



2 Cor. 3:18

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Without The Law

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Although there have always been several concepts of righteousness embraced by different groups of people, there is actually only one true standard of righteousness and it is God's character as expressed in His law. Ellen White says that, "righteousness is right-doing (COL - 312)," and we conclude that this right doing is defined by the law of God when properly understood in its spiritual application. However, we read something in Romans 3:21 which gives us an interesting perspective on righteousness.

But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; (Rom 3:21)

If right-doing is righteousness and this right-doing is defined by the law, how is it possible that there can be a righteousness, "without the law?" This is the difficulty which many Christians have. They find it hard to accept that there is a way to salvation and victory which does not depend on the law or

on their observance of the law. They believe that such an idea will destroy reverence for the law and will lead to a religion which is indolent, lazy and void of good works. However, let us put our misconceptions aside and allow the Bible to speak.

If, as Ellen White says, righteousness is "right-doing," and this is the true definition of righteousness, then it is clear that there can be no righteousness unless somebody does what is right. This is simple and so easy to understand that most people conclude that the answer to their problem of unrighteousness is simply to start doing what is right. However, those who are honest soon encounter an insurmountable problem. They discover that they have taken on an impossible task, for all their efforts to do good only end in failure and they discover that it is impossible for them to do what is right, that is, they cannot become righteous by doing good. Some who are dishonest convince themselves that they are succeeding and that they are righteous because they observe the outward forms of the law, but such righteousness is no better than filthy rags and produces only hypocrisy.

It is clear that man cannot become righteous by obeying the law, yet, since righteousness is "right-doing," there can be no righteousness unless right is done. Unless the law is kept.

Ellen White also says that the only definition of sin is that, "sin is the transgression of the law." This indicates that sin cannot arise unless the law is transgressed. The opposite of "sin," is "right-

eousness." If we say that a person cannot be a sinner unless he transgresses the law, then it must be equally true that a person cannot be righteous unless he observes the law, or does right. Is this in harmony with the teaching of Scripture?

RIGHTEOUSNESS WITHOUT LAW

In seeming contradiction the Bible speaks of a righteousness which is "without the law." If righteousness is defined by the law, how can there be righteousness, "without the law" as Paul describes?

The simple answer is that Paul describes it in this way because our becoming righteous by this means has *nothing to do* with whether or not *we* have kept the law or done what is right – not because the law has not been kept, but because it is not we who have kept it. This is God's own righteousness, a righteousness which is equal to God Himself, a purity which implies perfect, unblemished right-doing, yet which amazingly, becomes ours absolutely without any effort or work, or doing on our part. It is ours by the simple expedient that we believe in Christ.

The question is, what is the legal mechanism by which God makes me

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

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

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righteous apart from my works? How can He fairly and justly declare that I am without sin, that I am blameless, how can He restore me to friendship with Himself and grant me the gift of eternal life when all my life I have done absolutely no good? How can this be right? Notice that the Bible declares that this gift of righteousness is "by faith of Jesus Christ," (Rom. 3:22) and that we are made the righteousness of God, "in Him." (2 Cor. 5:21).

There is only one person who has kept the law perfectly and I mean absolutely perfectly. There is one who fulfilled every requirement of the law. This person of course was Jesus Christ. Nobody else has ever done this. But how does this help me? He has done it, I have not. The answer lies in the phrase, "in Him." We are made the righteousness of God in Him (2 Cor. 5:21)."

CONDEMNED IN ADAM

We can only understand this when we recognize mankind's natural condition and learn how it is that we came to be

in that condition.

When Adam sinned at the beginning, he affected the entire human race. His actions were not only effective in his own experience, but they affected all humanity. On the basis of his actions, all his descendants were doomed to be born,

- a. Sinful, weak, naturally bent to evil.
- b. Degenerate, mortal, sickly, infirm.
- c. Alienated from God, unaccepted by God, naturally his enemies.
- d. Condemned, that is doomed to die and to remain dead forever.

No honest Bible student can deny these facts, though many find some of them hard to accept. It is easy to see that Adam's degeneracy was passed on to his children. That is a logical consequence of the fact that the laws of nature dictated that it should be so. Adam's children would be weak, sin-prone, sickly, infirm by inheritance. These things would be passed on to them in their genes. The fact which some find hard to come to grips with however, is that Adam also lost his **status**. He was no longer acceptable to God and he was condemned to die. God deliberately removed him from the tree of life so that he could die. This was also in consequence of his sin, but since it was by a deliberate action of God it must also be regarded as a penalty for his sin. It was not the result of the natural workings of the forces of nature (consequences) but was the deliberate imposition of a sentence by a judge (penalty).

The critical question is this, have the children of Adam suffered only the consequences of his sin, or have they also suffered the penalty? This question is critical. If we misunderstand this, then it is not possible for us to properly understand justification by faith. Let us consider the simple fact; Adam's children were all denied access to the tree of life. It was not just Adam who was cut off from the tree, but an angel was set on guard there, specifically to prevent him, or his children and descendants from eating of the tree.

"Had man, after his fall, been allowed free access to the tree of life, he would have lived forever, and thus sin would have been immortalized. But cherubim and a flaming sword kept "the way of the tree of life," [GEN. 3:24.] and not one of the family of Adam has been permitted to pass that barrier and partake of the life-giving fruit. Therefore there is not an immortal sinner." {GC88 533-4}

In other words, it is clear that not only was Adam's degeneracy imparted to his descendants, but also that they were not excluded from the penalty imposed on him. They were also condemned along with him. Now, until we understand this properly, it seems to be a most offensive doctrine and I admit that it was very difficult for me to accept at first. But when I understood it and saw how it relates to my salvation, I was filled with joy and happily embraced it as one of the most helpful facts which I ever learned in relation to the gospel.

Suppose Christ had not intervened on humanity's behalf, how many of Adam's descendants would have inherited eternal life? Not a single one! How many of them would have been resurrected from the grave once they had died? Not a single one. Can anyone deny these plain facts? It would not have mattered whether they died one day old or a thousand years old. Outside of Christ's provision man is condemned to **eternal death**. All humanity is included in this condemnation. Where did this condemnation come from? Was it because of what we did personally? Was it because we broke the law? No! We were born this way! From the moment of birth we were natural enemies of God and condemned to die.

A QUALIFIED TEACHER

This is what Paul says as plainly as it could be said, in Romans 5:12-19, a passage in which he was specifically ex-

plaining the gospel. As we all know, Paul was the apostle who was given the task of taking the gospel to the gentiles, people who had no background in the things of Jehovah and who needed careful teaching in the foundational principles of the truth. To prepare Paul for this work, Christ Himself personally taught Him the gospel by special divine revelation (Gal. 1:11,12).



Paul's qualifications for teaching the truth are tremendous. He is probably more qualified to do so than any other writer in the Bible and although many people find his writings hard to understand, the problem is often that they refuse to accept what he says. For example they will read where Paul says, "*we are not under the law* (Rom. 6:14)," and they think, "*that is impossible. Whatever does Paul mean by this?*" then they pass it by as one of those things "hard to be understood." The problem is not with Paul, but with their pre-conceived ideas.

Similarly, Paul says, "*Adams sin made us all sinners and condemned us all.*" Our response has typically been, "*I hear you Paul, but I know you can't mean what you say. Such an idea is not reasonable, so I suppose you are just a little careless in the way you express your ideas.*" We place this also in the category of "things hard to be understood." But the passages are as plain as day and say exactly what Paul means to say. The problem is our refusal to accept what we read. I myself was guilty of this for more years than I care to remember! I read these statements of Paul

and refused to accept what I read. My concept was that I could only be condemned for my own personal behaviour and Paul's statements seemed to contradict that. So for many years I was robbed of truly understanding some of the most critical aspects of the gospel because my limited ideas made me resist what Paul taught.

CONDEMNED WITHOUT LAW

A person may say, "well, it cannot be so because Jesus made provision for man to be saved." That is absolutely true, thank God. But in order to understand what Christ has done we must understand man's position outside of Christ's provision. So the Bible says that all of us were condemned by Adam's sin (Rom. 5:18,19). That is, we were condemned "*without the law.*" Adam is the one who was condemned in the law, because he is the one who broke it. We received that condemnation before we broke one single law, personally. Our initial condemnation had nothing to do with whether or not we kept the law. We were condemned from the moment of birth, even before we were intelligent enough to know that there is a law. Of course somebody did break that law. That person was Adam and in doing this he became unrighteous. Now his unrighteousness is passed on to all his descendants, to all who are **in** him. They are condemned because of what he did.

THE SAME PRINCIPLE

Someone may say, "that is unreasonable and unfair." But hold on a moment, is it unreasonable and unfair that one man, the second Adam, should have kept the law, should have done righteousness and we all be justified and declared righteous because of it? Tell me, what is the legal basis for this? How can this be fair and right and just? When Satan accuses God that He has no right to justify us on the basis of another person's actions, what does God say? Is He being unfair? Is He doing what is fair and right and just? Brothers and sisters, if we can understand that God is acting **fairly** in justi-

fying us because of what **ONE** man did, then how can it be unfair for Him to operate on the **SAME EXACT** principle and condemn us because of what one man did? Both actions are based on the same principle, that is, all receive the benefits of the actions of one (Rom. 5:15-19). If this principle is wrong in the case of how Adam relates to his descendants, then it cannot be right in the way Christ relates to His spiritual descendants. Let us be consistent, because God is consistent!

But the question arises again, how can this be legally acceptable in both cases? How can it be fair that many receive the benefits (or disadvantages) obtained by one. By what rule can such a thing be justified?

THE LEGAL BASIS

This can only be understood when we grasp the concept that in terms of these issues, God deals with humanity as a single entity. He deals with the human race on the basis that we are all a part of one and the same existence, that we all exist in the same life. This life is the life of Adam and as the Bible teaches us, there are two Adams. Both of them possess a different life, a different existence, one condemned and depraved, the other undefiled and wholly acceptable to God. God deals with humanity on the basis of the actions of these two men, the first and the last Adam.

Think for a moment, why is Jesus called the last Adam (1 Cor. 15:45)? It is because He has been made the head or the representative of humanity, just as Adam was. Adam was the father of humanity and as such, all the human race was in him when he was created. All humanity today is simply the extension of Adam's original life, perverted shortly after its origin and passed on in its condemned state to six billion people today. Though God loves us individually, yet in terms of the great events in the history of the fall and redemption of man, God deals with us as a race – He has acted in behalf of humanity as a whole and it is from this perspective that we must view the plan of redemption.

In other words, Adam committed sin. All, in him are condemned. Christ did righteousness. All in Him are justified. Our salvation or damnation depends entirely upon our relationship to one of these two Adams. ***Not upon my relationship to the law, but upon my relationship to these two men.*** Salvation is in Christ, condemnation is in Adam. God will save us individually, but that individual salvation is dependent upon one thing and one thing only; it depends upon our relationship to these two Adams. In one, we are lost, regardless of what we have done (that is, apart from the law). In the other, we are saved, regardless of what we have done (that is, apart from the law). In terms of salvation it is the actions of these two which matter, not **our** actions. All we can do, is choose which man we will be a part of. To remain in the first Adam where we found ourselves at birth, which means eternal death, or to be born into the second Adam by means of faith, which means eternal life.

This is the legal basis for us being either lost by Adam's action or saved by Christ's action. It is not that we took the blame for Adam or that Christ took the blame for us. Both of these ideas are contrary to reason and to justice. The only way that this can be rationally and legally acceptable is when we recognize that **we** were **in** Adam when he sinned. We were there, we were involved, therefore the sentence passed on Adam that day was our sentence, because we were there. The life which is our life, our existence in Adam is a condemned one. Here is how some of the Adventist pioneers saw it:

THE PIONEER'S VIEW

The question is, Does the second Adam's righteousness embrace as many as does the first Adam's sin? Look closely. Without our consent at all, without our having anything to do with it, we were all included in the first Adam; we were there. All the human race were in the first Adam. What that first

What Adam Did to Us	What Christ Did for Us
1. Brought us into condemnation	1. Justified us
2. Sentenced us to death	2. Gave us eternal life
3. Sold us to the devil	3. Redeemed us back to God
4. Made us children of the devil	4. Made us children of God
5. Alienated us from God	5. Reconciled us to God
6. Made us enemies of God	6. Made us friends of God
7. Gave us a carnal mind	7. Gave us a spiritual mind
8. Imparted sinfulness to us	8. Imparted righteousness to us
9. Made us servants of sin	9. Made us servants of righteousness
10. Made us dead in sins	10. Made us alive to righteousness

Let us notice that the same exact reason that makes it legal for Christ to do these things for us, is the same reason that explains how it was possible for Adam to bring us into his condemnation. If we deny that Adam could legally do this on any of these points, then on that point we destroy the legality of what Christ has done for us.

Adam—what that first man, did meant us; it involved us. That which the first Adam did brought us into sin, and the end of sin is death, and that touches every one of us and involves every one of us. - A.T. Jones General Conference Bulletin 1895 – Sermon 14

when God created Adam he created the whole human family. He created all nations that are upon the earth when he created Adam. That is, in creating Adam and conferring upon him the power to beget in his own image, he saw, as it were, a fountain of life in him; and when he created Adam, he saw in Adam every human being that has been or will be upon the face of the earth, and he created every human being upon the face of the earth in Adam. - W.W. Prescott - The Head of The Family. (1895 General Conference)

That is what this scripture in the seventh of Hebrews, to which we have referred, has illustrated, how it is that God saw in Adam all the human family, and how that when he created Adam he created all the human family. This Scripture means a great deal more than that. Read

again Heb.7:9,10: "And as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, paid tithes in Abraham. For he was yet in the loins of his father when Melchisedec met him." When Abraham paid tithes to Melchisedec, Levi paid tithes in him, for he was in the loins of his father when Melchisedec met him. All that Abraham did, Levi did in him. - W.W. Prescott - The Head of The Family. (1895 General Conference)

RIGHTEOUS IN CHRIST

In the same way, the new human race was in Christ when He lived here, died and was resurrected. All of the new humanity was there and this new humanity lived righteously, kept the law of God perfectly and therefore it is perfectly legal, reasonable and logical that all who have become a part of this new humanity, all who become a part of this new human race should inherit, should partake of the benefits available in it. The righteousness of Christ is imputed to those who believe in Christ and this is not simply a make-believe situation. It is not a matter of God pretending that things are so, although they really are not so. No, this would not be justice. It would be unreasonable and

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The Soul That sinneth

Since we published the last two issues of Open Face, we have had a couple of people who asked to be removed from our mailing list. While we know that any important issue will always cause polarization and strong feelings, yet I must admit that it dampens my spirit a little when I find that Christians – and especially those who claim to be seeking for reformation and revival – either outrightly deny the **plain** teachings of the Bible or misinterpret its teachings so badly that they make it seem to contradict itself. Too many people simply find a verse which seems to support their long-held ideas and cling to that verse, refusing to look at, consider or believe the multitude of other verses which plainly indicate that their understanding of the subject is faulty.

On the other hand though, it has been very encouraging to find that more people have asked to be added to the mailing list than the number who have asked to be removed. That seems to indicate that more people have found the newsletter helpful than those who have thought it to be harmful. Nevertheless, I wish to briefly deal with a passage which seems to be a major issue with those who have disagreed with us. The passage is Ezekiel 18:20. It says,

The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him. (Ezek 18:20)

Before examining this statement from Ezekiel, Let us first of all look at some biblical ideas, which I want to ask us to consider. They are not all saying the same thing but they are all biblical.

1. The soul that sinneth, it shall die. (Ezek. 18:20)
2. The soul that believeth not, it shall

die. (Mark 16:16; John 3:18)

3. The soul that doeth righteousness shall live. (Ezek. 18:22)
4. All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags. (Isa. 64:6)
5. Only by faith can we receive life, not by works. (Eph. 2:8,9)
6. No man can be saved by doing righteousness, only by believing. (Rom. 3:28)

(a) Which of these statements are true? (b) Do any of these statements contradict the other? (c) Can all the statements be true? (d) How is it possible to harmonize all of these statements? Let us bear these questions and points in mind as we continue.

PAUL'S TEACHING

We have continued to emphasize Paul's teaching that all humanity was condemned when Adam was condemned (Rom. 5:18) and that all men were made sinners by what Adam did (Rom. 5:12,18,19). Please notice that we stated **EXACTLY** what the verses say. Stop and read them for yourselves. That is what they say. All men were condemned and became sinners because of what Adam did. We may not all agree with what the verses say and we may suggest that Paul did not mean that we should take his words literally, but we cannot deny that this is what they do actually say.

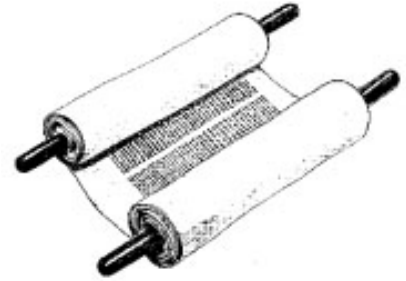
THE OLD VS THE NEW

Does Ezekiel contradict Paul? Ezekiel seems to say, "we cannot die for another person's sin," while Paul says, we all die because of Adam's sin. Let us consider a few factors as we seek an answer to this question.

First of all, the covenant under which Ezekiel lived was the old covenant. Let me explain why this is important. The Old Testament, to a large degree is filled with experiences and teachings which are illustrations of salvation, but which do not actually deal with eternal

salvation themselves. Here is what Paul said about the concept of salvation under the law:

For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them. (Rom 10:5)



This was correct doctrine under the old covenant, but not under the new. Paul contrasted this sharply with the eternal principle of true salvation:

... if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. (Rom 10:9)

Let us consider for a moment. If, under the old covenant a man obeyed strictly the outward requirements of the law (as Paul did and as the rich young ruler did – Phil. 3:6; Matt. 19:17-20), what could he expect on the basis of his behaviour? According to the law he would be blessed with prosperity, rest from his enemies and long life (Leviticus 26:1-17). It did not matter if he was inwardly corrupt as long as he outwardly obeyed, for the law could not condemn a person for what he did not actually do, and so by obeying the strict instructions of the law, he became entitled to these blessings. Please notice that these blessings did not have to do with eternal salvation, but with temporal prosperity. Salvation from enemies, rest in a peaceful environment, the necessities of life provided in abundance, but not necessarily eternal life.

The conditions of *eternal* life were always different. This was always *only* by faith in Christ, whether in the old or New Testament times. The system of the Old Testament was type and symbol. We must remember that.

Under the old covenant Moses lost his temporal “heaven.” He was prevented from entering the land of rest and promise by one single sin. In type, he lost his inheritance, and could not make it into the promised land, but in terms of eternal salvation which is purely by faith, all his sins could not keep him away from it. He was taken to heaven long before the rest of us because eternal salvation is not on the basis of our works, but on the basis of Christ’s righteousness, received by faith.

THE CONTEXT OF EZEKIEL'S STATEMENT

Ezekiel is speaking of this temporal death when he says, “the soul that sinneth, it shall die.” He is not looking at the issue of eternal life and eternal death, but is speaking strictly in the context of the disasters which frequently came upon disobedient Israel. The king would sin and all the people would suffer. One man would do wrong and his children would die for it (Achan was one such example – Joshua 7:24). Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah were all, evidently godly and obedient young men, yet they suffered the consequences of other peoples’ apostasy. Notice that this had become so frequent that the people had made a proverb concerning it. They would say, “*The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge.*” Jer 31:28-30 explains the meaning and the context of this statement better than does the similar passage in Ezekiel 18. Here is what it says:

And it shall come to pass, that like as I have watched over them, to pluck up, and to break down, and to throw down, and to destroy, and to afflict; so will I watch over them, to build, and to plant, saith the LORD. (29)

In those days they shall say no more, The fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the children’s teeth are set on edge. (30) But every one shall die for his own iniquity: every man that eateth the sour grape, his teeth shall be set on edge. (Jer 31:28-30)

What God was saying was, “the man who does not obey the law is the one upon whom I will bring the disaster (just like it happened in the case of Moses. He alone suffered for his sin). The one who sins is the one who will die (not like it happened to Achan’s children. They suffered for their father’s sin).” This has nothing to do with eternal salvation. If it did, it would totally contradict the key principle of the gospel. Notice what it says in this same passage in Ezekiel 18. Whenever we quote verse 20 we should also be careful to quote the last part of verse 22. It says,

“... in his righteousness that he hath done he shall live.” (Ezek. 18:22)

This teaches that the basis on which a man receives life is *his own righteousness!!* Surely this cannot be true of eternal life!! This is only true of temporal life in Old Testament times. It is Christ’s righteousness alone which can give us eternal life, not our own righteousness which we have done. Is this the truth? Let us consider this carefully. The Bible cautions us that we should rightly divide the word of truth. Just picking up a verse of Scripture in isolation and quoting it does not mean that we have settled a question. We must be careful that we understand the meaning and the intent of the verse properly in the context in which it is used.

Many people are fond of quoting the verse in Isaiah 45:7 which says, “*I make peace and create evil.*” They insist on the basis of this verse that God is the One who created evil and that therefore He is to be blamed for all the pain, suffering and wickedness in the world. However, a careful examination of the passage, in context will

lead the honest searcher to a different conclusion.

So there are two perspectives on the issue of sin and blame. In the type, or the Old Testament system, or “under the law,” the conditions on which God granted blessings, long life and security was obedience to His law. It was righteous living as defined by the law which brought temporal blessings. Many times people sinned by this standard and their children suffered the consequences. We already mentioned Achan, Daniel and his friends etc. In fact the second commandment states that God visits, “the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation of them that hate,” Him.

It is in this context that God declares in Ezekiel 18 that He is no longer going to operate on this principle. From that time forward, each man would die for his own sin, not for those of another. Likewise the “righteous” man would live for his own righteousness (not because of the righteousness of another). In Ezekiel 14:14,20 God declared that even if Noah, Daniel and Job were in the land they would not be able, by their righteous living, to prevent the disasters which God would bring upon it. They would be able to deliver only their own souls by their own righteousness. Again, we see clearly that this was not referring to eternal salvation, but to preservation from the disasters which would come upon disobedient Israel.

“*The soul that sinneth, it shall die,*” is often quoted as evidence to deny the truth that all men die because of Adam’s sin, but we cannot fairly use this verse to prove such a point? Surely the careful and honest reader can see that this passage in Ezekiel is not dealing with the issues of eternal death and eternal life. On the question of eternal salvation the facts are plainly laid out in the New Testament and they are:

- a. All men die because of Adam’s sin (1 Cor. 15:22)

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The Work of a Lifetime

At every stage of development our life may be perfect; yet if God's purpose for us is fulfilled, there will be continual advancement. Sanctification is the work of a lifetime {COL 65.2}

There are two significant things in this statement by Ellen White which we need to take note of. Firstly, she says that at every stage, our life may be **PERFECT!** Let us settle it then, that perfection is not the work of a lifetime, but it is an instantaneous work which is accomplished immediately when a person enters into Christ, so that his life may be perfect at the very first stage of his Christian experience.

Secondly, she says that there will be continual advancement and that this will continue for the person's entire lifetime. This highlights the fact that perfection is a relative thing and does not mean that a person is immediately perfectly mature, but simply that he is all that is expected of him at that particular stage. In that condition even God does not expect more, and that is effectively, perfection.

The **popular** concept of sanctification is that it is the process by which we are fitted (made fit) for heaven. In most cases this has been interpreted to mean that it is a process by which, little by little, we become more and more holy, more and more like Christ until eventually we are just like Him. It is interesting to note that the word sanctification carries a different meaning in the Bible and nearly always speaks of a finished work. For example, "God sanctified (finished action) the Sabbath day (Gen. 2:3)." Paul speaks of the Corinthian believers and says, "but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified ... (1 Cor. 6:11). Again he says, "for by one offering he has perfected forever them that are sanctified." (Heb. 10:14). Here the word signifies to be set apart for a holy purpose and signifies an immediate experience.

But admittedly, the word as used to-

day, and often in the writings of Ellen White refers to a process by which a person becomes progressively more holy. A process which Ellen White refers to as "the work of a lifetime (COL 65.2)."

Let us consider something right at the very beginning: When we say that sanctification is the "work of a lifetime," whose lifetime are we talking about? Do we mean the lifetime of Methuselah which was 969 years, the lifetime of Enoch (365 years), the lifetime of Moses (120 years), or the lifetime of today's average person (70-80 years)? And what about the lifetimes of those whose lives are cut much shorter by sickness or accident? How long does it really take to be sanctified? How long did it take for the thief on the cross who lived for only a few hours after he was converted?

Immediately we can see that we have to revise our ideas of sanctification. The idea that sanctification is a process which comes to an end when we have attained to a certain level of holiness or perfection is a false idea. If it were true, then what it would mean is that most Christians never ever are fully sanctified. Maybe we all need a longer lifetime. Perhaps we all need 365 years like Enoch, but then again, even that may not be enough because it seems that even Methuselah who lived almost three times as long as Enoch never reached the place where he walked with God as closely as Enoch did.

If sanctification is what makes us fit for heaven then why did it happen so



quickly as in the case of the thief on the cross and happen so slowly in the case of others whose lifetimes are almost a hundred years?

Is there some way that we can harmonize the biblical concept of sanctification, that is, being immediately set apart unto God, with the concept expressed by Ellen White, that is, a lifetime's work of being made holy? I believe that when we properly understand what the Christian life is about we will recognize that there is no disagreement between Ellen White and the Bible on this issue.

In Hebrews 4:9-11, Paul tells us that there is a rest which remains for the people of God. He explains that the person who has entered into God's rest has rested from his (the person's) own works just as God rested from His works at the end of creation. If we have rested from **our** works, does it mean that there will be no more works done by us? Absolutely not! As Paul again says, "*it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure* (Phil. 2:13)." Notice, there are works in the life of the believer, but they are not his works, they are the works of Christ. In a strikingly paradoxical statement, Paul tells us,

"Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief." (Heb 4:11)

I had to smile when I recognized what Paul was saying. Here he says that we must "labour," we must work. For what purpose? So that we can **rest!** We must labour so that we may rest! Is this contradictory? Not at all, here we find the harmony between both ideas of sanctification, that is, that it is the "work of a lifetime," as opposed to the immediate experience of being set apart wholly unto God.

The danger against which Paul warns us in Hebrews 4 is the danger of UN-

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Answers and Clarifications

It happened in 1888 and it is happening again today. The message of righteousness by faith is stirring a community of believers and is producing strong reactions, revealing not only the state of our theology, but also the state of our hearts. I have not the slightest regret that this subject, the essence of salvation, is being agitated, discussed and debated. Anything is better than apathy and complacency, and out of all this there is bound to emerge a clearer concept of the gospel as the Bible teaches it. This is a necessary requirement if there is ever to be a people who have pure truth and an experience of genuine Christianity, fit and ready for the reception of the latter rain.

Since we started writing on this subject, several questions have been asked, and there has been objection to several of the points which we have raised. Some people have not accepted these ideas, but in some cases this has been because there has been misunderstanding and even misrepresentation of our position. For those who have objections, we would like you to be sure of what you are objecting to and so we would like to clarify our position on these questions which seem to have caused the greatest concern.

Can we have “sinless flesh” in this life?

This objection is evidently based on misunderstanding and careless reading as well. It is difficult to understand why some have suggested that we are leaning in the direction of teaching “holy flesh.” When I speak of, “sinful nature,” I am not speaking of our physical makeup for the most part. The apostle Paul refers to the part that dies at conversion, as “the body of sin,” “the old man,” “the flesh,” and “the carnal mind.” I believe that if he used such words, then it cannot be wrong for me to use them also. When Paul stated that the body of sin had been destroyed (Rom. 6:6) was he teaching

holy flesh? In fact, in Ephesians 2:3 Paul refers to the Ephesians as people who in the past “were by *nature* (sinful nature) the children of wrath.” This was not true of them after they became Christians. Their *nature* was changed. It was not their bodies that had changed, but rather their spiritual natures or their minds. This is why we are told that those who have become Christians have been made partakers of the “divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4).” That does not mean that they have a heavenly or a sinless body. It simply means that their minds have been changed. Can we see that?

At times, in trying to show that every thing which we possess in our nature is from Adam, we have referred to the inheritance of “flesh and blood and genes and bones.” This is the same thing that Paul does in speaking of our relationship to Christ when he says that we are “members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones (Eph. 5:30).” Some people have objected to the way we have used these words, but strangely, they have not objected to the way Paul used them.

But we can see that the Bible does use the word “nature,” to refer to the makeup of the *mind*, and this is what I mean when I say that all men (except Christ) are born with a sinful nature, which condemns them from birth. We have the same sin-affected bodies as Christ had, but He had a different mind. He was not born with a carnal, sinful mind as we are. It is true that Ellen White often used the term “sinful nature,” to refer to the physical body but the Bible does not usually do this. If we don’t recognize this difference in the way words are used in different settings we often end up objecting to something when we do not even properly understand what is being said.

Our understanding of this is explained very carefully in Open Face 44 on page 7, in the article entitled, “You can be Truly Free.” In fact, I have copied the

section below so we can read it again.

“Of course, it is not the physical body which dies. Hopefully, nobody would be foolish enough to misunderstand this truth. The physical, sinful body will be with us until Jesus comes again to change it. However, this physical body is not the real root of our sin problem and it is not what Jesus has destroyed, or put to death. The real problem is what is called “the carnal mind.” This is the self-centered life, the self-seeking, self-preserving attitude. This is something which resides in the mind of man, but is a very real part of our existence. It is this which Jesus put to death when He died to His own will and made the supreme sacrifice of His life, in choosing the Father’s will. Now, through the mighty power of the holy spirit, His own life and power, Jesus enters our mind in the new birth and crucifies the self-centered life so that from then on, we no longer live for self, but only for God.” (Open Face 44, p. 7)

Does “sin” have only one definition?

In our November newsletter we stated that the way in which Paul uses the word, “sin,” in Romans 7:17,20, requires that we define sin as a negative ruling power in the carnal man. However, it has been pointed out to us that Ellen White says that the *only* definition of sin in the Bible is found in 1 John 3:4 where it says, “sin is the transgression of the law.” I will not debate with Ellen White on this matter and I accept that both Paul and Jesus, when they speak of sin as being our master are personifying sin, that is, they are speaking of it as if it is a tangible entity. But since sin is not something which can exist independently on its own, then technically it has no substan-

tive reality apart from the actions which we commit. I accept this.

However, The real question is, what do Paul and Jesus mean when they say that a man is the servant of sin? (John 8:34; Rom. 6:20). When Paul says that “sin dwelleth in me,” was he referring to the indwelling of evil spirits? One friend of mine has suggested that this is what Paul meant, however, I cannot accept that this is what Paul was trying to say when he wrote, “sin that dwelleth in me.” There is not the slightest clue in the passage to support such an idea. However, even if this were referring to evil spirits, we would still have a problem, because again, we would have to define sin as meaning, “evil spirits.” It would then not be true that the only definition of sin is the transgression of the law.

Paul states clearly, “it is no more I that do it, but **sin that dwelleth in me** (Rom. 7:20).” If this was referring to the presence of evil spirits in him, then what Paul would need is not conversion, but the casting out of evil spirits! Many of those who have become involved in “deliverance” ministries have concluded that this is the real problem with us and have decided to solve the problem of sin by casting out “demons” of anger, hate, depression etc. They claim that all these problems are due to demons dwelling in people, but is this what Paul is saying?

His meaning is very obvious. It is the same as the meaning of Jesus when He said, “he that committeth sin is the servant of sin.” What He is saying is that there is a power which rules in the carnal man which compels such a person to commit sin, and this power he refers to as the master of the person and He calls it “sin.” It is the person’s master because he is compelled to obey its commands. If Jesus and Paul call it sin, then why am I wrong in doing the same as they?

However, we don’t need to be distracted or diverted by definitions. I will abandon all my definitions and declare that I was wrong if only we can accept the truth which Paul wanted us to

grasp. What is this truth? It is the truth that in our natural state we are so helpless, so controlled by our inherited depravity that it is absolutely impossible for us to do anything good. This is the real issue. It is the truth that all men are in this condition when they are born and because of it are declared unfit to live, and outside of Christ are lost forever, even from the moment of birth. Can we all accept this?

When Jesus and Paul tell me that sin is my master and that my problem is that sin is dwelling in me, they are trying to tell me something about what I am and what my real problem is, and that is the real issue!! If I do not learn this lesson there is no hope that sin will ever be conquered in me. Notice Paul’s words in Romans 8:8. “*So then, they that are in the flesh cannot please God!!*” In verse 6 he says that the carnal mind is not subject to the law of God and it **CANNOT** be. It is not that it refuses to be, but that it cannot. It is an impossibility. Why is it impossible? Because we are born that way and committing sin is an integral part of our nature. Such a mind is **enmity** against God from the moment we are born (verse 7). In this condition there is no hope that we can ever escape its bondage and the only hope for us is that we must be born again.

Is our real problem our actions, or our nature?

If we say that our problem is what we do, rather than what we are, this is where we make a terrible mistake. We do not identify the problem properly and as a result we set out to overcome sin in the wrong way. We will never, ever be free from sin if we believe that **our problem** is what we **do**, rather than what we **are**! When we say that our problem is our ACTIONS, then logically, we set out to change our actions. We seek to do works!! This can never give us the victory. But when we understand that the problem is what we are, then we know that this is something which we can do nothing about. The answer must be in Christ and in Him alone. We come to Him for the

remedy and we trust in Him alone, because although we may know how to do works, we know nothing about changing our nature.

One popular proverb says,

*Sow a thought; reap a deed,
Sow a deed; reap a habit,
Sow a habit; reap a character.*

There you have the human formula for “overcoming” sin. Notice, there is no need for God in this prescription. This concept has led some to the conclusion that all we need to do in order to change our characters is to change our actions. I believe that this concept is a source of much misunderstanding. It is partially true but not wholly true as I will demonstrate in a moment. If we limit the character to being **only** the product of our actions, what conclusions would I then reach? I would have to believe the following things which are totally contrary to the teachings of the Bible.

- a. A baby has formed no habits so therefore has no character and therefore, cannot be defined as a sinner. Since he has performed no actions, he does not have a sinful character. Such a person does not need Christ to be saved.
- b. Since the problem with men is the habits which they form, then in order to solve our problem, all we need to do is change our habits, thereby changing our characters. (notice that there is then no need for a new birth). This makes it possible to be saved by rehabilitation and self-improvement programs.
- c. A parent who trains his child to good habits will produce a child who has no need of conversion since he already has a good character.

I am sure none of us would agree with the above listed points, and yet this is what we are required to accept if we hold to the concept that our real problem is our actions rather than our nature. Obviously the character is more than simply the result of my actions and habits. It also includes the nature that

I was born with.

How does God transform my mind? Is it by a miracle or by education? Is conversion an act of God which takes place by the infusion of the holy spirit, a supernatural, divine power, or is it a gradual change which occurs as a result of a person beginning to adjust his thoughts? Education has its place in teaching me the will of God, in enabling me to understand God's purposes and ways better so we can be more perfectly in harmony. But what is the critical ingredient in the Christian's experience? Is it education or is it re-creation? Does God merely direct me into new truth, or is there an actual experience when the very life of Christ is imparted to me, when by His power, I am changed into a new creation? These are critical questions.

Are we guilty of Adam's sin?

I have never stated that we are guilty of Adam's sin, although I did quote Ellen White where she states that Adam's children "share his guilt." (ST, May 19, 1890 par. 8). Those who object to the idea of us sharing Adam's guilt should contend with Ellen White.

I have preferred to use the biblical expression which says that we are **condemned** because of Adam's sin (Rom. 5:18). Is there a difference between the words, "condemned," and "guilty?" I am not sure if the dictionary would define them differently, but there is an implied difference in the way we use these words which might give the wrong idea if I use the word, "guilty," with respect to our inheritance from Adam.

The word, "guilty," suggests personal, willing and conscious involvement to such a degree that a person may be taken before a judge and questioned concerning his involvement. Blame may be fixed upon him because he was consciously and willingly involved in a crime. This was not true of our involvement in Adam's sin and so I have not used the word guilty to describe our state in Adam.

However, the Bible does use the word

"condemnation." This word indicates that doom has been pronounced against a person and that he is simply waiting to be destroyed. We often use the word, "condemned," to refer to old buildings which have been marked for destruction. Notice that guilt is not necessarily the issue. Condemnation signifies that a thing has been consigned to destruction, that a decision has been taken to remove it from existence. This sentence can be passed for several reasons. It does not necessarily mean that the person or thing has been personally involved in a crime.

The Bible does teach that we are condemned in Adam. His sin involved us and took us, along with himself to death. We were condemned when he was condemned, but we were not personally or consciously involved in his sin, therefore, we cannot be tried for the sin which he committed, although it killed us all.

Did Adam's sin totally corrupt all humanity?

There is a dangerous thinking which permeates the thinking of many Seventh-day Adventists, and I believe it is a very grave false doctrine. It is the belief that all that is wrong with us is that we are born weak and all we need is the right kind of teaching and training to become good. The Roman Catholic church teaches that the sin of Adam **wounded** the human race but that man is not wholly evil. The Catholic Catechism expresses the difference between Catholics and Protestants over the issue of the human condition by saying:

(Original sin) is a deprivation of original holiness and justice, but human nature has not been totally corrupted,- it is wounded in the natural powers proper to it. The Church's teaching on the transmission of original sin was articulated more precisely in the sixteenth century, in opposition to the Protestant Reformation . The first Protestant reformers taught that original sin has radically

perverted man and destroyed his freedom; they identified the sin inherited by each man with the tendency to evil, which would be in (him).

The Protestant reformers taught that Adam's sin **killed** humanity rather than wounded it. In other words, man is totally and hopelessly depraved and lost. His only hope is Christ, but of course the Catholic point of view makes us believe that what man needs is assistance rather than to be totally and completely recreated. This Catholic point of view is what many Adventists have embraced. They believe that we are born in absolutely the same condition as Christ except that He was born full of the holy spirit. The only difference as they see it, is that He had more help at the beginning so He was able to choose not to sin, while we chose to. In their thinking if we had only had a



little help we could have been Christ!!

This utterly false concept has led some to the conclusion that people such as John the Baptist who were filled with the holy spirit from birth were men who lived without sin. In effect, this idea is suggesting that we have more than one Christ!! Naturally, the conclusion is that all we have to do in order to overcome is simply to copy Christ, that is to follow His example. Victory over sin and becoming perfect is simply achieved by learning to change our habits. If we

can do this through the right education, hard work and much struggling and striving, we will eventually change **ALL** our habits and so we will be just like Christ!! Thus, there is no need for a man to be **born again**. This is just a figurative term which refers to the time when a person makes up his mind that he will begin to strive to be like Christ.

This is pure foolishness because it has never worked. Unless the spirit of God comes to take possession of a person, to give him a new nature and a new mind, there is no hope that he can ever change. **Education, even Biblical education is not the same as the new birth!!!**

At least the Catholics have devised a way by which they feel that this impossible task may be finally accomplished after a person dies, because it certainly cannot be accomplished while those who try in this way, are alive. The Catholic Church teaches,

All who die in God's grace and friendship, but still imperfectly purified, are indeed assured of their eternal salvation; but after death they undergo purification, so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven. The Church gives the name Purgatory to this final purification of the elect. (The Catholic Catechism)

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The soul that sinneth

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- b. Man's personal sins add to that condemnation.
- c. No man's righteousness can save Him.
- d. Man's observance of the law cannot produce righteousness and therefore cannot bring life to him.
- e. Only the righteousness of Christ can save any man.

These facts are true for every single human being. It matters not whether he is one day old or a hundred years old. It matters not whether he has committed a million sins or none at all. If there is any human being for whom this is not true, then evidently, Christ need not have died for such a person. It would mean that there is salvation outside of Christ. However, even a baby who is one day old cannot be saved outside of Christ. If Christ had not provided a way of deliverance for humanity, even the baby who is one day old would have had no hope, regardless of whether or not he had committed one single act of sin. If he had died in that state (outside of Christ's provision) then that would have been the end. He would have gone to the grave and there would never have been a resurrection for him. The fact that he had not personally transgressed the law could not have saved him. Adam's sin would have condemned him, like all other humans, to a death which would have been eternal.

These are the plain facts. Denying them will not enable us to understand the word of God better and ultimately, such denial will rob us of the blessings which are inherent in the truth. Let all who are expecting true revival and reformation stand faithfully for the truth in its pure and unadulterated form, without adding human bias.



Without the law

Continued from page 4

illegal for God to judge men as righteous merely because another was righteous. But the truth is that God is able to impute the righteousness of Christ to us because we have indeed **BECOME** a part of Christ's own existence!! This is why we are now able to keep the law perfectly.

Oh the wonder of it all! This is not pretence, we have been baptized, immersed into the very body, the life of Christ by means of the imparting of the holy spirit (1 Cor. 12:13). We are truly a part of the very life of Christ, the new humanity, or the last Adam. Therefore we are made the righteousness of God **IN HIM!!** We are a part of His body, members of His "flesh and of His bones (Eph. 5:30). Therefore, He is our righteousness. His righteousness is our righteousness. Because we are one, we are the same, we are of His body, of His life, of His existence.

The term, "Christ our righteousness," has tended to give us a limited understanding of the nature of our relationship with Christ. People have come to believe that God gives us by some unfathomable principle the righteousness of Christ in isolation. Unless we can see that it is not merely "righteousness" which God gives us, but a complete new life – a new existence in which righteousness is already an accomplished reality, an accomplished fact, then it will be impossible to see the legality of what God has done for us through Christ.

The fact is, God has not done these things for us **through** Christ, or **by** Christ, but rather **in** Christ. Let us think about this brothers and sisters. There is a difference, a vast difference and only as we see this distinction will we be able to gain a true understanding of justification by faith and the plan of salvation.



The Work of a Lifetime

Continued from page 7

BELIEF. He says we must labour so that we can enter God's rest, but how do we enter? It is by faith that we enter! So it becomes evident that all our labour must be to help us to have faith, not to do works. Where works are concerned, we rest, we enter into God's rest. Our work is finished. Our only problem is that unbelief may keep us from this rest and so we must labour, we must struggle to keep the focus of faith. This is the sum totality of the Christian's struggle, the fight to maintain faith, because where there is faith, the fight is finished, where faith is, God works and the battle is over.

If the life of victory over sin is ours simply by faith in Christ, then it is evident that we may have this experience immediately, as soon as we have faith. However, it is equally evident that since this victory is ours purely by faith, then it is the maintaining of faith which de-

termines whether or not we keep it. God's work is always perfect but His ability to work in us is dependent upon our faith. So there is a battle to be fought, but, notice, it is not a battle to do right, it is not a struggle to overcome sin, it is the "good fight of faith." It is the struggle to maintain our faith.

This explains why sanctification, the work of being set apart unto Christ is an instant work which takes place as soon as we are in Christ, but at the same time is a process which lasts for the rest of a person's lifetime. A man in Christ is wholly acceptable to God and such a person is complete in Him (Col. 2:9). He is sanctified or set apart unto God. However, every day of his life for as long as he lives, whether it is 969 years or 70 years, this person must continually maintain this experience in Christ, by faith. It is not an automatic process in which the relationship maintains itself. Faith must be nurtured, fed,

exercised, jealously guarded and this "fight of faith," continues as long as a person lives. It is not that it takes a whole lifetime to become holy (!!). No, it is that this holy status which we receive at the very beginning, must be maintained for the rest of our lives whether that is 2 years or 969 years. It is the "work" of a lifetime.

So, the thief on the cross who lived only a few hours was sanctified during his lifetime, and so was Methuselah who lived 969 years. The work never came to an end while they lived. They never came to the place where they could say, "now I am sanctified and there is no need to have the experience tomorrow."

Notice, it is not sanctification which requires work. This was the work of God. It is the faith which brings sanctification which must be maintained during the "work of a lifetime."



Open Face

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