal wrongdoing and sin. A defective concept of sin inevitably leads to a lack of appreciation of justification and salvation. In order to understand and appreciate justification, or pardon for sin, we must first have a realization of

what sin is. After all, what is sin and how did we become sinners?

It goes back to Eden. When God created Adam and Eve, He endowed them with free moral choice. They possessed the ability either of obeying or disobeying their Maker. This is evident from the instruction He gave them concerning the fruit of the tree of knowledge: "You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat" (Gen. 2:16, 17). Adam and Eve were acquainted with God's will, but they were not captives to it. They could depart from it. And departure from God's will is sin.

The ability to make independent choices is part of God's own nature. And He gave this remarkable faculty to Adam and Eve, fully aware of its ultimate cost: His own Son's life on Calvary's cross. But He did it because He longed for the fellowship with beings that were somewhat like Himself. Not robots that would automatically do as He desired, but intelligent, free-willed beings, capable of thinking, deciding, and acting

volitionally, who would love Him and choose His company and way.

Satan knew that the fair couple in God's garden possessed freedom of moral choice. This, he thought, might be the linchpin in turning their affections and allegiance from God to himself, And "Adam was to be tested, to see whether he would be obedient, as the loyal angels, or disobedient. If he stood the test, his instruction to his children would have been only of loyalty."

He and his descendants' trust relationship to God would have resulted in their highest development, since 'higher than the highest human thought can reach is God's ideal for His children. Godliness—godlikeness—is the goal to be reached." Rebellion, on the other hand, would result in disaster and ultimate death. To achieve his goal, Satan subtly wooed Eve to go against God's will by choosing to eat of the forbidden fruit.

Adam's decision to follow Eve's example, to deliberately act contrary to God's will and obey

Satan, was decisively fatal (see I Tim. 2:14). "When man [Adam] transgressed the divine law, his nature became evil, and he was in harmony, and not at variance, with Satan. There exists no enmity between sinful man and the originator of sin. Both became evil through apostasy."

Through the misuse of his God-given free moral agency, Adam became carnal in nature and locked mankind into slavery to Satan. "The outlook of the lower nature is enmity with God" (Roan 8:7, NEB), or "the carnal attitude is inevitably opposed to the purpose of God" (Phillips).

In the service of God, Adam had been free to choose his allegiance. By obeying Satan he jumped, as it were, with all his posterity, from freedom under God into slavery to Satan (see Rom. 6:16; 2 Peter 2:19). Adam's sin affected all mankind.

Man's position in sin is something like that of nations under the Brezhnev doctrine: Democratic or independent nations are free to choose to

convert to Communist but when they have once chosen to adopt the Communistic system of government they lose the right to leave the Communistic fold and reconvert to a democratic system of government.

By violating God's will, Adam and Eve passed from potential immortality to sinful mortality. They bore children after their kind—mortal, with carnal and evil natures, enemies of God. Their firstborn, Cain, let his carnal nature rule him; he cherished feelings of rebellion against God and resented that the curse resulting from Adam's sin had passed upon him and the human race. Abel, on the other hand, chose to be born again. He followed the promptings of God's Spirit and manifested "a spirit of loyalty to God; he saw justice and mercy in the Creator's dealings with the fallen race, and gratefully accepted the hope of redemption."

Cain, a slave of Satan; Abel, a man under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Through only physical birth man has ever since

been the slave of Satan, and his own evil desires and appetites." In Ephesians 2 Paul discusses man's slavish helplessness in sin. He says that all the unregenerate, like the Ephesians before they came to Jesus, were spiritually dead. and followed the desires and imaginings of our [their] lower nature, being in fact under the wrath of God by nature, like everyone else" (Eph. 2:1-3, Phillips).

Mankind's slavery to Satan does not imply that every person is continuously in visible rebellion against God. "Nature will lay buried a great time," said Francis Bacon, "and yet revive upon the occasion, or temptation" But enmity toward God and His will lies always latent within every unconverted person. When sudden violence erupted at the European Cup final in Brussels on May 29, 1985, between the fans of a British soccer team and those of an Italian team, leaving people dead. Roger Rosenblatt commented: "People are brimming with cyclones ready to spin into fury."

Without the new birth, every person born into the world is irretrievably lost for eternity, since he

is by temperament an enemy of God. This is the reason Jesus presented us with the imperative: "Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (John 3:5).

All of us "must be born anew" (verse 7), as was Abel, "not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:13), "not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God" (1 Peter 1:23). Every genuine Christian has experienced this rebirth. Through such regeneration or conversion the sinner has "come to share the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4, TEV). "In Christ he becomes a new person altogether- the past is finished and gone, everything has become fresh and new" (2 Cor. 5:17, Phillips). For the first time in his life, the converted person has "the same attitude that Christ Jesus had" (Phil. 2:5, Goodspeed). This attitude prompted Jesus always to say, "I delight to do thy will, O my God; thy law is within my heart" (Ps. 40:8).

Unlike all other human beings, Jesus had this

attitude from His very birth in Bethlehem, since at His physical birth into this world He was born by the Spirit (see Luke 1:35). Jesus was physically horn 'born again," while yon and I "must he horn again" (John 3:7, KJV).

Natural man rebels against God in attitude, thought, word, and deed. And this is sin. Sin is therefore not always an act. Too often we limit sin, or opposition to God, only to wrong deeds or words. But in the parable of the great separation (Matt. 25:31-46), Jesus enumerated no overt wrong acts committed by those designated as goats. They were not rejected for having performed wrong deeds or spoken unseemly words. They had one nothing wrong, but they had sinned because they had differed from God in motive and attitude.

A confusion as to what constitutes sin or makes a sinner springs from the altogether too prevalent concept that only acts of sin constitute sin. But sinful deeds or words are symptoms of sin rather than themselves being intrinsic sin. They are expressions of an attitude of mental or spiritual

departure from God's will. This is inward evil, or the essence of sin.

Sin is basically relational. Sin is anything which breaks a man's fellowship with God and causes a separation between man and God."

We sin when we rupture our God-intended, intimate union or fellowship with Him. And fellowship with God, as Watchman Nee perceptively observes, exists only when a person will is "united with God's."

Sin is not merely ethics, consisting in the violation of a code of law. It is rather religious, consisting in departure from God. Norman H. Snaith says that sin is "theofugal," a moving away from God. It is therefore correct, as someone has said, that sin is more than a question of breaking God's law; it is a question of breaking God's heart. Adam and Eve did that when they ate of the fruit of the tree of knowledge, then ran and hid in the bowers of the ancient garden; the prodigal did the same when he left home.

Sin resides in the mind and manifests itself in one's choices. Thus "it is not the greatness of the act of disobedience that constitutes sin, hut the fact of variance from God's expressed will in the least particular."

When we give our allegiance to someone other than God, we sin. We may give it to self by exalting self and our ways above God's will and way. In the garden Adam and Eve chose their own way rather than God's when they ate of the forbidden fruit (see Gen. 3:1-7). In this way they sinned.

We may sin simply by cherishing feelings that are not in harmony with God's will. "The law of God takes note of the jealousy, envy, hatred malignity, revenge, lust, and ambition that surge through the soul.

As long as we vary from God's will in any respect, we are sinning. And "we have turned every one to his own way" (Isa. 53:6). In other words, we

are all sinners.

Sin, or departure from God and His will, did not originate on this earth. It originated in heaven, in the very presence of God. The highest of the angels, Lucifer, the light bearer, an intelligent sinless, moral being, misused his free moral choice and concocted sin. The prophet Isaiah speaks of him, under the symbol of the king of Babylon, as saying: "I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God I will set my throne on high; I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will make myself like the Most High" (Isa. 14:13, 14). In aspiring to equality with God. Lucifer made his own choice apart from the will of God.

No one can make our moral choices for us. God will never coerce us to choose His way anymore than He coerced Lucifer and Adam and Eve. He will respect each individual's choice, although it be contrary to His will. He curtails His omnipotence in order to give intelligent, free-willed, moral beings, which you and I are, an area in which to

operate. Jesus put His life on the block and finally gave it to guarantee each person the inalienable right of free moral choice.

The greatness that God had in mind for man at his creation is evidenced by man's moral freedom. And man manifests his virtue and nobility by his refusal to depart from God's will. Only in such a way will a person become truly great. Such greatness, with virtue and nobility, the redeemed will attain. Temptation is therefore not a penalty for being a moral being, but is rather the badge of the glory and honor of being free moral beings.

Today we do not stand before the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, as did Adam and Eve. But the battle for the will is constantly reenacted, and the same question stares every one of us in the face: Will we obey God's word to us, or will we yield our wills to the archenemy, as did Adam and Eve?

The answer to that question is solely yours; it is solely mine. By yielding their wills to Satan, Adam

and Eve became his associates in rebellious departure from their God and Creator.

The will is the beachhead to the control of the whole person. Whoever controls the will controls the person. "This is the governing power in the nature of man, the power of decision, or of choice. Everything depends on the right action of the will."

Everyone born into the world—from genius to moron, and all persons in between—lives under the imperious demand that the faculty of free choice imposes on him—that of deciding where he will turn his will. From this constant demand there is no respite. The demand for decisions constantly assails us. God Himself laid this awesome responsibility upon our original forebears, Adam and Eve, and through them upon us.

The battle between moral right and wrong is the battle for every person's soul. This involves the will—whether one is willing to place it on the side of God, under the guidance of His Word and the Holy Spirit, or keep it under one's own

unsanctified control.

Both righteousness and sin pivot on the use of one's will and personal choice. Sin, or departure from God, is nothing but the misuse of our free moral choice, the greatest gift that God gave to sin-free Adam, and Eve. Most sin arises from self-assertion, or self-will, and a turning away from trusting God and His way. Sin is not a virus rampant in the body, although it is often stumbled into by the mind's submission to the clamorings of the body tinder a perverse will.

Oscar P. Blackwelder writes in the *The Interpreter's Bible*: "Consider what happens to the moral life if the flesh is considered evil or the source of evil. The real issue is the question of control. Who is in control, the Spirit or the flesh? The seat of evil and of good is not in the flesh, but in the will,"

"The flesh is not the seat or center of sin; the control is in man's will. The flesh becomes sinful when it is given the upper hand The question is,

Who is in command? When the flesh or natural body is under the direction of the mind, and that mind is saturated with the mind of Christ, we are sowing to the Spirit, and shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. When such a relationship does not exist, we are sowing to the flesh, and the harvest is corruption."

The battle for the will stretches from Eden in the past to the very end of time. The first Adam, under the intriguing enticement of his charming wife, Eve, was seduced and yielded his will to Satan's bidding. In the wilderness temptation Satan tried to lure Jesus, the second Adam, to depart from His Father's will. But Jesus never wavered in His loyalty to His Father. Close to the end of His life Jesus could affirm His oneness with His Father by saying: "The ruler of this world is coming. He has no power over me" (John 14:30). In the Garden of Gethsemane, just before His death, Jesus again showed His union with His Father when He prayed: "Not my will, but thine, be done" (Luke 22:44). Although Jesus did not enjoy the prospect of death at 33, He would die rather than sever His

fellowship with His Father.

Today you and I do not stand before the tree of knowledge, as did Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. But the battle for the will is nevertheless reenacted in us. Today and every new day the same question stares everyone in the face: Will we follow the example of Jesus and obey God's word to me, or will I follow Adam's example and be disloyal to my God, and thereby sin?

Each of us holds in his hand the remarkable gift that God Himself gave to our sin-free first parents on Creation's morning: free moral choice! And over this the battle still rages.

Chapter 2

Kinds of Sin

Basically there are several reasons for departure from God's will. One is a rebellious attitude, reflected in thoughts, feelings, words, and actions. Other reasons for departure from God's will include ignorance of God's will, or spiritual immaturity or weakness. Such sin could be called "falling short of the mark." All forms of failure to live in accordance with God's plan for us are sin. However, when the Bible speaks of sin, is primarily concerned with rebellion and with wrongdoing that results from spiritual immaturity or weakness, rather than with sins of ignorance.

The apostle John speaks about the sin of rebellion when he writes: "Every one who commits sin is guilty of lawlessness; sin is lawlessness" (1 John 3:4). To say that someone is lawless implies that he knows the law but chooses to disregard That is the meaning in this verse.

Lawlessness, says Westcott, is "the assertion of the selfish will against a paramount authority. He who sins breaks, not only by accident or in an isolated detail, but essentially, the 'law' which he was created to fulfill."

He violates right behavior or the correct government of self; he also forgets his concern for his brother. In both instances he is disloyal to God. First John 3:4 freely translated reads: "He who commits sin is thereby in revolt against God; indeed, sin is nothing but rebellion against God." the essence of lawlessness is resistance to, rebellion against, or departure from, the known will of God. This ruptures the fellowship between God and man.

Deliberate wrongdoing in turn may lead to cultivated or habitual wrongdoing. Through repeated deliberate wrongdoing, a person may come to the place where is almost impossible for him to resist doing wrong. He may become like a person falling from the roof of a 10-story building. After deliberately taking a step out into space such

a person can do nothing about stopping his fall.

Leaving transgression- (see Rom. lawlessness, rebellion, or deliberate sin, we now come to unintentional sin, or a falling short of God's plan for us. This kind of sin is not prompted by rebellion but is caused by ignorance or human frailty (see Lev. 4:2, 13, 22, 27). At the time such a sin is committed, the sinner does not know that what he is doing is wrong. He has not deliberately chosen to go contrary to God's will or to be disloyal to Him, but nevertheless, he departs from God's plan.

When I gave my life to God, I tried to make all things right. I made confessions, both face-to-face and by letters; I made restitution wherever such was possible. After having taken care of all I could think of, I asked God to remind me of any wrongdoings I had committed so that I might make confession and restitution. In my prayer I added: "God, if I have done something wrong and You do not remind me of it so that I can confess and rectify then You are responsible for that and not I." With this agreement with God, I was at peace and for 10

or 11 years did not recall anything more from my preconversion days that I still needed to rectify. But then some experiences from my adolescent years came vividly back to me and begged for confession. The memory of my past wrongdoing came with special urgency when I prayed.

I grew up in a part of Sweden where many families would grow a few apple and pear trees by their homes. In the fall when the fruit ripened, teenage fellows would form small gangs and raid these trees. It was a common practice; all the people who owned some fruit trees knew that young fellows would be around stealing apples and pears during the dark autumn evenings. I, together with other youths, had stolen apples in two places in particular.

It was the memory of these apple-stealing escapades that after many years came back to me. I was impressed that I must confess my wrongdoing and make things right. But by that time I was thousands of miles away. I could not even recall the names of the people from whom I had stolen.

So I told God, "You know there is nothing I can do about this." But in spite of my telling God that, every time I knelt to pray, the apples came back to mind.

But even though I had forgotten the names of the people from whom I had stolen fruit, I still recalled the locations very distinctly. Finally I sat down and wrote a letter to my father, who was still alive. I drew maps showing the homes and the apple trees where I had stolen fruit. Then I asked him to go to the people from whom I had stolen fruit 15 or more years earlier and make confession for me and offer to pay for the stolen fruit.

Some time later I received a letter from my father in which he told me that he had gone to the different owners and told them what I had said. The owners of the fruit told him to write and tell me just to forget it. They certainly did not worry about it.

Even though the stolen apples did not make any difference to the owners, I had keenly felt that I

must confess my wrongdoing in order to clear my conscience and have freedom before God. This is an illustration of a sin of ignorance, or possibly a trespass as spoken of in Leviticus 6:1-7. When the Holy Spirit, even after many years, reminded me of this wrongdoing, became a moral offense that I had to confess and rectify.

Paul illustrates the commission of a sin of ignorance. In his letter to Timothy he candidly admitted that before his conversion he had both "blasphemed and persecuted and insulted" Christ. Although he had not committed known sin, he had nevertheless gone contrary to God's will and verily sinned. But he added: "But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief" (1 Tim. 1:13). God still judged Paul "faithful" in his sinful ignorance because he had not been intentionally disloyal to God. He had been faithful, and because of his faithfulness God Himself placed him in His service (see 1 Tim. 1:12).

Even while he was a blasphemer and persecutor, Paul had done only what he believed to

be right. Thus he could say, as he stood before Felix, that he had always endeavored "to have a clear conscience toward God and toward men" (Acts 24:16). Paul had sinned ignorantly and thus had been innocent, or blameless although not sinless before God.

As sinners we may stand blameless before God, as was Paul in his sinful ignorance. In the judgment, God will not condemn us for sins of ignorance. Such unavoidable sins God will blot out by the shed blood of Christ, if we accept Him as our Saviour. In His words to the Pharisees, Jesus Himself makes it clear that for such sins we are not held accountable. He says, "If you were blind, you would have no guilt" (John 9:41). But the Pharisees had gone against better knowledge. Thus Jesus says, "But now that you say, 'We, see,' your guilt remains." Hence they stood condemned.

In the same way, willful wrongdoing will be held against us. James says, "Whoever knows what is right to do and fails to do for him is sin" (James 4:17). Ellen G. White writes: "Jesus has made

atonement for all sins of ignorance, but there is no provision made for willful blindness."

"Sins that were once sins of ignorance because of the blindness of the mind can no more be indulged in [after light has come] without incurring guilt. . . As increased light is given, men must be reformed, elevated, and refined by or they will be more perverse and stubborn than before the light came."

A person who is willingly ignorant is not blameless in his fault. He had an opportunity to learn but refused to improve it. He may have reasoned that if he did not know, he would not be held responsible. On one occasion I had a person tell me, "Don't tell me any more, lest I be held responsible." But with such an attitude a person is already condemned because he does not want to learn, even when he has the opportunity to do so.

Years ago when I was crossing the United States by car, a state patrol officer stopped me one night for driving too fast. I pleaded innocence,

stating that I had maintained the same legal speed at which I had been driving in that same state before nightfall. His reply was that the speed limit was lower at night and that had been my responsibility to learn about that upon entering the state. My plea of ignorance availed me nothing.

As Christians we are not held responsible merely for what we actually do know. We are also held accountable for the knowledge we had had an opportunity to acquire but refused to obtain. "God will not condemn any at the judgment because they honestly believed a lie, or conscientiously cherished error; but will be because they neglected the opportunities of making themselves acquainted with truth."

"Our standing before God depends, not upon the amount of light we have received, but upon the use we make of what we have."

At the judgment the willingly ignorant sinner will stand in the same position before God that I stood in before the state trooper. The person who

has failed to improve his opportunity to learn truth will be accounted an unfaithful servant. And there will be no unfaithful servants in the kingdom of God.

In addition to sins of ignorance, which are not prompted by rebellion or disloyalty to God but are stumbled into by lack of knowledge, there are also sins occasioned by falling short of one's desired goals and pure motives. Unintentionally, toddlers do stumble and fall. So do God's sincere but immature children. In such instances there is no unwillingness on the part of the toddlers, or on the part of immature Christians to do better, just immaturity or weakness.

The first year I attended an Adventist school I became acquainted with a young man in his early 20s who had just joined the Adventist church through baptism. His background was nonreligious, and occasionally when provoked he would lose his temper and begin using swear words not common in his new environment. But as soon as he became aware of what he was doing, he would instantly ask

us to forgive him for his outburst. He would also ask God for forgiveness and for help to overcome this habit. As the months passed, it was interesting to see how those outbursts became fewer and fewer, until before the end of the year they had entirely disappeared.

Having stumbled and fallen, we will naturally ask God to forgive us and then ask for help to overcome our weakness, as did my schoolmate. Jesus does not disown us for such failures to live by His will any more than parents excoriate and reject their toddlers for failure to walk without stumbling and falling. "When it is in the heart to obey God, when efforts are put forth to this end, Jesus accepts this disposition and effort as man's best service, and He makes up for the deficiency with His own merit."

We did not intend to do wrong, but we did. "Christ looks at the spirit, and when He sees us carrying our burden with faith, His perfect holiness atones for our shortcomings. When we do our best, He becomes our righteousness."

God acknowledges us as His own, even though we do commit inadvertent sins and stumble because of our spiritual immaturity. He is pleased with our attitude of fidelity and loyalty, even though our performance may be far from faultless.

All of us are sinners, "for there is no man who does not sin" (2 Chron. 6:36). Solomon correctly observed in his prayer at the dedication of the Temple. We have committed both sins of ignorance and sins of inadvertently stumbling and falling because of spiritual immaturity. We have also occasionally chosen to go contrary to God's will, as did Adam when he ate of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The gospel prophet Isaiah diagnosis our ailment when he says, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way" (Isa. 53:6). In the New Testament the apostle Paul likewise affirms that all men are sinners: "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). All of us are alike in that we have departed from God's will for us, either through rebellion, disloyalty, or

willfulness, which are deliberate, or known sins, or through ignorance because of spiritual immaturity, or by stumbling into sin because of weakness.

One might almost speak of moral and amoral sins. Deliberate sin is moral sin, since it involves the sinner's choice. But there are no morals connected with either the sin of ignorance or the sin of stumbling because of immaturity or weakness. Such are accidents, and morals have nothing to do with accidents. A person does not choose to have accidents. They are unwanted mishaps. "We may make mistakes, but we will hate the sin that caused the suffering of the Son of God."

But even amoral sins will cause our eternal death unless we accept Jesus as our Saviour. When we do that, they are forthwith blotted out by His shed blood.

The apostle Paul gives the definitive definition of sin when he says that "whatever does not proceed from faith is sin" (Rom. 14:23). In other

words, we sin when we refuse to cling to God and trust His will and way for us. On the other hand, as long as we gladly trust Him by placing our wills on the side of His will and obey Him to the extent of our knowledge, He freely absolves us from the sentence of death; He counts us blameless, irrespective of any mistakes we may have made, and reckons us just. As G. Campbell Morgan says: "Sin is alienation from God by choice. Hell is the utter realization of that chosen alienation."

We shall enlarge on this in our next chapter.

Chapter 3

The Destructiveness of Sin

God is life. Only He has life in Himself (see 1 Tim. 6:16; John 5:26). Life is grounded in His very nature and is native only to Him.

The whole creation was brought into existence by God. All its multitudinous parts received life from the great Life-giver. Everything is still sustained by Him. The apostle Paul well expresses this thought when he says, "In him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28). From this fountain of all life, life is constantly flowing into all living creatures and organisms.

In a sense we are like electric light bulbs. They give light as long as electricity flows through their filaments. But when the current ceases, there is no light. As long as life flows into us from God, we possess life. When this flow ceases, we die.

Both angels and men are sustained by the

inflowing life from our great God. When Lucifer and his followers decided to rebel against God's will in heaven, they separated themselves from Him and cut themselves off from life. "Had Satan and his host then been left to reap the full result of their sin, they would have perished." But God chose not to have them immediately reap the full results of their departure from Him. He granted the rebels a stay of execution by placing His preserving hand over them. God Himself granted Satan and his followers "existence for a time that they may develop their character and reveal their principles," and be able to demonstrate before the whole universe the pretended viability of their plan of government. Human beings who follow Satan by departing from God in rebellion and sin thereby cut themselves off from life. Eternal death is the ultimate result of their choice to turn away from God.

One balmy afternoon as you are working in your yard, your neighbor happens to pass by. As he stops to visit with you for a few moments, you notice that his coveralls are apparently soaking

wet. You inquire what happened, and he explains to you that just a few moments earlier when he was cleaning out his garage a five-gallon can of gasoline that he was taking down from a shelf came open and spilled its contents over him.

Immediately you advise your neighbor to go and change his clothes as quickly as possible. You explain that it is exceedingly dangerous to go about in a gasoline-soaked suit. If perchance he should come close to a fire, his coveralls might catch fire, and he would be roasted alive.

Your neighbor dutifully listens to your admonition. Then he casually explains to you that he surely plans to change coveralls, but first he intends to burn some rubbish on a bonfire in his backyard. You become still more insistent in your appeal that he change clothes at once. He must not come close to the fire in his gasoline-saturated clothes.

But all your kind and well-meaning counsel is of no avail. Your neighbor picks up a pile of leaves

and other rakings. But as he approaches the fire, a capricious wind blows a tongue of flame in his direction. The next moment your neighbor is aflame from head to foot. Nothing can save him. He is in a gasoline-fed inferno.

This is only a parable; we are glad of that. We are happier still that no one in his sound mind is so foolish.

But stop for a moment! Most of us are, in a different respect, just as foolish as that man. We are lackadaisically going about dressed in suits drenched in the gasoline of sin.

Sin, or departure from God's will, contains the virus of eternal death. In the universe of God, sin in its very nature is just as inflammable as gasoline. Everything that is defiled or contaminated by sin becomes ignitable, or combustible, in the presence of God. In the light of eternity, it is just as disastrous to walk nonchalantly about with a sin-spotted character as it is to amble about in garments drenched in gasoline. Truly the man in

the gasoline-drenched garments was courting death. But aren't we all, if our lives are spotted with unrepented and unforgiven sin? The spark that will eventually ignite sin and sinners is the presence of a holy God, "for our God is a consuming fire" (Heb. 12:29). As sinners we are all like cut flowers—not yet dead, but dying—and we will ultimately die eternally in the presence of a loving God unless we are saved from sin by Jesus.

Luther picturesquely said that God is "a blazing oven, all aglow with love." In the Scriptures God repeatedly appears as fire. In Midian He appeared to Moses as a burning bush (see Ex. 3:2). On Mount Sinai He appeared to all the children of Israel as a devouring fire (see Ex. 24:17). It was because God is a devouring fire that the children of Israel pleaded with Moses: "You speak to us, and we will hear; but let not God speak to us, lest we die" (Ex. 20:19).

The prophet Isaiah repeatedly points out the inflammable character of sin. "But rebels and sinners shall be destroyed together, and those who

forsake the Lord shall be consumed" (Isa. 1:28). "And the strong shall become tow, and his work a spark, and both of them shall burn together, with none to quench them" (verse 31). "For wickedness burns like a fire, it consumes briers and thorns; it kindles the thickets of the forest, and they roll upward in a column of smoke" (Isa. 9:18). "For a burning place has long been prepared; yea, for the king it is made ready, its pyre made deep and wide, with fire and wood in abundance; the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, kindles it" (Isa. 30:33). "You conceive chaff, you bring forth stubble; your breath is a fire that will consume you. And the peoples will be as if burned to lime, like thorns cut down, that are burned in the fire" (Isa. 33:11, 12). A well-known Bible commentator says, "To sin, wherever found, God is a consuming fire. If you choose sin, and refuse to separate from it, the presence of God, which consumes sin, must consume you."

The very presence of God is death to sinners. But so also is departure or separation from God. It was the holiness of God, which is a consuming fire

to sin, that made Adam and Eve flee from the presence of God in Eden. After they had sinned, they were no longer comfortable in His presence but hid themselves among the bushes of the garden. As children we were not comfortable in the presence of our parents after we had disobeyed them. Neither will we be comfortable with God after disobeying Him, as long as we have not asked for forgiveness.

Since all men are sinners, "no one has ever seen God" (John 1:18). When Jesus came to this earth as our Saviour, He dared not appear in His divine glory lest sinful men die in His presence. He therefore clothed Himself in human form to veil His divine glory (see Phil. 2:6-8). Only in this way could He dwell among men without destroying them by His presence.

Soon this same Jesus will come back to this earth. But He will not then be veiled in human form. He will come in His divine glory, surrounded by myriads of angels (see Matt. 25:31). No person with unforgiven sins still clinging to him will then

be able to live in the presence of God. His very presence will be a flaming fire to sinners. About this event the apostle Paul spoke: "When the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance upon those who do not know God and upon those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus" (2 Thess. 1:7, 8). Thus Isaiah queries in connection with Christ's coming as King: "Who among us can dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us can dwell with everlasting burnings?" (Isa. 33:14).

Those who have refused to accept salvation from sin through Christ's shed blood will, at His coming in glory, find themselves in the very midst of the "devouring fire." They will then be destroyed by the flammability of their sins after they in vain have called upon the rocks and mountains to fall on them to hide them "from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb" (Rev. 6:16) at His return in glory.

But not even at His second coming will God

"make a full end" of sin (Jer. 4:27). Not until after the millennium will God permit sin and sinners to be completely consumed in the lake of fire (see Rev. 20:9, 10).

It is God's desire that no person, despite his sins, be destroyed when Jesus appears in His glory. Jesus came the first time as a Saviour, "to seek and to save the lost" (Luke 19:10). He came that we "may have life, and have it abundantly" (John 10:10). The purpose of His second coming is the same as that of His first—that men might live. He comes to confer immortality and incorruption on mortal men who have prepared for it by having permitting Him to save them from sin (see 1 Cor. 15:51-53; Matt. 1:21).

Solemnly God warns us against sin: "He that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death" (Prov. 8:36, KJV). If we desire life—eternal life—our characters must be cleansed from sin through Christ's shed blood, and patterned in accordance with God's will. Then eternal life will be conferred upon us as a gift from

God (see Rom. 6:23). If, on the other hand, we remain rebels against God and depart from Him and His will, we break our connection with God, who alone is life.

As creatures we have no life in ourselves. As sinners we have all departed from God; we will cease to exist when God suspends His stay of execution on sinners. Unless we accept salvation through Jesus, we will ultimately perish with the devil and his angels in hell, even though it was designed only for them (see Matt. 25:4 1). God created all of us to live, not to die. If we choose to squander the gift of life that God designed should last for eternity, we are unfaithful stewards, and as such we shall forfeit eternal life.

Today, through His Word and the Holy Spirit, God's holiness may be a purifying influence from sin in our lives. If we refuse and do not permit the Spirit to burn away our sins now, then at Christ's third coming to this earth, after the millennium, His holiness will become even to us a destroying fire. Any form of sin—the sin of rebellion, or

lawlessness, the sin of ignorance, and the sin of spiritual immaturity—will rob us of eternal life unless we have been saved through Jesus our Lord.

It is impossible to overemphasize the gravity of departure from God's will. The prophets of the Old Testament and the writers of the New Testament stressed the destructiveness of sin. Sin is lethal; it is deadly; it is like gasoline in the universe of God. It is separation from God and hence from life. Paul says that "the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). In eternal death, sinners reap what they have chosen—separation from God. The eternal destiny of every person pivots on his own choice. Each ultimately will experience what he has chosen. In this way eternity will show that God respects each person's choice.

But God does not want anyone to die eternally. Even though all of us stand before Him drenched in death, He wants us to live. The next three chapters will explain His plan for our escape from eternal death.

Chapter 4

Justification

According to God's plan, parents should bring children into the world as a result of their abiding mutual love. Unfortunately, in a world of sin children often are born as the unlucky accidents of lust. Thus frequently they are resented rather than anticipated with joy and happiness. Whether consequences of love or lust, all of us have arrived into this world apart from a choice of our own. The actions—although not always the choices—of others placed us here.

Adam and Eve came into this world because of God's love and choice, but by no choice of their own. It was His purpose for them and their descendants that they should continuously rise higher and higher in moral development and "that after test and trial the human family might become one with the heavenly family." To enable them to reach this goal, He equipped them with free moral choice, the means for unlimited moral

development.

Unfortunately, Adam and Eve turned this remarkable gift—this awesome capability either to develop virtue or to accept and perpetuate sin—against God's expressed will by eating of the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden. In this way free moral choice opened the floodgate to disaster rather than becoming a stepping stone toward moral excellence. It led to alienation and separation from God and became the gateway to death and eternal extinction.

Every person born since Adam has been weighted with Adam's nature. And every successive descendant of Adam—with the exception of Jesus Christ—has possessed less strength than Adam and Eve to resist temptation. Through sin, man became "the captive of Satan, a servant ever ready to do his bidding" and is "in harmony, and not at variance, with Satan." Man, created for the glory of God (see Isa. 43:7), stumbled into the calamity of sin with its consequent degradation and ultimate death.

But God still loved man. And He had a moral responsibility for His earthly children. He had created them and equipped them with freedom of choice, this fateful capacity leading either to weal or woe. This moral responsibility God did not shirk. He shouldered it through His plan of salvation.

The plan of salvation was designed to preclude any person's perdition. Through it Adam and Eve, and their every descendant, might be saved from sin and its ravages. It made God's original plan possible—that every person might live in happy fellowship with God and the sinless angels throughout eternity.

God devised His rescue plan before He created the earth and man. God "chose us in him [Jesus] before the foundation of the world" (Eph. 1:4; cf. 2 Tim. 1:9). As a buyer covers his new car with insurance before he drives it from the showroom, so God covered His creation with redemption insurance in case of accident, even before He

started His creative work. "The plan for our redemption was not an afterthought, a plan formulated after the fall of Adam. It was a revelation of 'the mystery which hath been kept in silence through times eternal' (Rom. 16:25, RV)."

Immediately after the Fall, God acquainted Adam and Eve with His rescue plan. Genesis 3:15 is its first unveiling. Through this covenant of grace Adam and Eve continued to enjoy life, despite their sin that merited death. Through it they were also given the opportunity to eliminate the eternal adverse effects of their sin. It would do the same for all their descendants by enabling them to overcome both their inherited proclivity toward disobedience and sin, and also sin itself. This rescue plan God implements through the method of justification.

The apostle Paul is the great exponent of the doctrine of justification. He first broached the subject when he needed to correct the legalistic views of the Galatians. Later he expounded on it in more detail in his Epistle to the Romans.

In his Epistles to the Galatians and the Romans, Paul is refuting the teaching that a sinner can be justified, or put right with God, by keeping His law. In his argument Paul presents the sinner as a criminal who stands condemned to death before the law. In Romans 8:33, 34 he asks, "Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies; who is to condemn?" In this legal, or forensic, setting, justification is the very opposite of condemnation.

It is difficult to find words in English that adequately cover all that the word justify—the Greek *dikaioo*—and its kindred terms embrace. In the Greek New Testament the verb *dikaioo* ("justify" or some form of it) is used only of persons and occurs 39 times. Paul alone uses it 27 times. In Paul's writings "justify" usually "indicates the act or process by which a man is brought into a right state as related to God." So justification is God's way of putting a sinner right, of placing him into a life-sustaining or life-giving relationship to Himself.

According to the rule of strict justice, the sinner should die instantly as a result of his departure from God's expressed will. God told Adam and Eve of the dire consequences of transgression in front of the tree of knowledge in Eden. "Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die" (Gen. 2:17), ran God's immutable verdict.

Through His method of justification, however, God shields the sinner from the instant effect of his sin. God treats him not as he deserves, but as if he were just and righteous; He graciously prolongs his life, although he deserves nothing but death.

Justification rests solely on God's love and concern for the welfare of His earthly children. He takes "no pleasure in the death of any one" (Eze. 18:32); He created them to live. He therefore "encircled the whole world with an atmosphere of grace as real as the air which circulates around the globe."

By His grace God purposes to give sinners a chance to choose to come to Him, to avail themselves of His power, and to live in intimate fellowship with Him. Eternal life is possible only in union with God, since He is the only source of life in the universe.

Through justification, God discharges His moral responsibility to the whole human race. It vindicates His fairness. It affords each person an opportunity to consider his predicament in sin. It enables the sinner to escape sin's ultimate result—eternal extinction—by accepting the gift of eternal life through the restoration of amiable fellowship with his Creator and Life-giver.

There are two modes of justification: temporary universal (or forensic) justification, and justification by faith. Temporary universal justification affords human existence on earth. It confers neither salvation nor the gift of eternal life. Justification by faith, on the other hand, grants not only temporal life with salvation from sin but also confers eternal life. In the next two chapters we

shall look at these two modes of justification in greater detail.

Chapter 5

Temporary Universal Justification

While Moses and Joshua were on the mountain talking with God, the people of Israel grew restless on the plain below. In their idleness, they prevailed on Aaron to make a calf of gold. This they worshipped as their god and deliverer from Egypt. For their idol worship, God decided to destroy them.

Moses, seeing with his own eyes their wanton idolatry, realized that death awaited them. He interceded for them. He loved the people and did not want them to die, but he was also concerned about God's honor. He feared that if God failed to bring them into Canaan, the Promised Land, as He had promised, the heathen might gain the impression that He was unable to do so. Moses wanted no blotch on the name and reputation of God. So he told God that he would rather have his

own name blotted out from His book than to see God's people perish in the wilderness. As Moses thus stepped into the breach, God relented and decided to forgive His people and let them live (see Ex. 32; Ps. 106:23).

When Adam and Eve, in the sin-free Garden of Eden, did what God had told them not to do—eat of the forbidden fruit—Jesus stepped into the breach. "Christ, the Son of God, stood between the living and the dead, saying, 'Let the punishment fall on Me. I will stand in man's place. He shall have another chance.' In this way Jesus, the second person in the Godhead, became our Saviour, "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev. 13:8, KJV). Thus, "in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses" (2 Cor. 5:19). "While we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son" (Rom. 5:10). In giving His life on the cross, Jesus "died for all" (2 Cor. 5:15). All have been redeemed-but not all are saved.

Ellen G. White comments: "As soon as there

was sin, there was a Saviour." "Christ became our substitute and surety. He took the case of fallen man upon Himself. He became the Redeemer, the Intercessor. When death was proclaimed as the penalty of sin, He offered to give His life for the life of the world, in order that man might have a second probation." Through Christ's offer to take the sinner's place and die on Calvary's tree "when the time had fully come" (Gal. 4:14), men and women lived on this earth from the very entrance of sin until Jesus made His sacrifice on the cross.

Only through this sacrifice are we and all people in the whole world alive even today. Because of Christ's death on the cross, God temporarily treats all as if they were just and righteous. By virtue of the cross, all enjoy life through temporary universal (temporal and forensic) justification. All are undeservedly put into a life-giving relationship with God.

All sins are covered temporarily by the blood of Jesus. "God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us (Rom. 5:8).

This divine mercy is manifested to unworthy creatures because Jesus "is the expiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:2). God "sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10) because He loves mankind. Temporary universal justification, in addition to being called forensic, may also be called legal, technical, objective, or impersonal justification. It is based solely on God's goodness toward all, irrespective of the individual's attitude toward Him.

In the ancient sanctuary service, the high priest carried the names of every tribe on his breastplate. Symbolically, he carried on his heart the name of every individual into the very presence of God. In the same way, Jesus carries on His heart every person born into this world, whether or not he has accepted Him as his Saviour.

By giving His life on the cross, Jesus assured all of physical life and made provision for their eternal life. On the cross He temporarily atoned for all sins—known as well as unknown, confessed as

well as unconfessed. And "as our Mediator, Christ works incessantly. Whether men receive or reject Him, He works earnestly for them. He grants them life and light, striving by His Spirit to win them from Satan's service." At the cross He removed every barrier to salvation for everyone and sends out the invitation: "Come, for everything is now ready" (Luke 14:17, NIV).

With our first parents, all people born into this world stand guilty as rebels before God. All of us have forfeited the right to life and deserve death. But God did not create man to perish; He created him for fellowship with Himself and sinless angels. According to the Creator's plan, every person born into this world was to live forever in His very presence. To fulfill this purpose, Jesus volunteered to die, and He did die so that sinners might live both for time and for eternity, if they choose to avail themselves of God's gracious provision for eternal life.

The purpose of temporary universal—or temporal—justification is to afford rebels against

God and His government—which all of us have been and may still be—time to change our attitudes toward God and His government. He does this to afford us opportunity to choose to become loyal citizens of His kingdom. In this way, temporary universal justification does not imply ethical change or a change in a person's attitude toward God. It only means that God temporarily deals with sinners as if they were just, or righteous, in spite of their rebellious attitude toward Him.

In His temporary universal justification, God manifests tender compassion toward all. He grants all a reprieve from death by not executing them immediately despite their sin. This reprieve is designed to break the sinner's stubborn heart and draw him to His Saviour in repentance.

To the woman taken in adultery Jesus said: "Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more" (John 8:11, KJV). Or to paraphrase it: "Come now and forsake your life of sin." When the trembling woman heard these gracious words, "her heart was melted, and she cast herself at the feet of Jesus,

sobbing out her grateful love, and with bitter tears confessing her sins." Jesus did not condemn her, even though she was a sinner. God deals in the same gracious way with all sinners. He condemns no one today. Today is still "the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6:2), not of judgment and condemnation (see John 3:17). By virtue of temporary universal justification, God ordinarily chooses not to exact the wages for sin during a person's life on earth. Rather, He treats him—and that embraces every person born into the world—as if he merited life. If He did not, not one person would be alive today. Every one of us would be dead, for we are all sinners.

If it were not for the shed blood of Christ—both anticipatory for pre-cross generations and historically for us—not one would ever have lived on this earth. All would have died because of sin. It is only because of Christ's sacrifice and intercession that we are alive. "To the death of Christ we owe even this earthly life. The bread we eat is the purchase of His broken body. The water we drink is bought by His spilled blood. Never one,

saint or sinner, eats his daily food, but he is nourished by the body and blood of Christ."

The psalmist's testimony is: "The Lord is good to all, and his compassion is over all that he has made" (Ps. 145:9). "He makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matt. 5:45). God does not deprive the wicked of His bounties, reserving them only for those who love and serve Him. He pours His blessings on both the just and wicked. Indeed, "the Lord's true love is surely not spent, nor has his compassion failed; they are new every morning: (Lam. 3:22, 23, NEB). Jesus Himself emphasized this truth when He said that His Father "is kind to the ungrateful and wicked" (Luke 6:35, NEB).

In this life there is no distinct difference between God's treatment of saints and sinners. Both are under the cover of God's grace; both benefit from Jesus' shed blood for all.

The psalmist noticed this temporal impartiality on the part of God. In a moment of spiritual

myopia, or shortsightedness, he was overwhelmed with envy of the prosperity of the wicked. In retrospect he confessed, "But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled, my steps had well nigh slipped. For I was envious of the arrogant, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked" (Ps. 73:2, 3). He over-came his spiritual "dizziness" when he went into the sanctuary (see Ps. 73:17). There he perceived that there would be a final accounting, or judgment, at which everyone would reap what he had sown in the flesh (see Gal. 6:7).

I have spent most of my life in the classroom, either studying or teaching. Some of my students were good, others not so good. But during the weeks or months of the course there was no difference in my treatment of them. They were all equally accepted. The difference did not appear until the final examination. Some passed the exams, while some failed. The distinct difference between the righteous and the wicked, between the saved and the unsaved, between those who are only forensically justified and those who are justified by faith, will not become evident until the course of

life has ended—at the final judgment.

God has no stepchildren. All men and women are God's natural children in the sense that He created us. But God desires us to be more than natural children. He wants us to be His spiritual sons and daughters; He wants us to enter into a father-son and father-daughter relationship with Him. The prodigal was his father's natural son, even while he was in the far country, but he did not then enjoy a father-son relationship with his father. "But when he came to himself" (Luke 15:17) and returned to his father, he became a real son. This is more than being a natural son.

God mercifully grants us all life, in spite of our sins, so that we might come into a genuine father-child relationship with Him and be prepared to live with Him in full fellowship and joy throughout eternity. The difference between being only a natural or earthly child and being a real child of God will become evident at the end of temporal life. Not even the unrepentant sinner is condemned during his temporal life. His fatal condemnation

will not come until the final judgment.

Among the ancient Hebrews no one was condemned or cut off from his people until the annual Day of Atonement. In the same way, by virtue of Christ's death, all people stand in a life-giving relationship to God. Ordinarily, God does not cut short a person's temporal life because of his sins (although a person himself may terminate it). God acquits everyone of the deserved judgment of death during his or her lifetime. But those in whom God's love does not evoke a response of love will be "reserved until the day of judgement when the godless will be destroyed" (2 Peter 3:7, NEB).

God grants this stay of execution to all sinners because He desires their salvation. If He did not, He would be the ruler of only dead people. But God does not choose to vindicate Himself at the expense of the lives of His earthly created beings. "He does not intend to enjoy his own life at the expense of uncounted masses of miserable and dead men. . . . He does not want to rule over a gaping emptiness. Therefore, he has decided from

eternity not to treat the nations and his chosen people according to what they have deserved but according to the measure of what is needful for them."

Two days before Christmas my wife and I stepped up to the counter at the airport in Cebu, Philippines, intending to return to Manila. I presented our tickets and told the attendant that we had two reservations for that particular flight. After doing some checking, the attendant politely informed me that my reservations had not been confirmed; consequently, they were holding no reservations for me and my wife on that flight. Gently I tried to point out to him that it was more than an hour before the flight was to depart and that certainly was sufficient time to arrange for our passage. He told me that he was sorry, but by not confirming my reservations I had forfeited them.

Jesus has prepared a mansion for everyone born into this world—He has made reservations for us. God "desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:4). Hell was

not prepared for human beings, but only for the devil and his angels (see Matt. 25:41). But even though God wishes us to be saved and has made provision and reservations for our salvation, these reservations will not hold unless we as individuals personally choose and confirm our salvation by giving "diligence to make [our] calling and election sure" (2 Peter 1:10, KJV), by being justified by faith. If not, God's granting a stay of execution by His temporary universal justification will avail us nothing. God's planned salvation will be forfeited, just as were my plane reservations in the Philippines.

When man's second trial ends, God will say about the lost what He anciently said about His vineyard, which represented His Old Testament people: "What more could have been done for my vineyard than I have done for it?" (Isa. 5:4, NIV). He could have done no more. He gave Himself. "In Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them" (2 Cor. 5:19). "Thanks be to God for his gift beyond words!" (2Cor. 9:15, NEB).

Chapter 6

Personal Involvement Through Justification by Faith

There is but one door to eternal salvation, That door is Jesus. As the snow during the northern winter covers the entire landscape, so Christ died for all men. Nevertheless, Christ's death on Calvary does not guarantee every sinner's salvation. No person will be saved eternally solely as a result of Christ's death for all, nor because of God's temporary universal justification.

When the Philippian jailer inquired as to what he must do to be saved, Paul and Silas told him: "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved" (Acts 16:3 1). To the Ephesian believers Paul later wrote: "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God" (Eph. 2:8). The sinner can lay hold of justification and eternal salvation by no other means than through faith in Jesus and His atoning

death for him on the cross. God can save sinners only through faith in Jesus.

In the plan of salvation, faith is the means that connects the sinner to Jesus - the only door to salvation. It is the upraised hand that puts a sinner into a life-giving connection with Jesus. Through it the gift of forgiveness is received and fellowship with God restored. "Whoever believes in him should [shall] not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). The ground of salvation is Jesus, not faith, but we lay hold of salvation by faith. Through faith the sinner grasps the gift of salvation.

To make salvation possible for every person, God gives each individual a "measure of faith" (Rom. 12:3). But each individual decides what to do with that gift. Some choose to use it and develop it; others do not. As a result, a person's faith either grows or atrophies. That is why some have much faith while others have but little faith or may be altogether devoid of it.

There is no salvation apart from our connection, or union, with Jesus. And faith is the only connector. It is like the rope with the life preserver that dangled from the U.S. Park Service police helicopter over the icy waters of the Potomac River after the crash of Air Florida's Flight 90 to Tampa on January 13, 1982. It was not the rope that was the savior of the passengers in the water. It was the pilot and the helicopter that saved them. But the rope was necessary to connect them with the will and the power hovering above. So, through faith, a life-giving connection must be established between the sinner and Jesus. Jesus saves the repentant sinner by means of faith, just as the pilot and the helicopter saved the crash survivors by means of the rope.

There is a common misconception among Christians that mere mental assent to truth constitutes saving faith. They think that because they believe that Jesus is God, that He died for them on Calvary, they will be saved. But such is not the case. Even the demons believe that Jesus is God (see Mark 5:7). Indeed, "the demons

believe—and shudder" (James 2:19). "A nominal faith in Christ, which accepts Him merely as the Saviour of the world, can never bring healing to the soul.... The only faith that will benefit us is that which embraces Him as a personal Saviour; which appropriates His merits to ourselves."

A family's backyard apple tree was bearing its first fruit—one apple. Mother told little Jack to be careful when playing ball with his friends in the backyard to make sure the ball would not be tossed in the direction of the apple tree. She did not want the apple to be hit. But the unfortunate happened. The ball hit the apple, and it fell to the ground. Jack went inside and found his mother's sewing basket. From it he took a spool of thread with which he tied the stem of the green apple to the twig where it had been growing. So again the apple was hanging on the tree.

Day after day Jack's mother continued to watch the apple from a distance, anticipating the time when it would be ripe for picking and eating. But before long she thought the apple did not look so

fresh and healthy as it used to. So she went up to the tree and discovered that the apple was attached to its twig only by a thread. The apple had no life-giving connection with the tree.

There are many Christians who believe the truth but sustain no life-giving union with Jesus—the Living Vine—through a living, fruit-producing, and saving faith.

In Greek and in Hebrew, the original languages of the Bible, the same words denote both faith and belief. Both are translated from the same words. The same is true with the verb forms. The only reason English has two different words—faith and belief, with different corresponding verbs—is to satisfy its tendency toward richness of meaning by drawing two synonyms from two different language sources.

But as we commonly use the terms faith and belief in English, there may be a difference between them. Belief is the road map; it shows the road, or route, of travel. Belief knows the will of

God. Faith, on the other hand, does not rest satisfied by merely knowing the road, or the will of God. By actually traveling the road, or making the journey, the person with faith is distinguished from the person who merely believes. Faith is trust; it leads to obedience, or doing, or acting, in conformity with one's belief.

With a friend I was standing one day last winter on the edge of one of the small ponds in the George Washington Memorial Cemetery, just outside Washington, D.C. The past few nights had been rather cold, and the ice on the pond was now more than an inch and a half thick. As we looked at the ice, I said, "This ice is strong enough to bear you up."

"I believe it," my friend responded, but he remained firmly glued to the ground beside me.

My friend possessed belief, not faith. Belief is mere mental assent; it is inactive. If my friend had possessed faith in what I had said, he would have walked out onto the ice; he would have entrusted

his life to the strength of the ice.

In the same way, saving faith is an attitude of complete trust in and loyalty to Jesus. It leads to a commitment to God, to His ways and plans, and to the doing of His will. Saving faith does not rest satisfied with a mere theoretical knowledge of God's will; it is experimental. "Faith is trusting God-believing that He loves us and knows best what is for our good. Thus, instead of our own, it leads us to choose His way."

But the value of even experimental faith depends upon whom or what it is placed. Faith is like sight. Apart from its object, sight is worthless. Eve possessed living, virile faith. But she placed it in the serpent. Eve's living faith—not saving faith—led her to espouse and act upon Satan's proposition. It would have been better if her faith in the serpent had been dead. Then she would have listened to his proposition without complying with his suggestion. But unfortunately her faith was a living, virile faith that led to action.

Prospective brides have living faith. But some brides place their faith in the wrong men. For them marriage, instead of being a foretaste of heaven, becomes a gateway to hell. Saving faith is anchored in Jesus. Only Christ-centered faith leads to salvation, for "there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

A swimmer trusts himself to the water, knowing that it will support him; the wader, however, shrewd and prudent, keeps at least one toe on the bottom of the lake. But the wader does not know, and never will know, the exhilaration of swimming and being borne by the water. To do that, he must let go every toe support from the bottom of the lake and entrust himself in faith to the water. Without his doing this there is no possibility of swimming.

To the unbeliever, the risk of faith appears too great. He is like the person with his toe on the bottom of the lake. But to the person who has

learned to swim, even 100 or more feet of water underneath him imparts sheer joy. The deeper the water underneath, the more exhilarating the sensation of mastery over it.

The swimmer commits himself to the bearing-up power of the water. The person with saving faith surrenders himself to Jesus and gladly brings his choices into line with God's will. A wife is not afraid to surrender herself to her husband, whom she loves and trusts. And her surrender is not passive. Greater than passive surrender is to be active in love. Such surrender produces the most exhilarating joy and pleasure. So saving faith in God leads to active—not passive—surrender, with joy unspeakable.

With reference to God and His will, faith involves a person's free moral choice. It depends on an action of the will. No one trusts anyone or believes anything unless he chooses to do so; one trusts, or has faith in, a person or thing only by choice. Some people never travel by plane, because they choose to believe it is not a safe mode of

travel. Millions of others choose to believe it is safe. Saving faith is a person's choice to trust Jesus; it is a willing personal response to the pleadings of the Holy Spirit, based on God's promises in His Word.

Jesus says, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any one hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me" (Rev. 3:20). He is knocking at the heart's door of every person. But His knocking does not necessarily mean that He is admitted with His gift of salvation. It is true, as the chorus runs: "You must open the door."

If all were automatically saved by Jesus' death for sinners, then no one would be lost. But nowhere does the Bible teach universalism, or that all will be saved by virtue of God's temporary universal justification of all. Rather, it says that "whoever believes in him [Jesus] should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). Those who do not positively choose to believe, or have faith, in Jesus, those who do not commit themselves to follow

Him in obedience to His will, will be lost—some by deliberate choice and others by default. In order to be saved, the rebel must stop his insurgency and, by accepting and living gladly by the laws of God's kingdom, respond to God's invitation to eternal salvation.

On March 10, 1974, while we were living in the Philippines, the Japanese Army straggler Lt. Hiroo Onoda came out of the jungle of the island of Lubang, just south of Manila Bay, and surrendered. The war between the Philippines and Japan had ended on September 2, 1945, but Onoda had derived no benefit from the peace. To profit from that peace, he himself had to believe that peace had been concluded and personally accept it.

For almost three decades Onoda had refused to believe the reports of peace he had repeatedly received through public Japanese language broadcasts made on the island and through Japanese newspapers left for him on the beach. He thought all these were just American ruses to lure him to surrender. So he had continued his one-man

war.

During those long years he had been constantly harassed by Filipino soldiers and others who had tried to find this hideaway. Every day he had been waiting for the Japanese Navy and Army to return to aid him in recapturing the Philippines.

Onoda's situation on the island of Lubang is comparable to the unconverted sinner's state before God. Christ's death for him on the cross does not bring him peace and salvation; God's announcement of reconciliation as a result of Christ's death does not profit him. It does not automatically bring the sinner peace and save him, any more than the peace concluded between Japan and the Philippines had brought peace to Onoda. He personally had to believe that peace had been concluded, and he had to accept that peace. So we must personally accept the peace God has already made and provided for us through Jesus. Peace with God and salvation come only by trusting God's promise. Salvation by faith presupposes a personal involvement through choice, with

personal commitment of one's life and plans to God.

Onoda himself did not bring about peace between Japan and the Philippines. He accepted the peace that had already been made. So "the believer is not called upon to make his peace with God; he never has nor ever can do this. He is to accept Christ as his peace, for with Christ is God and peace." "All that man can possibly do toward his own salvation is to accept the invitation, 'Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.'"

As sinners before God, we must do like Onoda-surrender. "The surrender of the heart to Jesus subdues the rebel into a penitent, and then the language of the obedient soul is: 'Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.'"

All that God requires for restoration of our peace with Him has been done by Him, acting in the person of His Son. His achievement is credited to anyone, however vile, who is willing to change

from being an enemy to being a loyal follower of God by accepting His gift of peace and salvation and by going His way and doing His works. But like Onoda, the sinner must first trust the standing offer of peace and choose to accept it.

Justification by faith rests on our acceptance of what Christ has already done, not upon what you and I have done or can do. The sinner's response to God's love would be utterly worthless if Jesus had not obtained our redemption on Calvary.

The law, though perfect, is powerless to bring us into a right relationship with God. But the gospel tells of One who represented the entire race, One to whom our sins were imputed that His righteousness might be imputed to us. "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Cor. 5:21). "He was condemned for our sins, in which He had no share, that we might be justified by His righteousness, in which we had no share."

Through His temporary universal justification, God acquits the sinner of deserved instant death for sin and guilt and treats him during his earthly life as if he were righteous. Through justification by faith, the sinner accepts God's reconciliation and receives forgiveness and peace from God as Christ arrays him in the garment of His own righteousness and seals him with the Holy Spirit. As long as the converted sinner—now a believer—abides in Christ, he enjoys escape from the bondage to sin and has the assurance of salvation and eternal life.

In a church service I attended some years ago, the minister held up a \$1 bill and offered to give it to anyone who would come up and claim it. I was sitting at the very back of the church, which seated about 800 people. No one in front of me moved to receive the offered gift. I had ample time to rise from my seat and go forward and claim it.

Paul writes, "We were reconciled to God by the death of his Son" (Rom. 5:10). But God's reconciliation will not save us apart from our choice to claim it. Just as I had to arise from my

seat and go up and claim the minister's offer, so we must claim God's offer in order to be saved.

Reconciliation wrought by Christ on the cross is comparable to the slain Passover lamb at the Exodus. Every Israelite household slew a Passover lamb, but no one was protected from death by the mere spilling of its blood. The blood of the slain lamb had to be applied to the doorposts and the lintel of each home. Only then did the slaying angel spare the members of that particular home. In the same way, the reconciliation provided by God must be personally claimed by each sinner in order to insure eternal salvation.

The blood of reconciliation, which Christ shed for all men on the cross, becomes valuable to the sinner first when the sinner personally accepts Jesus as his Saviour by faith and trusts God's offer of forgiveness. All are called and receive the invitation, but not all accept it.

A young suitor asks a girl to marry him. But their marriage never takes place if the girl declines

his marriage proposal. In the same way God asks every person to accept salvation through faith in Jesus' shed blood. Some do accept and are saved; others spurn God's invitation; still others fail by default to profit from Christ's sacrifice. These are ultimately eternally lost, even though Jesus verily died also for their salvation. "For many are called, but few are chosen" (Matt. 22:14). Only those who positively accept the gift of salvation will be with God in His kingdom.

Through personal faith in God, or by an attitude of trust and loyalty toward Him, the universal justification wrought for all men on the cross becomes personal justification by faith. Through this God Himself justifies, or accounts the sinner righteous. "Christ has become our sacrifice and surety. He has become sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. Through faith in His name, He imputes unto us His righteousness, and it becomes a living principle in our life." This renewal of spirit and mind implies restoration of fellowship.

This positive aspect of forgiveness, followed by obedience and devoted service, is illustrated by the prodigal's return home. Gustaf Aulen aptly observes that "the principal danger is that forgiveness might be interpreted negatively as simply remission of punishment. Such an interpretation is not satisfactory and does not exhaust the rich content of this idea. The essential element is the positive reestablishment of broken fellowship." Luther, he observes, uses it in this fuller meaning, so that "where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and blessedness."

This renewed fellowship eliminates rebellion. Jesus did not hang and die on the cross to give rebels license to remain such and still inherit eternal life. The plan of salvation is designed to do away with rebellion and sin, not to perpetuate them. Jesus died to pay our penalty for sin. The waiting father had probably forgiven his son while he was still in the far country. That was forensic, or objective, justification. Legally, the son had been put right with his father, even while he was still in the foreign country. But fellowship, with blessed

"righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 14:17), was restored and experienced only when the straying son willingly relinquished his rebellion and gladly returned home.

And he did not return home to remain a rebel. When the prodigal left home, he was a rebel in both sentiment and deed; when he returned, his rebel spirit had melted away. He returned eagerly, willing to live by his father's rules. In the same way, the person justified by faith has experienced a change in attitude. This has been effected by the Holy Spirit, to whom the sinner has responded by divinely inspired faith, which implies confidence, trust, and commitment to God and His will. "In faith a man as it were switches himself in on a circuit parallel with Christ."

Like the returning prodigal, the repentant sinner has no righteousness of his own to commend him to God. But again like the prodigal, he places his trust in the graciousness of the Father, and everyone who believes in him [Jesus] is set free [justified] from all sins" (Acts 13:39, TEV). God

"justifies [unto salvation] him who has faith in Jesus" (Rom. 3:26). "They are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as an expiation by his blood, to be received by faith" (Rom. 3:24, 25).

"The sinner is justified through the merits of Jesus, and this is God's acknowledgment of the perfection of the ransom paid for man. That Christ was obedient even unto the death of the cross is a pledge of the repenting sinner's acceptance with the Father." "Justification is a full, complete pardon of sin," and "to be pardoned in the way that Christ pardons is not only to be forgiven, but to be renewed in the spirit of our mind." "The moment a sinner accepts Christ by faith, that moment he is pardoned. The righteousness of Christ is imputed to him." "He becomes a member of the royal family, a child of the heavenly King, an heir of God, and joint heir with Christ."

In justification by faith, Christ's perfect righteousness, or law-keeping, is credited to the

sinner. "It is the righteousness of Christ that makes the penitent sinner acceptable to God and works his justification. However sinful has been his life, if he believes in Jesus as his personal Saviour, he stands before God in the spotless robes of Christ's imputed righteousness." Justification by faith is a gift of God; it attributes to the repentant sinner the righteousness of Christ. This righteousness the sinner obtains by faith alone through the Holy Spirit.

Christ's death alone cannot impart eternal life to the repentant sinner. Christ must needs be "raised again to secure our justification" (Rom. 4:25, Phillips). The New International Version reads: "He [Jesus] was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification." The word Paul uses here as well as in Romans 5:18 for justification, *dikaiosis* denotes "a process as well as its result." It is an "acquittal [from condemnation] that brings life." Today's English Version renders Romans 4:25 as follows: "He was raised to life in order to put us right with God." To Paul, the sinner's justification by faith and the

resurrection of Jesus are indissolubly tied together.

"What Paul calls justification, redemption, or reconciliation is the same powerful event that is described as 'forgiveness' in other New Testament books. In Acts 13:38-39 Luke renders a speech of Paul's in such a way that Paul himself identifies forgiveness with justification. 'Through this man [Jesus] forgiveness of sins is proclaimed. . . in him each who believes is justified.'"

On one occasion Jesus was walking with Jairus to his house, but a vast crowd thronged them. In this crowd was a woman who for 12 years had suffered from a discharge of blood. She had heard of Jesus and believed that her only hope was to see and touch Him. In her weakness she placed herself in a position in the oncoming crowd where she thought He would come. She was fortunate. He did come close to her. Now there were only two others between the Great Healer and her. She reached out between the two and just managed to touch the hem of Jesus' garment. Instantly she felt a surge of health, possibly like an electric shock, go through

her whole body. She knew she was healed.

At this point Jesus stopped and asked, "Who touched my garments?" (Mark 5:30). The disciples were close to Him, and Peter, always the spokesman for the group, almost with a chuckle in his voice, asked, "Master, you asked who touched you. You can see that the people are jostling you on every side, and you ask who touched me ?" Jesus said He was not referring to the careless jostling by the crowd but to a touch of faith, because He felt "power had gone forth from him" (verse 30). The woman knew she was found out; on her knees she confessed to Him, "I touched You." Tenderly Jesus looked at her and said, "Daughter, your faith has healed you" (Mark 5:34, NIV).

What kind of faith do you and I possess? Is it like the faith of the crowds that jostled Jesus? Or is it like the woman who was healed by her life-giving faith? God-imparted faith will heal us from sin's ravages and make us whole unto life eternal. We will be fitted for heavenly society as we choose

to accept Jesus as our Saviour and are justified by faith.

Chapter 7

Security in Christ

By trusting the control of his will to Jesus, and having been put into a right relationship to Him through justification by faith, the believer is "married" to Christ; he has entered into a covenant, or contract relationship, with God on the basis of love. In 2 Corinthians 11:2, Paul uses marriage as an illustration of a person's relationship to his Saviour. He says, "I betrothed you to Christ to present you as a pure bride to her one husband." The gospel prophet Isaiah uses the same figure of speech to portray the relationship existing between the believer and his God; he says, "For your Maker is your husband" (Isa. 54:5). As a faithful husband loves his wife, so Jesus loves the believer and the church (see Eph. 5:25, 29).

In Romans 7:1-3, Paul again uses marriage as an illustration of a person's relationship, first to sin and then to Christ. The unconverted person, who has not been justified by faith or put into a right

relationship with God, is under the dominion of the law and sin. He is married to sin, as the believer is married to Christ. It is impossible for him to obey God. To him, law and sin are inseparable and can almost be used as synonyms. But the person who is wedded to Christ abides in Christ and is constantly guided by the Holy Spirit. He is no longer married to sin and thus under its dominion, nor is he under the condemnation of the law. Justified by faith, married to and remaining in Christ, he stands in a right and life-giving relationship to God.

The believer and Christ are united in a covenant of love, and love is a decision to keep another person's best interest always in mind. It calls for one to think, feel, and act in behalf of the other's well-being under all conditions and circumstances. The relationship between God and the believer is defined by this agreement. The believer was prompted to enter into this relationship with God because of God's gracious acts previously performed on the sinner's behalf. As his superior, God has defined the obligations resting on the believer in this covenant

relationship, just as a medieval suzerain, or landlord, defined it to his vassal or serf.

Using another metaphor, God is like a suitor who has proposed repeatedly to his sweetheart. For a long time he has wanted to marry her, but she has refused his marriage proposals. One day she does accept, and she becomes his bride. Their marriage depended on her decision, not his.

In the same way, justification by faith does not depend primarily on God's decision. Like the suitor, He has for a long time wanted to justify and redeem every sinner. But an acceptance of God's proposal by the sinner is also needed. As the suitor, God would long ago have accepted the sinner as His bride if the sinner had been willing to respond to His overtures in love, faith, and trust. The ground of justification by faith is God's love for the sinner, manifested in the death of Christ for his salvation. But the sinner is justified unto salvation only when he accepts God's gift of love and chooses to believe in Him and commit himself to Him as his Saviour.

Like a marriage, justification by faith is a union of two parties on the basis of their free choice. We who are married got married by our own volition. And before we married, we gave our intended mates our hearts. The same is true of our marriage to God—justification by faith. Therefore God's generic plea to every person is: "My son, give me your heart" (Prov. 23:26). "God requires the entire surrender of the heart, before justification can take place." Personal justification is justification by faith in contradistinction to universal temporary (or forensic) justification, which is impersonal.

By accepting the repentance granted by God (see Rom. 2:4) and believing in Jesus as our personal Saviour, you and I as sinners actively participate in justification by faith. We must be personally involved in order that salvation might be ours. We respond to Jesus by trusting ourselves to Him and personally and voluntarily accepting His love to us through the Holy Spirit. By doing so, we personally accept His righteousness as His free gift. By our own choice, we invite the Holy Spirit

into our hearts and make the decision that we will no longer follow capricious, sinful impulses and fleeting desires. Rather, we will think and act in accordance with God's will at all times.

In this way, we are dressed in the garment of Christ's righteousness. Many suitors have bought and presented dresses to their lady loves, particularly after they have accepted their marriage proposals. Suitors generally do not present dresses to girls who turn down their marriage proposals. So also Jesus, the heavenly suitor, clothes in the garment of His righteousness not those who spurn His marriage proposal but only those who accept Him as their Saviour. He does not give the garment of His righteousness to rebels and enemies.

At the Passover feast Jesus said to the disciples, "You are clean" (John 13:10). And everyone who accepts Jesus is clean. "If you give yourself to Him, and accept Him as your Saviour, then, sinful as your life may have been, for His sake you are accounted righteous. Christ's character stands in place of your character, and you are accepted

before God just as if you had not sinned."

Through justification by faith, the sinner is both accounted and made righteous. It is just like a poor person marrying a rich person. After their marriage they are both rich. Through their marriage the riches of the one become the riches of the other. This richness lasts throughout their marriage.

Through our justification by faith—our marriage to Jesus —Christ's righteousness becomes and is our righteousness. His riches are now our riches. Our sinful poverty is left behind. As Christians we are rich through Christ's riches; we are righteous through His righteousness. "The moment we surrender ourselves to God, believing in Him, we have His righteousness."

Through marriage the two parties become one flesh. As close as is the union between two people in marriage, so through our marriage to Christ we are one with Him. When the Father looks at you and me, He sees us through His Son and accepts us as He accepts Him. "Christ's relation to His Father

embraces all who receive Him by faith as their personal Saviour." "In this union the hope of man must rest alone." Luther wrote: "Faith ... unites the soul with Christ, like a bride with the bridegroom, and from this marriage, Christ and the soul become one body, as Saint Paul says (Eph. 5:30). Then the possessions of both are in common, whether fortune, misfortune, or anything else; so that what Christ has also belongs to the believing soul, and what the soul has will belong to Christ. If Christ has all good things, including blessedness, these will also belong to the soul ... He takes possession of the sins of the believing soul by virtue of her wedding ring, namely faith, and acts just as if He had committed those sins Himself.... Thus the soul is cleansed from all her sins by virtue of her dowry, i.e., for the sake of her faith. She is made free and unfettered, and endowed with the eternal righteousness of Christ, her bridegroom. Is not that a happy household, when Christ, the rich, noble, and good bridegroom, takes the poor, despised, wicked little harlot in marriage, sets her free from all evil, and decks her with all good things? It is not possible for her sins to damn her, for now they

rest on Christ and are swallowed up in Him. In this way she has such a rich righteousness in her bridegroom that she can always withstand sins, though they indeed lie in wait for her."

By our physical birth we are carnal and belong to Satan's family. But through our marriage to Jesus, through justification by faith, we become members of God's family. No longer are we orphans; we now belong to God. Justification is founded on God's free grace. Again the words of Paul: "They are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 3:24). Or translated in a different way: "By the free gift of God's grace all are put right with him through Christ Jesus" (TEV).

An acquaintance of mine has a female cousin who lived, without benefit of marriage, with a male friend for several years. During the time she lived with him, she was constantly afraid that someday he would leave her. She enjoyed no security or peace of mind because there was no true or binding relationship, as there is in marriage. She knew

there was little that held them together except her magnetic feminine pull and constant allure. She also knew that when she was in curlers her attractiveness was greatly reduced; when she was sick it was almost entirely gone.

Mae—my wife—and I do not live in such a state of constant fear. We know that even though we disappoint each another at times, neither of us will forsake the other. Through marriage we have established a relationship that enables us to live in a state of security and peace of mind with each other. We do not live in constant fear of desertion.

A certain woman told me that when she was first married she was fearful after occasionally disappointing her husband. She knew that he loved her; he readily forgave her and reassured her of his love whenever she said that she thought she had annoyed him. But still, fear lingered in her mind during the early months of their marriage. But as they got better acquainted in marriage, this fear disappeared. She became confident of her husband's ready forgiveness, whole-hearted

acceptance, and constant love for her.

Possibly a young Christian may at times feel about God like this young wife did about her husband. But as we become better acquainted with God and His compassion and love, fear of His disapproval should disappear, as it did in the case of this young wife. Remember that you are married to Jesus through justification by faith. Jesus chose you to come into this special relationship to Him because He loves you. He loves you even when you stumble into sin and disappoint Him. After you have stumbled into sin or made mistakes and disappointed Him, tell Him, as did this young wife, that you are sorry for what you have done. As you do this, He "will abundantly pardon" (Isa. 55:7). At times we may all disappoint Him. But "if in our ignorance we make missteps, the Saviour does not forsake us." He vows: "I will never fail you nor forsake you" (Heb. 13:5).

Do we realize that we are married to Jesus through justification by faith? We are accepted by God not because of our goodness but because Jesus

is good and worthy. We place ourselves trustingly in His hands, and we know He will hold us securely (see John 10:27-29). He knows and calls everyone by name. He says, "I have redeemed you" (Isa. 44:22). This is something about which to rejoice and shout.

I know a family in which the wife and mother strayed away from the family unit. She became intimate with another man, and by him she became pregnant and bore a child. Despite this injury to love, this breach of loyalty, the husband forgave her and was willing to adopt his wife's baby. The older children likewise were willing to follow their father in his love and forgiveness of their mother. Such is God's love for us, in spite of our unfaithfulness.

Through justification by faith, a relationship of peace and security between God and us, which was broken by sin, has been reestablished (see Rom. 5:1). The divorce that was caused by rebellion is ended. A life-giving relationship with God, affording security in His love, has been entered

into through faith. Thus we do not live in constant fear that Jesus will forsake us, although at times we inadvertently stumble and fall, as do toddlers. We are wedded to Him. This relationship will last as long as we choose to maintain it by loving and obeying Him.

"Sinful man can find hope and righteousness only in God, and no human being is righteous any longer than he has faith in God and maintains a vital connection with Him"

Our hope of being admitted into heavenly society rests on our marriage to Christ. In ourselves we have nothing either to fit us for or to admit us to heavenly society. Jesus provides the wedding garment. In the parable of the wedding feast (Matt. 22:1-14), the king offered a wedding garment to every invited guest. Those who accepted it and wore it were welcome at his son's wedding feast.

We are utterly unable to provide our own wedding garment. But Jesus is rich. He offers it to everyone. Our salvation depends on our accepting

it. In the parable of the wedding feast, those who disdained and despised the king's gift and refused to wear it were thrown out. Our only hope of salvation rests on the gift of salvation—the garment of Christ's righteousness. This the heavenly Groom alone can provide.

Having accepted us and married us, Jesus will never divorce us. He vows, "Him who comes to me I will not cast out" (John 6:37). If there is going to be a divorce between us and God, you and I must initiate it. God will never do so. Jesus gave His life so that we might be His for eternity. The restored relationship of peace and harmony between God and the justified sinner will be retained through our constant loyalty and obedience. "In order for man to retain justification, there must be continual obedience, through active, living faith that works by love and purifies the soul."

The girl with the live-in boyfriend lived in constant fear that her companion would forsake her if she did not appear attractive and alluring at all times. So every professed Christian who bases his

hope of salvation on the flawlessness of his own behavior will live in constant fear before God. Every time he falls into sin, his own self-conceived basis for his acceptance and approval by God is gone. Consequently, his professing Christian life becomes an endless journey of fear and often of pitiful despair.

The Christian's security and certainty of salvation must never rest on his own moral or ethical attainment, irrespective of how far advanced he is in his development of Christian maturity. His only true basis for peace of mind and security of salvation will always rest on God's acceptance of him. For even a willing servant of God, there is no deck of self-righteousness underneath his feet. Our loyal willingness and right motives do not always ensure commensurate performance. "Man's obedience can be made perfect only by the incense of Christ's righteousness."

The apostle Paul was far advanced along the path of Christian maturity. Still, his hope of eternal

salvation centered not in his Christian attainments, but in the redemption purchased for him by Christ on the cross. Thus he exclaims, "But far be it from me to glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world" (Gal. 6:14). Our only hope of salvation and security rests on Jesus, the Rock of Ages cleft for you and me. To Him we are married through justification by faith.

Chapter 8

A New Creature

Customarily in Western society, when a woman gets married she changes her name. In a certain sense she becomes a new person. When a sinner is wedded to Christ, he too becomes a new person. "Therefore if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come" (2 Cor. 5:17). This is the basis on which God can accept and account a sinner just and righteous, and treat him as such, although He solemnly vows that He "will not justify the wicked" (Ex. 23:7, KJV) and that "he who justifies the wicked and he who condemns the righteous are both alike an abomination to the Lord" (Prov. 17:15).

Justification is not based on God's dealings with the "old sinner. The old sinner has died. In the Old Testament sanctuary service, the figurative death of the sinner was symbolized by the slain sacrificial animal. As the sacrificial animal died

symbolically for the Old Testament sinner, so Christ has literally died for you and me. "Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh" (1 Peter 4:1, KJV). And the sinner, justified by faith, has died to sin (see Rom. 6:2).

Paul says that "the law is binding on a person only during his life" (Rom. 7:1). Its jurisdiction ceases with the person's death, "for he who has died is freed from sin" (Rom. 6:7), and hence from the law that demanded his life. The demands of the violated law have been met by Christ's death for the repentant sinner and the crucifixion of the old carnal self.

Following the death of the old man of sin, a new person is born in response to the wooing of the Holy Spirit through justification by faith. This death, burial, and resurrection to newness of life is symbolized by immersion baptism. Paul says: "Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the sinful body might be destroyed, and we

might no longer be enslaved to sin" (Rom. 6:3, 6). When a person rises from the baptismal grave, he is, as it were, a new person. "It is as the Spirit of God touches the soul that the powers of the soul are quickened, and man becomes a new creature in Christ Jesus."

The broken law condemns to death. Death is caused by "the commandment, which was ordained to life" (Rom. 7:10, KJV; cf. Deut. 6:24). No possible present and future obedience can atone for past disobedience. A pardoned murderer is constantly dependent on the executive pardon for his life. Apart from it, he possesses no right to life.

Law, sin, and death are inseparable for the carnal man. The relationship between them is so close that the words Law, sin, and death could be used interchangeably. In himself and apart from God, there is no hope for man. By the very fact of his being a human being, he is as good as dead for eternity, apart from Christ. Either he himself will die eternal death, or he will accept Jesus and let Him die in his stead. This Jesus did on Calvary.

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

As the sinner lays hold of Christ by faith, the old man of sin dies; a new man now stands before Christ. By having become a new person with a new heart and attitude toward God and His will, the Christian accepts the law of God with love and chooses to live by it, just as a pardoned murderer gratefully chooses to live by the law of the land.

Paul says: "For I through the law died to the law, that I might live to God" (Gal. 2:19). This does not mean that the law died. It is still in full

force after it put the old carnal Paul to death spiritually. It is only by virtue of its being alive that the law can condemn and put sinners to death. It will continue to condemn other law-breakers, like you and me, to death. But like Saul in the Old

Testament and Paul in the New, every sinner who accepts Christ is turned into a new person (see 1 Sam. 10:6). By our natural fallen nature we are identified with sin; it cannot be taken out of us or from us apart from taking our life. But Jesus died in our stead; He bore our sins in His own body (see 1 Peter 2:24) and became "a curse for us" (Gal. 3:13).

"For our sake he made him [Jesus] to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Cor. 5:21). This text points out the double solidarity of Jesus with the sinner. He chose to take our side against the "accuser of our brethren" (Rev. 12:10). As our Creator, He preferred to die for us rather than see His creatures lost in suffering, sin, and eternal death. In dying for us, Jesus died the second death.

He took our wages of sin so that any repentant sinner need not suffer eternal death. By His stripes we are healed. "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that made us whole" (Isa. 53:5).

Through the re-creative power of the accepted Saviour, the repentant sinner is turned into a new creature. The power of redemption is the power of creation. Salvation reveals to us the power that was used at Creation to bring worlds and man into existence. This same power Jesus now exerts for our salvation. God can take a human being, broken and ruined by sin—yes, even dead in sin (see Eph. 2:1)—and make him into a new creature that will ultimately excel even the angels in moral beauty. Only Jesus, who is Himself God and the Creator, can do this.

This transformation from sinfulness into righteousness is illustrated by Elisha's curing the pot of poisonous food on his visit to the sons of the prophets at Gilgal. "And Elisha came again to

Gilgal when there was a famine in the land. And as the sons of the prophets were sitting before him, he said to his servant, 'Set on the great pot, and boil pottage for the sons of the prophets.' One of them went out into the field to gather herbs, and found a wild vine and gathered from it his lap full of wild gourds, and came and cut them up into the pot of pottage, not knowing what they were. And they poured out for the men to eat. But while they were eating of the pottage, they cried out, 'O man of God, there is death in the pot!' And they could not eat it. He said, 'Then bring meal.' And he threw it into the pot, and said, 'Pour out for the men, that they may eat.' And there was no harm in the pot" (2 Kings 4:38-41).

The poisonous effect in the pottage was caused possibly by the gourd-like colocynth that the sons of the prophets may have gathered in the field. This is a yellow fruit about the size of an orange. The fruit is bitter and produces colic; it affects the nerves as well as causing stomach ache and nausea. If eaten in large quantities, the colocynth might even cause death.

To cure the pottage from its death-producing effect, Elisha put some meal into the kettle. Even though there was "death in the pot," Elisha did not have the servant discard it. Rather, he transformed the lethal pottage into wholesome food.

As the colocynth (or whatever the men had gathered) was a poison unto death in the pottage, so sin is a poison unto eternal death in human lives. Elisha put meal into the pottage. Jesus is the meal—the "bread of life," according to John 6:35, to us who are poisoned unto death. There is power in the gospel of Jesus Christ to heal every one of us from the vilest sin.

In his parting speech to the leaders of the church at Ephesus, Paul said, "And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified" (Acts 20:32). The evil that sin has wrought in us, the Holy Spirit has power to undo through the Word. The Word is able to build us up and fit us

for His kingdom. "Our Saviour is the bread of life, and it is by beholding His love, by receiving it into the soul, that we feed upon the bread which came down from heaven."

"Consequently he is able for all time to save those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them" (Heb. 7:25). "Through faith, every deficiency of character may be supplied, every defilement cleansed, every fault corrected, every excellence developed."

Jesus, who is the bread of life, possesses power to transform us. He wants to put this meal, this bread of life, into us through His Word, as Elisha put the flour into the poisoned pottage. With the meal, the nature of the pottage was changed. So it is God's plan for you and me to be transformed by admitting Jesus into us through His Word. But only by choosing to fill our minds with His Word can this be done.

The transforming power of the Word is also illustrated by several parables. In the parable of the

sower (Matt. 13:1-9) the seed is scattered upon the soil, and new life sprouts and grows. So the old man of sin dies and a new man in Christ arises under the nurture of the Word.

The beginning of new spiritual life, the new birth, is also illustrated by the parable of the leaven (Matt. 13:33). Leaven, or yeast, is put into a lump of dough. The purpose of the leaven is to change the nature of the dough. Jesus accepts us just as we are at the moment we commit ourselves to Him and are justified by faith. But as the meal removed the poison from Elisha's pottage, and as the yeast changes the dough, so Jesus changes us through His Word.

"As the sinner, drawn by the power of Christ, approaches the uplifted cross, and prostrates himself before it, there is a new creation. A new heart is given him. He becomes a new creature in Christ Jesus. Holiness finds that it has nothing more to require. God Himself is 'the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus' (Rom.3:26)."

There is no justification by faith or salvation apart from regeneration. Jesus made this clear in His nocturnal conversation with Nicodemus when He said that "unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (John 3:5). "It is the Spirit that gives life" (John 6:63). There can be no true Christian life without the life-giving power of the Holy Spirit. And the Spirit exalts and glorifies Christ (see John 16:14) by leading men and women gladly to do His will.

As a new creature in Christ Jesus, the transformed sinner—now a saint—has been enabled to keep God's law, as expressed in the Ten Commandments. "For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh . . . in order that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit" (Rom. 8:3, 4).

F. F. Bruce comments that "for Paul there was no substantial difference in content between the 'just requirement of the law,' which cannot be kept

by those who live 'according to the flesh,' and the just requirement fulfilled in those who live 'according to the Spirit.' The difference lay in the fact that a new inward power was now imparted, enabling the believer to fulfill what he could not fulfill before. The will of God had not changed; but whereas formerly it was recorded on tablets of stone, it was now engraved on human hearts, and inward impulsion accomplished what external compulsion could not. "For neither circumcision counts for anything nor uncircumcision, but keeping the commandments of God" (1 Cor. 7:19).

In the sinner justified by faith, the *sine qua non* presented by Jesus to Nicodemus in John 3:7 for entrance into the kingdom, "You must be born anew," has been fulfilled. And to be born again means to "begin life anew in relation to God; his manner of thinking, feeling, and acting, with reference to spiritual things, under-going a fundamental and permanent revolution."

As a new creature in Christ, the converted person has a new standing before God. "Through

faith, the believer passes from the position of a rebel, a child of sin and Satan, to the position of a loyal subject of Christ Jesus." The sinner justified by faith is a new creature in Christ Jesus, for "no man is justified who is not renewed, nor is any man renewed who is not also justified."

Although his standing has changed, to onlookers his state may appear to be the same since they may not perceive any immediate ethical change. But his state, or condition, has also changed. He is no longer a rebel against God and His ways, as he was before, although he may not as yet have been entirely delivered from the snares of sinful habits.

A person justified by faith may still look like a sinner. When he returned to his father's home, the prodigal looked like a sinner. But he was no longer a rebel. So a person justified by faith no longer chooses to sin.

Chapter 9

The Fruit of Justification

A certain woman attended our church regularly. She came not only to the preaching service but also to the Bible study period before the Sabbath sermon. She seemed to appreciate the discussions and even participated in them. But she was not a member of the church. One day the minister, who had greeted her and talked with her on several occasions, invited her to be baptized and join the church. She answered, "I have thought of it, but my neighbor is a Seventh-day Adventist, and she screams at her children just as much as I do. So I don't think I'll join your church."

This non-Adventist had failed to find the virtues of self-control and patience in her Adventist neighbor. Evidently she had expected her Adventist neighbor to possess something that she herself did not have. Concluding that her neighbor's commitment to her Saviour and God had not helped her to control her temper, she was not

interested in joining her church.

Jesus does hope that you and I, as members of His family, will be climbing Peter's ladder and come to possess and manifest the different facets of the fruit of the Spirit (see 2 Peter 1:5-7; Gal. 5:22, 23).

Jesus expects His followers to bear fruit. In John 15:8 He says:

"By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be my disciples." As a good fruit tree or vine bears fruit, so His genuine followers also bear fruit. Abundant fruit bearing pleases Jesus.

Through justification by faith, the heavenly Husbandman grafts the returning sinner into the Vine and imbues him with the Holy Spirit. The believer becomes a branch or twig of the True Vine, which is Christ. As such he shares the very life of Christ, just as the branch or twig of a tree shares the sap and life of the tree. The believer's

connection with Jesus is not casual, but vital. He is not an isolated tendril; he is part of the True Vine.

Being grafted into the Vine, he cannot help but produce fruit of righteousness. The new life within "is testified to by righteousness without." "When we accept Christ, good works will appear as fruitful evidence that we are in the way of life, that Christ is our way, and that we are treading the true path that leads to heaven."

The fruit that the believer bears is not his own; it owes its existence to the nourishment the Vine supplies. It is thus fruit of the Vine rather than fruit of a particular branch. The life-giving sap comes up through the vine stalk and flows out into the branches. Only through this connection are the branches able to grow grapes. Even though the fruit grows on the branches, it is not the branches that furnish the nourishment that produces the fruit. It is the vine stalk. If the branches are not connected to the life-giving vine stalk, they produce no fruit. So "all our good works are dependent on a power outside of ourselves." Although fruit is produced in

our lives, it is the fruit of the Spirit, not your fruit and mine. "The heart renewed by the Holy Spirit will bring forth the fruits of the Spirit."

But fruit may not appear immediately after a person has given his life to God. Jesus Himself said, "First the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear" (Mark 4:28). The leaven in the dough does not instantly change the consistency of the entire lump of dough. But if the yeast is alive, it will gradually affect the entire lump.

If a leafy tree is alive, it will sprout leaves in the spring. So in due time will a living Christian bear fruit of righteousness. The "works of the flesh" (Gal. 5:19-21), performed by the person while he was "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1, KJV), will gradually disappear.

By our front porch we have a small oak tree that stubbornly holds on to its leaves, dead though they be, when most trees shed their leaves in the fall. This tree retains most of its leaves throughout the winter. But when spring comes and the sap

begins to flow up through its trunk and out into the branches and twigs, the leaves that have tenaciously hung on all winter fall off. In the same way, the "works of the flesh" will begin to fall off when the new life of the Spirit surges within. If a person claims to have been justified by faith and does not gradually experience ethical change and begin to produce good works, there is something radically wrong, for salvation is by grace through faith "for good works" (Eph. 2:10). Fruit bearing is precisely the end product God had in mind from the very beginning for every genuine Christian.

In the graceful words Jesus spoke to the embarrassed and shamed woman taken in adultery, there was a promise of victory over sin, with fruit of righteousness. Victory was implicit in the words, "go, and sin no more" (John 8:11, KJV). To the sinner who receives forgiveness, Jesus speaks the same words and imparts overcoming power for victory.

As we accept the gift of salvation by faith, the resultant friendship relationship with Jesus will

bear fruit in good works. "True faith trusts wholly in Christ for salvation. . . . Faith is manifested by works."

In Old Testament times a bitter curse rested upon Meroz because its men did nothing in Israel's warfare against its enemies (see Judges 5:23). In the parable of the great separation (Matt. 25:41-43), we are again told that those who do nothing will be among the damned. Jesus condemned the unfruitful fig tree (see Matt. 21:18-20). And the apostle James said that "faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead." "For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so faith apart from works is dead" (James 2:17, 26).

There is no compulsion in a justified person's fruit bearing. Jesus does not say, "You must bear fruit." Rather, He says He prunes the vine "that it may bear more fruit" (John 15:2). In the Sermon on the Mount, He does not say, "Make your light shine." Rather, He says, "Let your light so shine" (Matt. 5:16). The fruit bearing, like the light, is spontaneous, not forced. It is the result of imparted

Christian love, an integral part of the new life. And Christian love is action, as genuine Christianity is love in action. Good works are our response to God's love as manifested to us on the cross. Thus "the lives of those who are connected with God are fragrant with deeds of love and goodness."

God's gracious acceptance of us, His placing every believing person into a right, life-giving relationship to Himself, produces a love response in the saved sinner. Christ's acceptance stimulates the believer's powers of mind and body, resulting in the fulfillment of God's will in daily living. It generates in the converted person's heart and mind a desire to believe what God says, to accept what God offers, and to do whatever God wishes, in glad-hearted obedience. Nathaniel Emmons says, "Obedience to God is the most infallible evidence of sincere and supreme love to Him."

As the mind grasps more and more of the depth of God's love, it grows also in knowledge and understanding. Thus the converted person will gradually bring his life into conformity to God's

will to the extent of his knowledge. But in his readiness to exemplify the gospel, the Christian depends constantly upon the grace and the sustaining power of Christ. The apostle Paul expressed it well when he said, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10). And an inspired commentator says that a justified person's "understanding is under the control of the Holy Spirit, and his character is molded after the divine likeness."

Let us think of a home with children. The parents are anxious that the children shall grow physically, spiritually, socially, and mentally. Accordingly, they want them to do well in school and receive good grades. At the end of a term, one child brings home a report card that is not as good as the parents had expected. The parents show their dissatisfaction. During the entire ensuing term, the parents put this child on probation. He has to do well or at least better than he did the last term to merit his parents' acceptance and approval.

Such a parental stance could be disastrous. Living under such conditions, children tend to become edgy and experience constant stress and fear. In such circumstances, even mentally alert children, fully capable of doing work meriting good grades, often fail to achieve their goals. Consequently, their achievements will be subnormal or well below what they could have achieved with unconditional parental love and acceptance.

Other wiser parents accept their children as they are, irrespective of some not-so-good grades. In this more relaxed environment of parental acceptance, these children are able to do their very best and bring home better grade cards. Their parental acceptance furnishes a favorable climate for scholastic achievement. The children achieved their potential in their work and studies when the parents love and accept them. Acceptance precedes fruit bearing.

God does what He prompts wise parents to do.

Through justification by faith, through the sacrifice of Jesus, He accepts us as His own. In the surety of unconditional acceptance, they grow. Freed from anxiety, they will inevitably produce fruit in the form of works of righteousness, to the glory of God.

Luther said that if a believer "is alive and righteous and saved by faith... he needs nothing further except to prove his faith by works. Truly, if faith is there, he cannot hold back; he proves himself, breaks out in good works.... For where works and love do not break forth, there faith is not right, the gospel does not yet take hold, and Christ is not rightly known." "It is impossible to separate works from faith, quite as impossible as to separate heat and light from fire." Calvin's position was the same: "For we dream neither of a faith devoid of good works nor of a justification that stands without them. This alone is of importance: having admitted that faith and good works must cleave together, we still lodge justification in faith, not in works."

We are not justified by works, nor will our ultimate salvation depend on them. Our salvation will always rest on God's free grace through faith in the shed blood and the righteousness of Jesus. On the other hand, the omission of works, or fruits of justification by faith, may cause one to forfeit eternal life. This is illustrated by the rejection of the one-talent servant in the parable of the talents (Matt. 25:14-30); by the damnation of the designated goats in the parable of the great separation (Matt. 25:31-46); and by the parable of the two sons (Matt. 21:28-31).

The son who initially promised to go and work in his father's vineyard but neglected to do so was rejected, while the son who at first refused to go but later repented and went and worked was accepted and commended. Justification by faith, in contradistinction to mere temporary universal justification, will produce fruits of righteousness. But our good works, the fruits of righteousness, even when performed because of love for our Maker and Redeemer, will never earn us salvation. It is only through Jesus, who took our place when

we were all condemned to eternal death, that we receive the gift of eternal life. Thus John said, "He who has the Son has life; he who has not the Son of God has not life (1 John 5:12).

As speed enables the water-skier to glide on water, so saving faith enables a Christian to produce works of righteousness. It was by faith that Noah built the ark (see Heb. 11:7). All the other heroes in the hail of faith in Hebrews 11 produced fruit. They "wrought righteousness" (Heb. 11:33, KJV). Those living in the end-time will be like the people in Noah's day (see Matt. 24:3-7). Even though the righteous have made wrong choices, as Samson had, ultimately they will choose to serve God, as did Samson, and produce works of righteousness (see Heb. 11:32; cf. Judges 16:28). It is unthinkable that a person who has been justified and transformed by God's grace through faith—put into a right and amiable relationship to God by accepting Him as his Lord and Saviour—would go out and ignore God's will or work wickedness by deliberately breaking His law. That would be just as impossible as for an apple tree to produce not

apples but wild grapes.

In order to be with God in His kingdom, we must be alive in Christ. And where there is life, there is growth. Growth is the evidence of life. So works of righteousness are the fruit, or evidence, of our new life in Christ. Those who produce fruit, will therefore be found in the kingdom of God.

Probably most of us have seen an old foundation for a house on which a house was never built. When I see such a foundation, I feel a tinge of sadness because I know that someone's hopes and dreams were never fulfilled. The foundation for a house is not an end in itself. The sole purpose of a foundation is the erection of a house on it. Likewise, justification by faith is not an end in itself. Through it a believer is pardoned from all past sins and accepted by God as His child so that he might grow in grace and bear fruit.

"How can we come to God with full assurance of faith if we bear no fruit that testifies to a change wrought in us by the grace of God, no fruit that

shows that we are in fellowship with Christ? How can we approach God in faith and be abiding in Christ and He in us when by our works we show that we are not bearing fruit?"

Every natural, human mother was once pregnant. But if no changes took place in her appearance during the alleged pregnancy, people would know she is not telling the truth in spite of all her protestations. Neither is a baby's birth the final goal; we want to see it live and grow normally after birth. But pregnancy must precipitate changes—it causes changes in appearance. The same is true of life in Christ. There will be no transformation of life unless a person is converted and justified by faith. Thus justification by faith, or regeneration, which is the divine counterpart of conversion, is paramountly important. It is like the mythological Atlas, who carried the whole heavens on his shoulders. The entire evangelical knowledge of saving grace rests on justification by faith, founded on the atonement of Christ. Hence, we must never minimize the importance of justification by faith or even subordinate it to

sanctification.

Some time ago I built a small storage shed near the woods in our backyard. It resembled an authentic Swedish barn—red with white corners, fascia boards on both the sides and gables, and trimmings around the door. Even though it is small, its design is, as nearly as I can recall from my youthful years in Sweden, genuinely Swedish. Both my wife, Mae, and I and all our neighbors and visiting friends look at it with pleasure. But my joy did not begin with its completion. Every moment I found to work on its construction was sheer delight.

As Christians we will joyfully respond to the pleadings of the Holy Spirit by working in accordance with God's will. Good works, performed in joyous gratitude to God for the infinite sacrifice He made on our behalf, will thus appear in our lives as the fruit of living faith. By remembering God's graciousness in putting us right with Himself through justification by faith, a Christian will more devotedly commit his life in

grateful service to Him who died to make this new life possible.

At Simon's feast in Bethany, Mary anointed Jesus with expensive ointment (see Matt. 26:6-13). She did this not because she had to, but because she loved Jesus and wanted to do something for Him. When Judas murmuringly accused her for her extravagance, Jesus just said, "Why do you trouble the woman? For she has done a beautiful thing to me" (Matt. 26:10).

The works of righteousness, done from love for what God has done for us, are beautiful in His sight. May there be many patches of beauty in our redeemed lives.

Chapter 10

The Insufficiency of Good Works

The Jews in the time of Jesus were socially respectable citizens, as were their forebears. The rich young ruler was one of them, and he had outwardly kept the law. But he harbored a suspicion that his observance of the law was not adequate for salvation. The question he addressed to Jesus revealed this fear. Like his kinsmen, he rested his hope of salvation on his own doings. Hence his question: "Teacher, what good deed must I do, to have eternal life" (Matt. 19:16).

By basing their hope of salvation on their doings, the Jews failed to gain salvation. The apostle Paul writes: "God's people, who were seeking a law that would put them right with God, did not find it. And why not? Because they did not depend on faith but on what they did" (Rom. 9:31, 32, TEV). Unfortunately, the zealous Jews, "being

ignorant of the righteousness that comes from God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness" (Rom. 10:3), or as Today's English Version puts it; they did not know "the way in which God puts people right with himself, and instead, they have tried to set up their own way; and so they did not submit themselves to God's way of putting people right."

Even the early Christians needed to be reminded that salvation did not rest on their own deeds, but solely on God's love and mercy. Paul writes again: "It was not because of any good deeds that we ourselves had done, but because of his own mercy that he saved us, through the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5, TEV).

But gradually Christianity reverted to the Jewish position and began to trust in works for salvation. With the Reformation, the insufficiency of man's righteousness and his inability to gain salvation by works gained recognition. At least it was accepted in theory. But in the human heart—and even in the heart of the genuine Christian—the

inability of man to earn salvation has by no means obtained clear and unchallenged recognition. Human nature instinctively hankers after self-salvation.

The enemy of God and of our salvation is constantly trying to obscure the utter necessity of entire dependence on Christ. But Peter's categorical announcement before the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem is still true: "And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). A perceptive Christian writer says that "if Satan can succeed in leading man to place value upon his own works as works of merit and righteousness, he knows that he can overcome him by his temptations, and make him his victim and prey. Lift up Jesus before the people. Strike the doorposts with the blood of Calvary's Lamb, and you are safe."

Americans are a great do-it-yourself people. But not only Americans but most people everywhere are tempted to believe they can earn

salvation. Every pagan religion is based on self-salvation. "The principle that man can save himself by his own works lays at the foundation of every heathen religion. . . . Wherever it is held, men have no barrier against sin."

Christ alone can save. It is sobering to realize that, irrespective of how much we may accomplish in life, there will be no do-it-yourself Christians in heaven. Only those who have by faith accepted salvation through Christ's free grace will be found there.

The danger of self-justification comes as easily to us as it did to the ancient Pharisees. "The faithful and true witness" (Rev. 3:14) reminds us that we who are represented by the Laodiceans are just as "wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked" (Rev. 3:17). "What is it that constitutes the wretchedness, the nakedness of those who feel rich and increased with goods? It is the want of the righteousness of Christ. In their own righteousness they are represented as clothed with filthy rags, and yet in this condition they flatter themselves that they are

clothed upon with Christ's righteousness. Could deception be greater?"

Even though most Christians know cognitively that they are saved by God's free grace and receive salvation as a gift, it is exceedingly easy to slip back into the notion that we may be saved through our own works. Man in sin instinctively wants to be independent of God. Sin drives him away from God, as it did Adam and Eve after they ate of the forbidden fruit (see Gen. 3:8). And out very independence from God is sin.

Since we are closer to self than to God, our eyes tend to turn oftener to self than to God. And when some virtue appears in our lives, as fruit of salvation by the grace of Christ, we are prone to look to this goodness as the basis for our salvation. We are prone to believe that ultimate salvation depends at least partly on self rather than wholly on the free gift of God's grace.

Some so-called Christians may glory in their Christian achievements. But "the man who sits

most at the feet of Jesus, and is taught by the Saviour's spirit, will be ready to cry out, 'I am weak and unworthy, but Christ is my strength and my righteousness.'"

"We may always be startled and indignant when we hear a poor, fallen mortal exclaiming, 'I am holy; I am sinless!' Not one soul to whom God has granted the wonderful view of His greatness and majesty has ever uttered one word like this. On the contrary, they have felt like sinking down in the deepest humiliation of soul as they have viewed the purity of God and contrasted with it their own imperfection of life and character. One ray of the glory of God, one gleam of the purity of Christ, penetrating the soul, makes every spot of defilement painfully distinct and lays bare the deformity and defects of the human character. How can anyone who is brought before the holy standard of God's law, which makes apparent the evil motives, the unhallowed desires, the infidelity of the heart, the impurity of the lips, and that lays bare the life—make any boast of holiness? His acts of disloyalty in making void the law of God are

exposed to his sight, and his spirit is stricken and afflicted under the searching influences of the Spirit of God. He loathes himself, as he views the greatness, the majesty, the pure and spotless character of Jesus Christ."

"The nearer we come to Jesus and the more clearly we discern the purity of His character, the more clearly we shall discern the exceeding sinfulness of sin and the less we shall feel like exalting ourselves. Those whom heaven recognizes as holy ones are the last to parade their own goodness." True believers are "willing to exchange their own righteousness, which is unrighteousness, for the righteousness of Christ."

The insidious hankering for self-salvation arises even in the mind and heart of the person who started out by throwing himself fully upon the mercy of God. After having accepted Christ's full and free forgiveness for past sins, he may soon come to the place where he is tempted to believe that his own performance of good works will earn him salvation. But this is impossible.

No person can change his nature for the better any more than the leopard can change his spots (see Jer. 13:23). But God can and will do so when we give ourselves to Him and choose to make all our decisions in harmony with His will. This enables Him to transform us and to fulfill His eternal purpose for us. "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10). We give ourselves along with our wills and lives to Him and choose to live according to His will. As we do so, He re-creates us.

When our oldest daughter, Karen, was 1½ years old, she was out in the yard one day in early spring. The lawn had not as yet turned green, but the dandelions were blooming. Karen picked some, but with them she also got many straws of dry grass in her little hands. With this bouquet of dandelions and dry grass she went up to the front door and rang the doorbell. When her mother opened the door, Karen reached out her handful of

weeds and grass and said: "Powers, Mommy, powers.

To a coldly logical mind, Karen was offering her mother nothing but weeds, suitable only for the garbage can. But a mother's love saw beyond the worthless gift to the motive that prompted it. Thus she did not despise and disdain the "flowers," but received them with happiness and a cordial thank you to her little daughter. She took them into the house and put the yellow flowers in a little vase. They were a gift of Karen's love for her mother.

As Karen's gift of love was worthless in monetary terms, really nothing but weeds, so our good works may be utterly worthless in God's sight. Nevertheless, He is pleased with them, just as Karen's mother was pleased with Karen's flowers. He accepts them as our gift of love to Him. And in doing good works we are fulfilling Paul's desire and admonition to us "that those who have believed in God may be careful to apply themselves to good deeds" (Titus 3:8).

The person who has grasped the doctrine of justification by faith has permanently lost the false security of salvation based on his own efforts. He realizes that only Jesus' death can satisfy the divine justice and that salvation is a gift of God. "The more thorough and rich your experience in the knowledge of Jesus, the more humble will be your views of self." To this gift of salvation the Christian responds in devoted love and gratitude.

C. S. Lewis observed perceptively that "when a man is getting better, he understands more and more clearly the evil that is still in him. When a man is getting worse, he understands his own badness less and less."

Shortly after we moved to Takoma Park, Maryland, I came cruising down Powder Mill Road from New Hampshire Avenue to Riggs Road. I paid no attention to the speedometer. In the slight hollow before I reached Riggs Road, I saw three cars parked at the right-hand curb. I was just about ready to pass them when a patrolman stepped out into the street and motioned me to stop behind the

last car. To my chagrin, I now discovered that the car at the head of the line was a police car; the other two cars had been stopped by the patrolman. When the policeman was through with the other drivers, he came and told me that I had been traveling 46 miles an hour in a 30-mile-per-hour zone.

I stood condemned by the law I had broken. Fortunately, I was able to make amends for my violation of the speed law by paying a fine of \$36. All of us have broken the law of God. The punishment for breaking God's law is not a fine of \$36, but death. There is no possibility for a violator of God's law to atone for his transgression or to make amends for his mistake. Man is utterly unable to pay for his violation of God's law, which prevents him from inheriting eternal life. Man cannot justify or save himself. Only death—eternal death—awaits the sinner who is relying on his own efforts. And all of us are sinners.

"Let no one take the limited, narrow position that any of the works of man can help in the least

possible way to liquidate the debt of his transgression. This is a fatal deception."

All of us are aware of personal shortcomings and sin by our going contrary to the known will of God. God's perfect and holy law cannot justify us or put us into a right relationship to God. The purpose of the law is not to set us right with God; its purpose is to point out sin (see Rom. 3:20). After the law has made us aware of our sinfulness, it only condemns us to death (see 2 Cor. 3:7).

"Our dependence is not in what man can do; it is in what God can do for man through Christ. When we surrender ourselves wholly to God, and fully believe, the blood of Christ cleanses from all sin. The conscience can be freed from condemnation. Through faith in His blood, all may be made perfect in Christ Jesus. Thank God that we are not dealing with impossibilities."

"By faith he [the sinner] can bring to God the merits of Christ, and the Lord places the obedience of His Son to the sinner's account. Christ's

righteousness is accepted in place of man's failure."

This simple, beautiful way of attaining to righteousness appears difficult even for a converted person to fully accept. The Jews of old missed it. On the other hand, the Gentiles, who did not pursue it through their own works, "attained it, that is, righteousness through faith" (Rom. 9:30).

In his hymn "Rock of Ages," Augustus M. Toplady tells the truth:

Not the labors of my hands
Can fulfill Thy law's demands;
Could my zeal no respite know,
Could my tears forever flow,
All for sin could not atone;
Thou must save, and Thou alone.

Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to Thy cross I cling;
Naked, come to Thee for dress
Helpless, look to Thee for grace

Foul, I to the fountain fly;
Wash me, Saviour, or I die.

Our only hope of salvation, of acceptance by God, rests on Jesus and His death for us on the cross. "Without the cross, man could have no connection with the Father. On it hangs our every hope."

Salvation is not the work of man but of God. It is solely God's initiative, not man's. This is illustrated repeatedly in the Bible. Adam and Eve ran away from God, and He went in search of them. It was the father's waiting and inviting love that prompted the prodigal to start on his trek back home. In the two parables depicting the lost sheep and the lost coin, it was the shepherd and the owner—both representing God—who went in search of the lost.

No one can earn salvation. We are both justified by faith and saved by grace through faith. Therefore with Paul we say, "Let us thank God for his priceless gift!" (2 Cor. 9:15, TEV)

Chapter 11

Cain and Abel

When we think of Cain, our thoughts almost instantly focus on his murder of his brother, Abel. In one sense, that is unfortunate. Apart from that, in his industriousness Cain must have been a very respectable, commendable, and admirable person. He was a "tiller of the ground" (Gen. 4:2). He had chosen the backbreaking occupation of farming. He did not shrink from hard work in making a living. A person with the qualities he had up to the time of the murder of his brother probably could obtain membership in any present-day church.

Both Cain and Abel had grown up in a God-fearing home. Both had participated in family worship and seen their father, Adam, offer lambs to God. When the boys grew up and began to bring their own sacrifices, Abel brought lambs as his father had done. "Through the shed blood he [Abel] looked to the future sacrifice, Christ dying on the cross of Calvary; and trusting in the

atonement that was there to be made, he had the witness that he was righteous, and his offering accepted." Cain, with self-justified pride, brought products of the land, reasoning that such fruit, produced through his arduous toil, was as good an offering as his brother's lambs. But "his [Cain's] gift expressed no penitence for sin. He felt, as many now feel, that it would be an acknowledgment of weakness to follow the exact plan marked out by God, of trusting his salvation wholly to the atonement of the promised Saviour."

But the record reads: "And the Lord had regard for Abel and his offering, but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell. The Lord said to Cain, 'Why are you angry, and why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted?' " (Gen. 4:4-6). Cain might have retorted, "What do You mean, do well? Have I not been working day after day in the sweat of my brow to produce this fruit and grain? Have I not struggled painfully with thorns and thistles and the stubborn soil? When You put my parents in the

garden, did You not tell them to dress it and keep it? I have faithfully followed the directions You gave them, even though we are no longer in Eden. Besides, Lord, it is not my fault that I am a sinner. It is my father's fault that I am in this predicament. And I am not going to bring You a lamb, I am going to give You a gift of my hard labor. If You don't like it, that's too bad. Besides, did I not produce this fruit and grain with Your help and by the goodness and skill You imparted to me? These are Your fruit and grain, Lord! Even that which you asked of me."

In like manner, many Christians may at times be prone to commend themselves before God by referring to the Christlike characters they are developing. They may say, "Has not the Lord asked us to bear much fruit through the transformation of character and thus glorify our Father in heaven? Is not God's righteousness revealed in them who walk after the Spirit?" It would appear that God should indeed have respect unto such an offering of developed Christlikeness and accept it gladly.

Cain must have reasoned in that way: "That lazy brother of mine. He has just been sitting, watching the sheep, without a care in the world, while I have been working hard to produce this grain and fruit. He simply took a lamb from his flock and presented it to God; whereas I have worked for my offering." To this self-justifying attitude, God's answer might come in the words of Paul: "And to one who does not work but trusts him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned as righteousness" (Rom. 4:5).

Abraham counted himself ungodly. Paul asked, "What then shall we say about Abraham. . . ? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God" (Rom. 4:1, 2).

In contrast to Abraham, Cain thought himself righteous and came to God with a thank offering only. "He made no confession of sin, and acknowledged no need of mercy. But Abel came with the blood that pointed to the Lamb of God. He came as a sinner, confessing himself lost; his only

hope was the unmerited love of God." Cain refused to accept God's plan of salvation by grace and relied on his own good works for salvation. Cain genuinely wanted God to be pleased with what he did instead of seeking to do what would please God. He laid down the conditions under which he would like to honor and worship God.

God did not consider Cain's works of goodness as a basis for acceptance; we note with sorrow that the record reads: "Then Cain went away from the presence of the Lord" (Gen. 4:16). It would have filled both God and us with joy if it had read: "And Cain gladly followed God's plan and went out and returned with a lamb as an offering." The lamb would have been an acknowledgment that his acceptance by God depended solely on the goodness and grace of God through Christ's death for him rather than on his own good works. Then in addition to the lamb, Cain could have brought his fruit from the field as a thank offering to God for His gracious salvation through Christ, symbolized by the blood of the Lamb.

"He [Cain] chose the course of self-dependence. He would come in his own merits. He would not bring the lamb, and mingle its blood with his offering, but would present his fruits, the products of his labor. He presented his offering as a favor done to God, through which he expected to secure the divine approval. Cain obeyed in building an altar, obeyed in bringing a sacrifice; but he rendered only a partial obedience. The essential part, the recognition of the need of a Redeemer, was left out." Thus his efforts were all in vain. Like Abel, Cain should have come before God through the blood of Christ, symbolized by the slain lamb. Then he should have added the fruit from his field and garden as a thank offering to God, even as we present the fruit of the Spirit in our lives as a thank offering. Abel was determined to worship God according to the directions God had given. Cain insisted on doing it his own way, invoking God's displeasure.

"He [Cain] thought that his plans were best, and that the Lord would come to his terms. Cain in his offering did not acknowledge his dependence

upon Christ. He thought that his father Adam had been treated harshly in being expelled from Eden. The idea of keeping that sin ever before the mind, and offering the blood of the slain lamb as a confession of entire dependence upon a power outside of himself, was torture to the high spirit of Cain."

We can approach God only through the blood of Jesus. Through faith in the coming Lamb of God, Abel found favor with God. You and I are not to come before God depending even partly on our own moral and ethical attainments of goodness for salvation, but we are to approach God by virtue of the shed blood of Jesus for our sins. We must constantly remember that salvation is a gift of God. There is no other possible and acceptable way for a sinner to approach a righteous God. Then as a thank offering, we are to bring the fruit of a transformed life as we daily dedicate our lives to God and live for Him.

Both Jesus our Saviour and the fruit of the Spirit, manifested in a transformed life, are gifts of

God to us. One is the pattern; the other is the resemblance. One is the substance; the other is the shadow. One is infinite righteousness, for "the life of Christ reveals an infinitely perfect character;" the other is finite. Speaking about Jesus, Paul says in Colossians 1:14: "In whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." Our redemption rests on the work Christ did for us. "There is great need that Christ should be preached as the only hope and salvation."

We should remember constantly that it is only through the merits of Jesus that our transgressions can be pardoned and our lives transformed into His likeness. "Those who feel no need of the blood of Christ, who feel that without divine grace they can by their own works secure the approval of God, are making the same mistake as did Cain." Cain brought the fruit of his own efforts, hoping God would accept him because of his good works. But this was all in vain.

Never for one moment should we think that our hope of salvation rests on our own perfection,

however honed and refined it may be. The Pharisee in the Temple judged his character by comparing it with the character of other men (see Luke 18:11) and thus felt no conviction of sin. The publican, on the other hand, did not compare himself with others but looked solely to Jesus for saving mercy (see Luke 18:13). He knew there was nothing he could do that could atone for his sins. In the same way, only the blood of Christ can pay for our sins.

"Cain and Abel represent two classes that will exist in the world till the close of time. One class avail themselves of the appointed sacrifice for sin; the other venture to depend upon their own merits; theirs is a sacrifice without the virtue of divine mediation, and thus it is not able to bring man into favor with God. It is only through the merits of Jesus that our transgressions can be pardoned. Those who feel no need of the blood of Christ, who feel that without divine grace they can by their own works secure the approval of God, are making the same mistake as did Cain. If they do not accept the cleansing blood, they are under condemnation. There is no other provision made whereby they can

be released from the thralldom of sin."

The true Christian's hope will be centered only in Christ, as Paul expressed it in Galatians 6:14: "But far be it from me to glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world." Our "sense of need, the recognition of our poverty and sin, is the very first condition of acceptance with God."

In Hebrews 11:4 the inspired writer declares: "By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain." "Abel grasped the great principles of redemption. He saw himself a sinner, and he saw sin and its penalty, death, standing between his soul and communion with God. He brought the slain victim, the sacrificed life, thus acknowledging the claims of the law that had been transgressed. Through the shed blood he looked to the future sacrifice, Christ dying on the cross of Calvary; and trusting in the atonement that was there to be made, he had the witness that he was righteous, and his offering accepted."

By stepping into the footsteps of Abel and looking to Jesus as the only atonement for our sins, we too may receive the witness of God that we are righteous.

Chapter 12

Looking to Jesus

In traveling from the Red Sea toward Edom, the Israelites on one occasion were troubled by poisonous snakes (see Num. 21:4-9). The snakes bit many of the people, and many died. In their predicament the people cried to Moses for help. Moses talked to God, and God told him to make a brazen serpent and set it on a pole in the midst of the camp. Then He told Moses to instruct the people who had been bitten by the snakes to look at the serpent of brass. As they looked they would be healed.

Moses conveyed God's bidding to the people, and as the snakebitten victims looked at the brazen serpent, they were indeed healed. Those who refused to look perished in their disbelief and refusal to follow God's direction.

All of us have been bitten by the old serpent (see Rev. 12:9; 20:2). We are infected with a

poison that will result in eternal death unless we look to Jesus to be healed. "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:14, 15), Jesus told Nicodemus during their nocturnal visit. The apostle says: "Let us keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, on whom our faith depends from beginning to end" (Heb. 12:2, TEV).

As Christians we choose to focus our gaze on Jesus, just as the believing snakebitten Israelites focused on the brazen serpent. It would have done the Israelites no good to look at themselves to see how well they were doing in resisting the effects of the poison. So it will do you and me no good to look at ourselves to see how well we are doing in resisting and overcoming temptation to sin. Apart from ultimately reaping eternal death, followers of Jesus who look at themselves rather than at their Saviour will face two possible consequences: either they will become pharisaical and self-righteous, or they will be constantly discouraged as they notice how far short they fall from resembling their

Master.

The Pharisees in the days of Jesus knew they were morally respectable. They conceitedly believed their ethical respectability would save them. In this connection it might be well to remember that the unique ailment of the Laodicean church is also self-deception. The members think they are rich, and "need nothing; not knowing that" [they] "are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked," the faithful and true Witness says (Rev. 3:17).

At the Temple the Pharisee's eyes were fixed on self; the publican's on God (see Luke 18:9-14). The Pharisee looked upon heaven as a corporation where his good, respectable life had earned him considerable dividends. He was waiting to collect what he had earned. The publican, on the other hand, saw God as He actually is—"a consuming fire" (Heb. 12:29) to sin and sinners. He knew that only God's grace could forgive and purify him and fit him to live with God, who is "everlasting burnings" (Isa. 33:14). In this way the publican

"went down to his house justified rather than the other" (Luke 18:14).

Those who look constantly at self will lose their Christian hope and end up renouncing their faith. There are many professing Christians who fear that they will never be saved. Some of these are in our own church. Ellen G. White says: "Many who are sincerely seeking for holiness of heart and purity of life seem perplexed and discouraged. They are constantly looking to themselves, and lamenting their lack of faith; and because they have no faith, they feel that they cannot claim the blessing of God. They look above the simplicity of true faith, and thus bring great darkness upon their souls. They should turn the mind from self, and dwell upon the mercy and goodness of God and recount His promises, and then simply believe that He will fulfill His word."

Anyone who thinks that he must earn his acceptance with God by his flawless behavior will constantly fix his eyes and thoughts on self. But continuous introspection will cause deep

discouragement to every honest soul, since he will notice constant shortcomings. To be freed from this trap he must focus his eyes on Jesus and grasp the glorious truth of justification and salvation by faith.

When a person looks at himself to discover a title to heaven, he is absolutely correct when he concludes that heaven will never be his. We have all broken the law of God, and hence we merit only death. But since we have committed our lives to Jesus, and remain in that commitment, "we are not to be anxious about what Christ and God think of us, but about what God thinks of Christ, our Substitute."

Still, Jesus is our pattern, and although "we cannot equal the pattern; . . . we shall not be approved of God if we do not copy it and, according to the ability which God has given, resemble it." Jesus is the model for every committed Christian, as He gladly did only what pleased His Father. So also will His friends and followers of today choose to do. But even more important than being my Pattern, He is and will

always remain my Saviour.

Jesus removed the burden of sin from you and me. He will do that for everyone who comes to Him as a repentant sinner and acclaims Him as his Saviour. Some of you recall what happened when Christian, in Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, came to the cross. There the burdens rolled from Christian's shoulders. Your burdens and mine also should fall from our shoulders when we meet Jesus at Calvary, provided we accept Him as our Saviour from sin and as our Substitute. You and I need no longer carry the burdens of sin and guilt. Jesus took them all and nailed them to His cross. You and I may be free!

Without the cross of Jesus there would never have been any hope of salvation for anyone. "Without the cross, man could have no union with the Father. On it depends our every hope. From it shines the light of the Saviour's love, and when at the foot of the cross the sinner looks up to the One who died to save him, he may rejoice with fullness of joy, for his sins are pardoned."

"Our faith must be an intelligent faith, looking unto Jesus in perfect confidence, in full and entire faith in the atoning Sacrifice. This is essential that the soul may not be enshrouded in darkness."

With an intelligent faith we will constantly rest our hope of salvation on Christ. If we do not, we will be enveloped in darkness and utter despair. To avoid this we will accept the atonement Jesus wrought for us at Calvary. But if we persist in basing our salvation on our own attainments, the day of accounting will reveal that our hope is based on shifting sand and not on the solid Rock. Even if it were possible to live flawlessly from this moment on, we still have the problem of our sin in our past. That alone will cause our damnation for eternity. About this we are utterly helpless to do anything. Only Jesus can take care of that sin. This He did on the cross. As Christian in Pilgrim's Progress, you and I are also delivered from the burdens of sin and guilt at the cross. This deliverance is ours if we are willing to hand over our sin and guilt to Jesus.

I love the sea. I love water and big oceangoing ships. So one day I go down to a pier in New York Harbor. I walk very close to the edge of the pier, and as I do, I stumble and fall into the water. I am not a very good swimmer to start with, and because I am fully dressed, my fight to stay afloat is not succeeding. I am going to go under. Then a man on the pier sees my predicament; he jumps into the water and rescues me.

Three weeks later I happen to be at the same pier, looking at the ships. And there I just happen to meet the man who rescued me from drowning. What do you think I say when I meet him? Do you think I go up to him and say, "I am certainly glad that today I have been able to stay out of the water; look at my well-pressed suit"? Do you think that is what I say to him? How preposterous! When I discover the man who saved me from drowning, I have no thought at all of my good appearance and well-pressed suit. I can think only that he saved me from drowning! My eyes and thoughts are not on self. They are fixed on the man who saved me; he

rescued me from drowning. If it had not been for him, I would have been dead.

As a sinner justified and saved by faith, I will have the same relationship with Jesus as with my hypothetical rescuer. My thoughts will not be on how well I am doing in living a God-pleasing life. My mind will be continuously filled with thankfulness to Jesus. He saved me. For the person who realizes he has been saved from eternal death by Jesus, "One interest will prevail, one subject will swallow up every other—Christ our righteousness."

With our eyes and thoughts focused on Jesus, by God's grace we may live victoriously and even be saved from sinking into sinning. We may do the impossible. Peter did. He walked on water as long as his eyes were glued on Jesus. But his attention turned to self; proudly he looked back to his friends still in the boat and thought, Look what I am doing. I am walking on water while you are still in the boat. You can't do what I am doing. As these self-congratulatory thoughts rolled through his mind, he

began to sink.

The same will be true about you and me. When we take our eyes off Jesus and focus them on self, we will inevitably sink into sin. But with our eyes on Jesus, we may, like Peter, achieve the impossible—we may be kept from falling into sin.

"God can and will, if we permit Him, keep us from falling into sin, just as anyone of us can keep a pencil standing on its sharpened tip, by holding on to its top. The pencil verily stands, but not by itself. God does not expect you and me to stand by our own strength or power. But He is willing and eager to hold us by His sustaining grace and keep us from falling. A person who stands through God's grace will do no boasting of sinlessness. He will take no glory or credit to himself, but will constantly praise God for His grace and goodness."

The apostle Jude assures us that Jesus, through His Spirit, aims to keep us from falling, provided we are willing to be held by Him. He will keep us standing just as anyone of us can keep a pencil

standing on its tip. These are the apostle's reassuring words: "Now to the One who can keep you from falling and set you in the presence of his glory, jubilant and above reproach" (Jude 24, NEB).

He who holds us will also change us. Some of you remember Hawthorne's story "The Great Stone Face," inspired perhaps by the natural rock formation, at Franconia Notch in New Hampshire. The story tells us that late one summer afternoon a mother and her boy, Ernest, were sitting by their cottage in the valley, looking at the Great Stone Face. Ernest's mother said that one day—according to a prophecy the White settlers had inherited from the Indians in the area—a man would come who would reflect both the facial features and the kind, noble character that the valley people read into the Great Stone Face.

From that moment on Ernest's thoughts were constantly on the great and good man represented by the mountain's craggy features. With the valley people Ernest looked longingly for this man to

appear. In the meantime Ernest became a youth, grew to manhood, and finally reached old age, still looking for the fulfillment of the prophecy told to him by his mother. One day Ernest was told that he was the man represented by the Great Stone Face. His facial features and his noble and kind character had come to resemble those of the Great Stone Face.

The point of Hawthorne's story is that a person will inevitably grow to resemble whatever is the center of his thoughts. Nothing can outweigh the character-molding influence of one's thoughts and affections. As Ernest was changed—transformed—so you and I shall be transformed into the likeness of Jesus, provided He is the center of our thoughts and affection. This is God's unbreakable promise to you and me: "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 Cor. 3:18, KJV).

The prophet Isaiah foretells that God's glory—

that is, His character—shall be reflected in His people (see Isa. 60:1). This will never be so long as we have our eyes focused on self. It will take place only when we forget ourselves and focus our eyes upon Jesus and become absorbed by His loveliness. Then "if the eye is kept fixed on Christ, the work of the Spirit ceases not until the soul is conformed to His image."

While we focus our attention on Jesus we shall be no more aware of self and our possible attainments than was Moses when he came down from the mountain after he had been with God. But the people noticed that he had been changed. His face was shining with heavenly glory, although he himself was completely unaware of it (see Ex. 34:29-35). Like John the Baptist, who "looked upon the King in His beauty, and self was forgotten," so shall we wonder at the incomprehensible love of Jesus. We shall continuously adore Him who died for us all on the cross that we might be saved from the poison of sin and eternal death.

Chapter 13

Justification and Sanctification

Distinct, but Never Separate

The term sanctification is not a felicitous expression when used in contradistinction to justification by faith. In post-Reformation theological thinking, it denotes a process of character development, or the result of this experience culminating in the ultimate attainment in Christian maturity.

In the Bible, on the other hand, the Greek words usually translated "sanctify" might more accurately be rendered "to dedicate" or "to consecrate" to God. A sanctified person has made a commitment to God and remains in that commitment. This is exemplified in Hebrews 10:10, which reads: "And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of

Jesus Christ once for all." The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary remarks on this text: "The Greek emphasizes the thought that we were sanctified and now stand in a state of sanctification. Sanctification is here viewed, not from the aspect of a continual process, . . . but in terms of the original change from sin to holiness, and as a continuation in that state." In other words, in the Bible a sanctified person is dedicated or consecrated to the service of God and remains in that state of commitment. He is a believer. Many modern Bible translations reflect this meaning of the text (e.g., Moffatt and NEB), while others say that the believers have been made or are holy (e.g., Phillips and Jerusalem).

Biblical sanctification, therefore, usually denotes the sinner's affirmative response to God's pleading through the Holy Spirit, and his acceptance of Jesus as his Saviour. This is in contradistinction to God's acceptance of the sinner, which is denoted by justification.

This biblical concept of sanctification is also

illustrated in 1 Corinthians 1:2, where Paul writes: "To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus" (literally: "to those who have been sanctified"). Most modern language versions, instead of using the term sanctified read "consecrated" (NAB, Moffatt, Goodspeed, Twentieth Century New Testament) or "dedicated" (NEB). Others use phrases such as "called to be God's holy people" (TEV), "those whom Christ Jesus has made holy" (Phillips), "the holy people of Jesus Christ" (Jerusalem), etc.

In 1 Corinthians 6:11, Paul reminds the Corinthian believers that they "were sanctified." In this verse Paul again presents sanctification as preceding justification by faith. He says: "but you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God." The sanctified ones had responded to the pleadings of the Holy Spirit and dedicated or consecrated themselves to God in the Spirit. Sanctification here refers to a sinner's turn to God with joyous acceptance of His plans and will for his life, away from his prior, selfish disregard of God's loving

will. In this way the former rebel is justified by faith and becomes an obedient child of God.

The saints, according to the Bible, are the "holy ones"—hagioi in the original Greek. These have accepted Christ by faith and have dedicated themselves to God and His service. Today we would call them believers or Christians, rather than saints or holy ones. We would also speak of them as in the process of sanctification, rather than as having been sanctified.

The Levitical law helps us understand the character or nature of "holy ones" or "saints" in the biblical sense. Leviticus 27:28 reads: "But no devoted thing that a man devotes to the Lord, of anything that he has, whether of man or beast, or of his inherited field, shall be sold or redeemed; every devoted thing is most holy to the Lord."

According to the Old Testament ritual, when something was devoted or dedicated to God it became holy. This was true of both things and persons (see Ex. 29:3 7; cf. Matt. 23:19). The

holiness, either of a thing or of a person, did not derive from the object's own holiness or the person's ethical development, but rather from having been devoted, dedicated, or consecrated to God. It was the holiness of the Divine Recipient that made it holy. Not the giver, but the Divine Receiver invested the object or the person with holiness at the time of "devotion." "For it is not by nature but by divine calling that Christians are [holy ones]; they owe their membership of the holy cultic community to the call of divine grace in Christ (Phil. 1:1: [to the holy ones in Christ])." A person becomes or is reckoned holy when he is joined to a holy God, just as a woman becomes rich when she marries a rich man.

After a person has accepted salvation through Christ's grace, he chooses to live a life devoted to God and His service. He is dedicated or consecrated to God. Thus he is "holy." Any person who has committed himself to God is holy in the biblical sense. He is a saint. So when Paul wrote to the churches that he had raised, he called their members saints (see Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:2; Eph.

1:1; Phil. 1:1; Col. 1:2).^{*} But these members were not saints in the popular theological sense of today, which denotes moral flawlessness.

Justification by faith and sanctification are connected. Through sanctification, in the biblical sense, the believer commits himself to God. As he commits or "sanctifies" himself to God and lays hold of Jesus by faith, he is justified. After the initial commitment or dedication to God, the believer will daily "sanctify" himself to God and His service. We often find this meaning of sanctify and sanctification in the Old Testament. The Israelites were to sanctify themselves (see Lev. 11:44; 20:7; 2 Chron. 35:6, KJV); the Sabbath (see Neh. 13:22, KJV); and even "the Lord of hosts himself" (Isa. 8:13, KJV). Job sanctified his children (see Job 1:5, KJV). In modern versions of the Bible, terms or phrases other than sanctify are ordinarily used in these passages.

The biblical meaning of sanctify and sanctification in no way denies the important

theological doctrine of sanctification as an ongoing process of spiritual and ethical growth throughout life. The Bible strongly endorses this doctrine, but it generally uses other terms to describe it. The Bible may speak of Christians as sons or children of God who are daily growing into fuller Christ-likeness. This growth in grace permits no stagnation. As John says: "Beloved, we are God's children now; it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. And every one who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure" (1 John 3:2, 3).

The sixth chapter of Romans might be entitled "Sanctification." But the terms sanctify and sanctification do not appear in this chapter. Its subject is the birth into the kingdom of God as symbolized by baptism. After birth into the kingdom of God, obedience to Christ follows, with victory over sin. Victory over sin is part of growth in grace, or theological sanctification.

In this chapter of Romans, Paul makes it clear

that there is to be no willful disobedience—or sin in the theological sanctification process—but obedience. He expresses it in this way: "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions. Do not yield your members to sin as instruments of wickedness, but yield yourselves to God as men who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments of righteousness" (Rom. 6:12, 13). Ideally this will be our experience since we are "dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus" (verse 11). Thus in Romans 6 the apostle Paul portrays a living Christian experience, embracing both justification by faith and its logical sequence, theologically called sanctification. He does not separate them, he ties them together. He slides smoothly from justification by faith to theological sanctification.

Though we often prefer to separate them in our thinking, because it makes it easier for us to understand these two experiences in the salvation process, it would be well for us as Christians to follow the example of the apostle Paul and not

separate justification by faith from theological sanctification.

In Catholic theology, justification by faith and sanctification are merged. According to the canons of the Council of Trent, "Justification . . . is not remission of sins merely, but also the sanctification and renewal of the inward man." In Protestant theology, on the other hand, justification by faith and sanctification have traditionally been looked upon as distinct experiences, although not separated.

The Reformers, who rediscovered the gospel teaching of justification by faith, taught the "indissoluble connection between the justification and (theological) sanctification" while they maintained "that they are not only distinguishable in idea, but different in nature."

Luther spoke of justification by faith and theological sanctification in this way: "Christ has earned for us not only God's mercy, but also the gift of the Holy Spirit, that we should have not only

forgiveness, but also an end of sins. Whoever remains in his earlier evil ways must have another kind of Christ. Consequence demands that a Christian should have the Holy Spirit and lead a new life, or know that he has not received Christ at all." Indeed, "The righteousness of Christ is not a cloak to cover unconfessed and unforsaken sin; it is a principle of life that transforms the character and controls the conduct."

Through justification by faith man is put into a life-giving connection or union with God and given the Holy Spirit for growth in grace and victory over sin. Justification restores fellowship between God and man, and this fellowship is to be maintained. There can be no union of God and man unless man is willing to be separated from rebellion and sin. Amos points this out when he says "Do two men travel together unless they have agreed?" (Amos 3:3, NEB). When two friends walk together it is not the walk that brings the greatest delight, but the fellowship. Genuine Christian life is likewise fellowship with Christ.

Calvin, like Luther, tied justification by faith to theological sanctification by insisting that the fruit of good works will appear in a Christian. He says: "Christ therefore justifies no one whom He does not at the same time sanctify. These benefits are joined together by an everlasting and indissoluble bond, so that those whom He illumines by His wisdom, He redeems; those whom He redeems He justifies; those whom He justifies, He sanctifies.

"But, since the question concerns only righteousness and sanctification, let us dwell upon these. Although we may distinguish them, Christ contains both of them inseparably in Himself. Do you wish then, to attain righteousness in Christ? You must first possess Christ; but you cannot possess Him without being made partaker in His [theological] sanctification, because He cannot be divided into pieces."

The Westminster Confession expresses the connections and differences between justification by faith and sanctification this way: "Although [theological] sanctification be inseparably joined

with justification, yet they differ in that God, in justification, imputeth the righteousness of Christ; in [theological] sanctification, His Spirit infuseth grace, and enableth to the exercise there-of; in the former, sin is pardoned; in the other, it is subdued; the one doeth equally free all believers from the revenging wrath of God, and that perfectly in this life, that they never fall into condemnation; the other is neither equal in all, nor in this life perfect in any, but growing up to perfection."

It has always been the traditional Protestant position that the two experiences, justification by faith and theological sanctification, are distinct but not separate.

Karl Barth says about justification by faith and theological sanctification: "We must not confuse or confound them. Justification is not sanctification and does not merge into it. Sanctification is not justification and does not merge into it. Thus, although the two belong indissolubly together, the one cannot be explained by the other. It is one thing that God turns in free grace to sinful man,

and quite another that in the same free grace He converts man to Himself." That by faith "the sinful man may grasp the righteousness promised him in Jesus Christ is one thing, and quite another his obedience, or love, as his correspondence to the holiness imparted to him in Jesus Christ. . . . But it is a connection, not identity. The one cannot take the place of the other."

Barth continues by saying that justification and theological sanctification are but "two different aspects of the one event of salvation. The distinction between them has its basis in the fact that we have in this event two genuinely different moments. That Jesus Christ is true God and true man in one person does not mean that His true deity and His true humanity are one and the same, or that the one is interchangeable with the other."

Justification by faith may be compared to conception—the new life initiated through it must continue and develop into a fetus and finally into a baby. Or we might compare justification to birth. How unfortunate when, after birth, a baby's life is

snatched away and it does not continue to grow and develop. So justification by faith is related to theological sanctification. Following justification, we welcome Jesus to come and live within us during the process of theological sanctification. Thus Paul says: "As therefore you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so live in him" (Col. 2:6).

Justification by faith is immediate and complete, albeit with continuous effects. But our sanctification is to be continuous, both in its biblical meaning (dedication or consecration to God) as well as in its theological meaning (growing toward spiritual maturity or perfection). In the biblical sense sanctification is gradual, progressive, and never complete. In either sense, sanctification is never to terminate.

Decisions for God are good. But such decisions are empty unless there is action. Therefore, God does not want us to stop with mere decisions; He wants us to become disciples and follow Him. It is newness of life in Jesus Christ with willing, obedient discipleship that counts. No one can be a

disciple of Jesus unless he demonstrates his trust by walking in the path of obedience to Christ and His Father. Such commitment will result in a life of growth in grace—theological sanctification.

When using the word sanctification in its theological meaning, justification by faith must of necessity precede sanctification. Growth in grace follows justification by faith just as the superstructure of a building must be constructed upon the foundation. Architecturally, the foundation of any building is physically below the superstructure, but it is not therefore less important. The whole building—even the Empire State Building—rests on its foundation. In the same way, theological sanctification rests on justification by faith. Apart from justification by faith no flesh would ever be saved, because only through it comes newness of life. And there can be no growth—no sanctification in its theological sense—without a birth to new spiritual life within, through the Holy Spirit.

Sanctification, in both its biblical and

theological meanings, is effected through the Word and the Holy Spirit. In its biblical meaning it is the prevenient or common grace of the Spirit that prompts a person to come to Jesus and dedicate or consecrate himself to God and His service. After a person has committed Himself to God, the Spirit works continuously within him, effecting an ever fuller conformity to God's will. "The soul is to be sanctified through the truth. And this also is accomplished through faith. For it is by the grace of Christ, which we receive through faith, that the character can be transformed." In this way the Spirit fulfills His mission, which is to glorify our Saviour (see John 16:14), by fitting men and women for fellowship with God and the angels throughout eternity.

Justification by faith and theological sanctification belong together as do the two rails of a railroad. The two rails are distinct, but they always run together. They are really only two parts of one and the same railroad track. Using another metaphor, they are like the two sides of a coin—distinct but never separated. So justification by

faith and theological sanctification are both integral parts of the salvation process. At times it is difficult clearly to differentiate between them. Inspiration testifies to this. "Many commit the error of trying to define minutely the fine points of distinction between justification and sanctification. . . . Why try to be more minute than is Inspiration on the vital question of righteousness by faith?"

Chapter 14

Between Scylla and Charybdis

On his long journey from Troy, Ulysses of Greek mythology had to navigate the Strait of Messina. On the Italian side of the strait was the rock Scylla. Ancient Greek sailors personified this promontory as a monster with 12 feet, six heads on long snakelike necks, each head having a triple row of sharklike teeth that would snatch and devour unwary sailors. On the Sicilian side was the whirlpool Charybdis. It was personified as a monster that drank huge amounts of water and belched it forth three times a day. It would suck to death sailors who came too close. To navigate this perilous passage it was essential that Ulysses steer a steady course, lest he, his ship, and all his sailors either be sucked to a watery grave by coming too close to the whirlpool Charybdis or be devoured by the monster Scylla. Despite Ulysses' vigilance, Scylla devoured six of his sailors.

This classic dilemma often illustrates life. In

guarding against one danger we often come close to, or succumb to, another. The path of safety is seldom found easily.

In the area of mental persuasion or religious conviction, our course as Christians lies constantly between Scylla and Charybdis. The Christian must sail between legalism, a formal theoretical acceptance of the Written Word, with meticulous observance of the ethics of Christianity; and libertinism or emotional antinomianism, an alleged warm feeling of personal oneness with Jesus while disregarding the Written Word and despising the growth of the fruit of the Spirit in one's life. In trying to avoid one pitfall, it is easy to fall prey to the other. Extreme stress on theological sanctification may result in a belief in salvation by works; undue stress on justification by faith may result in devotion to cheap grace.

E. J. Waggoner and A. T. Jones did God's work at the Minneapolis General Conference session in 1888. By boldly proclaiming the message of righteousness by faith, they tried to rescue the

church from sterile legalism and to nurture the believers in a living experience in Christ. Ellen G. White wholeheartedly endorsed their efforts to present Christ as our righteousness. Before sailing for Australia, she joined them in presenting this message in many ministerial institutes across the United States. About the message of righteousness by faith she writes: "The loud cry of the third angel has already begun in the revelation of the righteousness of Christ, the sin-pardoning Redeemer."

Later, in a letter from New Zealand, she warns Jones: "In my dream you were presenting the subject of faith and the imputed righteousness of Christ by faith. You repeated several times that works amounted to nothing, that there are no conditions. The matter was presented in that light that I knew minds would be confused, and would not receive the correct impression in reference to faith and works, and I decided to write to you. You state this matter too strongly. There are conditions to our receiving justification and sanctification, and the righteousness of Christ. I know your meaning,

but you leave a wrong impression upon many minds. While good works will not save even one soul, yet it is impossible for even one soul to be saved without good works."

Justification by faith is attained without works. It is solely "by faith apart from works of law" (Rom. 3:28). This means that we are justified or put right with God without meriting it of ourselves. The sinner experiences justification by faith when he accepts the gift of salvation. It occurs when the sinner responds to the pleadings of the Holy Spirit and changes his attitude toward God from one of rebellion and enmity to one of veneration, trust, and loyalty. And this change manifests itself in obedience.

Obedience to God's will as expressed in His law, and salvation by grace through faith are not mutually exclusive. Rather, they go together. Obedience does not imply legalism. To call observance of law legalism is to misconstrue the Word of God. Thinking that one can be saved by keeping the law is legalism. Willing obedience is

not legalism. Jesus said, "For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother, and sister, and mother" (Matt. 12:50).

Neither the observance of the law of God nor the fulfilling of God's will makes a person a legalist. Rather, it is the person's attitude or motive for abiding by God's will that may make him a legalist. If a person keeps the law, hoping that by doing so he will be saved, he surely is a rank legalist. No one, not even a converted person, can be saved by keeping the law, but he may be lost by not keeping it.

Salvation is not earned by keeping the law; salvation is a gift of God. "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God" (Eph. 2:8). But having been saved (forgiven of our past violations of God's law) by Christ's shed blood for us, we are now being saved (preserved from transgressing His law) by Jesus Himself, who is living out His life of obedience within us through His Holy Spirit.

Through the Holy Spirit, Jesus will protect us from sinning whenever we trust God and place our wills on the side of His will. "Every temptation, every opposing influence, whether open or secret, may be successfully resisted, 'not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts.'"

We are not saved by works any more than a tree produces fruit to prove that it is alive. A tree produces fruit because it is alive, not to prove that it is alive. So it is with a genuine Christian; he produces good works as fruit. "By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be my disciples" (John 15:8).

Although it may appear easy to hold a one-sided view of a question, it is not always the best or safest position. Years ago, while selling books in a Swedish county adjacent to Norway, I decided to cycle into Norway to spend my midsummer holiday in the Norwegian capital of Oslo. At that time, traffic in Sweden moved on the left side of the road, as it still does in the British Isles. However in Norway traffic moved on the right side

of the road.

I entered Norway on a narrow, graveled country road barely wide enough for two cars. When I rode my bicycle on such a road in Sweden I would ordinarily stay in the middle of the infrequently traveled road and veer over to the extreme left side only when I would occasionally meet a car. When I crossed the dividing line between the two countries, I moved over to the right side of the road and remained on that side, even though the Norwegian road was no wider and carried no more traffic than the Swedish country road did.

Why did I cling to the right side of the narrow road in Norway, even though I had not hugged the left side of the road in my native Sweden? From early childhood I had made it a habit to turn to the left in a moment of unexpected danger. In Norway, to avoid the temptation of veering over to the left if I should unexpectedly meet a traveler, I stayed on the extreme right side of the road, even though I was in danger of running off the narrow road into

the ditch.

Although it appears easier for some Christians to veer to the side of a righteousness by faith that does not produce fruit, and for others to veer to righteousness by works, it is God's will and plan that we succumb to neither extreme.

In 1890 Ellen G. White wrote: "We hear a great deal about faith, but we need to hear a great deal more about works. Many are deceiving their own souls by living an easygoing, accommodating, cross-less religion. But Jesus says, 'If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.'"

In other words, although it should be impressed indelibly upon everyone's awareness that our salvation rests solely on God's grace through faith, we must never come to the place where we believe the law is abrogated. A living, vital, saving relationship with God is not adequately expressed in a formal creed or in theoretical dogma and a set form of worship. But neither does it express itself

in fatuous, fruitless faith. Rather, saving faith is a divine dynamic, operative in our lives through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, who abides and rules within every true Christian. In such a relationship the believer acclaims Jesus not merely as a loving Friend, a gracious Saviour, and an Intercessor at God's throne, but exalts Him also as King in all the different facets of personal living here and now. He becomes a glad-hearted follower of Jesus, loyal to Him in every respect by keeping His law.

In her letter to A. T. Jones, Ellen White links "justification and sanctification, and the righteousness of Christ." The righteousness of Christ embraces both justification by faith and the resultant process of theological sanctification by faith in Jesus as our Redeemer. Sanctification is His righteousness made part of us, as we live under the constant guidance and power of the Holy Spirit.

The gospel encompasses both God's gracious acceptance of the sinner and the subsequent grace—gift that enabled him to live according to

God's will. It steers a middle course between antinomianism and legalism. In Jesus, law and gospel are not opposites but complementary. We are redeemed by God's grace through faith, but by a faith that works through love (see Gal. 5:6). "Faith and works are two oars which we must use equally."

But the danger is constantly present, as Luther found to his extreme sorrow, that some will swing too far to one side or the other. He concluded that it was almost impossible to present the gospel of salvation by God's free grace and justification by faith without some so-called Christians abusing it by turning grace into license and libertinism. He wrote: "Thus there is a danger on both sides... if grace or faith is not preached, no one is saved; for faith alone justifies and saves. On the other hand, if faith is preached, as it must be preached, the majority of men understand the teaching about faith in a fleshly way and transform the freedom of the Spirit with the freedom of the flesh. This can be discerned today in all classes of society, both high and low. They all boast of being evangelicals and

boast of Christian freedom. Meanwhile, however, they give in to their desires and turn to greed, sexual desire, pride, envy, etc. No one performs his duty faithfully; no one serves another by love."

But in spite of the danger that some may turn grace into libertinism, an ambassador for Christ will proclaim the message of salvation by God's free grace in order to win men and women to Christ, just as a suitor must take the dare of proposing in order to win his bride.

Man in sin needs forgiveness. This is rescue. He must become a son of God in order to have eternal life. But rescue does not suffice. After having been rescued, life must be sustained. Man needs care and rehabilitation to be restored to the image of God in which he was created (see Gen. 1:26). Some erroneously call this deification. Such it is definitely not, since man, although redeemed, will never become God. He is, and always will remain, a creature; man will never become the Creator. But although a creature who has been soiled by sin, through justification by faith he

stands without condemnation before God because he is in Christ Jesus. "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1)

Both justification by faith and theological sanctification are divine truths. They are both part of God's plan of salvation. Justification may be compared to the root system of a tree. Because the root system is physically below the tree, it is not therefore less important. As a matter of fact, the tree lives only because of its roots. Justification by faith is the root system on which theological sanctification grows. As there will be no tree without a root system, so there will be no theological sanctification without prior justification by faith.

But balance between the two must be maintained. Paul, the great proponent of justification and salvation by faith, did not slight the importance of good works. To Titus he wrote: "I desire you to insist on these things, so that those who have believed in God may be careful to apply

themselves to good deeds; these are excellent and profitable to men" (Titus 3:8).

In view of that, Luther emphasized that "It is extremely necessary, following Paul's example, to exhort believers to do good works, that is, to exercise their faith through good works; for unless these works follow faith, this is the surest possible sign that the faith is not genuine." Indeed, "faith by itself if it has no works, is dead.... For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so faith apart from works is dead" (James 2:17-26). "Faith and works will keep us evenly balanced, and make us successful in the work of perfecting Christian character."

If either faith or works is stressed to the exclusion of the other, then the retained and emphasized part—although a truth of divine origin—becomes the rankest heresy. In such a case it is not what is retained and taught that is wrong or incorrect or heresy, but what has been omitted makes it such.

Today God is looking for a people who will intelligently join faith and works. When His professed followers achieve this ideal, then their light will "so shine before men, that they may see [their] good works and give glory to [their] Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 5:16).

The first work of grace is justification by faith. The continuing work of grace is sanctification in its theological meaning. And the final work of grace is glorification. Together, justification by faith, sanctification, and glorification constitute salvation. What God hath joined together let no man put asunder.

Chapter 15

Justification and the Judgment

The judgment is prominent in both the Old and the New Testaments. On several occasions Jesus Himself pointed forward to a time when every man's work will be scrutinized by God (see Matt. 10:15; 11:24; 12:36, 41, 42; Luke 11:31, 32; John 5:28, 29). He also made clear the surety of judgment in the parable of the man without a wedding garment (see Matt. 22: 1-14), the Talents (see Matt. 25:14-40), the sheep and the goats (see Matt. 25:31-46), and others. In the teachings of Jesus about a final judgment at which every person will receive his just due, there is no uncertainty.

The apostles likewise presented the certainty of a judgment to come (see Acts 10:42; James 2:13; 2 Peter 2:4, 9; 1 John 4:17; Jude 6).

Paul, the ardent proclaimer of salvation by faith

through God's free grace, saw no conflict between salvation by grace and a judgment. He repeatedly taught the certainty of a judgment for both saints and sinners (see Acts 17:31; Rom. 14:10; 1 Cor. 3:3-15; 2 Cor. 5:10; Heb. 9:27). In Romans 3 he introduced the teaching of justification by faith only after having shown, in chapters 1 and 2, that all men are sinners and will face a final judgment.

About this the theologian Herman Ridderbos says: "The idea of the final divine judgment is so fundamental in all of Scripture and Paul appeals to it in a great many connections so much as a matter of course (cf., e.g., Rom. 3:6), that it is inconceivable that by proclaiming the righteousness by faith as the content of the gospel he would consciously or unconsciously have deprived this fundamental religious notion of its force. Rather, one will have to see in this self-evidentness the proof that for Paul both these realities, on the one hand that of justification by faith, on the other hand that of God's judgment of every man according to his works without respect of persons, are in no respect whatever in

contradiction with one another."

When Jesus and the Bible writers describe the coming judgment, they often give the impression that the judgment of the righteous and that of the wicked are one and the same. The parable of the separation of the sheep and the goats certainly gives that impression (see Matt. 25:31-46).

When a person starts to climb a certain mountain, it may appear as one mountain. But when he begins his upward climb he may find that several smaller peaks intervene before he can reach the highest one, which he had seen from below. The mountain consists of not one peak but several. But he discovered this only as he moves toward the top.

Viewing unfulfilled Bible prophecy from a distance of thousands of years, several Bible events are likewise telescoped and seem to merge into one. But approaching them in time, one discovers that they are not one but several events, separated in time. So it is with the judgment.

There are three facets in the final judgment: "God's own people are the first to be judged" (1 Peter 4:17, TEV) in a pre-Advent investigative judgment. This is, as Peter says, for God's people, or for all those who ever responded to the pleadings of the Holy Spirit and claimed salvation through Jesus Christ. For the redeemed, this investigative judgment might be called a pre-Advent heavenly audit, since it is just confirmatory in nature. Its purpose is to reveal who of those who responded to Christ's searching love remained in that love and will be saved, and who lapsed and will perish. The records of those who never responded to the promptings of the Holy Spirit need not be verified. They are lost by default and automatically slated for eternal death, since "there is salvation in no one else [but Jesus], for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). Second, there is a millennial judgment (see Rev. 20:2-4), during which the righteous will find out why the lost will forfeit salvation; and third, the executive judgment at the end of the millennium, when Satan

and all his impenitent followers will be destroyed in the fires of hell (see Rev. 20:11-14).

There needs to be a pre-Advent audit or judgment based on the heavenly records. When Jesus returns, He comes to raise those who are "blessed and holy" (Rev. 20:6) to eternal life and to take them to the wedding feast in heaven. In this pre-Advent audit their entitlement to salvation will be verified before all heavenly intelligences so that there will be no question in the mind of any intelligent being in the entire universe why some are saved while others are damned.

The pre-Advent heavenly audit/judgment is referred to by the prophet Daniel: "As I looked, thrones were placed and one that was ancient of days took his seat; his raiment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was fiery flames, its wheels were burning fire. A stream of fire issued and came forth from before him; a thousand thousands served him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him; the court sat in judgment, and the books were opened"

(Dan. 7:9, 10). It is also referred to in Revelation 14:7. The time for the beginning of this audit/judgment is derived from a historicist interpretation of the prophecy about the "two thousand and three hundred evenings and mornings" in Daniel 8:14. Since these embrace the "seventy weeks" of Daniel 9:24, 25, they take us to A.D. 1844 when "God's sanctuary," "cast down and profaned" for 2300 years, would "be cleansed and restored" (see Dan. 8:11-14, Amplified).

In the ancient Jewish sanctuary/temple ritual, the day of atonement was such a day of cleansing or removal of the records of all sins from the sanctuary/temple (see Lev. 16). It was both a day of audit and of judgment. Those who had repented of and confessed their sins and brought their animal sacrifices (which pointed forward to Christ), had the records of their sins destroyed. Those who had not done so were "cut off from his [God's] people" (Lev. 23:29). This presupposes a prior judgment.

This is also the import of the cleansing of the

heavenly sanctuary that began in 1844. At its end the records of the sins of the redeemed will be destroyed. Those who did once profess Christ but did not remain in Him, by trusting His promises, repenting of and confessing all their sins, and placing their wills on the side of His will, to them this audit will indeed become a judgment to eternal damnation. They will be "cut off" from life in the executive judgment at the end of the millennium, as were the unrepentant sinners in ancient Israel at the close of the day of atonement.

In this audit/judgment the Father is seated on the throne, surrounded by myriads of angels. Before Him stands Jesus, the Advocate of all the redeemed (see 1 John 2:1). Books are opened. Among them is the book of the law of God or the Bible. This is the standard in the judgment (see James 2:8-12; Eccl. 12:13, 14). There are also books of record, such as the book of life, spoken of in Philippians 4:3 and Revelation 20:15; the book of remembrance, mentioned in Malachi 3:16; and the book of sins or death, alluded to in Isaiah 65:6, 7.

There are no faulty entries in those heavenly ledgers. They have been kept by unerring angels who have witnessed every act, both good and bad. But not merely deeds and words are recorded, also the secret motives and purposes prompting acts, words, and feelings are there chronicled, with the sins that might have been committed had there been opportunity (see 1 Cor. 4:5).

The purpose of this audit/judgment is at least threefold. It will convince the unfallen inhabitants of the universe that it is safe to readmit former rebels into their society. For this reason, Jesus makes intercession for the redeemed before the Father (see Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25; 9:24; 1 John 2:1). He does not plead with the Father to take them to heaven. There is no need for this. The Father Himself loves His blood-bought children. He gave His Son for their redemption. Both the Father and the Son are eager to see their loyal followers come home to the mansions Jesus has prepared for them (see John 14:2). Assured by their leader, Jesus, that these earth-children—former

rebels—will be eternally loyal to their heavenly King, the loyal angels are glad to admit these newcomers into their society.

But the pre-Advent heavenly audit is not primarily for the benefit of the unfallen angels. It is specifically for the benefit of Satan and his followers. Satan, at the head of the fallen angels, is constantly reminding God of the sins of His followers and their lack of faith and commitment to Him, His will, and His ways. He has always been "the accuser" (Rev. 12:10) of God's children. He will challenge the salvation of every redeemed man and woman by asserting that if God admits them into heaven He must also accept him and his followers. " 'Are these,' he says, 'the people who are to take my place in heaven and the place of the angels who united with me? While they profess to obey the law of God, have they kept its precepts? . . . Look at the sins which have marked their lives.' . . . Satan has an accurate knowledge of the sins which he has tempted them to commit, and he presents these in the most exaggerated light, declaring: 'Will God banish me and my angels

from His presence, and yet reward those who have been guilty of the same sins? Thou canst not do this, O Lord, in justice. Thy throne will not stand in righteousness and judgment. Justice demands that sentence be pronounced against them.'"

The pre-Advent heavenly audit will show Satan and his angels that God is fair and just in barring them and their followers from heaven and depriving them of eternal life, while taking other earth-children to live with Him forever in glory.

Let us, in imagination, feature what will happen when the life-records of the first two kings of Israel are checked. Both entered the service of God and had their names written in the book of life. In the first part of King Saul's record in the heavenly ledgers, every sin has been marked "paid" by the shed blood of Jesus and forgiven. But toward the end of his life unconfessed and unforgiven sins remain. King Saul faltered in his loyalty to God. As a consequence, even those sins that Saul repented of and asked God to forgive during the early part of his life are returned to him as unforgiven. In this

way all the sins that Saul ever committed are charged back to him. This is in keeping with Ezekiel 18:24, which says: "But when a righteous man turns away from his righteousness and commits iniquity and does the same abominable things that the wicked man does, shall he live? None of the righteous deeds which he has done shall be remembered; for the treachery of which he is guilty and the sin he has committed, he shall die."

Jesus teaches this same truth in the parable of the unforgiving servant in Matthew 18:23-35. Even though the first servant had been forgiven his huge debt of 10,000 talents, when he refused to forgive his fellow servant, who owed him only 100 denarii, or about 1 millionth part of the debt he himself had been forgiven, the king's forgiveness was withdrawn and his huge debt was charged back to him. According to this principle, all the good deeds of Saul are erased. Finally, Saul's name is also stricken from the book of life (see Rev. 3:5) while his name is retained in the book of sin and death. Historically "Saul died for his unfaithfulness; he

was unfaithful to the Lord in that he did not keep the command of the Lord" (1 Chron. 10:13). For the same reason, he will also die eternal death.

King David committed several gruesome sins. Among them is his sordid adultery with Bathsheba, and his scheming murder of her husband Uriah. But every sin of David's has been marked "paid" by the shed blood of Jesus. Not one of David's heinous sins stands unforgiven. Therefore, his record of sin is erased from the book of sin and death, while his good entries in the book of remembrance remain. David did indeed sin, but he repented of his sins (see Ps. 51), and became a man after God's own heart (see Acts 13:22). His name is therefore retained in the book of life, and he is redeemed for eternity by God's grace.

With reference to the redeemed, this pre-Advent heavenly audit of their life records is comparable to the experience of Abraham on Mount Moriah. The test that befell Abraham in the sacrifice of his son was not essentially for God's benefit. God already knew Abraham would pass

that searching test. If Abraham had not been ready for it, God would not have given it to him at that time because God will never test His children above what they are able to endure (see 1 Cor. 10:13). Nor was the test given primarily for Abraham's sake. By that time Abraham's faith had matured to the point that he knew that "God was able to raise Isaac back from death" (Heb. 11:19, TEV) if he sacrificed him, so that God's promise to him of descendants through Isaac, as numerous "as stars of heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore" (Gen. 22:17), might be fulfilled.

The test was given to demonstrate Abraham's loyalty to God before the questioning universe. About this test given to Abraham, we read: "The sacrifice required of Abraham was not alone for his own good, not solely for the benefit of succeeding generations; but it was also for the instruction of the sinless intelligences of heaven and of the other worlds. The field of the controversy between Christ and Satan—the field on which the plan of redemption is wrought—is the lesson book of the universe. Because Abraham had shown a lack of

faith in God's promises, Satan had accused him before the angels and before God of having failed to comply with the conditions of the covenant, and as unworthy of its blessings. God desired to prove the loyalty of His servant before all heaven, to demonstrate that nothing less than perfect obedience can be accepted, and to open more fully before them the plan of salvation."

Even though we are living in a post-Copernican age we are too often geocentered in our concepts. We are prone to believe the plan of salvation is solely for the benefit of our little world. "But the plan of redemption had a yet broader and deeper purpose than the salvation of man. It was not for this alone that Christ came to the earth; it was not merely that the inhabitants of this little world might regard the law of God as it should be regarded; but it was to vindicate the character of God before the universe" Paul says, "We have been made a spectacle to the whole universe, to angels as well as to men" (1 Cor. 4:9, NIV).

God definitely does not need this audit to find

out who is worthy of salvation. He is omniscient. He knows those who have accepted Jesus as Saviour and Lord. "The Lord knows those who are his" (2 Tim. 2:19). And Jesus Himself says "I know my own and my own know me" (John 10:14). He also knows those who have remained faithful to Him to the end (see Cot. 1:23; Matt. 24:13). Such do not come into judgment. Jesus assures us: "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears my word and believes him who sent me, has eternal life; he does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life" (John 5:24).

But God does need this audit to prove before the entire universe that His ways and doings have always been fair and just. Many of the redeemed who are sleeping in their graves during this audit were looked upon as unworthy of life while on earth—they were martyred. During long ages they have symbolically cried "with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" (Rev. 6:10, KJV). In this audit their reputations will be cleared before the whole

universe. Their records will show that they were not gross sinners worthy of death, but saints of God and worthy of salvation. Thus this audit will vindicate God's deeds and character before the universe. It will justify or condemn every professed follower of Christ (see Matt. 12:36, 37). It is for this purpose that even the records of the redeemed remain until this pre-Advent audit/judgment.

God's handling of sin is illustrated by the Jewish sanctuary ritual. As soon as a sin was committed, it was symbolically recorded at the sanctuary. Jeremiah says it was "written on the horns of their altars" (Jer. 17:1). The blood of the slain sacrificial animal was smeared on the horns of the altar of burnt offerings or on the altar of incense to indicate that the sins, written on the horns of the altars, had been atoned for by shed blood. The blood expressed the repentant sinner's "desire for pardon through faith in a Redeemer," as Ellen G. White phrased it on page 420 of *The Great Controversy*. As far as the repentant sinner himself was concerned, his confessed sin was thereby blotted out (see Isa. 43:25; 44:22), or separated or

removed from him "as far as the east is from the west" (Ps. 103:12). It was cast "into the depths of the sea" (Micah 7:19) when he repented of and confessed his sin.

Everything we do, think, or feel is chronicled in the records of heaven (see Dan. 7:10; Rev. 20:12; Eccl. 12:14), as were the sins of Israel "written on the horns of their altars." God has a perfect transcript of our characters. "Opposite each name in the books of heaven is entered with terrible exactness every wrong word, every selfish act, every unfulfilled duty, and every secret sin, with every artful dissembling." "As the features of the countenance are reproduced with unerring accuracy on the polished plate of the artist, so the character is faithfully delineated in the books above." But when we accept Jesus as our Saviour and remain loyal to Him, our sins too are blotted out as far as we are concerned, although the heavenly records remain until the pre-Advent audit/judgment.

The deliverance that is experienced in coming to Jesus and being saved by His grace is like being

discharged from a hospital. During a patient's hospital stay his temperature, blood pressure, heart beat, etc., are recorded several times a day. Those records remain in the medical records library of the hospital even after the patient has regained his health and has been discharged and sent home.

In the same way, the person who has chosen to live by God's will rejoices in the forgiveness of sin and the gift of eternal life (see 1 John 5:12). He knows that as far as he is concerned, his sins are blotted out. He knows that nothing stands against him, because all his sins have been covered by the blood of Jesus.

When the names of the redeemed come up in this audit Jesus will represent them. But He does something paradoxical. Instead of defending His clients, He admits their guilt before the whole universe. He does not try to justify their salvation by referring to anyone's ethical or moral goodness, irrespective of how far a believer may have advanced in his dedication to God. Zechariah 3 vividly demonstrates what Jesus does for the

sinner. Here Satan presses his charges against Joshua the high priest, a sinner and the representative of all sinners. Joshua stands before God in garments stained with personal sin. "And the Lord said to Satan, 'The Lord rebuke you, O Satan!... Is not this a brand plucked from the fire? Now Joshua was standing before the angel, clothed with filthy garments. And the angel said to those who were standing before him, 'Remove the filthy garments from him.' And to him he said, 'Behold, I have taken your iniquity away from you, and I will clothe you with rich apparel' "(verses 2-4).

Jesus' compelling and only argument for Joshua's and anyone's redemption is, "My blood, My blood, My blood."

The following scene took place in a courtroom some time ago. A young woman who had been cited for speeding stood before the judge. He asked her, "Guilty or not guilty?" She answered quietly, "Guilty." The judge fined her \$75 or seven days in jail. But after the judge had done this he arose from his chair, took off his judge's robe, walked around

to the side of the young woman, and paid the \$75 fine. The judge was the young woman's father. To be a just judge he must, upon her confession of guilt, declare her guilty and mete out a suitable fine for her lawbreaking. As a good judge he had no other option. The law must be upheld. But being the young woman's father, he also chose to take her punishment; he paid her fine.

Jesus is an honest judge. In the pre-Advent audit/judgment before the onlookers of the universe He admits to the guilt of every redeemed soul He represents. But He is also our Saviour, and though He must condemn every one of us to death because of our transgression of God's law, on Calvary He chose to take our place and suffer death for us.

By pleading His shed blood as payment for the sins of the redeemed, Jesus comes before His Father as a conqueror claiming His victory. "His offering is complete, and as our Intercessor He executes His self-appointed work, holding before God the censer containing His own spotless merits

and the prayers, confessions, and thanksgiving of His people. Perfumed with the fragrance of His righteousness, these ascend to God as a sweet savor. The offering is wholly acceptable, and pardon covers all transgression."

This pre-Advent searching of the heavenly ledgers is thus both an audit and a judgment. For those who have accepted Jesus as their Saviour and remained in that faith relationship, it is an audit verifying that their debts of sin have been fully paid. Their receipt for full atonement for every sin committed is Christ's death on Calvary. To those who remain faithful to Christ this audit/judgment is of no more concern than an audit of bills for which they have receipts for payment in full. As a matter of fact, most of the persons whose heavenly records are being audited are asleep in death. But before the redeemed went to sleep they had the sweet assurance that all their debts of sin had been covered.

For God's elect who are still alive during this audit, it will be a day of great rejoicing. Their

entitlement to salvation will then be declared before the whole universe.

Unfortunately, some Christians view this divine audit/judgment with dread and fear. To many Bible characters, the thought of the final judgment brought comfort. The reason for this was that the ancient Jews looked upon judges as helpers, deliverers, and defenders more than as punishers of crime. The book of Judges illustrates this.

"The clue to the meaning of the Hebrew word for judge may be found in chapter 2:16, 'And the Lord raised up judges, which saved them out of the hand of those that spoiled them' (RV). The judges were primarily the 'saviours' or 'deliverers' of their people from their enemies."

The psalmist repeatedly expressed a desire to be judged by God because he regarded God as his helper and defender. (See Ps. 7:8; 9:8; 10:17, 18; 26:1; 35:24; 43:1; 54:1.) The believers in God's Word knew that God—their Judge—would make everything right. In this way "the hour of his

judgment" (Rev. 14:7) to them was a day of unspeakable happiness and joy.

In addition to verifying the payment of their debts of sin, and entitling them to eternal life, this audit judgment will also determine specific rewards. This will be discussed in the next chapter.

Redemption is two-phased. This is indicated by the Greek word *apolutrosis*, meaning redemption or deliverance. It does refer to the forgiveness of sin when we come to Jesus and acclaim Him as our Saviour. This is clear from texts such as Colossians 1:14; 1 Corinthians 1:30; and Romans 3:24. Jesus took our sins and nailed them to His cross. *Apolutrosis* also applies to our eschatological redemption or freedom from condemnation in the day of the final audit/judgment of the heavenly records. No sin will then stand against the redeemed. This meaning of redemption is evident from texts such as Romans 8:23; Ephesians 1:14; 4:30. The redeemed will be declared righteous and just—they will be justified. Final atonement—at-one-ment—or harmony between them and God is

theirs. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1, KJV). They are gloriously free, both now and in the pre-Advent audit/judgment.

On the other hand, those who accepted Christ as their Saviour but lapsed in their commitment to Him will find this audit/judgment to be a judgment unto condemnation to eternal death. They began, but they did not persevere in loyalty to Him; hence, they are lost (see Matt. 24:13). They, with all those who never claimed salvation in Jesus, will awake from the first death at the end of the millennium to receive their "wages" of eternal death at the executive judgment.

Some of them will challenge God's justice by saying, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works ?" (Matt. 7:22, KJV). They will ask, as it were, "Why did you let us oversleep a thousand years? Why did you not call us at the resurrection of the righteous a thousand years ago?" And He will answer: "I never

knew you; depart from me, you evildoers" (Matt. 7:23). Then the records of their lives will pass before them. The Revelator speaks of these as books (see Rev. 20:12), while Ellen G. White, in this particular instance, refers to them as a great panoramic view portraying their lives. After reviewing their own lives, the lost, with Satan, will admit that God has dealt fairly with them. Even the billions of lost with Satan will exclaim: "To him who sits upon the throne and to the Lamb be blessing, honor and glory and might for ever and ever!" (Rev. 5:13).

There is a necessary and beautiful tension—a delicate balance—in God's plan of salvation between the free gift of salvation by grace through faith, and judgment. This tension tends to protect us from falling victim to two common fallacies in Christianity. "The first . . . is that of looking to their own works, trusting to anything they can do, to bring themselves into harmony with God.... The opposite and no less dangerous error is that belief in Christ releases men from keeping the law of God; that since by faith alone we become partakers

of the grace of Christ, our works have nothing to do with our redemption."

Those who accept the teaching of the Bible on salvation by God's free grace, complemented by its teaching of a judgment for all, will be protected from both of these dangers. The affirmation of justification by grace through faith does not obviate divine judgment. But it does teach that the judgment of condemnation to death, deserved by every person, has fallen upon Jesus who has paid the price for those who have accepted Him as their Saviour and remained in that commitment. Thus in God's plan grace and judgment coexist in a relationship of mutual tension. By God's free grace the pre-Advent judgment of the redeemed becomes an audit confirming that they are entitled to eternal fellowship with God and His angels, while to all others it becomes a judgment of condemnation to eternal death.

Chapter 16

Salvation and Rewards

Jesus says, "For the Son of man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay every man for what he has done" (Matt. 16:27), while Paul says, "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God—not because of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph. 2:8, 9).

Does the apostle Paul contradict Jesus in saying that salvation is a free gift of God's grace, while Jesus seems to say that each person will be rewarded according to his works? Are we justified and saved by faith or by works?

When we think that the reward Jesus is speaking about in Matthew 16:27 is salvation, we blur the issue and consequently fail to discover the ground of our salvation. Salvation is not a reward; salvation is a gift of God's free grace. Jesus Himself made this abundantly clear.

He taught this most lucidly in several parables, as in the parable of the wedding garment (Matt. 22:1-14). The wedding garment that entitled the guests to attend the wedding was a gift from the king. Jesus also presented salvation as a gift of His Father's love in the parable of the Pharisee and the publican (see Luke 18:9-14); in the parable about the laborers in the vineyard (see Matt. 20: 1-16); and in the parable of the prodigal son (see Luke 15:11-24).

In Romans 6:23, Paul speaks both about "wages" and "the gift of God." The words he uses for both are military terms. "Wages" stands for the pay a Roman mercenary earned fighting for the empire. For "gift" he uses the word *charisma*. This denotes a totally unearned gift that the emperor might give as a bonus to his soldiers on some special occasion.

At heaven's final assize the unrepentant will receive the "wages" that they have truly earned, namely, death. In sharp contrast to the wicked, the

saved will receive a "gift" of God's free grace, namely, eternal life.

There is no possibility that a person who has broken the divine law, the violation of which demands his life, can save himself from death. This is not to say that a person cannot pay for his transgression of God's law. Any sinner can pay for the debt of his sin. But by doing so he forfeits life for eternity; he becomes a nonentity. No person can both pay for his sin and inherit eternal life. The only way in which a person can inherit eternal life and also have his debt of sin liquidated, is to accept Jesus as his Saviour. "He who has the Son has life; he who has not the Son of God has not life" (1 John 5:12). No one can earn it. "This life is not inherent in man. He can possess it only through Christ. He cannot earn it; it is given him as a free gift if he will believe in Christ as His personal Saviour."

When a sinner accepts Jesus as his Saviour, then Christ's death is counted as his death. Jesus died in his place—He died in your place and mine. "A full, complete ransom has been paid by Jesus,

by virtue of which the sinner is pardoned, and the justice of the law is maintained." Our only hope of salvation is Jesus. Paul speaks about this: "In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace" (Eph. 1:7).

We should constantly guard against thinking that salvation and eternal life are rewards for faithful service. They are not. There is a definitive difference between God's gift of salvation and His rewards for service. E. P. Sanders in *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* aptly observes that "Paul explicitly distinguishes between being saved and being punished or rewarded."

A gift is of no value to a dead person. The gift is valuable only as long as the recipient is alive. Therefore the redeemed first receive the gift of life. After receiving the gift of eternal life they also receive their just reward for faithful service.

Kelsey Van Kipp told the story in *Guide of Maharani Jamnabi and the poor Indian boy*,

Gopalrao, from the remote village of Kavhana in India. In 1875, Maharani Jamnabi, widow of the maharaja of the state of Baroda, in India, had to choose a male heir. At that time a female could not succeed to the throne in India. To select an heir, the maharani invited many village boys to the palace. At the palace she would test the boys by observing them at a sumptuous banquet. But for the time being the boys were not told of the test, or even the reason they were being taken to the palace.

None of the boys knew anything about etiquette; they were unfamiliar with the manners of princes. In their villages they ate their meals from banana leaves, sitting on the floor and using their fingers for forks. Gopalrao's mother knew no more about how to act in the palace than her young son. But when he was about to leave for the journey to the palace his mother embraced him and said, "Go, my son. You are not dressed for the king's court, yet true worth is not in the clothes we wear but in the content of our hearts. You have been a good son to me, and a diligent worker. I need not tell you to act wisely at the palace. Be courteous, gentle,

and think carefully before you act. Follow your kind heart, and do not be afraid." Some days later, with that instruction still ringing in his ears, Gopalrao with the other boys was ushered into the palace grounds by uniformed police. The boys stared open-mouthed at the magnificent buildings and beautiful gardens.

The maharani had ordered a sumptuous dinner to be served in the banquet hall. The table was loaded with delicacies, some of which her young guests had never before seen. She knew that these delicacies would probably bring out the best—and the worst—in the boys. Shyly the boys entered the banquet room, full of sparkling chandeliers and velvet-covered chairs. Overawed by the surroundings, they were clumsier than usual. But they did understand what the food was for, and they intended to eat their fill.

Jamnabi seated herself at the head of the table and said to the boys, "You may sit down now. I hope you enjoy the food." While the other boys scrambled into their chairs and attacked the food

with enthusiastic hands, Gopalrao watched Jamnabi as she unfolded her napkin and picked up a serving spoon to help herself to something. He had no more training in table manners than the other boys, and never before had he held a piece of silverware in his hand. But picking up his fork and knife, he followed Jamnabi's example in their use as nearly as he could.

Quietly Jamnabi ate, missing nothing of what the boys were doing. Her eyes swept back and forth over the loaded table, and she noticed Gopalrao without appearing to look directly at him. Unknown to him, before the meal was over she had chosen him to be the future maharaja of Baroda. Jamnabi adopted him as her son and future heir. He ruled for 64 years, until 1939.

Gopalrao's adoption as her son was a gift of Maharani Jamnabi's free grace. But in receiving sonship as a gift on the basis of her free grace, he became heir to one of the greatest fortunes in the world, calculated to be worth in excess of \$1 billion. These riches became his because he had

first received the gift of adoption—the gift of royalty.

In the same way, repentant sinners become children of God and receive the gift of eternal life. "This salvation comes to us not as a reward for our works, not bestowed because of the merits of sinful man, but it is a gift unto us, having its foundation for bestowal in the spotless righteousness of Christ."

After having received the gift of salvation with eternal life, the saved will also receive rewards for their work. "Our acceptance with God is not upon the ground of our good works, but our reward will be according to our works."

The rewards to the fruit bearers will not all be alike. There will be 10-talent servants, four-talent servants, and two-talent servants in the kingdom of God. Every one will be rewarded or judged according to what he has done. According to Paul in 1 Corinthians 3:13-15, some will apparently not receive any reward, although they will receive the

gift of eternal life. About this George Ladd writes: "The believer will be judged for his works. Our life will be laid bare before the divine scrutiny that each one may receive the proper recompense for the things done through the life of the body, in accordance with the things that he has done, whether that life record is good or bad. This judgment is not 'a declaration of doom, but an assessment of worth,' involving not condemnation or acquittal, but rewards or loss on the basis of the worthfulness or worthlessness of the Christian's life. This same principle of judgment is expounded in 1 Corinthians 3:12-15."

Jesus told His disciples that they would be rulers and be rewarded by being seated on thrones in His kingdom (see Matt. 19:28). Others will receive no rewards but be saved "as through fire," while their works will be burnt (see 1 Cor. 3:15). They shall enter the kingdom of God empty-handed, as it were, because none of their works were salvageable for eternity.

The Revelator writes: "And I heard a voice

from heaven saying, 'Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord henceforth.' 'Blessed indeed,' says the Spirit, 'that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!' "(Rev. 14:13). Earthly good works or deeds will apparently follow us throughout eternity and our station in the kingdom of God will be affected by what we have done here on earth. "Even if we do not lose our souls, we shall realize in eternity the result of our unused talents." For all knowledge that we might have gained but did not, there will be an eternal loss."

Our achievements, actions, or good works will not, however, be the ground of our salvation, although lack of good works may cause a person to forfeit eternal life. The one-talent servant was judged "wicked and slothful" (Matt. 25:26), because he neglected to work. The son who refused to go and work in his father's vineyard balked at his father's will (see Matt. 21:28-31). Works, whether good or bad, are simply the body or concrete substance of a person's attitude or inward real self. They are evidence whether a person is

still dead in sin or has been born again to newness of life. If he remains alive in Christ, he will choose to act in accordance with God's will and the fruit of the Spirit will grow in his life.

Salvation with eternal life is never merited. It is a gift to every repentant sinner who commits himself to God without reserve and remains in that commitment. It is given on the basis of the quality of his commitment to God; rather than for his quantity of service. The reward, on the other hand, will be based on the quantity of the service rendered in love to God. Jesus says, "he will repay every man for what he has done" (Matt. 16:2 7).

By disallowing the law to be the ground of salvation, or by clarifying that salvation as a gift, we must not discard the law as a standard of life and conduct. No one who is redeemed by the King of glory will despise and disregard the King's law. Every one who is saved by the grace of God will always remember that in the pre-Advent audit/judgment "all will be justified by their faith and judged by their works."

William Barclay perceptively writes: "We can say that works have nothing to do with salvation; but we dare not say that works have nothing to do with the Christian life. . . . Christianity was a religion which issued in a certain way of life. Was not its first title The Way?"

Although justified by faith, all will be measured by the law.

Chapter 17

Christian Perfection

In the parable of the talents (Matt. 25:14-30), the Master gave the same commendation to the two-talent servant, who presented four talents, as He did to the five-talent servant, who brought Him 10. Both had done equally well; they had doubled their initial capital. Both had been faithful in their stewardship.

As is evident from this parable, we may be equally acceptable in God's sight and receive the same commendation, even though we are not all alike. As a matter of fact, God does not expect all His children to be alike; He expects the members of His church to be different. "The church is His garden, adorned with a variety of trees, plants, and flowers. He does not expect the hyssop to assume the proportions of the cedar, nor the olive to reach the height of the stately palm." Nor does He expect all His servants to be equally productive. Their fruit bearing will vary, as did the number of talents

the two faithful servants presented to their master.

At our home in New England we had many different flowers. But they served no utilitarian purpose. They could not be eaten like the carrots, the beets, or the cucumbers we raised in our garden. Their sole purpose was to impart joy to onlookers. Undoubtedly there are members in God's church who seem to contribute hardly anything to the collective good of the church. The duty of some of them may be just to gladden the heart of some weary traveler along life's road, as did our flowers.

In our living and service for God, our attitude of faithfulness or loyalty in willing stewardship is more important than the amount of work we do. Luther correctly observed that "when we deal with piety and impiety, we are dealing, not with behaviour but with attitudes, that is, with the source of the behaviour." Our salvation depends on our attitude; it pivots on a 100-percent commitment to God and His will, irrespective of how much we may accomplish for Him. It depends on the quality

of devotion to God rather than on quantity of works. Ellen G. White agrees with Luther in saying that God is more interested in the attitude with which we work than in how much we accomplish.

Attitude is the way we think and feel about things. To say that our salvation depends on our attitude to God means that it depends on how we think and feel about God and His will. And our attitude in turn determines both our relationship to God and our actions.

The reason salvation or damnation rests on a person's attitude rather than on his deeds, is that each person's attitude depends on his own free choice. Attitude resides within the sanctuary of each person's inmost self. This is true even when everything else has been taken away. This may not always be true of one's actions. Other people can deprive us of everything tangible in life. They may even make our hands and feet—our bodies—do what we do not want or choose to do. But no one can commandeer our thoughts and feelings, our attitude.

This was forcibly impressed upon me some years ago when I read Man's Search for Meaning by the Viennese psychiatrist Dr. Viktor E. Frankl. In his book he referred to his experience in the Nazi concentration camp at Auschwitz during World War II. Food was too scarce for adequate maintenance of one's normal body needs; bedcovers were too scanty to keep the inmates warm while sleeping on wooden bunks; clothing was inadequate; some of the inmates lacked shoes, even though the weather was below freezing. Under these adverse conditions many inmates relinquished hope and despaired of survival. These soon died, even before they were pushed into the gas chambers. But even in this concentration camp, where most inmates anticipated being liquidated, there were some who retained a positive attitude, and with it they also retained passable health under extremely adverse conditions.

Attitude divided the inmates in the concentration camp into two classes. The survivors, such as Dr. Frankl, were positive in their

attitude. This saved them from succumbing. No one and nothing—no persecution, no lack of food, no cold, no harsh treatment—could rob Frankl and his like-minded friends of their positive attitude. Nothing could commandeer their thoughts and feelings. Over this they themselves had control, despite the unfavorable environment. They chose not to react to other men's doings, but rather decided to be masters of their own thoughts and feelings—not victims but victors over circumstances.

My wife, Mae, knows that I am not the best husband in every respect. There are other men who are more handsome; others are more intelligent; others have more knowledge or money; still others are more efficient handymen around the home, and so on. But her awareness of my shortcomings does not impair her faithfulness and loyalty to me. Her loyalty to me does not depend on any knowledge on her part that I am the best husband in every respect. She knows better; her loyalty to me compensates for her knowledge of my imperfection as a husband. Her attitude toward me is right.

Loyalty and love are closely akin to decision and action, rather than to passing emotion and feeling. Both loyalty and love stem from decisions to think, feel, and behave in a certain way at all times and under all circumstances. God is interested in our doing, but He is even more concerned that our actions spring from a right disposition of pure motives. Thus He says, "Do it heartily, as to the Lord" (Col. 3:23, KJV). Legalism may also produce correct actions, but these spring from wrong motives. God wants the right motives or attitude; the right actions will usually follow in conformity with God's will in humility and obedience.

A believer's acceptance by God and his continuous justification by faith do not depend on his flawless behavior. It is possible for a Christian to be and remain in a right relationship to God—to be justified by faith—and still fall short of God's ideal for him, because of ignorance or spiritual immaturity.

With a faithful inner commitment to God there is no need for specific prohibitions against every specific sin or vice. In the first place, there is no possibility of building enough fences or multiplying enough rules to protect everyone against every exigency and every specific temptation. No precautionary fences will protect a philandering husband from straying. Only the principle of faithfulness and loyalty vested in love will keep a married person true to his spouse. The same is true of our relationship to God.

A single girl may consider and accept a date with any respectable bachelor. But a faithful wife does not even consider another man's suggestion of a date. The thought of dating another man does not even occur to her. Even in thought she is loyal to her husband at all times. In the same way, as followers of Jesus we will choose even in thought to be loyal to God at all times and under all circumstances. Not even for a moment will we consider Satan's insidious suggestions. In the experience of a genuine Christian, "unswerving allegiance to God" will always prevail. Therefore,

Jesus gives His disciples but one commandment; namely, to love Him. Then He says: "If you love me, you will keep my commandments" (John 14:15).

We might almost say that love, faithfulness, and loyalty are identical. At least they will manifest themselves in the same way toward one's spouse and to God. In our love for God and our loyalty to Him, we are fully accepted by God although our motives at times may fail to meet with commensurate achievement. "For if the readiness is there, it is acceptable according to what a man has, not according to what he has not" (2 Cor. 8:12), or as the Phillips translation phrases it: "The important thing is to be willing to give as much as we can—that is what God accepts, and no one is asked to give what he has not got." Having been put right with God through justification by faith and being constantly motivated by the Holy Spirit, we are loyal to God and remain perfect in His sight.

Jesus was ever obedient to His Father's will;

His obedience sprang from His love, faithfulness, and loyalty to His Father. "Christ did not possess the same sinful, corrupt, fallen disloyalty we possess." It was His oneness of mind, purpose, and plan with His Father that precluded "variance from God's expressed will in the least particular." There was no rift between Him and His Father—not even in thought. Thus He was perfect.

Even though we as followers of God shall be always "in the making," growing in spiritual maturity and attainments, until Jesus returns, we may always be loyal. But love and loyalty to God do not spring from our own carnal natures; they come only from a willingness born of the Holy Spirit within us.

Loyalty to God means abiding by His will to the extent of one's knowledge. Such loyalty eliminates the sin of rebellion spoken of in 1 John 3:4. Outwardly the Pharisees and the rich young ruler kept God's commandments, but they were not loyal to God. Their attitude was wrong. Loyalty also rules out sins of willful omission, spoken of in

James 4:17, which says: "Whoever knows what is right to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin." Loyalty also precludes the sin spoken of in Romans 14:23: "Whatever does not proceed from faith is sin." A loyal and faithful person trusts God and abides by His will. Through this attitude of loyalty and trust, we perceive that the basic requirement for salvation is not keeping a code of law, but a right attitude of love and loyalty to God, which in turn expresses itself in willing obedience to God's entire will as expressed in His law.

During my years of teaching at Loma Linda University, I discovered a very admirable trait in physicians and dentists, namely, their constant readiness, yes eagerness, always to learn better methods of practicing their professions. On one occasion the associate dean of the Medical School told the students that unless they continued to study after graduation, in 10 years they would become menaces to humanity. He was trying to impress upon them the dire necessity of keeping pace with growing knowledge and new techniques in their profession.

Good physicians and dentists will constantly read professional journals, regularly attend conventions, and take refresher courses in their respective fields. They do not reject the better methods of serving their patients that have been discovered and developed after they received their degrees. Their attitudes are right.

I have often thought of this eagerness on the part of health professionals constantly to learn more in order to serve their patients better. Then I have asked myself if we as individual Christians are just as eager to learn more and more of God's truth, so that we may live more completely in accordance with His revealed will for us.

When it comes to God's will, there often seems to be a strange reluctance, even on the part of professed Christians, to learn more of His will in order to practice it. We may be eager to learn Christian theory but loath to practice what we learn. But as true, faithful, and loyal sons and daughters of God, looking forward to living with

Him in His soon-coming kingdom, it will be our constant aim to learn as much as we can in order to practice His will and thus please Him, rather than see how little we can do and still be counted as His children. This is the attitude of love and loyalty.

Faithfulness and loyalty to God are foundational. They embrace acts, words, thoughts, and feelings, and accept with joyous readiness any added disclosures of God's will. As knowledge is progressive, so Christian perfection is the process of gladly accepting constantly expanding knowledge and putting that knowledge to practical use.

A faithful follower of God does not insist on a plan differing from God's plan. Rather, he gladly chooses and supports God's plan. "But one says, 'Can I not have my own way, and act myself?'—No, you cannot have your own way, and enter the kingdom of heaven. No 'my way' will be there. No human ways will find place in the kingdom of heaven. Our ways must be lost in God's ways. As friends of Jesus and glad-hearted servants of God,

we choose not to follow in the steps of Adam and go against God's will. Rather, we choose to do what God tells us.

Jesus is not merely the converted person's Saviour; He is also his King and Ruler. "If we accept Christ as a Redeemer, we must accept Him as a Ruler. We cannot have the assurance and perfect confiding trust in Christ as our Saviour until we acknowledge Him as our King and are obedient to His commandments. Thus we evidence our allegiance to God."

The apostle Paul is a striking example of a loyal follower of God. Prior to his Damascus road experience, he went far in trying to destroy the followers of Jesus. But by meeting Jesus a change was wrought in his life that made him a devoted follower (see Acts 9:5, 6; Rom. 1:1; Phil. 3:7, 8). In the introduction to many of his epistles, Paul introduces himself as a servant. Several modern language versions of the Bible translate the Greek *doulos* as slave rather than servant. The Greek word *doulos* literally means "one bound," hence a

"bondservant" or a "slave."

In designating himself as a slave to Jesus, Paul is trying to tell us that he had gladly chosen to subordinate all his plans, wishes, and desires to the will of God. This became Paul's daily, and deliberate choice after his conversion. The judaic rebel Saul became the apostle Paul—a faithful, loyal, devoted slave to King Jesus.

Perfect loyalty is not impaired by lack of information or knowledge. God's true followers throughout the world will never possess the same amount of knowledge, because all do not possess the same opportunities and degree of intelligence. If moral perfection and salvation rested on knowledge, then Christianity would revert to Gnostic elitism, according to which only some, by virtue of their psychological endowment, are capable of the knowledge of spiritual truth that is essential to salvation. But that is not God's plan; His offer of salvation is extended to all. He says: "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. 22:17, KJV).

On the other hand, disloyalty springs from the seedbed of an attitude of distrust. The German theologian, Helmut Thielike, in his sermon on the parable of the prodigal son aptly observes: "Have we really understood once and for all that doubts do not have their roots in the intellect, in rational difficulties at all, but in something altogether different? Do we understand that these doubts ... keep rising like a toxic fog from a heart that is not in tune with the Father's, a heart that is no longer always with the Father, even though it lives every day in the atmosphere of Christianity?" Being perfect before God means that our attitude toward Him and His doings is one of complete confidence and trust. For such people God is looking, and those who fully trust Him will be with Him in His eternal kingdom.

Being perfect in character does not imply physical perfection or perfection in nature. Such is impossible for human beings. Our natures are fallen and our bodies are tinged with sinful promptings. "While we cannot claim perfection of

the flesh, we may have Christian perfection of the soul." In spite of the weakness of the flesh, or of our sinful nature, it is possible for us to be morally perfect. In choosing to be animated and led by the Spirit through the Word, as was Jesus, our thoughts and feelings may be pleasing to God. And our thoughts and feelings combined make up our moral character or attitude. In this way "Moral and spiritual perfection, through the grace and power of Christ, is promised to all."

A word used in the Greek New Testament for "perfect" is *teleios*. It comes from the noun *telos*, meaning "end" or "purpose." A perfect person is therefore one who is fulfilling God's purpose for him. In this sense, Lucifer was perfect as long as he was fulfilling God's purpose for him. Ceasing to abide by God's purpose and plan for him, and devising his own contrary plan, he was no longer perfect but became a sinner, and Satan (Eze. 28:15).

Lucifer displayed distrust in God's government. He questioned God's wisdom and His

administration. His attitude was wrong. He was disloyal to God; and disloyalty to God is sin.

Teleios also means "mature." A child or a teenager is not mature. When it comes to the choice of a profession a teenager may change his mind just about every day. One day he says he wants to be a commercial pilot. The next day he says he wants to be a physician. Later he says he wants to be a lawyer. Then he wants to be an auto mechanic. This can go on indefinitely. This constant change with reference to life ambition is a sign of immaturity. Such a person has not settled in his mind what he actually wants to do with his life.

In the same way the teenager's inclination toward members of the opposite sex flits around. For a few days he likes Mary. Then his fancy focuses on Kay. After a little while he is through with Kay and now he is attracted to Anne. There is no steadiness or constancy in his inclination toward girls. This, too, is a sign of immaturity.

Some years later he definitely makes up his

mind that he is going to be a building engineer. Now he is constantly working to prepare for that particular profession. Gradually he also settles in his mind that Mae is the particular girl whom he wants as his partner for life.

Settling the mind on one particular line of lifework and on one particular girl as wife are signs of maturity. The young man's thoughts are no longer flitting around from one notion to another, but his thinking and determination are stabilized. He has become constant both in his choice of lifework and in the choice of his life companion. Now he is mature.

Part of God's perfection is His unchangeableness. He is constant in His attitude of love and faithfulness toward all His creatures. Our very existence depends on this. He says: "For I the Lord do not change; therefore you, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed" (Mal. 3:6). Indeed, with Him "there is no variation or shadow due to change" (James 1:17). "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and for ever" (Heb. 13:8). As God is

changeless, so His law—the reflection of His character—is also changeless. When we, His followers, become settled and constant in our love, faithfulness, and loyalty to God and His law, and do not shift our loyalties and change our plans away from His will as expressed in His law, then we too are mature or perfect in His sight.

By exalting His law and committing ourselves to the doing of His will, we are also sanctified, or holy in the biblical sense. Jesus voices such a hope for His followers when He says: "Sanctify them in the truth; thy word is truth" (John 17:17).

Being committed to biblical truth results in spiritual growth with commensurate ethical change; there will be growth.—Jesus says, "First the blade, then the ear, then the full grain of the ear" (Mark 4:28). In this way, "At every stage of development our life may be perfect; yet if God's purpose for us is fulfilled, there will be continual advancement." Perfect but not full-grown.

Being loyal to God at all times, "We may be

perfect in our sphere, even as God is perfect in His." This attitude of loyalty will make us like Jesus, who in every respect and at all times was loyal to His Father's will—"obedient unto death, even death on a cross" (Phil. 2:8). Jesus chose to die rather than depart from His Father's will. When His followers reach this place, then "the character of Christ shall [have been] perfectly reproduced in His people."

The genuine Christian's motto will therefore always be the same as that of the United States Marine Corps: *semper fidelis*—"ever faithful," ever loyal. While disloyalty to God is sin, loyalty to our Master is Christian perfection, for "the essence of all righteousness is loyalty to our Redeemer."

Chapter 18

The Joy and Glory of Justification by Faith

Justification by faith! How sweet the thought!
Differences overcome. Bitter feelings assuaged.
Misunderstandings removed.

Separation bridged. Peace of mind after years
of anxiety. Perfect fellowship!

In human relationships there is no sweeter
sensation than when spirits that have been alienated
and have cherished enmity toward each other again
flow together. Even the cause of the animosity is
forgotten.

This peace of mind is not a greenhouse plant.
Peace, as Einar Billing says, is "not a tender
treasure which we must anxiously guard in order to
protect it against the world, but that mighty power
which guards us and in whose company we may

pass securely through the world; not a perishable sentiment which comes and goes, but the secure and objective reality which surrounds us wherever we go, from which we cannot in a sense escape; not the last, final and highest in the Christian life, but the first, basic—and highest."

Peace of mind is indeed the choicest gift of God. It was the gift for which the Levitical priests were continually to petition God on behalf of His people, according to God's own words to Moses (see Num. 6:22-26). Such peace is grounded in fellowship and union with God. It is "a peace 'in spite of all,' a peace in the midst of conflict. Because the forgiveness which brings peace is an act of God received and held by faith, or, in other words, because peace depends on fellowship with God, it can exist in the midst of darkness and tumult, and it can dwell in a human heart filled with storm and stress." It is the experiential fruit of the grace that comes from God. It is "a positive peace, peace of heart and mind, through Him who is the Prince of Peace." If men and women are at peace with God "in hearty and diligent obedience,

what matter all other foes?" Such peace was the parting gift Jesus gave His disciples. He says, "Peace is my parting gift to you, my own peace, such as the world cannot give" (John 14:27, NEB).

Jesus Himself demonstrated His possession of this peace while He was on earth amid greater adversities than you and I have ever faced. When He stood before His accusers and executioners in Pilate's judgment hall, He had peace of mind. It was not dependent on external circumstances. His peace was grounded firmly in His complete oneness with His Father and in His assurance that everything between Him and His Father was right. "In the heart of Christ, where reigned perfect harmony with God, there was perfect peace. He was never elated by applause, nor dejected by censure or disappointment. Amid the greatest opposition and the most cruel treatment, He was still of good courage."

Today multitudes are troubled and afraid. They lack peace. But Jesus is graciously proffering you and me undisturbed peace. The peace of mind that

God is willing and eager to give to you and me in this bewildering age is as unlimited as the ceaseless waves of the sea. Through justification by faith—being put right with God—God desires to give this gift of peace to every person born into this world.

For the Japanese Army straggler Onoda, coming out from the jungles of Lubang Island in the Philippines, it was peace after 30 years of his one-man warfare against a whole nation. For three decades he had lived in constant fear. Night and day he had kept vigil lest he be caught by Filipino search parties. His fears had been reinforced by the fact that two friends who had been with him during the major portion of his hiding were killed by soldiers. But on March 9, 1974, when Onoda personally accepted the peace already concluded, the separation ended in a warm glow of reconciliation and acceptance by the nation he had previously regarded as his enemy. Justification by faith is just such a restoration of peace between the sinner and his God.

Every normal person has a resident court

within. This is the conscience. It is the judgment of this court upon sin committed that produces guilt, or condemnation. Sin and guilt are not identical, although they belong together. "There is a difference between the blaze and the blackened spot upon the wall caused by it; long after the blaze is out the spot remains. Even so with sin and guilt. Sin's red blaze blackens the soul; but long after sin is left behind, the black mark upon the soul continues."

It is such guilt that prompts tax evaders to send thousands of dollars anonymously to the Internal Revenue Service every year. Their efforts at tax evasion have been caught or discovered by no one. But they cannot live with the condemnation of their own resident inner court. To free themselves from its condemnation, they send the IRS the tax they had withheld.

There are other causes of guilt that no tax payments can remove. But they may be removed through justification by faith. "Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that

we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb.4:16).

Justification by faith—a change of thoughts and feelings from hostility and rebellion to love and obedience toward God—brings that peace "which passes all understanding" (Phil. 4:7). The sinful past, so apparently irrevocable, has been blotted out as by a magician's wand. The past is separated from us with impervious walls. These barriers seal the past from the present; our sorrow is changed into redemptive joy.

"The joy of release, the peace of conscience, the escape from condemnation, the pulsating life of freedom in Christ—all this the creative dynamic doctrine of justification should bring to the men of today as it brought it to Martin Luther." Indeed, "the sweetest melodies that come from human lips—justification by faith, and the righteousness of Christ"—are ours through faith in Christ and submission to His will.

The Old Testament believers saw salvation as a

shadow. In Hebrews 9 they are presented as looking forward to it in faith, believing that someday their redemption price would be paid. Peter says that the prophets tried to peer into the future to ascertain how the promise was to be fulfilled (see 1 Peter 1:10). To them the execution of the plan of salvation was not clear.

We have seen the promise of God, first announced to Adam and Eve in Eden (see Gen. 3:15), fulfilled on Calvary. Through it forgiveness and restored fellowship with God may be ours with the promise of eternal life. Justification is not a mere doctrine. Satan undoubtedly knows the doctrine of salvation better than you and I. But his knowledge of it is not experimental or experiential. But for you and me, through personal faith and trust in God and with a glad-hearted submission to His will, it becomes existential, a personal experience.

Justification by faith is an exhilarating experience, and the more so for those who have been most severely harassed by sin. The heavier

the gravity of sin and guilt, with a consequent sense of divine condemnation weighing on a person's mind, the more precious is the deliverance from its crushing oppression. Luther gloried in it joyously, because the weight of sin had rested on him like a millstone. But he learned that "there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1). They are safe and secure both now and in the final judgment. No condemnation, either in time or in eternity.

Justification by faith sets a sinner free from sin and guilt, just as in ancient Israel all slaves were set free from indebtedness during the year of jubilee (see Lev. 25:9, 10). Justification by faith makes the joyous jubilee trumpet sound in every believer's heart.

Peace is the result. "Now that we have been put right with God through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:1, TEV). The phrase "have been put right" or "having been justified" (perfect participle in Greek) points back to an event in past time whose results are still

present, namely, Christ's death for all on Calvary. God's forensic justification from His throne, based on the cross, becomes a subjective experience of personal peace with the King of the universe when we consent to have our every thought brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.

In Hebrews this peace is portrayed by a believer having entered into rest (see Heb. 4:10, 11). He has desisted from the impossible attempt to become acceptable to God, to become righteous by his

own works. He has recognized his inability to pay the debt of sin; he has accepted the payment Jesus made for him on the cross and lives the new life through the gift and power of the Holy Spirit.

Each year many people desire to become citizens of the United States of America. But it is even greater to become a son or a daughter of God. To this the gospel invites by saying, "But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God" (John

1:12). Redemption in Christ is full and free. We have only to receive and accept it as we give ourselves to God in total trust and submission.

Seventh-day Adventists value and appreciate a living experience of justification by faith more than do most Christians. Because our ethical standards are so high, we may often fail to reach them. This failure to attain will inevitably cause discouragement and despair unless we have a Saviour who graciously forgives and lifts us up again, as a parent lifts a stumbling child.

The Greeks had a legend of a horse with wings. But even though the horse had wings, he still trudged in the dirt of a muddy road. One day a man saw this horse walking slowly along the road through the mud and dirt. He stepped up to the horse and said, "Why do you laboriously trudge along in the filth and mud of this road? Don't you know you have wings? You were not made for this road. You have wings; you were made to fly."

Man was not made to grovel in the despair of

sin and guilt. Justified by faith in Christ and His saving sacrifice on the cross, he was lifted from the dirt. He now may fly in the sunshine of God's love.

As a result of justification by faith and its fruit in Christian living, the redeemed will soon sing a song of redemption that the angels will never be able to learn. It will be sung on the sea of glass (see Rev. 15:3, 4) in sweeter tones and with deeper joy than even the Japanese Army straggler Onoda felt on his surrender. At that time the redeemed will thrill at their reconciliation with God, at being put right with Him, after 6,000 years of separation. Because the oppression and separation of sin have been so terrible, the restoration of peace through justification by faith will be so much sweeter.

During the Civil War someone asked Abraham Lincoln how he was going to treat the rebels after the war ended. He answered, "I'll treat them as if they had never been away."

This is exactly how God treats us, former rebels. The alienation caused by the rupture of sin

will be healed and forgotten as we return to Him, like the prodigal son to his father. The intimate friendship and close fellowship between the Creator and His creatures that existed in the Garden of Eden is restored through justification by faith. The rupture caused by sin is healed.