

Earth's Final Message...

# CHRIST OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS

condensed from the book by Pastor J.W. Bill Lehman



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Additional FREE copies of this book may be downloaded from the internet:

Original book: <https://pastorbilllehman.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/Christ-Our-Righteousness.pdf>

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# CHRIST OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS—TODAY'S MESSAGE

There are some today who minimize the message of Christ our righteousness, believing there are other topics far more important, such as the second coming of Jesus, some of the prophecies, our personal needs in the Christian life, and the law and the Sabbath. All of these comments demonstrate a terrible ignorance of the scope and meaning of the topic of Christ our righteousness. Such a depreciation of the message often causes many to not see its true worth, value, and importance in their lives; and therefore they fail to experience Christ as their righteousness.

The following quote is one of the most significant things Ellen White wrote regarding the third angel's message: **"Several have written to me inquiring if the message of justification by faith is the third angel's message, and I have answered, 'It is the third angel's message in verity.'" COR 64.** There are several other statements like this.

**"The Lord in His great mercy sent a most precious message to His people through Elders Waggoner and Jones....It presented justification through faith in the Surety; it invited the people to receive the righteousness of Christ, which is made manifest in obedience to all the commandments of God....This is the message that God commanded to be given to the world. It is the third angel's message, which is to be proclaimed with a loud voice, and attended with the outpouring of His Spirit in a large measure." TM 91,92.**

The terms "justification by faith" and "Christ our righteousness" are used interchangeably; therefore, Christ our righteousness is the third angel's message, which we know to be the final message from God to the world in the last days. **"The time of test is just upon us, for the Loud Cry of the third angel has already begun in the revelation of the righteousness of Christ, the sin pardoning Redeemer. This is the beginning of the light of the angel whose glory shall fill the whole earth." COR 56.**

Throughout the Spirit of Prophecy we find that the terms third angel's message, the Loud Cry of the third angel, justification by faith, and Christ our righteousness are all closely interrelated, and in fact synonymous...There will be no greater message sent from God than this precious truth—the message of Christ our righteousness. This final message will lighten the earth

with the glory (character) of God, bringing to a close God's final work upon the earth...

There are many similarities between Christ our righteousness and the third angel's message that we often do not see. The Loud Cry declares that **"Babylon is fallen."** Revelation 18:2. Babylon is the symbol of self-righteousness—do it yourself in your own efforts and your own strength. As Nebuchadnezzar said, **"Is not this great Babylon, that I have built...by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?"** Daniel 4:30...

In Revelation 14:12, we are told that God's people keep His commandments. Jesus taught that the law was supreme love for God and to love our neighbors as ourselves. This will be made manifest to the world.

What is the glory that lights up the earth? **"Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and His glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising."** Isaiah 60:1-3. Jesus also said, **"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."** Matthew 5:16.

Literally, the people involved in the Loud Cry will shine. In the book *Early Writings*, there are several places where it mentions this. **"The work of this angel comes in at the right time to join in the last great work of the third angel's message as it swells to a loud cry... I saw a great light resting upon them [God's people], and they united to fearlessly proclaim the third angel's message... The glory of God rested upon the patient, waiting saints, and they fearlessly gave the last solemn warning... The light that was shed upon the waiting ones penetrated everywhere."** **"Servants of God, endowed with power from on high with their faces lighted up, and shining with holy consecration, went forth to proclaim the message from heaven... God's people were strengthened by the excellent glory which rested upon them in rich abundance and prepared them to endure the hour of temptation."** EW 277-279. These quotations tell us that these people will literally shine in the radiance of God's

**"One interest will prevail, one subject will swallow up all other: Christ Our Righteousness."**



glory that rests upon them.

This light is needed because Isaiah tells us that **“darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and His glory shall be seen upon thee.”** Isaiah 60:2. Into this darkness God’s glory will shine, and the world will see God as He is, manifested in His people.

**“It is the darkness of misapprehension of God [we fear Him] that is enshrouding the world. Men are losing their knowledge of His character. It has been misunderstood and misinterpreted. The children of God are to manifest His glory. In their own life and character they are to reveal what the grace of God has done for them. The light of the Sun of Righteousness is to shine forth in good works—in words of truth and deeds of holiness.”** COL 415.

He is counting on us to manifest Him to the world, to demonstrate what God’s true character is really like—that He is truly a God of love.

**“Those who wait for the Bridegroom’s coming are to say**

**to the people, ‘Behold your God.’ The last rays of merciful light, the last message of mercy to be given to the world, is a revelation of His character of love.”** COL

415. The world has not yet, apart from Jesus, seen God. Jesus was the only One who has truly revealed Him to the world; and now we understand there will be a message that will lighten the whole earth that will say, “Behold God in His

people; and God is love”. There will be no last plagues until the world sees that God is love. There will be no return of Jesus until the world sees that God is love. This is the last message—the revelation of God’s character of love.

John told us in very simple words that **“when He shall appear, we shall be like Him.”** 1 John 3:2. Some people listen to this and become very discouraged. They say, “I can never become like Him.” But the One who made something out of nothing, the One who made light to shine out of darkness, can make something out of nothing in you, too. If you understand the Creator, and the power of God unto salvation, which Paul defines as the gospel, it is not what you can do, but rather what He will do with you when He is permitted to do that.

**“It is His glory to pardon the chief of sinners.”** MH 161. And His glory is His character. He says, “I don’t care how bad you are. That doesn’t bother Me or prevent Me from doing something for you. My character is manifested when I pardon the chief of sinners and transform them. Then the world truly sees that I am God; and a God of love and of might and power who loves humans so much that He can change the vilest of sinners.”...

The Lord is capable. What do you think of God? Is He too small to accomplish His plans? We are everlastingly looking

at weak self and becoming discouraged. He tells us to look to Him and be saved and to be transformed. It is His glory that is to be seen in our transformation, not ours.

**“Thus in the night of spiritual darkness God’s glory is to shine forth through His church in lifting up the bowed down and comforting those that mourn. All around us are heard the wails of a world’s sorrow. On every hand are the needy and distressed. It is ours to aid in relieving and softening life’s hardships and misery. Practical work will have far more effect than mere sermonizing. We are to give food to the hungry, clothing to the naked, and shelter to the homeless. And we are called to do more than this. The wants of the soul, only the love of Christ can satisfy. If Christ is abiding in us, our hearts will be full of divine sympathy. The sealed fountains of earnest, Christlike love will be unsealed.”** COL 417.

Christ wants to give each of us a tender heart that sympathizes with people, that has compassion as He had, that is sensitive to the needs of those around us. An Old

Testament writer prophesied that **“the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.”** Habakkuk 2:14. Here is Ellen White’s comment on this Bible text: **“Another angel comes down from heaven having great power, and the earth is to be lightened with his glory. The Spirit of the Lord will so graciously bless consecrated**

**human instrumentalities that men, women, and children will open their lips in praise and thanksgiving, filling the earth with the knowledge of God, and with His unsurpassed glory as the waters cover the sea.”** 7BC 984

It is God’s glory to pardon the chiefest of sinners. It does not matter how vile you have been or how far you have gone. God will manifest Himself in you, He will glorify Himself in you, and the world will be amazed as they behold God in humanity. And then Jesus will come.

How He longs to come into your heart. How He longs to rise like the sun in the morning with light, warming us on the inside and the outside; and glowing in us, shining in us, until the whole life is so transformed that our very lips, our every act, manifests His love and His goodness; until we cannot contain and constrain ourselves. We must shine for Him. **“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”** Matt. 5:16.

It is our privilege to have that transformation, not tomorrow but this very day. God has been waiting many years to shine out into the darkness of this world through our lives. May His will be done for you and for me is my prayer in His precious name.

~Pastor Bill Lehman (condensed from **Christ Our Righteousness, chapter 1**)





# THE STARTING POINT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

Much has been written on the subject of Christ our righteousness. Our denomination faced a major crisis when in 1888, the finest leaders we had disagreed about this subject. Christ our righteousness has become such a volatile topic that when I first learned about it, my advisors in college told me to leave this subject alone, saying it would chase me out of the church. Yet I read in the Spirit of Prophecy and the Bible that this message is fundamental to the salvation of all who hear the gospel...

Justification by faith is not to be simply a theory, but an experience. The starting point for true righteousness is found in Ellen White's definition of justification by faith. **"What is justification by faith? It is the work of God in laying the glory of man in the dust, and doing for man that which it is not in his power to do for himself."** TM 456. We like the last part of that sentence where it talks about God doing for man that which we cannot do for ourselves. But many do not like the part about laying the glory of man in the dust.

How would you like to have been a prominent person living back in 1888 when this message was first taught? Imagine two messengers sent by God standing up and telling you that all your righteousness is "filthy rags." The implication is that, if Christ is your righteousness, then you do not have any. If He must be my righteousness, I cannot produce it of myself. Worse still, it says to me that all the righteous deeds I have been trying to do are not righteous. All the Sabbath-keeping, all the tithe paying, all the missionary work, all the preaching, all the Bible work—none of these are righteousness. If Christ must be your righteousness, then all of your righteousness is nothing. We must admit that we do not hear much about this. Why? Because when Christ our righteousness is correctly taught and preached, it deprives me of all that past righteousness that I thought was my ticket to heaven!

The Jews had the same problem. **"For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God."** Romans 10:3. This ignorance was willing. They learned about the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus, but they rejected it. They were seeking to establish their own. The next verse tells us **"For Christ is the end [the fulfillment] of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth."** To those who believe that Christ is their righteousness, He is the fulfillment of the law for them. But if I am seeking to establish my own righteousness—even just a tiny bit of my own righteousness—will I ever accept His? It is impossible!

We like anything that elevates self, but we dislike anything that depreciates self. Nowadays preachers like to talk about "self worth." It has a nice ring to it. We talk about self-love, and we take that marvelous text **"Love your neighbor as**

**yourself"** (Mark 12:31) and conclude that if you do not love yourself you cannot love your neighbor. And we say, "Oh, goody! I always wanted to love myself, and now I am told it is alright."

Jones and Waggoner used several texts from the Psalms. **"When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers; the moon and the stars, which Thou hast ordained; what is man, that Thou art mindful of him? And the son of man, that Thou visitest him?"**

**"Behold, Thou hast made my days as an hand-breadth; and mine age is as nothing before Thee: verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity."**

**"Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help."** Psalms 8:3,4; 39:3-5; 146:3. There were two texts from Isaiah. **"All nations before Him are as nothing; and they are counted to Him less than nothing, and vanity."**

**"The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof is as the**

**flower of the field: The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand forever."** Isaiah 40:17; 40:6-8. All of these verses were put into Waggoner's preaching of justification by faith. He said these texts show that God is everything, and that man is nothing.

Before I chase you away, I must pause and say that

in all of the preaching by Jones and Waggoner about the nothingness of man, they were always pointing out that God loved man and counted him so precious that He gave for man the most valuable thing in all heaven—the Lord Jesus. It is God's estimation of man that makes us good and valuable, not our estimation of ourselves. Our goodness is like flowers that are here for a few days, and then gone. Can you put your trust in that? No, of course not. We must put our trust in something far better than that.

Waggoner also used some New Testament texts. **"I am the Vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without Me ye can do nothing."** John 15:5. **"For I know that in me dwelleth no good thing."** Romans 7:18. Can you imagine the apostle Paul, who did so much for the Lord at all times, saying this about himself? Paul also wrote in Philippians 3:8 that he counted **"all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ."** Those things included monetary loss, losing his position in the Sanhedrin, and the prestige he once held amongst his brethren. Paul said he was a Pharisee of the Pharisees. A Pharisee is proud of his own righteousness. Paul had to discard his own righteousness...

When the children of Israel came out of Egypt, they had many distortions of the truth. They lived in a heathen land

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

where they had come to believe that God was angry with them, and that they must somehow appease Him and court His favor. They attempted to become righteous in their own energy and works. The Lord had to change that attitude. I sense that today He has the same job to do with many of us. The Lord gave them something called the old covenant to teach them lessons that they must learn, or they would never need Him.

Ellen White explained the old covenant and why God gave it to the nation of Israel at Sinai. ***“Another compact—called in Scripture the ‘old’ covenant—was formed between God and Israel at Sinai...The Abrahamic covenant...is called the ‘second,’ or ‘new,’ covenant.... But if the Abrahamic covenant contained the promise of redemption, why was another covenant formed at Sinai? In their bondage the people had to a great extent lost the knowledge of God and of the principles of the Abrahamic covenant... Living in the midst of idolatry and corruption, they had no true conception of the holiness of God, of the exceeding sinfulness of their own hearts, their utter inability, in themselves, to render obedience to God’s law, and their need of a Saviour. All this they must be taught. God brought them to Sinai; He manifested His glory; He gave them His law, with the promise of great blessings on condition of obedience... The people did not realize... that without Christ it was impossible for them to keep God’s law... Feeling that they were able to establish their own righteousness, they declared, ‘All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient.’ (Ex. 24:7)...yet only a few weeks passed before they broke their covenant with God, and bowed down to worship a graven image... Now, seeing their sinfulness and their need of pardon, they were brought to feel their need of the Saviour... Now they were prepared to appreciate the blessings of the new covenant.”*** PP 371,372.

Many today need to be taught those same lessons. They essentially come into the church under the old covenant. They hear the law and realize that it is good. They vow to keep it (go read your baptismal vows). Yet soon they realize that they cannot keep it in their weak flesh. So this next quote applies not only to the ancient Israelites, but to modern Israel as well:

***“Before there could be any permanent reformation, the people must be led to feel their utter inability in themselves to render obedience to God... While they trusted in their own strength and righteousness, it was impossible for them to secure the pardon of their sins; they could not meet the claims of God’s perfect law, and it was in vain that they pledged themselves to serve God. It was only by faith in Christ that they could secure pardon of sin and receive strength to obey God’s law. They must cease to rely on their own efforts for salvation, they must trust wholly in the merits of the promised Saviour, if they would be***

***accepted of God.”*** PP 524...

Keeping these quotes in mind, look at these words from the gospel prophet. ***“Comfort ye, comfort ye My people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished [no more strife, no more struggle, no more battling], that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the Lord’s hand double for all her sins.”*** Isaiah 40:1,2.

Why does He say that? When Christ is your righteousness, what about the struggles? What about the wars? What about the battles? You do not have to struggle to attain righteousness. In Christ you have attained. In Christ you have achieved. He is our victory. He is our success. He is the victor for all humankind. He is our King, and in Him we are accepted. We must cease to rely on our own efforts for salvation, and must trust wholly in the merits of the promised Savior, if we would be accepted of God.

***“Come with humble hearts, not thinking that you must do some good work to merit the favor of God, or that you must make yourself better before you can come to Christ. You are powerless to do good, and cannot better your condition. Apart from Christ we have no merit, no righteousness. Our sinfulness, our weakness, our human imperfection make it impossible that we should appear before God unless we are clothed in Christ’s spotless righteousness. We are to be found in Him not having our own righteousness, but the righteousness which is in Christ... The righteousness of Christ is presented as a free gift to the sinner if he will accept it. He has nothing of his own but what is tainted and corrupted, polluted with sin, utterly repulsive to a pure and***



***holy God. Only through the righteous character of Jesus Christ can man come nigh to God.”*** 1SM 333,342.

This next quote is one to be treasured: ***“None but God can subdue the pride of man’s heart. We cannot save ourselves. We cannot regenerate ourselves. In the heavenly courts there will be no song sung, ‘To me that loved myself, and washed myself, redeemed myself, unto me be glory and honor, and blessing and praise’. But this is the keynote of the song that is sung by many here in their world. They do not know what it means to be meek and lowly in heart; and they do not mean to know this, if they can avoid it. The whole gospel is comprised in learning of Christ, His meekness and lowliness.”*** TM 456.

The Lord wants us to have an experience where Christ is supreme, where He is unto us both salvation and righteousness. When we become filled with the glory of this subject, when we make our decision for Jesus completely as our righteousness, as well as our Savior, the work will be finished in a hurry. We will see revivals everywhere. And then the Lord Jesus can say to us, “Well done, good and faithful servant.”

~Pastor Bill Lehman (condensed from *Christ Our Righteousness*, chapter 2)



# JUSTIFIED HOW?

Revelation 3:17 describes the last church of the seven churches of Revelation: **“Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.”** There is a terrible deception pictured here. They say one thing while they are actually the opposite.

**“What is it that constitutes the wretchedness and 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 in filthy rags; and yet in this condition they flatter themselves that they are clothed upon with Christ’s righteousness. Could deception be greater?”** RH, August 7, 1894. They insist they have Christ’s righteousness, but the True Witness says, “No, you do not. You have your own filthy rags.”

This deception was so great in 1889 that Ellen White had this to say: **“There is not one in one hundred who understands for himself the Bible truth on this subject [justification by faith] that is so necessary to our present and eternal welfare.”** COR 87.

Why is it so easy to be deceived about it? **“The enemy of man and God is not willing that this truth [justification by faith] should be clearly presented; for he knows that if the people receive it fully, his power will be broken.”** COR 54. Is his power broken in your life? Then have you received it fully?

This quote continues on: **“If the enemy of truth and righteousness can obliterate from the mind the thought that it is necessary to depend upon the righteousness of Christ for salvation, he will do it. If Satan can succeed in leading men to place value upon his own works, as works of merit and righteousness, he knows he can overcome him by his temptations and make him his victim and prey. Lift up Jesus before the people. Strike the door posts with the blood of Calvary’s Lamb.”**

In 1924 Elder Daniels wrote the book *Christ Our Righteousness*. He describes the condition of the people then: **“In our blindness and dullness of heart, we have wandered far out of the way, and for many years have been failing to appropriate this sublime truth—Christ our Righteousness. But all the while our great Leader has been calling His people to come into line on this great fundamental of the gospel—receiving by faith the imputed righteousness of Christ for sins that are past, and the imparted righteousness of Christ for revealing the divine nature in human flesh.”**...

Is this accomplished by attempting to do good works? The Lord lays His requirements before us, and we say, “Okay, I will do it.” That seems to be the obvious response, but sometimes the obvious answer is not the right answer. To say “I will do it” is old covenant mentality.

**“Let no one take the limited, narrow position that any**

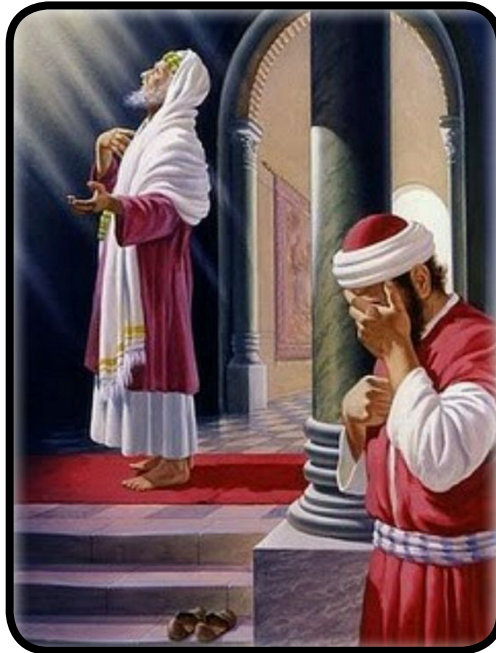
**of the works of man can help in the least possible way to liquidate the debt of his transgression. This is a fatal deception. If you would understand it, you must cease haggling over your pet ideas, and with humble hearts survey the atonement. This matter is so dimly comprehended that thousands upon thousands claiming to be sons of God are children of the wicked one, because they will depend on their own works... God always demanded good works, the law demands it, but because man placed himself in sin where his good works were valueless, Jesus’ righteousness alone can avail.”** 1SM 343

Immediately many have a thousand fears and want to argue that we are trying to do away with the law. We must never forget that. **“Man cannot possibly meet the demands of the law of God in human strength alone. His offerings, his works, will always be tainted with sin... The law demands righteousness, and this the sinner owes to the law; but he is incapable of rendering it.”** COR 116.

**“It is true that there may be an outward correctness of deportment without the renewing power of Christ. The love of influence and the desire for the esteem of others may produce a well-ordered life. Self-respect may lead us to avoid the appearance of evil. A selfish heart may perform generous actions.”** SC 58. If I do what is right because I am afraid of what the neighbors will think, is that righteousness? No, that is fear. If I do what you think I should do in order to get your esteem, is that righteousness? No, that is ego, or self being inflated by the approval of others.

**“Education, culture, the exercise of the will, human effort all have their proper sphere, but here they are powerless. They may produce an outward correctness of behavior, but they cannot change the heart. They cannot purify the springs of life. There must be a power working from within, a new life from above, before men can be changed from sin to holiness. That power is Christ.”** SC 18.

Paul put forth the same argument when he wrote: **“Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.”** Romans 3:2. We are justified by faith only, and not by any of our efforts at obeying the law. This causes many disputes. James argues that there is a difference between true faith and false faith (or presumption). He tells us how to tell the difference between the two. **“Seest thou how faith wrought with his [Abraham’s] works, and by works was faith made perfect?”** James 2:22. **“Genuine faith will be manifested in good works, for good works are the fruits of faith... The faith that does not produce good works does not justify the soul. ‘Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only’ (James 2:24). ‘Abraham believed God, and it was**



**counted unto him for righteousness' (Rom. 4:3)." 1SM 397.**

James and Paul are in total agreement. James is arguing for genuine faith, for genuine faith will truly justify; and that in turn will make us accomplish good works for God. He is examining faith and saying that works are the *result*, not the *cause*, of justification.

The biggest question here is: Who accomplishes justification? Is it something I do for God, or something that He does for me? Paul talks about Abraham in the Good News Version: ***"What shall we say then of Abraham... If he was put right with God by the things he did, he would have something to boast about; but he cannot boast before God. The Scriptures say that Abraham believed God, and because of his faith, God accepted him as righteous. A man who works is paid. His wages are not regarded as a gift but as something that he has earned. As for the man who does not work, however, but simply puts his faith in God, who declares the guilty of the innocent, it is his faith that God takes into account in order to put him right with Himself."*** Romans 4:1-5

Justification is an act of God, and not of man. Man simply believes what God does for us. There are other texts that will help us understand this:

***"It is God that justifieth."*** Rom 8:33.

***"And by Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses."*** Acts 13:39.

***"That He might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."*** Rom. 3:26.

***"Being justified freely by His grace."*** Rom. 3:24.

***"Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him."*** Rom. 5:9.

***"Even so by the righteousness of One the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life."*** Rom. 5:18

***"Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe."*** Rom. 3:22.

We are all familiar with a parable found in Luke chapter 18 where Jesus taught this truth. A Pharisee and a publican were in the temple praying. The Pharisee said he was thankful that he was not like other men, doing the terrible things they do. He listed the good things he did, and thus he thought he obeyed the law and was right (or just) before God. The publican came along and it is said he would not lift up his eyes to heaven. He said, ***"God be merciful to me a sinner."*** Verse 13. He had no good works to plead. Christ said, ***"this man went down to his house justified rather than the other."*** This seems to be a contradiction to many of us. But Paul taught, ***"What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith. But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, had not attained to the law of righteousness. Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law."*** Romans 9:30-32. Paul is saying that the obvious approach of trying to do right because the law and God ask you to do right is not the right way.

***"What then? Are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one. There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable: there is none that doeth good, no, not one."*** Rom. 3:9-12.

We see an upstanding person saying, "Lord, let me try." God steps back and says, "Alright, go ahead." So he tries and tries for fifty years. Then God comes back and asks, "Well, how good are you?" And the person says, "Well, I've done lots of good things."

And the Lord replies, "I know that, but let's ask your wife how good you are."

"Oh, don't talk to her!"

"Let's ask your children."

"Oh, no."

"Let's ask those who work for you."

"No, don't ask them."

All of our good works are valueless. They are tainted with sin because we have all been sinners. We do not climb out of that miry pit by trying to do good. It is like quicksand—the more you try, the more you sink...

***"Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil."*** Jeremiah 13:23. If it is impossible for them, it is impossible for you. We must look at this as it is, and not as we would like to make it...All our righteousness is ultimately as filthy rags.

Job asked... ***"Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one."*** Job 14:4. Who can bring righteousness out of a sinner? No one can. Someone from outside of us who is righteous must come in and clean up the sinner and make him just. The sinner cannot do it for himself. He must believe ***"in the Lord have I righteousness and strength."*** Isaiah 45:24. All our righteousness is of Him. I have none. Paul prayed, ***"And be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."*** Phil. 3:9.

When we put all these texts together, we have a startling message. If you are a proud person, as so many of us are, you will hate it. But we are told that this topic of justification by faith is laying the glory of man in the dust and doing for man what he cannot do for himself.

On the other hand, to those who have been struggling for years and years to do what is right, only to discover that they are incapable, this is a most precious, most hopeful, most enlightening message. It is glorious, because the good news is that God will do for you what you cannot do. The thing we desire to do, the thing we need most, the thing that is the most precious in all of life, He says He will give to us. He does this because He is so good.

Do you believe God is that good? This is the big question. Do you believe that God so loved sinners that He gave His Son for them? That Jesus so loved sinners that He died for them? That He has interceded all these two thousand years for them? Is He that good? Or are you always trying to prove how good you are in comparison to other people?

The nice thing about all this is that the praise will go to Him, not to me. He can handle it, but I cannot handle praise. Friend, if you will really look at this subject, and really look at yourself in the light of the Bible, you will find out that the truth on this subject is glorious!..And if you are a believer in this, it will make you want to jump and shout for joy. Once this truth gets hold of you, you cannot keep quiet about it. You will just radiate it...It is so wonderful, so real; and it is mine if I will by faith reach out and grasp the goodness of God to sinners.

~Pastor Bill Lehman (condensed from **Christ Our Righteousness**, chapter 3).



# GRACE OR MERIT?

Are we justified completely by grace, completely by merit, or by both grace and merit? There is a constant warfare in which we are engaged concerning this topic.

We can quickly understand how we are pardoned, or forgiven, by God's grace entirely. That seems to cause us no difficulty, but that I am made **just** by His grace is a different thing. When a criminal is released from prison, having paid his penalty to society, is he just? He is free. He no longer has to pay a penalty. But is he just? Just means he is right and you can depend on him. He will do right from then on. Will he?

Many Christians call this justification by faith—that you are pardoned and forgiven completely by His grace, but you are not righteous until you prove you are.

When someone disagreed with my understanding of this theory of justification, I thought they were like those "Christians" who would eliminate the law and all obedience to it; and I could not believe them. But frequently, something would trouble me, because many of my sinful habits were still with me. The harder I seemed to try to do right, the more I failed. I seemed to find very little love in my heart for people. I did not like myself for some of these things.

Then I read the following quotation: **"They have not been instructed as they should have been that Christ is unto them both salvation and righteousness."** RH, September 3, 1889. Salvation means pardon from my sins, and I believed that; but I did not know what it meant to have Christ "unto" me as my righteousness. Since I was trying to do this myself, I had not received His righteousness. I did not even know He wanted to give it to me, until I had proven I was righteous. Then I would be good enough to receive it.

More and more I began to see a duality in this message that I had missed before. **"The repentant soul realizes that his justification comes because Christ, as his substitute and surety, has died for him, as his atonement and righteousness."** COR 67. **"Through Christ, restoration as well as reconciliation is provided for man."** COR 95. I believed that Christ had taken my sins away, reconciling me, but I surely had not been restored, for I was deep in my sinful habits. I looked for restoration and thought it would come some day, if I lived long enough; but I did not have it.

**"Genuine faith appropriates the righteousness of Christ, and the sinner is made an overcomer with Christ."** COR 96. Lots of time had gone by, and I was not an overcomer. Apparently, I did not know what it was like to have Christ as my righteousness.

**"Through faith in His name, He imputes unto us His righteousness, and it becomes a living principle in our life."** COR 98. His righteousness becomes a something active in me, functioning in me.

**"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."** COR 99.

**"Christ imputes to us His sinless character and presents us to the Father in His own purity. There are many who think that it is impossible to escape from the power of sin [and I was finding that], but the promise is that we may be filled with all the fullness of God"** [and that includes His righteousness]. COR 99. We aim too low. God wants to fill us with all His fullness. We escape the power of sin, not by our striving, but by His giving. But I could not give up my theory... Where was the striving? How could I be counted righteous when I had not established it by a righteous life? Much of my confusion was an unwillingness to believe that God would do it for me by His grace. There is one thing we have never emphasized sufficiently, and that is God's goodness to sinners—His grace that is wholly undeserved.

The consequence is that we try to do it ourselves.

The Bible teaches it very clearly in several texts. **"Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."** Romans 3:24 **"That being justified by His grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life."** Titus 3:7. **"Therefore by the deeds of the law [by my own obedience to that law or my actions to it] there shall no flesh be justified in His sight."** Romans 3:20

**"Not by works of righteousness that we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us."** Titus 3:5.

Verse 7 talks about **"being justified by His grace."**

One of the finest texts is one we seldom hear about. **"And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of**

**works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work."** Romans 11:6. Works and grace, in this context, are opposites; for if righteousness is by grace, it cannot be of works. Work earns, or deserves, or merits something. Grace is unmerited...The righteousness of the righteous is of God, and not of man.

There are more texts we need to see. **"Surely, shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength."** Isaiah 45:24. In the Lord, not in myself. **"This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of Me, saith the Lord."** Isaiah 54:17. Where do they obtain it? From Him. **"And this is His name whereby He shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS."** Jeremiah 23:6. The life He lived, which was a righteous life, was not for Himself. It was for me. He is the Lord, our righteousness. So the righteousness of the righteous is not of man; it is of God. Therefore, if you try to establish your own, you are definitely not receiving His.

The Bible teaches that it is a gift. **"Even so by the**



**righteousness of One the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.”** Romans 5:18,19. By one Person’s righteousness, the free gift came unto all men. There is no way you can change these texts without destroying the truth. It is never our righteousness that makes us righteous. It is always and everlastingly His righteousness. I do not make myself just by trying to be righteous, by trying to be obedient. I accept by faith that He wants to give [His righteousness] to me. I claim it as my very own. This is righteousness by faith.

Here is a precious gem of truth that should never be forgotten: **“The righteousness of God is embodied in Christ. We receive righteousness by receiving Him.”** MB 18.

Justification...not only forgives but it transforms the life and controls the actions. I am forgiven, and then He gives me His righteousness; and this righteousness is something I receive, not something I produce by trying. It is a gift. Therefore it is all of grace.

This is described and illustrated in a parable that Jesus gave. **“When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first.”**

Matthew 12:43-45...

**“We must be emptied of self. But this is not all that is required; for when we have renounced our idols, the vacuum must be supplied**

**[or] it will be in the condition of him whose house was ‘empty, swept, and garnished,’ without a guest to occupy it. The evil spirit took unto him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and entered in and dwelt there; and the last state of that man was worse than the first. As you empty the heart of self, you must accept the righteousness of Christ. Lay hold of it by faith; for you must have the mind and spirit of Christ, that you may work the works of Christ.”** COR 119.

**“I am the Vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without Me ye can do nothing.”** John 15:5. If you are not attached to Jesus, there is no life in you. Without Jesus we are utterly helpless. Jesus must do the work. He is the living



vine. We live only as we are attached to Jesus.

While I can do nothing without Him, Philippians 4:13 tells us, **“I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”**

If we do not accept this, if we do not receive Christ as our righteousness, we will do exactly as the Jews did. **“For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.”** Romans 10:3. While you think you are becoming better as you try to clean up the outside of the cup, you leave the inside dirty, as Jesus said, being like a white-washed sepulcher—beautiful on the outside but full of dead men’s bones. While you think you are a sweet-smelling Christian, everyone holds their

nose when you come around, including your children and your spouse and your neighbor. Because the person who seeks to establish his own righteousness always has an “I” and a “me” problem; and

people get tired of a two-note song. And it is very apparent to others that Christ is not my righteousness; and we wonder why we have so few friends. We chase them away with our pride of self-attainment and self-achievement.

The world today wants to see Jesus, not you, not me. The world is tired of weak human beings. We do not perform flawlessly. They say as the Greeks did, “We would see Jesus,” but they will never see Jesus in us until He is both salvation and righteousness. This very moment, He is waiting to bestow the treasures of heaven, in the righteousness of Christ, to you and to me. He stands with His hands outstretched, filled with His righteousness, and He asks us, “Why will you die? Why do you try to establish your own righteousness when Mine is so freely given and completely available. When I am knocking and trying to get in, you won’t let Me in with My righteousness. Instead of going about with your own filthy rags, won’t you let Me take them off and put on the spotless robes of My righteousness? Won’t you trust Me? Don’t you believe I am that good? Why do you diminish My goodness? I am the mighty One.”

Friend, why will you go on in a miserable existence, trying to be good enough to be accepted when you are already accepted in Christ? All you have to do is receive Him. May God help us this day to see the truth of justification by faith—that Jesus is both salvation and righteousness. What a marvelous truth. May God help us to understand it and receive Him in the fullness of our hearts, in the fullness of His grace.

~Pastor Bill Lehman (condensed from **Christ Our Righteousness**, chapter 4).

**“The world today wants to see Jesus, not you, not me.”**



the empty house...



# RIGHTEOUS RECORDS OR RIGHTEOUS LIVES?

There are several areas of justification by faith that are misunderstood and misinterpreted. If you have an open mind and a teachable spirit, I would like to present some material that I believe will help us to understand some of these things that are so difficult.

**"Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness."** Romans 4:3. Let's look closer at the word "counted." Verse 5 says: **"But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness."** These words and others like them elsewhere in the Scriptures cause people a great deal of confusion about justification by faith. Some say that justification by faith is only a change in the records. The theory is that there is really no change in the life. It is just an accounting system where, though I am counted righteous, I really am not righteous. Many believe that this is justification by faith. Is there a literal change in the life from sin to righteousness; or does God just enter into the book of accounting that we are righteous, even though we continue to practice sin?

There is evidence in the Spirit of Prophecy that would lead us to believe God is keeping good books. **"By faith he [meaning the sinner], who has so grievously wronged and offended God, 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."** COR 19.

**"Therefore being justified [accounted righteous] by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."** Rom. 5:1. In *Christ Our Righteousness*, page 20, Ellen White defines justification as being "accounted righteous". This would make you think that God is doing bookkeeping.

**"When God pardons the sinner, remits the punishment he deserves, and treats him as though he had not sinned, He receives him into divine favor, and justifies him through the merits of Christ's righteousness."** 1SM 389. God treats him as though he had not sinned, but he *has* sinned. With all this evidence, most people say, "Well, justification by faith is merely accounting, keeping the records of heaven straight."

Before you accept this completely, you need to pause for awhile and meditate about what you are saying; because you might be saying some things you don't want to say. What kind of a bookkeeper is your God? Does He falsify the records to make you look good? Does He make the records say one thing when our lives reveal something else? No, we don't

want to think that about God, do we? Does He not know our lives? And are the records not compatible with our lives?

There is another aspect in looking at this accounting system that is something we almost never think about concerning God's words, or promises. **"For all the promises of God [and I would like to say accounting there], in Him are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us."** 2 Corinthians 1:20. Whatever God promises or accounts, it is as though they were, as though they had already been done or taken place. For when God speaks, things take place, do they not? His speaking is reality. It cannot be otherwise. He creates by His words.

There is another side to this problem. In justification by faith, is God only keeping books, or is He changing lives?

How can He take sinful people and call them righteous and still be called fair and just? This is explained by Paul. Abraham's faith **"was imputed to him for righteousness. Now it was not written for his sake alone, ...but for us also, ...if we believe on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification."** Rom. 4:22-25.

What Paul is saying here is that there is a just reason why God can call the sinful righteous. He does this by laying all our sins on Christ. Christ was punished for your sins and mine... And the Bible says He was resurrected for our justification... The important thing about the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ is that they were sufficient to pay the penalty for all the sins of all mankind.

**"Now [Jesus] declares: Father, it is finished. I have done Thy will, O My God. I have completed the work of redemption. If Thy justice is satisfied, 'I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am.' ...The voice of God is heard proclaiming that justice is satisfied. Satan is vanquished. Christ's toiling, struggling ones on earth are 'accepted in the Beloved.' Eph.1:6. Before the heavenly angels and the representatives of unfallen worlds, they are declared justified."** DA 834. Justified by whom? Justified by the Father. **"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus."** Rom.8:1.

**"Justice demands that sin be not merely pardoned, but the death penalty must be executed [justice demands that somebody must die]. God, in the gift of His only-begotten Son, met both these requirements. By dying in man's stead, Christ exhausted the penalty and provided a pardon."** 6BC 1099. When you exhaust something, how much remains?



Nothing! God is able to justify sinners and still be just, because Christ took all our sins and paid a price sufficient for the penalty—the punishment for every sinner.

If this was accomplished two thousand years ago, how do I receive what He has done for me? ***“Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin.”*** Romans 6:3-7.

Paul said you are justified by the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus...when you follow Him in this experience of the old man of sin dying, buried in the watery grave and coming up to the new life. We call this the new birth. You cannot separate justification by faith and the new birth, and when you put them together you get an unusual answer to that question: Is God only keeping records or changing lives? Justification is identified with the new birth. He is obviously changing lives, right? That is what new birth means, and we enter into that experience by following Him in the new birth and the death of the old man of sin.

***“Righteousness by faith is a transaction, an experience. It is a submitting unto the ‘righteousness of God.’ It is a change of standing before God and His law. It is a regeneration, a new birth.”*** COR 21.

In Romans 6:4, we read that in the new birth, we are to ***“walk in newness of life.”*** In 2 Corinthians 5:17, it says that those who are in Christ are new creatures, and that ***“old things are passed away, behold, all things have become new.”***

In Romans chapter 3, it talks about God declaring us righteous. God created all things by the word of His mouth. When God *declares* something by the words of His mouth, it is a creative act! He declares us righteous. He creates us righteous. And the new birth is a creative act. God is making new life. I am created in righteousness and true holiness. He does it for me as I believe it and expect it and anticipate it, and know that He wants to do it. It is not because of any goodness on my part. He made everything out of nothing, and I am nothing. God is not indebted to you for righteousness or re-creation. It is all His power. It is a gift. He does it for you and for me. This takes place in this marvelous thing called conversion.

***“When a man is converted to God, a new moral taste is created.”*** COR 101. ***“Holiness is the gift of God through Christ. Those who receive the Saviour become sons of God. They are His spiritual children, born again, renewed in righteousness and true holiness. Their minds are changed.”*** 6BC 1117.

***“Since we are sinful, unholy, we cannot perfectly obey the holy law. We have no righteousness of our own with which to meet the claims of the law of God. But Christ has made a way of escape for us. He lived on earth amid trials and temptations such as we have to meet. He lived a sinless life. He died for us, and now He offers to take our sins and give us His righteousness. 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 [the first***

part—the accounting]. ***Christ’s character stands in place of your character, and you are accepted before God just as if you had not sinned. More than this, Christ changes the heart.”*** SC 62. This changing of the heart is the other half. He accounts me righteous, He pardons me, but more than this, Christ changes the heart...

How does He do this? ***“He abides in your heart by faith. You are to maintain this connection with Christ by faith and the continual surrender of your will to Him; and so long as you do this, He will work in you to will and to do according to His good pleasure...Then with Christ working in you, you will manifest the same spirit and do the same good works—works of righteousness, obedience. Our only ground of hope is in the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and in that wrought by His Spirit working in and through us.”*** SC 62,63.

In the new birth we actually become partakers of the divine nature. God Himself comes to live in man. ***“Linked to the Infinite One, man is made a partaker of the divine nature...When the soul surrenders itself to Christ, a new power takes possession of the new heart. A change is wrought which man can never accomplish for himself. It is a supernatural work, bringing a supernatural element into human nature.”*** COR 99,100. Imagine combining divinity with humanity. This happens in the new covenant where God writes His law in our minds and hearts.

***“The atonement of Christ is not a mere skillful way to have our sins pardoned [in other words, God did not just scheme and devise how to get around the law and be just]. It is a divine remedy for the cure of transgression and the restoration of spiritual health. It is the heaven-ordained means by which the righteousness of Christ may be not only upon us but in our hearts and characters.”*** 6BC 1074.

What happens when the mighty One gets inside of this poor, weak human being? Suddenly the weak say, “I am strong through Christ who strengthens me.” Every morning I say, “Lord I am not righteous, and I cannot be righteous; but You are the mighty One, you are the righteous One. I submit my whole life to you. Take care of me today. Guide me today. Plan for me today. Control me today. Use me today.” And little by little His righteousness begins to flourish as I submit and give Him all the controls of my life. Soon the neighbors ask, “How did you get that way?” And I can say, “I really don’t know too much about it. Somebody else was doing it for me.” We never brag of what we are like. We only say, “Lord, be merciful to me a sinner.” And as we yield to the mighty One, He works mighty works in the weak one; and the world marvels and takes knowledge that we have been with Jesus.

This is a marvelous experience. It really is. What God wants to do for us is not to just take care of pages of books. He also wants to take care of hearts. ***“That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height [of God’s love]; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God.”*** Eph. 3:17-19.

And God will be praised as others see the righteousness of Christ perfectly reproduced in us. What a glorious experience is ours. Let us claim it today.

~Pastor Bill Lehman (condensed from **Christ Our**



# THE OTHER HALF OF FORGIVENESS

Many believe that forgiveness is simply gaining peace with God again...But the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy teach a forgiveness much greater than this human understanding of this topic.

Ellen White tells us that in David's prayer, we find the correct understanding of pardon: **"Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin... Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow... Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me."** Psalms 51:1-10.

Very few people use verse 10 in their confession of their sins. David said he saw something inside of him that needed correcting; it was not just the vile sins he had committed with Bathsheba and having her husband killed. He knew he needed a new heart and a renewed spirit that would change him so that he would never again conceive of such things.

Isaiah also contains a picture of God's forgiveness and genuine confession. **"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts."** Isaiah 55:7-9

**"Forgiveness has a broader meaning than many suppose. When God gives the promise that He 'will abundantly pardon,' He adds, as if the meaning of that promise exceeded all that we could comprehend: 'My thoughts are not your thoughts... God's forgiveness is not merely a judicial act by which He sets us free from condemnation. It is not only forgiveness for sin, but reclaiming from sin. It is the outflow of redeeming love that transforms the heart. David had the true conception of forgiveness when he prayed, 'Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.' And again he says, 'As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us.' Psalm 103:12."** MB 114.

Justification includes a conversion experience, which David called a clean heart and a right spirit. In His forgiveness, God is making it so I will not sin. Is God able to do that? We of ourselves cannot stop sinning, but He can stop us. How able is your God? **"Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think."** Eph. 3:20. If He

is that able, can we gain victory over besetting sins? When John the Baptist saw Jesus coming to the Jordan River, he said **"Behold, the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world."** John 1:29. What does Jesus do? He takes sin away. How far? As far as the east from the west.

**"The religion of Christ means more than the forgiveness of sin; it means taking away our sins...The beauty and fragrance of the character of Christ revealed in the life testifies that God has indeed sent His Son into the world to be its Saviour."** COL 419,420...

Our concept of forgiveness reminds me of a house we lived in when I was a young boy. We rented an old house and we were a very poor family with quite a few children in the home. Every time it rained the roof would leak...It leaked in the bedroom, and the living room, and the kitchen and everywhere else. Our routine at that time was to bring out a bunch of pails, kettles, and pans to catch the dripping water. When it stopped raining and the sun came out, we would put away the pans and pails after we emptied them, and save them for the next rainstorm...

Some people use forgiveness like those pails. Every time they get a leak in their life—their character—they run

and get the bucket of forgiveness and say, "O Lord, please forgive me for this terrible sin." Then they feel better. Empty the pail, and then wait until the next time to sin. Does the Lord always want us to have a bucket brigade of forgiveness? We say, "Oh, if I only ask enough times for forgiveness, the Lord will forgive me and I will be saved."

It is almost inconceivable of what we have done to the Investigative Judgment and to God's character with this attitude of forgiveness. Under this concept, if I lose my temper eighteen thousand and twenty times in a life time, in order to be judged righteous in the Judgment, I must ask God to forgive me for my temper eighteen thousand and twenty times. If I miss one, God says, "Ha! I caught you! You missed one and you are going to burn." People go away thinking that God is some kind of spy, watching their character to see if it is flawless; and if we goof up one time too many, we won't make it.

In addition to making the Investigative Judgment a perversion, we have also done the same thing to repentance. Can you imagine yourself going to a dear friend whom you have offended and saying to that person, "I am very sorry I offended you. I really love you very much and I don't want to harm you. I hope you will forgive me, but I will probably do it again before long." If you were that person's friend you



would say, "I really wonder how much you love me if you are planning on offending me again tomorrow or next week." But that is exactly what we do with God. We say, "I love you very much, Lord, and I hope you will keep on forgiving me even though I might offend you for the rest of my life." And we hope that He believes we love Him. But that is not sorrow for sin. If we are sorry for sin, we do not plan, or even make allowances, for offending again that person whom we love so dearly.

**"Repentance includes sorrow for sin and a turning away from it. We shall not renounce sin unless we see its sinfulness; until we turn away from it in heart, there will be no real change in the life."** SC 23. There is no real sorrow for sin until we really see how bad it is. The Lord can do that for us, for both forgiveness and repentance are gifts.

In Hebrews 9:22, the apostle Paul brings out a key thought about forgiveness and confession: **"And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission."** We are only forgiven because Christ died on Calvary. Christ has gone to heaven as our High Priest, and He ministers His precious blood in our behalf, does He not? That is what He is doing there. When I come confessing my sin I must never leave out the death and the blood of Jesus. Some have come to the place where they have invented a crossless Christianity; and if it is crossless, it is Christless. The heart of all the ministry of Jesus was His death on Calvary. You leave it out and you have no gospel. None! There is no gospel, there is no good news, for the Bible is not good news without the cross. It is bad news, it is all condemnation, and it is all law and no mercy without the cross, and all of us are a hopeless people.

The Jews believed the Scriptures and preached them very prominently, and even memorized great portions of them, but they killed the Savior. It is not enough to be Bible Christians. There is no salvation and no forgiveness apart from the cross.

Come with me back to the Old Testament...In olden days, when sin comes to your knowledge, there was only one way you could confess it. You had to bring a sacrifice, an animal, to slay, and the priest helped you tie it down so it could not get away; and then he hands you the knife. You take a good look at it, and you take a good look at that animal. You gulp, and your heart does flip-flops and ends up as a knot in your throat. It isn't very pleasant to think that an innocent animal should die for me.

Friend, there was no other way to find forgiveness in the Old Testament except this way. Some people think it has changed for the better. In reality, it changed for the worse. In the place of the lamb, it is the Lamb of God now. Our sins crucify Him afresh. Does that make you feel better? It is as though you are right at Calvary watching Him die for your sins when you come confessing in the Biblical fashion. This is why there are so few righteous people. We hate Calvary. We will not linger there a thoughtful hour, and some people cannot stand it for two seconds.

Ellen White said there is no higher place that you can ever reach than kneeling at the foot of the cross. And believe me, when you have been there a little while and experienced the saving grace of Christ, and the beauty of Jesus and His tremendous love in dying for us, you will never want to leave.

**"Jesus has said, 'I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me.' John 12:32. Christ must be revealed to the sinner as the Savior dying for the sins of the world; and as**

**we behold the Lamb of God upon the cross of Calvary, the mystery of redemption begins to unfold to our minds, and the goodness of God leads us to repentance. In dying for sinners, Christ manifested a love that is incomprehensible; and as the sinner beholds this love, it softens the heart, impresses the mind, and inspires contrition in the soul... And as Christ draws them to look upon His cross, to behold Him whom their sins have pierced, the commandment comes home to the conscience. The wickedness of their life, the deep-seated sin of the soul, is revealed to them. They begin to comprehend something of the righteousness of Christ, and exclaim, 'What is sin, that it should require such a sacrifice for the redemption of its victim? Was all this love, all this suffering, all this humiliation, demanded, that we might not perish, but have everlasting life?' The sinner may resist this love, may refuse to be drawn to Christ; but if he does not resist, he will be drawn to Jesus; a knowledge of the plan of salvation will lead him to the foot of the cross in repentance for his sins, which have caused the sufferings of God's dear Son."** SC 26,27.

**"Confession will not be acceptable to God without sincere repentance and reformation. There must be decided changes in the life; everything offensive to God must be put away. This will be the result of genuine sorrow for sin."** SC 39. The sorrow for sin is found at Calvary. As I come there, it breaks my heart that I could do all this to Jesus. How can I hurt the One who loves me so much?. Suddenly I want a new heart like David and I loathe myself; and I ask God to create in me a clean heart and renew a right spirit in me.

This is what John meant when he wrote, **"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."** I do not make myself different. He makes me different; and there is peace at the cross. He accepts me just like I am, without even one plea. I do not care what you find wrong with me. At the cross it is all taken care of. I find perfect rest, perfect freedom in Christ at the cross.

You know, friend, we have been struggling for years to be good enough for God to accept us. We have been struggling for years thinking about how much praying, and how much striving, how much studying or something else we must do so that we can be good enough. And all the time we have been going around the cross, running in the opposite direction and never looking back. We came confessing our sins, but left out the blood and the precious love of Jesus. Yet we keep on thinking we are forgiven and that we must be a Christian because we go to church, because we keep the right day, because we pay tithe. And Jesus says, "Why do you stay so far from Me if you love Me? And how can you avoid Me at the very place where I expressed supreme love." Greater love hath no man than He that lays down His life for His friends.

God is waiting for us to not only be forgiven for sin, but to be reclaimed from sin. The world is looking for a Christian who is displaying and demonstrating a God like this. For they long to have this peace, this joy, this freedom. They do not know where to find it. They come to our churches and go away empty. They come to our homes and go away empty. Jesus has been waiting and longing to make us a different people. He wants to give us total forgiveness, which includes a changed life. May God help us to realize how much He really loves us.

~Pastor Bill Lehman (condensed from **Christ Our**



# WHAT IS RIGHTEOUSNESS?

The subject of righteousness is as controversial as the subject of perfection. What is righteousness? Some people say it is just doing your best and God does the rest. Some say it is total sinlessness, and they are striving very diligently to be that way. If you believe in situational ethics, then righteousness depends on the circumstances.

Most of us realize that righteousness has some connection with obedience to God's law, for **"all unrighteousness is sin."** 1 John 5:17, and sin is the transgression of the law.

When you begin to study this topic, you immediately begin to check yourself by the law. Am I breaking the Sabbath? lying? stealing? taking God's name in vain? We have a long checklist of thou shalt nots, and we examine ourselves in this light. Finally, if by His grace that sin disappears, we can say, "I am more righteous because one more sin is gone."

And hopefully, if we live long enough, they will all be gone. Is that righteousness? There are many of us who have been trying to do this for years.

A lawyer once came to Jesus and asked, **"Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."**

Matt. 22:36-40. To Jesus, the keeping of the law was not simply the omission of sin. It was the doing of good—love for God and love for our fellow man—with an unselfish motive.

This is more than a profession. The Lord talked about the two men where one said he would do it but he did not do it; the other fellow said he would not but he did. Jesus said the one who did it was blessed. **"Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven."** Matthew 7:21.

**"The love of God is something more than a mere negation. It is a positive and active principle, a living spring ever flowing to bless others. If the love of Christ dwells in us, we shall not only cherish no hatred towards our fellows, but we shall seek in every way to manifest love toward them."** MB 58. In other words, if I really love you because of the love of Christ in my heart, it is not just avoiding doing wrong to you, it is taking every opportunity to do good things for you. That is a different kind of righteousness, is it not?

I want to show you some quotations about our inability to be righteous. **"Because of his [Adam's] sin, our natures are**

**fallen. We cannot make ourselves righteous. Since we are sinful, unholy, we cannot perfectly obey the holy law. We have no righteousness of our own with which to meet the claims of the law of God."** SC 62.

**"Because the law of the Lord is perfect, therefore changeless, it is impossible for sinful men in themselves to meet the standard of its requirement."** MB 50.

**"The law of God is as holy as He is holy, as perfect as He is perfect. It presents to men the righteousness of God. It is impossible for man, of himself, to keep this law, for the nature of man is depraved, deformed, and wholly unlike the character of God."** MB 54. If you are trying to be righteous of yourselves, you won't like what I am saying. If you have failed and are about to give up, you will like everything I am going to say.



In Romans chapter 3, it continues talking about our unrighteousness and our inability to keep God's law. After verse 20 comes a transition, **"But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested."** This righteousness is for us. Paul prayed about what he might possess when he finished his life: **"And be found in Him [Christ], not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law [my attempts to keep it], but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."**

Paul did not want his own righteousness. He only wanted the righteousness of God, which is found in Jesus and comes by faith in Him.

Did you know that Jesus did not claim that His righteousness was His own? **"He that hath seen me hath seen the Father... Believest not that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak unto you I speak not of Myself; but the Father that dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works."** John 14:9,10. The words and righteous works seen in Jesus were not His but the righteousness of the Father in Him.

There are other texts that state this, such as: **"I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father hath taught Me, I speak these things."** John 8:28.

**"The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father do: for what things soever He [the Father] doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise."** John 5:19. Therefore, the words He spoke and His acts of righteousness were the righteousness of God the Father in Jesus. And this is what is offered to us!

I want you to look at this righteousness of God much more closely. What is the righteousness that gets us into

heaven?...John talks about this: ***“Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is.”*** 1 John 3:2.

John taught that “God is love.” 1 John 4:8. In that one word he described His whole character, of which the law is a more lengthy description. As Moses asked to see God, he saw God’s character. Exodus 34:6. God is love, and since the law is a transcript of His character, His law has to be love. That is why Jesus said: ***“Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart... and thy neighbor as thyself.”*** Matthew 22:37. Paul tells us that ***“love is the fulfilling of the law.”*** Romans 13:10. Love is supreme love for God and love for your neighbor. That fulfills the law!

I want to come to one conclusion: Love is righteousness, and righteousness is love. If God is love, and the law describes His character, and the law is the character of love, and obedience to that law is love, and obedience is righteousness, then righteousness is love. Do you agree with me? Righteousness is love.

This means that all those years I had been trying to do something else that I called righteousness. Somehow I was totally deceived and missing the boat. Righteousness, if it is love, is not trying to avoid hurting you. Righteousness is doing good things for you and blessing you in every way I can think of. That is righteousness, because righteousness is love.

***“Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.”*** Matt. 5:6.

***“Righteousness is holiness, likeness to God; and God is love... It is conformity to the law of God, ‘For all Thy commandments are righteousness,’ (Ps. 119:172); and ‘love is the fulfilling of the law.’ (Rom. 13:10). Righteousness is love, and... we receive righteousness by receiving Him.”*** MB 18.

If there is love in my heart, planted there by Jesus, then there is love for you, because He loves you tremendously... That is Christianity. Obedience is loving people.

If we go back to Romans 3:10 where we started, it says ***“There is none righteous.”*** If you use the definition that righteousness is love, it says there are none who love. Paul said we are no better than the Jews. They did not love and neither do we. In the Bible we find the fall of Adam and Eve. After one sin Adam and Eve were estranged from each other, because when God came that evening and asked, “Where are you?” Adam said, “Eve did it.” And she said, “The serpent did it.” Look at how little love remained after just one day from just one sin. And in only one generation, from a perfect place in perfect love, Cain killed his brother. What is it like after six thousand years of sin? We cannot produce love, and yet this love is the fulfillment of God’s law, perfect righteousness. It only comes from Jesus.

Jesus said: ***“A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.”*** 1 John 13:34. Do you love like Jesus loved? I don’t. I thought I did once in a while. All day long Jesus cared for people. It did not matter who they were. He loved them all. And when He was hanging on Calvary’s cross, He said, “Father, forgive them.” That is a different kind of love than I have.

***“While the law is holy, the Jews could not attain righteousness by their own efforts to keep the law...God offered in His Son the perfect righteousness of the law. If they would open their hearts fully to receive Christ, then the very life of God—His love—would dwell in them, transforming them into His own likeness. And thus through*** **16**

***God’s free gift, they would possess the righteousness which the law requires.”*** MB 54,55.

***“The Jews had been wearily toiling to reach perfection by their own efforts, and they had failed. Christ has already told them that their righteousness could never enter the kingdom of heaven. Now He points out to them the character of the righteousness that all who enter heaven will possess...[and] in one sentence He points out its source and its nature: be perfect as God is perfect. The law is but a transcript of the character of God... God is love. Like rays of light from the sun, love and light and joy flow out from Him to all His creatures. It is His nature to give. His very life is the outflow of unselfish love... He tells us to be perfect as He is, in the same manner. We are to be centers of light and blessing to our little circle, even as He is to the universe. We have nothing of ourselves, but the light of His love shines upon us. We are to reflect its brightness. ‘In His borrowed goodness good,’ we may be perfect in our sphere, even as God is perfect in His.”*** MB 77,78. He is saying I should be a center of light to my little circle. We can do that if He abides in us.

She goes on: ***“Jesus said, Be perfect as your Father is perfect. If you are the children of God you are partakers of His nature, and you cannot but be like Him.”*** It isn’t striving to be good. You cannot avoid it if you partake of His nature. ***“Every child lives by the life of his father. If you are God’s children, begotten by His Spirit, you live by the life of God. In Christ dwells ‘all the fullness of the Godhead bodily’ (Colossians 2:9); and the life of Jesus is made manifest ‘in our mortal flesh’ (2 Corinthians 4:11). That life in you will produce the same character and manifest the same works as it did in Him. Thus you will be in harmony with every precept of His law; for ‘the law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul.’ Psalm 19:7, margin. Through love ‘the righteousness of the law’ will be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. Rom.8:4.”*** Ibid.

This is an amazing thing...It is our misunderstanding of righteousness that has led us into a weary struggle. We have pled with God to stop us from sinning, and God has been saying all along that He wants to make us lovers. We get the cart before the horse. The power that enables a person to love other people is in Jesus.

We have a problem understanding how He can love us so much when we can be so unloving and unrighteous. But He does. He loved David who was a murderer. He loved Peter who cut off the ear of that servant (he wasn’t aiming at his ear). He loved Moses who was going to deliver Israel by killing the Egyptian. Does He love you? Surely He does. How much He wants that love to be in our hearts, so that the world will see God in all His love and all His righteousness and beauty. He is so precious to us that we can hardly wait for Jesus to come back; and He will carry us up through the heavens and introduce us to His Father, the God of all love and light. And we will fall down and adore Him, this God who is love. And over and over we will sing “Hallelujah!” And we will never get tired of telling Him how much we love Him. And He will never get tired of listening, because He is a God of love.

Don’t you want to be like Him? I do. And it is so easy to reach out and receive the gift of heaven—the perfect gift of love. God can make the hardest soul a loving Christian. May God help us to be holy, to be righteous, to be loving, even as He is righteous.

~Pastor Bill Lehman (condensed from **Christ Our Righteousness**, chapter 7).



# RIGHTEOUS—BY EXAMPLE OR BY A GIFT?

Many believe that righteousness by faith is only following Christ as our example, and as we copy Him we become righteous. Others believe that Christ lived a righteous life on our behalf, that His righteousness is offered in place of our sinfulness, and since I have no righteousness of my own and cannot produce it, He literally is righteousness for me, and not merely the example, or pattern, of righteousness.

It is apparent that these two ideas are in conflict, for if Christ is doing something for me and offers to give His righteousness to me, then I do not receive righteousness by copying Him. On the other hand, if I must copy Christ in order to be righteous, then righteousness is not something He has done for me, nor do I receive it as a gift. This is another one of those problem areas that cause us to misunderstand and misinterpret this subject.

Let us first examine Christ as our example. There are many texts in the Bible that seem to say this. **“Love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.”** John 13:34. **“He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked.”** 1 John 2:6. **“Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps.”** 1 Pet. 2:21, 22.

**“Christ is our pattern; His life was an example of good works.”** 1T 505. **“How many imitate the great Exemplar? All who have professed to be followers of Christ have...pledged themselves to walk even as He walked.”** 2T 32. **“A pattern has been given you...If you turn from this... perfect pattern, and take an incorrect one... your life will be a failure.”** 2T 396. **“All should copy the Pattern as closely as possible.”** 5T 254. **“You are not excusable for not living a Christ-like life. Christ came to this world, subject to His Father’s will, for one great purpose—to show men and women what God desires them to be and what they may be.”** MM 42.

If you go and look up these quotations, you will note that I omitted a few words in two of them. The reason I did that is because I wanted to show you how most people read them. Stay with me and I will come back to these quotations.

Now we will ask some difficult questions. Can we attain to righteousness merely by imitating, or copying the right pattern?... Did Jesus in His sermon on the mount say blessed are the copycats for they shall inherit the kingdom of heaven? If you can copy Jesus and be righteous, why could we not copy the law and be righteous? Isn’t the law God’s character written down? And what difference does it make if we are copying the law or copying Jesus?

Paul discussed our inability to copy the law when he wrote: **“For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us.”** Rom. 8:3,4. The law cannot cause us to be obedient to the law. If I could not copy the law because of the weakness of my flesh, how can I copy Jesus with the same flesh? So it does not matter what the pattern is if you are dependent on man’s inability. Something has to be done about that before we can do any copying of any kind.

Some will reason that justification is a gift of God, and following

the Pattern is sanctification. That seems to be quite a logical concept, so I want to take a little detour and discuss sanctification in that context. Paul wrote: **“But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.”** 1 Cor. 1:30. It does not sound like we copy Him to be sanctified, does it?

**“And be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but...the righteousness which is of God by faith.”** Philippians 3:9. In the context here, as Paul talks about when he has finished his life, he does not want his own righteousness. He wants to have Christ’s. Certainly when Paul finished his life, he was sanctified. Yet he still does not want his own righteousness.

**“You are powerless to do good, and cannot better your condition. Apart from Christ we have no merit, no righteousness. Our sinfulness, our weakness, our human imperfection makes it impossible that we should appear before God unless we are clothed in Christ’s spotless righteousness.”** 1 SM 333.

**“The righteousness of Christ is presented as a free gift to the sinner if he will accept it. He has nothing of his own but what is tainted and corrupted, polluted with sin, utterly repulsive to a pure and holy God. Only through the righteous character of Jesus Christ can man come nigh to God.”** 1 SM 342.

And one more: **“In Him [Christ], is our hope, our justification, our righteousness.”** 1 SM 351. It seems that all of righteousness is found in Jesus; that none is found in us, and that man is incapable of following the Pattern. Man cannot perform although he

would like to. The things he wants to do he cannot do because of the weakness of the flesh.

Why does the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy teach us to copy the Pattern? Why does Ellen White call Christ the Pattern and the Example and say we should imitate and copy Him? There are two very good reasons. The Jews were always discussing the law and righteousness. They thought they knew what the law said, but Jesus said He wrote the law, that He was the law in human flesh, and the standard of righteousness.

**“He came to live out the law, and His words and character were daily a...living manifestation of what the law was.”** ST, March 14, 1985. The Jews were confused as to what constitutes obedience to the law. Christ is the pattern of the standard of righteousness. The Bible says when He comes we shall be like Him. He will be reproduced in us. He does not say that we are to copy Him in His actions, or try to mimic Him. He is the goal to be attained. He is righteousness.

There is a second reason why [Jesus] is called the Pattern. He is not only what righteousness is, but He is how righteousness is achieved. The method by which Christ lived that righteous life was by perfect faith and trust in His Father. Therefore the words He spoke and the works He did were not His, but those of the Father. And if we live by faith in Christ, we by faith, receive righteousness by receiving Him. There is no other righteousness, and there is no other way.

This is different than copying actions. Consider how when a man



wishes to learn how to drive, he is given a driving instructor. They go through all the streets, up and down the freeways, practicing how to park and back up. Eventually the man can do everything the instructor does. Then he says, "Now I know how to drive like the instructor." Does he? Of course not. There is more to driving than mechanical movements of a wheel and turn signal and brakes and gas pedal. The instructor has been driving for many years and has learned judgment by experience. You cannot teach judgment in a driving course. We see many foolish people who think they can drive well because they completed a driving course. I was like that when I went to flying school. When I finished flying school, I could do all the things the instructor could do; but I was a flying fool. I could fly but I did not have any sense. The neighbors who lived close to where we used to fly knew that by the way we blew the shingles off their roofs...

Righteousness is not simply doing what is right. Righteousness is being right. There is a vast difference. Over and over the Jews would come with a sacrifice, kill the sacrifice, then say they are forgiven and righteous. By the time of Isaiah, the Lord said He was sick of their sacrifices. They thought their endless sacrificing was righteousness, but it was nothing but the bloodthirsty killing of thousands of animals...Those animals were only a symbol of Christ and His love and death for them. If they did not see Him dying for their sins, if they did not see the fulfillment of the symbol, they were as unrighteous as can be! They were doing everything right but they were lost!

Righteousness is not achieved by trying to mimic Jesus. **"Having made us righteous through the imputed righteousness of Christ."** 1 SM 394. We are made righteous by something He puts into us or imputes to us. So it is not a mere following of a pattern. We must be born again. In other words, we must receive new hearts that **"are created in righteousness and true holiness."** Eph. 4:24. If I do not have a new heart, my hands may do right things but for the wrong reasons.

Christ talked about people who clean up the outside of the cup so nicely, but leave the inside dirty. He said that people like that are nothing but beautiful tombstones, but inside they are just filled with dead men's bones.

At the heart of all this is a statement of Jesus: **"If ye love Me, keep My commandments."** John 14:15. If you do not love Him, don't try, for all your trying is a counterfeit. This is the entire secret about following the Pattern. The Bible says that God is love, and Jesus taught that the law is love. And love is the fulfilling of the law (Rom. 13:10). Love comes out of the inside of you—if Jesus is in the heart.

**"The loveliness of the character of Christ will be seen in His followers. It was His delight to do the will of God. Love to God, zeal for His glory, was the controlling power in our Saviour's life...Love is of God. The unconsecrated heart cannot originate or produce it. It is found only in the heart where Jesus reigns. 'We love because He first loved us'...This love, cherished in the soul, sweetens the life, and sheds a refining influence on all around."** SC 59.

When you love Him, you cannot take your eyes off Him. 2 Corinthians 3:18 says by beholding Him, we are transformed into the same image or likeness. **"Even John, the beloved disciple, the one who most fully reflected the likeness of the Saviour, did not naturally possess that loveliness of character... But the strength and patience, the power and tenderness, the majesty and meekness, that he beheld in the daily life of the Son of God, filled his soul with admiration and love...His resentful, ambitious temper was yielded to the molding power of Christ. The regenerating influence of the Holy Spirit renewed his heart... When Christ abides in the heart, the whole nature is transformed."** SC 73

To sit and behold Jesus, to meditate on Him, to be absorbed in Him, to revel in Him is a fantastic experience. And only those who love Him will do it. They will like to talk about Him, they will like to witness concerning Him, and not so much about cold, sterile

doctrines. Jesus is an intimate, living Being. He lived all those doctrines. Tell people about Jesus. Loving people is practical. We can do that.

What is righteousness? Is it the following or imitating of a pattern, or is it loving Jesus (remember that righteousness is love)? As we love Jesus...we do the right things because we love Him. But the righteousness is not what we do. Righteousness is Whom we have abiding in our hearts. When we see ourselves forgiven, we know that not only are the sins of the past gone, we know that we belong to the family of God and that we are reinstated as though we had never sinned. We are treated as righteous because God has declared us righteous. And I say, "Glory to God in the highest! Praise His name!" Something has happened to me. Something is different. And what Jesus does for me in changing my life is a gift. I have not earned a thing. It is all by His grace.

Let's go back to two previous quotes and add in the words we omitted. The first quote is used by those who teach that righteousness is achieved by copying Jesus: **"Christ is our pattern; His life was an example of good works."** 1T 505. But notice what follows: **"He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief... Compare your course of life with that of your Master, who made so great a sacrifice that you might be saved...You are seeking your own pleasure...Is this imitating the pattern?"** In other words, can you really imitate the Pattern? Or is your life so filled with selfishness that you could never come close to copying the life of Jesus?

Here is the second quote: **"Christ came to this world, subject to His Father's will, for one great purpose—to show men and women what God desires them to be and what they may be."** When I quoted this originally, I left out three words. When I put them in, it shows how we should understand this quote: **"to show men and women what God desires them to be and what, through His grace, they may be."** MM 42. Note that it is "through His grace" that we are to do what God desires us to do.

**"He would have you follow a better way than you have followed in the past. This you are to do...by beholding Christ, the Sent of God, who in this world and in human nature lived a pure, noble, perfect life, setting an example that all may safely follow..."**

This is so different from the way many view the idea of following the Pattern. **"It is not by looking away from Him that we imitate the life of Jesus, but by talking of Him, by dwelling upon His perfection...by trying through faith and love [not just by trying], and by earnest, persevering effort to approach the perfect Pattern... Jesus becomes to us the Chiefest among ten thousand, the One altogether lovely."** 6BC 1098,1099.

When Christ becomes this to me, I sit at His feet charmed, because no one ever cared for me like Jesus. Like John the beloved, we do not care what happens just as long as we can be with Jesus. And the Pattern becomes wonderful because He is altogether lovely.

But it is not the copying that makes me righteous. I imitate Him because I love Him so much. And I do the right things because the Spirit of Jesus and the love of God are in my heart.

I believe with all my heart that Christ is trying to touch your heart. He doesn't just worry about what your hands do, and your lips say, and what you eat. He is asking, "Do you love Me? Haven't I loved you? Haven't I forgiven you for a mountain of debts of sin? Haven't I pronounced you righteous before the heavenly universe? Don't you know that you are accepted in Me as though you had never sinned? Don't you belong to My family? Aren't you overjoyed that I am so good to you? Why do you look elsewhere for righteousness? How can you reject so much love?"

This is what Christ wants to do for us. This will make us different. And the world will take knowledge that we have been with Jesus, because we will possess that softening, sweetening influence. And the world will marvel that such sinners as we could become like Jesus. May God grant you this marvelous experience.

~Pastor Bill Lehman (condensed from **Christ Our Righteousness**,



# TWO MEN, TWO ACTS, TWO RESULTS

The term "Christ our Righteousness" implies that Someone else is righteous for us. Most Christians can accept the idea that Christ died in their place, but it becomes a little more difficult to understand and accept the idea that Jesus is righteous, on my behalf.

There are two men who are involved in a proper understanding of Christ our righteousness. The first is identified by the apostle Paul: **"Wherefore, as by one man [Adam], sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."** Romans 5:12. The other Man you

will find in verse 15: **"But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one Man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many."** Here are the two men. I call them "men" because Jesus was called the "Man Christ Jesus"; and in no way do we deny or neglect His divinity by saying this. Paul also refers to them as the two Adams in 1 Corinthians 15. One brought death upon mankind, the other brought life.

Verse 18 is a unique verse in the Bible, and one which we want to look at very closely: **"Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life."** In the American Standard Version it reads, **"by one transgression and one act of righteousness."** In the Good News Version it reads, **"one sin and one righteous act."** Each of those acts had a major result upon the condition of mankind.

**"For as by one man's [Adam's] disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of One shall many be made righteous."** Romans 5:19. Some people become alarmed about this because when we talk about the one act of Adam, we get very close to original sin, and many people do not know what to think about the idea of original sin. Remember that the genuine and the counterfeit are not total opposites. They are very similar.

How can one person make another sinful? How can one person make another righteous? Adam was the father of all living...Christ is also called **"the everlasting Father."** Isaiah 9:6. By redemption He is called **"a quickening Spirit"** in 1 Cor. 15:45. All those who come to Christ He quickens, or gives life to. Therefore, He is the Life Giver. He was the Creator originally, and He is the Re-Creator through His resurrecting power. So both Adams are fathers of the human race, and both can give something to their children.

**"As related to the first Adam, men receive from him nothing but guilt and the sentence of death."** 6BC

1074. **"I am lost in Adam."** SD 120. **"Because of sin, his [Adam's] posterity was born with inherent propensities of disobedience."** 5 BC 1128.

**"In the likeness of God made He him."** Genesis 5:1 **"And Adam lived an hundred and thirty years, and begat a son in his own likeness."** Adam was made in the likeness of God. But now it says he begets a son in his own likeness. **"While Adam was created sinless, in the likeness of God, Seth, like Cain, inherited the fallen nature of his parents."** PP 80. This gives you some idea of what has happened to us as human beings because of heredity.

If I can inherit certain things from Adam, I can also inherit things from Christ. It functions the same way... **"And as we have borne the image of the earthy [of Adam], we shall also bear the image of the heavenly [of Christ]."** 1 Cor. 15:49.

**"As related to the first Adam, men receive from him nothing but guilt and the sentence of death. It places him where, through accepting Christ as his Saviour, he becomes a partaker of the divine nature. Thus he becomes connected with God and Christ."** 6BC 1074.

So now, through Christ, there is a relationship established with God. **"As many as have received Him, to them gave He power to become sons of God."** John 1:12. If you are a child of God, you are born of God, and you take after the likeness of your heavenly Parent. God is

reproducing Himself in His children. The purpose of the new birth is that God may dwell in man.

**"And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him."** Col. 3:10. "

**We know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him.**" 1 John 3:2. Christ is to be reproduced in us.

**"In his relation to Christ, he will be bone of His bone, flesh of His flesh, one with Christ in a peculiar relationship, because Christ took the humanity of man."** 7BC 926. We can be one with Christ in a peculiar relationship. What Adam has done to us by heredity, Christ comes along to undo by our being born again.

Adam was a king and Christ was a King. After God made man, He said, **"Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth"** Genesis 1:26.

**"At his creation Adam was placed in dominion over the earth. But by yielding to temptation, he was brought under the power of Satan. 'Of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage.'** 2 Peter 2:19. **When man became Satan's captive, the dominion that he held, passed to his conqueror. Thus Satan became 'the god of this world.'** 2 Cor. 4:4. **He had usurped that dominion over**



**the earth which had been originally given to Adam.”** PP 67. When Jesus was tempted in the wilderness, Satan showed Him the kingdoms of the world and then said, **“All these things will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me.”** Matt. 4:9.

**“Having conformed to his own nature the father and mother of our race, he thought to establish here his empire. He declared that men had chosen him as their sovereign. Through his control of men, he held dominion over the world. Christ had come to disprove Satan’s claim. As the Son of man, Christ would stand loyal to God. Thus it would be shown that Satan had not gained complete control of the human race, and that his claim to the world was false. All who desired deliverance from his power would be set free. The dominion that Adam had lost through sin would be recovered.”** DA 114,115.

Our first parents conformed to the image, or nature, of Satan. This happened by their act of sin. That is what Adam bequeathed to us. **“When man transgressed the divine law, his nature became evil, and he was in harmony, and not at variance, with Satan.”** GC 505. We had joined the devil’s team. Adam started the whole thing rolling...It came about because our king was conquered, and therefore all his subjects were conquered with him.

The opposite is also true. When Jesus came, He was a new King. Not many people recognized Him, but some of the heathen kings from the east knew that He was King. They brought Him king’s gifts, and they worshipped Him as King and as God. When Jesus came preaching, He talked about His kingdom, the kingdom of grace.

When Christ overcame Satan in the wilderness and on Calvary’s cross, He was setting every one of His subjects free! Satan is a dethroned king. He is no longer conqueror. He was defeated! We are victorious in Christ!

**“So then as through one trespass the judgment came unto all men to condemnation; even so through one act of righteousness the free gift came unto all men to justification of life.”** Romans 5:18, ASV.

We understand Adam’s one act of sin, but it is a little more difficult to understand Christ’s one act of righteousness. Since Christ did no sin, His whole life was righteous. What is that one act of perfect righteousness by which many are made righteous? I would like to suggest that Jesus defined that one, perfect act when He explained to His disciples that **“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.”** John 15:13. You cannot conceive of a greater act of love than this, and therefore Calvary stands apart distinctly as does the sin of Adam in the garden.

The serpent said to Eve, **“ye shall be as gods.”** Genesis 3:5. Eve reasoned that Satan’s lie that they wouldn’t die must be true, **“for she felt no evidence of God’s displeasure, but on the contrary realized a delicious, exhilarating influence, thrilling every faculty with new life, such, she imagined, as inspired the heavenly messengers.”** PP 56.

The quote continues speaking of Adam: **“After all, he reasoned, might not the words of the wise serpent be true? Eve was before him, as beautiful and apparently as innocent as before this act of disobedience. She expressed greater love for him than before. No sign of death appeared in her, and he decided to brave the consequences. He seized the fruit and quickly ate. After his transgression Adam at first imagined himself entering upon a higher state of existence.”** PP 56,57. He thought he had become like God.

This was part of the temptation, and this was part of his sin.

The Bible talks about the second Adam: **“Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And... He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”** Philippians 2:6-8. The first Adam said, “I want to be like God,” and he imagined himself as though he were. The second Adam, who is God, left His throne, and made Himself of no reputation, and as a man He humbled Himself even lower **“and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”** Phil. 2:8.

Jesus’ life was one of condescension where He went down and further down. Adam wanted to rise higher and higher and be like God. Which act is God-likeness? Adam conformed to the nature of Satan when he aspired to be like God, for Satan said, **“I will be like the most High.”** Isaiah 14:14. Jesus, who was God, became a man, and humbled Himself, even to the point of dying on a cross like a common criminal. In that one righteous act we see more of God’s true character than perhaps in any other act of the Bible; for God is love, and God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself.

How do you imagine yourself to be God-like? Jesus tells us by His condescension that if we want to rise higher, we must be like Him. To be condescending and humble is to be God-like. In God’s kingdom, the law of self-renouncing love is the law of life. This love is self-sacrificing, self-denying, self-forgotten.

Calvary is much more than dying for us. Calvary is seeing God made manifest as a human in the fullness of His glory and love. There our God was doing for men what they cannot do for themselves. There you see the righteousness of God demonstrated right before your eyes in the magnificent glory of His character, radiating out to us. He does more than make up for the past where we failed. Calvary is the transforming power, for the power of His love comes down and changes our hearts. **“We love him, because he first loved us.”** 1 John 4:19. And as day by day as I come to Calvary and kneel there, it is doing something for me. It is more than one act of justification at the beginning of my Christian experience.

Every day of my life His love is manifested in Calvary, and that has a molding influence. It is a power for good, a power of righteousness; and as I kneel there, the Potter still is working and the clay is still being molded until my heart is melted and the clay is softened, and you behold Christ in me.

Friend, we must never minimize Calvary. There was a good reason why Ellen White wrote that we ought to spend a thoughtful hour each day beholding those scenes, for only there do I truly comprehend the magnificence, the grandeur, the magnitude of the love of God for me. By one man’s disobedience many were made sinners. But where sin abounded...grace did much more abound.

Will you receive Him as your Savior from all sin? Will you make Him the Ruler of your whole life? Will you say as did Thomas, “My Lord and my God. Rule me, dominate me, use me, mold me, make me righteous.” This is the magnificence of the plan of salvation—Christ our righteousness. May God help us to know and understand and receive what Jesus has done for us in what the Bible calls the one act of perfect righteousness.

~Pastor Bill Lehman (condensed from **Christ Our**



# BUT WHAT CAN I DO?

One problem area in justification by faith is that of man's capabilities. Will striving, self-discipline and strenuous effort produce a righteous life that God can accept and approve?

So often we judge ourselves by what other people are like, and if we are doing a little better than they, then everything must be all right. Our real concern should be: What does God think? I want to survey several people in the Bible to give you some understanding of what we are like and how the Lord deals with us.

Among the most righteous people of Christ's day, at least as regarded by the general public, were the members of the Sanhedrin. *"There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: the same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that Thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that Thou doest, except God be with Him."* John 3:1-2. Either Christ did not hear him, or did not wish to hear him, because he steered Nicodemus in a different direction. Jesus responds: *"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."* This was a surprise to a man who seemed to be able to do so many things.

*"Nicodemus had heard the preaching of John the Baptist concerning repentance and baptism. Yet the heart-searching message... had failed to work in him conviction of sin. He was a strict Pharisee, and prided himself on his good works. He was widely esteemed for his benevolence and his liberality in sustaining the temple service, and he felt secure of the favor of God."* DA 171.

The response of Jesus seemed to irritate Nicodemus. "He was startled at the thought of a kingdom too pure for him to see in his present state." His questions such as, "How can a man be born when he is old?" shows how flabbergasted this intellectual man was. The Lord startled him on purpose, for he wanted this man to see something that he could not see in his present condition. Jesus told Nicodemus that he would not make it unless he was born again.

Another man who appeared very righteous was Isaiah. He felt approved of God until he saw the purity of the Lord high and lifted up in the temple. *"As the prophet Isaiah beheld the glory of the Lord, he was amazed and overwhelmed with a sense of his own weakness and unworthiness; and he cried, 'Woe is me!' Isaiah had denounced the sin of others; but now he sees himself exposed to the same condemnation he had pronounced upon them."* FLB 190

Moses, who seemed to have such an excellent beginning, thought that he was qualified to deliver God's people, and that it was a righteous act to go out and start killing Egyptians. When he found out he had been discovered, he became frightened and fled for his life. Then Moses, who seemed to be so righteous, spent forty long years herding sheep in the wilderness.

Moses realized that he could not use the techniques of a general when tending after sheep. He realized he could not afford to kill too many sheep. It took forty years for Moses to learn God's way to deal with people.

Another great man in Israel, at least at the beginning, was Saul. *"God gave him another heart."* 1 Samuel 10:6, 9. He became a

converted person. *"And Samuel said to all the people, See ye him whom the Lord hath chosen, that there is none like him among all the people? And all the people shouted, and said, God save the king."* Verses 22-24. Saul was at one time a born-again believer. Yet this is the man who for all those years tried to kill David because he was jealous of him.

For awhile, Saul was a prophet. *"And... behold, a company of prophets met him; and the Spirit of God came upon him, and he [king Saul] prophesied among them."* 1 Samuel 10:10. This must be put in context with the last acts in his life when he went to the witch of Endor, to find out what God would tell him to do. The man who with his own eyes had seen the visions and heard the voice of God as a prophet went to the devil's spokesman to ask what God wanted him to do. What was there in Saul's heart—that new heart—that could cause him to do these things?

Israel's greatest king was David, whom God called *"a man after Mine*

*own heart."* Acts 13:22. Surely David must have been a righteous man, yet lurking inside of him was the potential to commit adultery with Bathsheba, and then plan to have her husband murdered to cover up his own sin. There was no one who thought that David could do things like that. Later he wrote, *"Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me."* Psalms 51:10.

Similar situations may be found in the disciples of Jesus. Imagine seeing and eating and walking with Jesus day after day for years. You find out some things about James

and John when their mother went to see Jesus. *"Then came to Him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons... She saith unto Him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on Thy right hand, and the other on the left, in Thy kingdom. But Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They say unto Him, 'We are able.'" Matthew 20:20-22. Tell us what to do and we will jump. How foolish they were. They did not understand their own hearts. They did not understand the trials that were about to come upon them, or they would never have said they were able.*

Some of us identify with Peter because he was so much like us. *"And Jesus saith unto them, All ye shall be offended because of Me this night: for it is written, I will smite the Shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered... But Peter said unto Him, Although all shall be offended, yet will not I. And Jesus saith unto him... Even in this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny Me thrice. But he [Peter] spake the more vehemently, If I should die with Thee, I will not deny Thee."* Mark 14:27-31.

How could Peter say this so strongly? *"When Peter said he would follow his Lord to prison and to death, he meant it, every word of it; but he did not know himself... The Savior saw in him a self-love and assurance that would overbear even his love for Christ."* DA 673.

These days we teach people you must have self-love. Christ said that was Peter's most dangerous, vulnerable point. We talk about self-worth, self-achievement, pride, and self esteem. This was  
21 Peter's hang-up. *"Peter felt that he was distrusted, and he thought it*



cruel. He was already offended, and he became more persistent in his self-confidence." Sometimes the best help the Lord gives us entrenches us as we seek to defend ourselves, our pride of opinion, and our justification of self.

The Lord said, "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 18:3. The little child is always saying, "Mommy, I can't do it. Show me how." Some sense their terrible inability and do not even want to try; while others always say they are able. Those close to them know all about their hypocrisy and phoniness, and how they are different at church than at home. They listen to them pray at church but know that they almost never pray at home. There are many things in our characters that are understood very well by our children and spouses.

The Lord, in His divine grace, tries not to expose our hypocrisy to other people, but rather tries to reveal to our innermost soul the corruption that is there and the changes He would like to make on our behalf. The question is: Will we let Him? We have such pride. and some of us will never learn, not because the Lord does not love us, not because He has not tried repeatedly, for He never gives up. We take it as extreme criticism when people begin to discuss with us very kindly about what's inside us that protrudes to the outside for everyone around us to see. One of the marks of a healthy Christian is an honesty with self.

You know that the Lord knew all these things about us before He died for us; yet He still died for us. It does not matter how bad you are; there is nothing in your life so horrible that it is going to cause you to be lost, if you let Him take care of it. We need to know the truth about ourselves, and then we will not think ourselves so righteous. And this will be a great blessing to us when that happens.

Watch how in Sabbath school classes or during Bible studies people will try to prove the other fellow wrong. We want to advertise that we are right, and that we have a greater Bible knowledge than anybody else in the class. Then we wonder why others don't like us and come to our churches. But I showed them the truth! Yes, but how did you show them? By every time proving they were wrong. And then we think we love our brother as Jesus loved us.

"But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away." Isaiah 64:6. I have always believed this to be true for others haven't you? But I did not believe it for me.

"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" Jeremiah 17:9. When I get into problems with several different people, I never realize that something may be wrong with me! The Lord is constantly trying to bring us to a realization of what we are like inside. But we are frightened that something terrible is going to happen to us if something is found wrong with us.

Paul, while trying to kill off the Christian church, thought he was serving God. What greater deception could there be? Later, he said, "I am the chief of sinners." 1 Timothy 1:15. Paul was utterly amazed that God would use him after all the terrible things he did in persecuting the church. He knew from experience that "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." Romans 5:20.

Remember this important definition: "What is justification by faith? It is the work of God in laying the glory of man in the dust, and doing for man that which it is not in his power to do for himself." TM 456. This can be a humiliating experience. But "nothing is apparently more helpless, yet really more invincible, than the soul that feels its nothingness and relies wholly on the merits of the Saviour. God would send every angel in heaven to the aid of such an one, rather than allow him to be overcome." TT 17. He would empty heaven just for one person who senses his own nothingness.

"And there shall ye remember your ways, and all your doings..."

and ye shall lothe yourselves in your own sight for all your evils that ye have committed." Ezekiel 20:43. Someday, all of us will have a revelation of self. The Lord does not want to put our weaknesses and sins on display. That is not His way. He has a tender, loving, compassionate way. He is more long suffering than we can imagine. He understands us, because He became human. He knows how defensive we can be; but He knows we must see ourselves before we really want Him. Some think they are too good to need Him. And some think they are too bad to ever have Him.

This problem is more severe in the church today than it has ever been. As older members see how young people are lacking, they become even more critical. The young retaliate by criticizing the older ones. Somehow a strong emphasis on legalism—that you must do this or you are not accepted—has permeated our churches, our homes, and our schools for many years. We have lacked the knowledge of Christ and His righteousness and saving grace. How do you perform without Jesus? The strong-willed can at least give an external appearance of righteousness; but there are many weak-willed among us and they cannot. The strong-willed just polish the outside; but don't step on their toes because they bite. They are still the same on the inside.

As you see in your life these many failures, you become more and more discouraged and you want to quit. Why would anyone want to be condemned all the time? No one does! You retaliate by finding fault with those who find fault.

We find young people justifying their sins to protect themselves (and this is a defense measure, by the way). Then the older ones say, "Horrors! They are not only doing what is wrong but they justify what is wrong." Then they become even more extreme in their legalistic criticism. So old and young part ways, both believing themselves to be right, and neither one believing that there is anything wrong with self. You cannot tell people that there is anything wrong with them, because they have been told that so many times that they would like to punch you in the nose. Therefore, we don't talk about sin anymore. We have other names for it. And to protect ourselves and to find some hope, we join groups where they tell each other how good they are and where they emphasize self-love and self-achievement. And the devil laughs and laughs when we all say we are right.

How can the Lord tell us that He wants to bless us and that He has tremendous righteousness to give us as a free gift? He wants to take care of all the deficiencies, all the weakness, all the inadequacies, all the ineffectiveness. But not until you acknowledge your need and your nothingness will you ever depend upon Him.

God has a still, small voice. He is very careful that He does not crush out the only spark of hope we have, as He points out our deficiencies. He is literally asking, "Why will you die in your sins, when I can take them away and make you like Jesus?" He wants to show us our sham, our phoniness, our corruptions, how we have misled people. He wants us to turn to Him and depend on Him for the strength and the righteousness we do not have in self.

Forget the voices of many humans who find fault and who excuse and justify self. We are accountable for one voice: the voice of God's Spirit. He is speaking to us as He did to Nicodemus, telling us we must be born again...He wants you to give Him your heart, to trust Him, and to lean on Him. It doesn't matter how useless you think you are, He can make you mighty. He can bless you and even make you like Jesus.

May the Lord by His sweet grace somehow penetrate into our hearts and minds and take away all this defensiveness, all this self-justification; and may we see what Christ is really trying to do for us.

~Pastor Bill Lehman (condensed from **Christ Our Righteousness**, chapter 10)



# RIGHTEOUS—BY TRYING OR BUYING?

Many Christians believe that righteousness is a state or condition to be attained to, or a goal to be achieved by diligent effort. Most of the time we are looking at ourselves for personal victory over sin to give us some evidence as to whether we are climbing the ladder to that condition or status we are seeking.

Jesus gave this marvelously simple parable: **“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.”** Matthew 13:45, 46. You may want to know what that has to do with righteousness.

The inspired commentary teaches that “Christ Himself is the pearl of great price.” COL 115. **“The righteousness of Christ as a pure, white pearl has no defect, no stain, no guilt. This righteousness may be ours.”** 1 SM 399. **“We receive righteousness by receiving Him.”** MB 18. It is all wrapped up in one package—the Person we call Christ.

How did the merchantman obtain the pearl (or the righteousness)? He bought it. That is the way you get hold of righteousness. It is not something you attain to or something you produce.

**“I counsel thee to buy of Me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed.”** Revelation 3:18. What is the white raiment? **“The white raiment He invites the soul to wear is His own robe of righteousness.”** COR 113. Jesus says, “Come to Me and buy righteousness.”

The Spirit of Prophecy presents this same concept with a variety of terminology. **“Grasp by faith the righteousness of Christ.”** 1 SM 395....**“lay hold on the merits of Christ.”** 1 SM 364. **“Genuine faith appropriates the righteousness of Christ, and the sinner is made an overcomer with Christ.”** 1 SM 364. In all these quotations, we obtain righteousness. We grasp it. We lay hold of it. We claim it. We appropriate it. None of those give the idea that it is something I climb to reach; not something I produce but something I take from another for myself.

We need to spend a lot of time thinking about this because it will run out of our brains so fast it is worse than trying to hold on to mercury. And we will go right back trying to attain, or produce, when the Lord is trying to teach us different thoughts. You have to spend time saturating yourself with these concepts or they will quickly leave you.

**“Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.”** Isaiah 55:1. The Bible and Spirit of Prophecy are filled with seeming

contradictions that make you think, such as: **“Salvation is a free gift, and yet it is to be bought and sold... We are to give ourselves to Christ, to live a life of willing obedience to all His requirements. All that we are, all the talents and capabilities we possess, are the Lord’s, to be consecrated to His service. When we thus give ourselves wholly to Him, Christ, with all the treasures of heaven, gives Himself to us. We obtain the pearl of great price.”** COL 116,117.

The Bible asks, **“Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one.”** Job 14:4. And it also says we are all as an unclean thing. Is. 64:6. Therefore, you cannot get clean things out of unclean things. We cannot produce righteousness of ourselves. We insist, and He says that is okay; you may have your choice, but you cannot produce righteousness. The Bible teaches that only God is righteous; and, I must buy that righteousness at the price of giving myself to Him.

This concept of giving oneself bothers people today. You ask, “Why would anyone give themselves to someone else? I don’t understand this.” Ladies, why did you give yourselves to your husbands? Only because you love them. There is no other reason why. And we love Him because He first loved us.

You need to understand more about these connoisseurs of pearls (Matt. 13:46) or you will miss something in this parable. I was stationed in India during World War II in Bangladesh. This is the major city in the world for pink pearls. Those fellows would spend days and weeks with their little magnifying glasses, just looking over all the pearls. The man in the parable found one pearl of great price. What did he do? He sold everything he owned and bought it. He walked away with that pearl knowing in his heart that giving up all he had was worth it. Some people might think he had lost his mind. But he knew what he was getting, and that was all he wanted.

**“We cannot earn salvation, but we are to seek for it with as much interest and perseverance as though we would abandon everything in the world for it... the price we are required to pay is not gold or silver... God calls for your willing obedience. He asks you to give up your sins.”** COL 117. If this disturbs you, then read on; for now we come to the next logical question: suppose I do not like pearls? Suppose they are not precious to me? Is that possible? Yes. **“It is the Holy Spirit that reveals to men the preciousness of the goodly pearl.”** COL 118.

**“In Christ’s day many heard the gospel, but their minds were darkened by false teaching, and they did not recognize in the humble Teacher of Galilee the Sent of God.**



**But after Christ's ascension... on the day of Pentecost the Spirit was given. Christ's witnesses proclaimed the power of the risen Saviour. The light of heaven penetrated the darkened minds of those who had been deceived by the enemies of Christ. They now saw Him exalted to be 'a Prince and a Saviour...to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.' (Acts 5:31). They saw Him encircled with the glory of heaven, with infinite treasures in His hands to bestow upon all who would turn from their rebellion...Three thousand souls were... made to see themselves as they were, sinful and polluted, and Christ as their friend and Redeemer... the One who had borne humiliation, suffering, and death that they might not perish but have everlasting life... The Spirit of Christ animated the whole congregation; for they had found the pearl of great price."** COL 118. Why have some not yet found Him? The answer is stated right there on page 121: **"The Spirit awaits our demand and reception."**

I have heard hundreds of Christians asking the same question as the rich young ruler: "What lack I yet?" We go around from this camp meeting to that camp meeting, listening to one speaker after another. Why do we not seek the One who can supply all our needs according to His riches in glory? Why do we not beseech Him to open the windows of heaven and pour us out the blessing? When we do this, our own families, our neighbors, our friends, and all whose minds have been darkened by false teachings will be enlightened when the Spirit of truth comes down to convict. In the days of the apostles, He touched so many that three thousand were convicted in one day.

**"When men see their own nothingness, they are prepared to be clothed with the righteousness of Christ."** COR 104. There is a trade, or exchange, to be made. By seeing His goodness in comparison to yourself, you begin to see yourselves as you really are, and then you begin to desire to be like Him; and He tells you that you may have His righteousness if you will make the trade.

**"There are some who seem to be always seeking for the heavenly pearl. But they do not make an entire surrender of their wrong habits. They do not die to self that Christ may live in them... They do not take up the cross and follow Christ in the path of self-denial and sacrifice."** COL 118.

Many people with preconceived opinions misunderstand everything in this quote. They think they must become perfect and overcome all their sins before they can have His righteousness. No, it does not say that. It says that God wants you. He bought you with a price, the precious blood of Jesus. Do you love Him so much that you want to be His? If you will be His, He will give Himself to you with all He has. And when you give yourself to Him to love, honor, obey, and cherish, you will forget those things that have alienated you from God.

A couple separated because he had some very bad habits. He stopped working, but would come home often enough to get her money to sustain his bad habits. After a long while, she said, "I don't like that. I want you to leave and not come back." He said, "But I want to stay." She said, "You only want to stay for my money; but you don't want to stay because you love me. You want to hang around because you love those habits; and I don't want to work all my life taking care

of your bad habits. I would be glad to have you back, and I love you, but leave your habits some other place."

Of course, the problem is that we cannot overcome our sins, but we can give ourselves to Him. God is not asking us to overcome in the way we usually think about it. Our sins seem valuable to us and we cherish them; but when you begin to compare them with the Pearl of great price...it is like seeing a new, beautiful car next to yours and you say, "Hey, that old heap should be in the junkyard." That is the way it is with all these sins. God is not telling us how bad we are. He is asking us if we want something better.

In our love affair with Christ, we have become spiritual "swingers." At a certain time of day we want to be intimate with our Lord, but later in the day, we say, "I want to go now to my other lover—the world—and just have a little bit of spiritual adultery... So we keep two or three other lovers around—those cherished sins we cling to. And we wonder why we do not have Him and His righteousness.

Those who cheat on their spouse sense a coldness and remoteness when they return home. Somehow there is not that warmth they once felt. The conversations kind of fizzle and there is not much to talk about. This is exactly why the Bible and church become so dull to us. Our affections are elsewhere. We become lukewarm lovers.

Friend, the Lord has paid a precious price for us; and Jesus was the most valuable thing that heaven had. If God could have found something or someone more valuable than Christ, He would have given it to us. He is asking us if we appreciate truly valuable things.

I have met those with great wealth who told me that because of all the

fears and pressures and worries they had with wealth, it wasn't worth it. I have met those who worked a lifetime for a certain job or profession, and they would come to me and say, "Pastor, I'm bored stiff. What do I do? The Lord allows us to go along until we find the end result of those things we count so precious. He allows us to pursue them until we have lost our health, or our family, or until our children can no longer stand us because we have no interest in them. The Lord then asks tenderly, "Are you happy?" And after a while, you answer, "Not really."

The parable of Jesus says there is only one Pearl of great price. ...He says, "Give me what I purchased. Love Me because I first loved you. Be Mine because I have given Myself for you. Give Me your sins because I want to take them all away. Don't overcome by trying. Overcome by dying. Make Me the King of your life."

There is no other way. There is just one Pearl of great price, and the Bible calls Him One altogether lovely, the Lily of the Valley, the Desire of all nations, the bright and morning Star, the Pearl of great price. What do you count more valuable than Christ? What are you trying to hold on to? What are you seeking to achieve rather than Jesus? May God help us to see how valueless our cherished sins are and to understand how precious is Jesus who has been waiting to bestow on every one of us His marvelous righteousness. When we see Him, everything else grows dim in the light of His glory and grace.

~Pastor Bill Lehman (condensed from **Christ Our**

**24 Righteousness, chapter 11)**





# FAITH, WORKS, AND RIGHTEOUSNESS

The greatest problem we have concerning Christ and His righteousness, and the one most likely misunderstood, concerns the part of man's works in his righteousness and salvation. Almost everyone has some reservation concerning what Christ does for us. Many want to cling to the idea that their works, at least to some degree, qualify them to be righteous.

For example, Paul emphasizes that *"Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin."* Heb. 12:4. *"And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible."* 1 Cor. 9:25. The word translated here as "striveth" means to fight. We are to *"Fight the good fight of faith."* 1 Tim. 6:12. This is the aspect we want to study here.

This is a difficult subject because every time you seek to define or describe the works of man in the struggle against sin, you always come very close to the works of God. In fact, the two are so intertwined that what the Bible says about the works of man always talks about the working of God.

*"Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure."* Phil. 2:12,13. You cannot separate the two thoughts. Here is another one: *"Whereunto I also labour, striving according to His working, which worketh in me mightily."* Col. 1:29. I work, He works, and He works in me. Jesus said that *"without Me ye can do nothing."* John 15:5.

Nearly all the texts about man's works in regard to victory over sin say essentially, *"If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me."* Matthew 16:24.

*"The warfare against self is the greatest battle that was ever fought. The yielding of self, surrendering all to the will of God, requires a struggle; but the soul must submit to God before it can be renewed in holiness."* SC 43. Surrendering all to God is our work, but do you see where God's work comes into the picture? His work is in the renewing of man in holiness. The greatest war we must fight is not with Satan or other people, it is the submitting of the will to God.

This experience is well illustrated in the encounter that the rich young ruler had with Jesus; and we read it so casually sometimes that we miss the struggle. *"Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?"* Matthew 19:16. Jesus told him he must keep the commandments, to which the young man replied, *"All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?"* [Then] *Jesus said, "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow Me. But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions. Then said Jesus unto His disciples... It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God."* v. 19-24.

This man desired to follow Jesus, and he desired to be saved. In sincerity, he said he had kept all the commandments, but

apparently he did not understand the spirit of them. So Christ told him what to do; but he would not go that far. Could he have done what Jesus told him to do? Christ was not exaggerating when He talked about the difficulty of the rich entering the kingdom... There is no security in wealth, but we all think there is. We may think we have more than enough to live, but we do not act that way when someone tries to take it away from us.

You can see the same battle in the experience of the prodigal son. *"A certain man had two sons: And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him. And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants."* Luke 15:11-19.

This man was on an ego trip that would never end. It was self, running wild with riotous living. Just spend, spend, spend. Doing your own thing, we call it. Spending what we have, and what we can borrow; but please don't deny self. How could that young man

go so long and far in his selfishness? He reached the point where he would have gladly eaten the husks with the pigs. To a Jew, this was the lowest you could go.

Everyone says, "I want to do it. I want to achieve. Let me show you I can do it." We are everlastingly trying to show God we can do it in righteousness. We are not willing to admit that we are that much of a failure. Yet we keep saying, "I am doing pretty well. Just give me time and I will show you."

The fellow in the parable decided to go home. Would you like to have gone home as he did: a total failure. in dirty clothes, hungry and with no place to stay? Most would prefer to wait until they are a success, and then go home and say, "Look what I have done".

We like to pat ourselves on the back and think that things are better than they are. Jesus described this in what some would call extreme terms. *"And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee... And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell."* Matt. 5:29,30. I used to visit a man who had very serious diabetes.

25 To save his life, they first cut off a toe, then a foot, then the leg,



then fingers, and finally a hand.

*"Often it seems to us that to surrender the will to God is to consent to go through life maimed or crippled, but...that which you look upon as disaster is the door to highest benefit... Whatever shall draw away the heart from God must be given up: ...the love of money, the desire for wealth, ...reputation and worldly honor, ...the life of selfish ease and freedom from responsibility... We are not God's children unless we are such entirely."* SC 44.

You say, "But it is not true! I do not love those things. They are not my idols." Well, if it is not so great to you, it should be easy to give it up; but that is an indication of how important they are to us.

*"In the work of redemption there is no compulsion. No external force is employed. Under the influence of the Spirit of God, man is left free to choose whom he will serve. In the change that takes place when the soul surrenders to Christ, there is the highest sense of freedom. The expulsion of sin is the act of the soul itself [and too many of us stop there, which only talks about the works of man]. True, we have no power to free ourselves from Satan's control; but when we desire to be set free from sin, and in our great need cry out for a power out of and above ourselves, the powers of the soul are imbued with the divine energy of the Holy Spirit, and they obey the dictates of the will in fulfilling the will of God."* DA 466. Do you see the seeming contradiction? Sin is expelled by an act of the soul [which is our work], but we have no power to free ourselves from Satan's control. To resolve this, we must also bring in the work of God, which is to imbue us with divine energy so that we will obey the dictates of our will in fulfilling the will of God.

How much did we do in all this? I chose, I desired, I called, I received. But even the initial desire came from God.

*"It is not only at the beginning of the Christian life that this renunciation of self is to be made. At every advance step heavenward it is to be renewed. All our good works are dependent on a power outside of ourselves."* COL 159,160.

*"They must maintain a constant battle with self."* GW 135.

*"Sanctification is not the work of a moment, an hour, a day, but of a lifetime... So long as Satan reigns, we shall have self to subdue, besetting sins to overcome; so long as life shall last, there will be no stopping place, no point which we can reach and say, I have fully attained..."* AA 560.

Our concepts of this have caused us much difficulty, and much guilt and condemnation. Many people think that statements like this make it utterly impossible for them. Stop and look from a different perspective, and see what the Lord is really saying. God is talking about the battles that must be waged and how He will bless us in this.

*"The life of the apostle Paul was a constant conflict with self. He said, 'I die daily.' 1 Cor. 15:31. His will and his desires every day conflicted with duty and the will of God... Instead of following inclinations, he did God's will, however crucifying to his nature... The Christian life is a battle and a march. In this warfare there is no release; the effort must be continuous and persevering. It is by unceasing endeavor that we maintain the victory over the temptations of Satan... All must engage in this warfare for themselves; no one else can fight our battles."* MH 453

Many people misread this. Remember I told you we never talk about man's work without running into what God does for us. Paul was saying that every day he found his own perverse will fighting against that of God, and he had to die in order for Christ to live in Him. *"For me to live is Christ."* Phil. 1:21. The trouble is we assume that after conversion... that self is dead once and for all. That is not true. Self will try to rise up as long as we live; and every day it must be put down. I must choose Christ every day, every hour, and every moment... My difficulties are not just some remaining sins in my life. My difficulty is that self is not dead! It is not so much

that I have to pray and ask God to take care of my temper, and then think I will be in pretty good condition. It is asking the Lord to create in me a clean heart and renew a right spirit in me because I am still violently selfish—all the time!

Some people have no wars...they wonder why other people have so many struggles in life. *"[Many] interpret the will of God to be just what they will to do. While following their own desires, they flatter themselves that they are conforming to God's will. These have no conflicts with self... They are sincere and earnest, but grow weary of protracted effort, of daily death, of ceaseless turmoil. Indolence seems inviting, death to self repulsive; and they close their drowsy eyes and fall under the power of temptation instead of resisting it."* AA 565. But the Lord said, *"He that endureth to the end shall be saved."* Matthew 10:22.

When you have time, go study the life of Reuben, one of the sons of Jacob, and try to figure out how he could possibly be a symbol of one of the tribes that make up the one hundred and forty-four thousand. His father said he was as unstable as water and that he would never excel. We have all seen people like him. They go to church for a few weeks, then give up and not go back for six months. Reuben was just like that; but he never ceased coming back. I have known persons who had fallen deeply into sin and emotional problems, the most severe you can find, but they never ceased coming back to God for help. They would sneak in and sit on the back pew and never talk to anyone, but they came back. And the Lord eventually gave them victory, because they never ceased coming back.

When you maintain the war, the Lord is always there to bless. When you give up the battle, the devil is always there to conquer. We are counseled to *"be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armour of God."* Eph. 6:10. In His strength, fight the fight and wage the war.

If it gets tough sometimes, memorize and use this Bible promise: *"Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness... For I the Lord thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not; I will help thee."* Isaiah 41:10,13. God will never let us go! We should believe this with all our heart and say, "Praise God, this is wonderful!" How can you ever fail?

*"When Christ took human nature upon Him, He bound humanity to Himself by a tie of love that can never be broken by any power save the choice of man himself."* SC 72 *"Satan will constantly present allurements to induce us to break this tie—to choose to separate ourselves from Christ. Here is where we need to watch, to strive, to pray, that nothing may entice us to choose another master; for we are always free to do this."* (ibid)

It is a little frightening to realize that every morning when we awaken, we can have any master we choose that day. The Lord allows this by His great love. *"But let us keep our eyes fixed upon Christ, and He will preserve us. Looking unto Jesus, we are safe. Nothing can pluck us out of His hand. In constantly beholding Him, we 'are changed unto the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.' 2 Cor. 3:18."* (ibid).

There is something we can do. It isn't much, but it is tremendous in its consequences. The Lord never goes to sleep, and as you wake up, He is waiting to see what your choice is. Whom will you serve today? Whom will you choose to be your master?

At this very moment, He moves upon our hearts with tremendous love, and He asks, "Will you not gladly choose Me because you want to?" There is no other Master as wonderful as He. Is this your choice? Tell Him so, even now.

~Pastor Bill Lehman (condensed from **Christ Our**



# BLESSED ASSURANCE

Our theme for this study begins with a short Bible text that has one term we wish to examine: **"By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament."** Hebrews 7:22. This word surety is an old fashioned term almost never used anymore in these modern days, and it describes some of the various aspects of Christ's work. Because it is so seldom used, we read it and pass over it lightly and barely comprehend what it means.

What does it mean that Christ is our surety? Who or what is a surety? A surety stands good for someone who has an obligation or a debt of some kind. If you do not have a credit rating to get a certain loan and you must have it, you get someone to countersign for you. They make themselves liable and responsible if you do not pay.

The second way it is commonly used today is when you guarantee performance by another. A bondsman guarantees that you will appear in court, or otherwise he loses the amount of money he has put down. So he is guaranteeing a certain performance.

Whenever the president of a country, or a governor, or a judge releases someone from prison, that official is literally guaranteeing the future performance of that person who is released. He believes his behavior will be good from that point on. In order for a person to be a surety, he must be of upright and noble reputation, one who can be trusted. So first of all he must establish his reputation. This is exactly what Christ did when He became human and walked this earth as a human being and lived a flawless life, He was establishing His position as a surety. .

**"For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."** Hebrews 4:15.

**"And being made perfect, He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him."** Hebrews 5:8, 9.

**"For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens."** Hebrews 7:26. Is he qualified? Jesus said, **"The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me."** John 14:30. He said Satan cannot dispute about His reputation or His qualifications to be a surety.

**"All who... feel that they have nothing good in themselves, may find righteousness and strength by looking unto Jesus. We are not worthy of God's love, but Christ, our surety, is worthy. He presents us to the Father clothed in the white raiment of His own character. He pleads before God in our behalf, saying: I have taken the sinner's place. Look not upon this wayward child, but look on Me."** MB 8,9.

Sometimes when we pray, especially when we have great guilt, we get the idea God is up there with His spy glasses looking at all our flaws, and then we feel worse than ever and wonder what to do. All of this is a lack of knowledge of Christ as our surety. Jesus is worthy and sufficiently qualified to be surety for every human being. He lived that perfect life...

The second activity of a surety, after he is qualified, is that he must pay our debts if we cannot. Romans 6:23 tells us, **"The wages of sin is death."** According to Rom. 5:12, all have sinned, all are guilty, and all have come under the condemnation of death. Since we are transgressors of the law, the law demands our lives, but this we cannot afford to pay.

**"The human family are in trouble because of their transgression of the Father's law. But... the only-begotten Son of God has died that we might live. The Lord has accepted this sacrifice in our behalf, as our substitute and surety."** 1 SM 215.

**"He was counted a transgressor, that He might redeem us from the condemnation of the law. The guilt of every descendant of Adam was pressing upon His heart."** DA 753. Jesus said, **"Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life, that I might take it again."** John 1:17.

**"In becoming your Substitute and Surety, by surrendering My life, by taking your liabilities, your transgressions, I am endeared to My Father; for by My sacrifice, God can be just, and yet the Justifier of him who believeth in Jesus."** SC 14.

**"Because of transgression of the law of God, Christ became our sin-bearer... Himself taking the punishment, though all undeserving, that we who deserved it might be free."** FE 370. .

In order to be saved, in order to be accepted by God, we must be righteous. **"Can an Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye do good, that are accustomed to do evil?"** Jeremiah 13:23. Since we cannot make ourselves righteous and perform to this requirement of the law, we must have someone who is able, someone who is a surety.

**"Christ has pledged Himself to be our substitute and surety, and He neglects no one... As the sinner's sincere, humble prayers ascend to the throne of God, Christ mingles with them the merits of His own life of perfect obedience. Our prayers are made fragrant by this incense. Christ has pledged Himself to intercede in our behalf, and the Father always hears the Son."** SD 22.

It is not enough to tell God we are sorry for sinning and to ask forgiveness, and then to think everything is okay. I must come through the obedience of the Surety and never in my



own power. As I come through His righteousness, the Father always hears Him. Always! He intercedes for every sinner. He is substitute and surety for everyone. Our goodness or lack of it has neither closed nor opened heaven for us. It is Christ who has opened heaven by His righteousness. He ascended to heaven, and He is there interceding for us. We need to learn how to pray in Jesus' name, how to come to God through the Surety. This is where our help is.

***"The law demands righteousness, and this the sinner owes to the law; but he is incapable of rendering it. The only way in which he can attain to righteousness is through faith. By faith he 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."*** 1 SM 367.

The next step in order to accomplish this work of a surety is that the one who is in debt must choose the surety and believe in that person. This is not just something that is done for me that I never need to know about. ***"Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe."*** Romans 3:22. ***"The Lord has accepted this sacrifice in our behalf, as our substitute and surety, on the condition that we receive Christ and believe on Him. The sinner must come in faith to Christ, take hold of His merits, lay his sins upon the Sin Bearer, and receive His pardon. It was for this cause that Christ came into the world. Thus the righteousness of Christ is imputed to the repenting, believing sinner. He becomes a member of the royal family, a child of the heavenly King, an heir of God, and joint heir with Christ."*** 1 SM 215.

Through His righteousness and His obedience, we are restored to favor with God. He declares us righteous because of our faith in His righteousness. We receive power from God— in other words, divinity and humanity are combined—and I can do all things through Christ. Amazing things happen when a new power comes to live with me.

Come boldly unto the throne of grace. Have no fear, the door is wide open. He is worthy and He leads me in. What a marvelous thing it is to walk in with Jesus. All is dependent on your identifying with Jesus and your relationship to Him.

***"The way of salvation is provided; for the spotless Lamb of God is revealed as the One who taketh away the sin of the world. Jesus stands in the sinner's place, and takes the guilt of the transgressor upon Himself. Looking upon the sinner's Substitute and Surety, the Lord Jehovah can be just, and yet be the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. To him who accepts Christ as his righteousness, as his only hope, pardon is pronounced... Jesus says, 'Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.' ...By His transforming grace [Christ] makes him capable of associating with angels and communing with God."*** SD 239.

***"What a value this places upon man! Through transgression, the sons of man become subjects of Satan. Through faith in the atoning sacrifice of Christ, the sons of Adam may become the sons of God. By assuming human nature, Christ elevates humanity. Fallen men are placed where, through connection with Christ, they may indeed become worthy of the name 'sons of God.'"*** SC 15.

***"Through the atoning blood of Christ the sinner is set free from bondage and condemnation; through the perfection of the sinless Substitute and Surety, he may run in the race of humble obedience to all of God's commandments."*** 1 SM 330. He enables me and guarantees my future performance. **28**

If you have ever pledged yourself as surety for another person, you know that the person will love you dearly if you bail him out. When you understand what Jesus has done for you, you love Him and believe in His goodness...and then you begin to respond to Him. Jesus said, ***"If ye love Me, keep My commandments."*** John 14:15. There is no other way we can keep His commandments.

By becoming surety for us, He brings about the love that is the fulfilling of the law. As you see the magnitude of His love more and more, your heart is softened and you exclaim, "I cannot help but love Him when He first loved me!" But we must go to Him, and trust Him. It is not what I do, but what He does in me.

***"Jesus is our Surety and Mediator, and has placed at our command every resource, that we may have a perfect character."*** 6 BC 1116. Concerning the message of righteousness by faith presented in 1888 through Waggoner and Jones, Ellen White wrote, ***"This message was to bring more prominently before the world the uplifted Saviour, the sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. It presented justification through faith in the Surety; it invited the people to receive the righteousness of Christ, which is made manifest in obedience to all the commandments of God."*** TM 91,92. There is no other way to obey. It is utterly impossible; we only discover over and over how weak we are. Some strong willed people might give a good outward appearance, but don't dig inside. We are all alike on the inside, aren't we? The Lord looks into the heart and not on the externals. of the strong willed person who thinks he is doing such a good job...

Friend, for years we have been...believing that God demanded us to do it of ourselves. Or we have prayed, "Lord, please help me," as though with just a little boost we could do it ourselves. That is a poor prayer. The Lord wants us to focus on the Surety, and place all your confidence in Him and not in yourself. As you trust Him and His obedience, your life will change.

Imagine that you go see the state Governor. You have never met him in your whole life, but you walk in the door with the Governor's brother. The Governor hardly looks at you but he looks at his brother. Then his brother says, "This is my friend. I would like you to meet him." And the Governor responds, "Oh, well, I am happy to have you here." Why is he happy? Because you are friends with his brother. And suddenly he is looking right at you, for now you are acceptable because of his brother. Isn't that the way God does it? We come to Him through the obedience of Christ, the perfect Surety. The Father looks at Him. The Father never sees me without the veil of the incense of Christ's obedience. Then He says, "I am happy to have you here as My sons and daughters, the brothers and sisters of My Son, Jesus Christ."

We must never leave out our Surety. There will never be a time when you can live without Him. When you walk the streets of gold and someone asks, "How did you get here?" everyone will say, "Because of the Surety", and we will never leave Him because He is so everlastingly good and precious. We will love Him with all our heart, and through the ages of eternity, we will everlastingly praise Him, the marvelous, wonderful One, who because of His goodness makes us acceptable even to God.

~Pastor Bill Lehman (condensed from **Christ Our Righteousness**, chapter 13)



# HE MUST INCREASE

Our subject for this chapter is probably the most difficult of all to understand. It is found in Revelation 3:17-19. It is the Laodicean message, part of the message of Christ our righteousness...

**"Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of Me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent... The Laodicean message has been sounding... Justification by faith and the righteousness of Christ are the themes to be presented to a perishing world."** 7 BC 964. Laodicea says they are rich and in

need of nothing. The True Witness, who is Christ according to Revelation 1:5, does not agree with their self-assessment. He counsels them to buy white raiment that they might be clothed, symbolic of the righteousness of Christ. This is not a message of criticism; it is a message of love and of great concern to those who are having difficulty with shame, which is closely connected to guilt.

**"What is the shame of this nakedness and poverty? It is the shame of clothing ourselves with self-righteousness, and of separating ourselves from God, when He has made ample provision for all to receive His blessing."** 7 BC 965.

Consider the experience of Adam and Eve. **"And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons."** Genesis 3:7. **"And he [Adam] said, I heard Thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself. And He said, Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldst not eat?... Unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them."** Verse 21.

**"This robe of light was a symbol of their spiritual garments of heavenly innocence. Had they remained true to God it would ever have continued to enshroud them. But when sin entered, they severed their connection with God, and the light that had encircled them departed.**

**Naked and ashamed, they tried to supply the place of the heavenly garments by sewing together fig leaves for a covering... This is what the transgressors of God's law have done ever since the day of Adam and Eve's disobedience... They have worn the garments of their own devising, by works of their own they have tried to cover their sins, and make themselves acceptable with God. But this they can never do. Nothing can man devise to supply the place of his lost robe of innocence... Only the covering which Christ Himself has provided can make us meet to appear in God's presence. This covering, the robe of His own righteousness, Christ will put upon every repenting, believing soul."** COL 311.

As you begin to understand what took place there in the Garden of Eden, you begin to see that man tries to provide what he cannot provide. **"When they listened to the voice of the tempter, and sinned against God, the light of**

**the garments of heavenly innocence departed from them; and they drew about them the dark robes of ignorance of God."** 1 BC 1084.

**"The clear and perfect light that had hitherto surrounded them had lightened everything they approached; but deprived of that heavenly light, the posterity of Adam could no longer trace the character of God in His created works."**

A unique darkness came when they sinned, and no longer

did they have those perceptive powers.

**"The fig-leaves represent the arguments used to cover disobedience."** 1 BC 1084. Do you ever justify your sins? Lord, I didn't mean to do that. I would not have sinned today if I had slept better last night, or if my wife had not become angry with me, or if our children had not been out of hand. We have hundreds of arguments, don't we?

Do you realize that perhaps the greatest evidence that we are still naked, that His robe of righteousness is not ours, is that we present arguments to cover our disobedience? We try to justify self and argue every invention we can think of trying to make ourselves look good, as though God has to be convinced, or as if we must twist His arm in order for Him to save us.

Is your God like that? Some people cannot even pray to the Father. They are afraid; and so they pray "Dear Jesus" as though the Father would chase them away.

Adam and Eve...made fig leaves and sewed them together for garments. But God provided coats of skins to clothe



them. Some people say you must have both fig leaves and skins of animals. Can that be? The Lord did not sew together fig leaves.

Jesus says we are to buy white raiment of Him. It is either our raiment or His; it is never both ours and His.

The sinner persists in arguing that we are saved by both faith and works, and they offer a gross misunderstanding of James to establish their self-deception. James merely presents a way to determine if your faith is genuine. If it is, it will produce good works. James still says you are saved by faith alone. Adam and Eve were producing a kind of robe by their works, and they thought they were covered. The Lord asked, "Why are you hiding if you are covered?"

Adam and Eve were still in darkness, still misunderstanding God, still ignorant of His character. **"It is the darkness of misapprehension of God that is enshrouding the world. Men are losing their knowledge of His character. It has been misunderstood and misinterpreted."** COL 415. Do you know we still do not know Him very well? There is a quick way to establish how well you know Him. When you have sinned the same sin you have committed many times, how quickly do you pray? You probably say to yourself, "He will not hear me if I pray. I have sinned too many times." So many young people think they have committed the unpardonable sin. All this is darkness concerning the knowledge of God. He is not like that! The God who sent His Son all the way from heaven to earth to live with us, to become human, does not leave because of our sins!

Some begin to understand that their own robe of righteousness is foolishness and ridiculous. As they suddenly see the light of the character of God and His beauty, and that He provides the robe of righteousness, they become ecstatic, elated, and thrilled as if finding a first love again. But others who have never come to that realization will stand off and say they cannot understand what is so exciting about Christ our righteousness.

Some people find a great light, as the Bible says. **"The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined."** Isaiah 9:2. The light of the knowledge of the glory of God, His true character, beams down upon them.

**"Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and His glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising."** Isaiah 60:1-3. The Gentiles—the heathen and the unbelievers—will come. Note that it did not say His people will come. They think they already have the light.

Isaiah chapter 58 talks about the good works that we are to do, which includes loosening the bands of wickedness, undoing heavy burdens, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and helping the poor. When you do these things **"then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noonday."** (ibid). When the sun comes up, things begin to grow and flourish.

When I lived in Canada I talked to a man who farms in Peace River, which is way up north where it never becomes dark in the months of June and July. He told me in June that he already had huge tomatoes growing. I asked him how he got such big tomatoes at that time of year; and he said it was because the sun shines all day and all night. When the light shines twenty-four hours a day, everything grows fast.

And so it is, when the light from the Lord begins to shine into our hearts.

The Bible refers to Christ's righteousness as white raiment, a wedding garment, and a pearl of great price without flaw. His righteousness is without spot or wrinkle. There is nothing more perfect than the righteousness of Christ.

What is my righteousness? It is **"filthy rags, all as an unclean thing."** Isaiah 64:6.

**"There is none righteous, no not one."** Romans 3:10.

**"Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?"** Job 14:4. Pride is a deceptive thing.

With justification there must come an innocence that all is right with God, a perfect peace where God has taken our burdens away, and where the mind is totally free. It is like being lifted up and walking on air. Is it any wonder some people get so excited? All is at peace, and Christ did promise us that peace. But we go on and on, wretched and miserable and trying to act like we have peace; and the True Witness asks, "Why are you wretched and miserable in your nakedness when I want to give you My robe of righteousness?"

Paul reasons: **"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy."** Titus 3:5.

**"And be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness..."** Phil. 3:9.

We must experience what John the Baptist experienced when he declared, **"He must increase, but I must decrease."** John 3:30.

Jesus commented upon this in the experience of restoring sight to the man born blind. **"For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind. And some of the Pharisees which were with Him heard these words, and said unto Him, Are we blind also? Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth."** John 9:39-41.

We have this same problem. We continue to tell the world that we have the light. We tell them that we see...because of our marvelous doctrines. Yes, but our truths can be perverted when not centered in Christ. He is the truth...The Jews held to a Christless law until He had to come and tell them that the law is to love God supremely and to love one another as He has loved us.

**"I have been shown the greatest reason why the people of God are now found in the state of spiritual blindness is that they will not receive correction."** 3T 254. Jesus says, **"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten."** Rev. 3:19. God wants to save us from the end of the road we are traveling. He says, "Please hear My voice and repent."

At the heart of everything in Christ our righteousness is repentance. And when that happens to you, God takes away all the shame, all the disgrace, all the uncleanness. Thy light has come. Come and be blessed.

Friend, the Lord has been waiting a long time. Over and over again we argue with God; we seek to justify self. And all the time the Lord says, "You don't have to live like that. Let Me give you light and and peace and innocence and joy."

We must accept what we are, and what He is, and embrace Him with all our hearts. And then our light will break forth as the morning and we will shout songs of praise and gladness and halleluiahs, and then the Lord Jesus will come.

~Pastor Bill Lehman (condensed from **Christ Our**



# WHAT IS SANCTIFICATION?

As we continue these studies on the various aspects of Christ our righteousness and justification by faith, we want to challenge your thinking and help us to better see the picture that God has given to us.

Perhaps the most common misunderstanding among Seventh-day Adventists is the concept that justification is what Jesus does for us, and sanctification is what we do for Him as the result of our justification.

This has become a galling, despairing, and hopeless subject to many people. To some it is their ticket to heaven because they are strong-willed; and because they can provide an external obedience, they feel rather comfortable in what they do. Others who might be weak feel they will never make it.

Is sanctification what we do for Him? Or is it what He does in us? Paul wrote: **"Christ Jesus... is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."** 1 Cor. 1:30. So sanctification is apparently something that He performs on our behalf. **"And be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith"** Phil. 3:9.

Many will recognize this famous quotation: **"The righteousness by which we are justified is imputed; the righteousness by which we are sanctified is imparted. The first is our title to heaven, the second is our fitness for heaven."** MYP 35. Both come from Jesus to us. **"Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."** Phil. 1:6. The One who started it will perform it to completion.

We often ask God for help, or a little push or shove of some kind. That is not what we are talking about. He has something I lack, and I must go to Him to receive it. This is the only way you can experience obedience.

When we are seeking sanctification, we mean we are seeking righteousness. What is righteousness in relation to sanctification? **"Obedience to the law is sanctification."** ST, May 19, 1890.

**"Sanctification is the doing of all the commandments of God."** ST, March 24, 1890. Right here is where we have trouble.

Sanctification, as we read, is obedience to the law; but what is the law? Most will answer that the law is the Ten Commandments. What are those commandments like? **"Jesus said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it,"** 31

**Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."** Matt.22:36-39.

Before you can understand anything about sanctification, you must look at the law through the eyes of Jesus. The Jews expanded the commandments to the place where they had figured out every possible "thou shalt not" to guarantee they were not transgressing. Do you know that there are thousands of Adventists who follow the same philosophy? We have used the Spirit of Prophecy as a Talmud to find all of the "thou shalt not" and the "thou shalt." But you can have a million laws, and never avoid doing wrong. Those laws do not change character. Paul wrote about **"what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh."** Rom. 8:3.

Jesus taught that the law is love. **"Righteousness is holiness, likeness to God, and 'God is love.'** 1 John 4:16.

**"It is conformity to the law of God, 'for all Thy commandments are righteousness.' Psalms 119:172; and 'love is the fulfilling of the law.' Rom. 13:10. Righteousness is love; and love is the light and the life of God. The righteousness of God is embodied in Christ. We receive**

**righteousness by receiving**

**Him."** MB 18. God is love, and the law is a transcript of His character, so the law is love. Obedience to the law is love, so righteousness is love; and sanctification, which is obedience to the law, is love, too.

All of this is different than most of us have anticipated. We have tried to look in an egocentric way at ourselves to see what our hands do, what our lips speak, what we eat, what we hear, and what we see; then we ask, "I wonder if I am sanctified?" That is not sanctification. The more we

look at self. The less sanctified we will ever be.

Righteousness is love is expressed in action. Those who are married know this. Your spouse can say they love you all they wish, but unless they perform the acts of love, you have a difficult time accepting that they love you. Jesus said, **"If ye love Me, keep My commandments."** John 14:15.

It is the activity, the doing, for God and for your neighbors that fits what Jesus taught about obedience. **"Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand, Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungred, and ye gave Me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave Me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took Me in: Naked, and ye clothed Me: I was sick, and ye visited Me: I was in prison, and ye came unto Me... Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me."** Matthew 25:34-40. These works describe the life of Jesus. We cannot make ourselves like Him, but He is able to make us like Him.



***"Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?"*** Isaiah 58:6,7.

Job, whom I consider to be a type of Christ, wrote these words: ***"Because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me: and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy. I put on righteousness, and it clothed me... I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame. I was a father to the poor: and the cause which I knew not I searched out."*** Job 29:12-16.

This is genuine Christianity. All attempts to be righteous of ourselves, forgetting others, is pure selfishness. We are just on an ego trip, trying to enlarge our pride so that someone will pat us on the back eventually.

The type of activity described in Job and Isaiah is not an occasional once-a-week thing on Community Services day. It is a lifestyle that goes on every day that cares for the needs of all who come within our scope of activity. It is a heart drawn out to people in need, because they are human flesh and because we cannot bear to see them in need. Christ wept, not because Lazarus was dead, but because He identified Himself with human need, with hearts that ached.

***"To love God supremely and our neighbor as ourselves is genuine sanctification."*** ST, Feb. 24, 1890.

***"True sanctification comes through the working out of the principle of love. 'And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.'"*** AA 560.

***"A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another."*** John 13:34,35...

***"To the disciples... the command to love one another had a new meaning in the light of [Christ's] self-sacrifice... During every hour of Christ's sojourn upon the earth, the love of God was flowing from Him in irrepressible streams. All who are imbued with His Spirit will love as He loved... This love is the evidence of their discipleship. 'By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples,' said Jesus, 'if ye have love one to another.' When men are bound together, not by force or self-interest, but by love, they show the working of an influence that is above every human influence. Where this oneness exists, it is evidence that the image of God is being restored in humanity... that there is power in the divine nature to withstand the supernatural agencies of evil, and that the grace of God subdues the selfishness inherent in the natural heart."*** DA 677,678.

This is what the Lord was talking about—a unique, peculiar oneness in relationship that you do not find any other place in the world, where selfishness is pushed out and our people are bound together totally by love. That is what happened before the Spirit was poured out on the day of Pentecost.

This ***"love is of God."*** 1 John 4:7. I will never develop this love out of my selfish heart. It is found only in Him.

***"The first four of the Ten Commandments are summed up in the one great precept, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart.' The last six are included in the other, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself'...*** When God has His

***rightful place on the throne of the heart... we shall love [our neighbor] as ourselves. And only as we love God supremely is it possible to love our neighbor impartially."*** DA 607.

***"His love in the heart [the first four commandments] is a constraining power which leads men to reveal Him in the conversation, in the tender, pitiful spirit, in the uplifting of the lives of those with whom they associate... [Love] modifies the character, governs the impulses, controls the passions, and nobles the affections. This love cherished in the soul sweetens the life and sheds a refining influence on all around."*** GAG 237. Does this sound like sanctification?

***"The law is an expression of the thought of God; when received in Christ, it becomes our thought. It lifts us above the power of natural desires and tendencies, above the temptations that lead to sin."*** DA 308. You have a new heart and a new mind that delights to do the law of God.

Obedience, then, is a fantastic thing. When my heart is filled with love, I am sensitive to your needs and become more forgetful of self. This is the obedience of love.

At a church I once pastored, I decided one day to visit all the members. All day long I went from home to home, and all day long I listened to their problems. My head began to ache. I discovered that people develop all kinds of problems when they continually receive love, but never pass it on to others. We become like the Dead Sea, just bitter to the taste; and it was bitter to me to hear all those people tell me their problems. When I finished visiting in those homes, I wanted to leave the ministry. I said, "Let someone else come and take care of these sheep."

Around eight o'clock that evening, I went to visit the first non-Adventist that I had seen that day. I suppose I was not a very welcome sight to knock at her door at that time of the evening. In my depression and discouragement I was bitterly low. But she was spiritually hungry; and after she had just a little taste of the marvels of God's grace and word, she wanted more. I had forgotten that my pockets and briefcase and brain were full of good things for hungry people, because I had not met any hungry people that day; only critical, bitter ones who had been overfed and sermon-saturated. At first, I thought she was like the rest, but she began to ask me questions, and the Lord gave me answers by His grace. And every answer was like light from heaven to her. She was overjoyed! For about an hour I dished out a banquet, and the happier she became, the happier I became. And when we had prayer, I knew that heaven had come down and glory filled our souls. She was so thankful. I did not feel I had done very much, but I was literally exuberant, and she was, too. I slept a beautiful sleep that night. I had forgotten about all the problems of the saints, because I had fed one hungry soul.

Friend, the world is waiting to see a group of Christians who are bound together because they love God and each other. And those around me begin to see that the love of God has come down and abides in my soul.

Let us lose our fears of sanctification. How can I help but love Him when He loves me so much? And with a heart so filled and overflowing, how can I help but love you? I will serve God and my fellow man in the same way that Jesus served mankind when He walked this earth; and then the Lord will say, ***"Well done, thou good and faithful servant... enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."*** Matt. 25:21.

~Pastor Bill Lehman (condensed from **Christ Our**



# A VITAL DEPENDENCE

The apostle Paul wrote that we are to ***“lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.”*** Hebrews 12:1,2.

So often we read the first part of this text and then stop reading; and thus we conclude that we must expel sins by ourselves. This is not what Paul wrote. We are to look unto Jesus, the One who launches our faith and inspires us, and the One who finishes our faith, as well. He enables us to lay aside sin.

***“Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?”*** Galatians 3:3.

If God is the One who by His Spirit started us down the Christian road, do you think you can finish the work yourselves?

***“Many have an idea that they must do some part of the work alone. They have trusted in Christ for the forgiveness of sin, but now they seek by their own efforts to live aright. But every such effort must fail.”***

SC 69. So often we think that in conversion and justification, the Lord takes care of that for us; but after that, after

having been launched down the Christian road, now we must grow by ourselves and be sanctified by our own efforts. Of course, this is not the way it is.

***“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. We are changed by beholding Christ. Looking and beholding are activities. They are works. They are not just mind-processes, and something happens when we do this.

Jesus said, ***“Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in Me.”*** John 15:4. Looking, beholding, abiding. These are the three works that we accomplish in sanctification. We look unto Jesus, we behold Him in His glory, and we abide in Him.

Jesus talked about how faith is an action, or a work. ***“This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent.”*** John 6:29.

As you respond to His love by loving Him, you want to behold Him. The two demoniacs out of whom Jesus cast

so many devils begged Jesus to stay with them. Mary Magdalene, out of whom Jesus cast seven devils, always wanted to sit at the feet of Jesus. When you love someone, you want to sit and behold that person and listen to every word. Christ said. ***“Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.”*** Luke 10:42. Mary did not let her household duties crowd out her affection for Jesus. She found time to sit at His feet because she loved Him so much.

I recall those days when I tried to do the works of a Christian if it killed me. I determined to read my Bible through, and by sheer grit and determination I managed to read just over half way through. But I was no better off than when I started. It was just a difficult job. A year or so later, I

found myself, after working long hours in the field on the farm, staying up late every night reading my Bible. I could not get enough. suddenly had a different appetite.

We think the disciples had an advantage since they could see Him physically; and Mary Magdalene enjoyed His company right there in her own home in Bethany. But Christ said it was expedient for us if He went away.



***“‘I am the Vine, ye are the branches,’ Christ said to His disciples. Though He was about to be removed from them, their spiritual union with Him was to be unchanged... Fiber by fiber, vein by vein, [the branch] grows into the vine stock. The life of the vine becomes [its] life... By faith in Him as a personal Saviour the union is formed. The sinner unites his weakness to Christ’s strength, his emptiness to Christ’s fullness, his frailty to Christ’s enduring might. Then he has the mind of Christ.”*** DA 675.

***“This union with Christ, once formed, must be maintained. Christ said, ‘Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in Me.’ This is no casual touch, no off-and-on connection. The branch becomes a part of the living vine. The communication of life, strength, and fruitfulness from the root to the branches is unobstructed and constant. Separated from the vine, the branch cannot live. No more, said Jesus, can you live apart from Me. The life you have received from Me can be preserved only by continual communion. Without Me you cannot overcome***

**one sin, or resist one temptation.”** DA 676.

Many of us are satisfied with a belief that Jesus is our Savior, and have a mental awareness that He died for us, and even a casual experience of some kind in acknowledgement that He is good to us. But we do not abide in Him. We go off and try to do it by ourselves. Then when we fail in that, we think that He has disowned us, which is far from the truth...

This abiding in Christ is like children depending on a parent. We often think that when we get older we are independent, but everyone is dependent upon someone else; and all are dependent upon God.

**“Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.”** Luke 12:27. The lilies never work, but they are growing.

**“The plant, the child, grows by receiving from its surroundings that which ministers to its life—air, sunshine, and food. What these gifts of nature are to animal and plant, such is Christ to those who trust in Him.”** SC 68.

Jesus is **“everlasting light”** (Isaiah 60:19); **“a sun and shield”** (Psalm 84:11); **“the dew unto Israel”** (Hosea 14:5), **“the bread of God...which cometh down from heaven...and giveth life unto the world”** (John 6:33).

**“For without Me, ye can do nothing.”** John 15:5. So often we try to make a frontal attack on our deficiencies and sins and bad habits. **“Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil.”** Jeremiah 13:23. It is not by trying to change this or that habit or external act. It is by a connection with Jesus, by looking unto Him, by beholding Him, and by abiding in Him.

**“You are just as dependent upon Christ, in order to live a holy life, as is the branch upon the parent stock for growth and fruitfulness. Apart from Him you have no life. You have no power to resist temptation, or to grow in grace and holiness. Abiding in Him, you may flourish. Drawing your life from Him, you will not wither nor be fruitless. You will be like a tree planted by the rivers of water.”** SC 69.

Somehow when we see failure in our lives, we feel that He is far away. But in reality, all we have neglected to do is to maintain the abiding. The Psalmist wrote. **“I have set the Lord always before me: because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.”** Psalms 16:8. I can resolve all day long to stop sinning, but it is my faith in Him that makes the difference.

Too often we think that we must perform and thus earn His presence. But He is a God of grace that joins Himself with us while we are unworthy. While we were yet enemies, He died for us.

You can go through life and think you have forfeited His presence by some act or habits, but then suddenly there He is.

I have had people who would not dare tell me about their past come to me utterly amazed and shocked that the Lord manifested Himself to them. That means that they are very precious to Him. After Jacob cheated his brother Esau and ran away, when he slept that first night he discovered that he was literally in God's presence but all the while thinking that He was miles and miles away. How many there are who think they have chased Him away. He does not leave quickly. It is very difficult to get rid of Him. He sticks closer than a brother, the Bible says. If the Father gave His own Son to die for you, and if Christ gave His own life, it is going to take

an awful lot to get rid of Him. It is unbelief that eventually chases Him away, but not our sins and bad habits. As soon as we discover He is present, suddenly those sins and habits flee away. They do not interest us any longer when God is there.

**“As the vine branch constantly draws the sap from the living vine, so are we to cling to Jesus, and receive from Him by faith the strength and perfection of His own character.”** DA 676. You have seen how those little tendrils just cling to a vine; and thus we are to cling to Jesus.

In addition, there is a **“life of unreserved surrender to His service.”** This is giving to others what we receive from Him. We know that if we only receive, we become like the Dead Sea—just poisoned springs. As soon as you begin to give to others because you love souls, then immediately you have a hunger and a thirst. And we become open channels through which God works.

So often our time is spent looking at ourselves and worrying about ourselves. We look to see how we are doing. We have difficulty spending time looking to Jesus and abiding in Him, especially in this day and age when we are so everlastingly busy. We think that if we are busy at good things, it is alright; but it is not alright. Do wives ever get upset with their husbands because they spend all their time at their jobs? After a while the wife says, “I think you love that job more than you love me.” After a while, there comes to be an alienation of affections. It takes time to be in love, and to maintain the love.

There is a reason why we have difficulty spending time with Jesus. Satan knows that the time you spend with Jesus will make you different. He knows it better than we do. **“When the mind dwells upon self, it is turned away from Christ, the source of strength and life. Hence it is Satan's constant effort to keep the attention diverted from the Saviour... The pleasures of the world, life's cares and perplexities and sorrows, the faults of others, or your own faults and imperfections—to any or all of these he will seek to divert the mind. Do not be misled by his devices... All this turns the soul away from the Source of our strength. Commit the keeping of your soul to God, and trust in Him. Talk and think of Jesus. Let self be lost in Him. Put away all doubt; dismiss your fears. Say with the apostle Paul, ‘I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me.’ Galatians 2:20. Rest in God. He is able to keep that which you have committed to Him. If you will leave yourself in His hands, He will bring you off more than conqueror through Him that has loved you.”** SC 71.

This is faith. It is the whole heart of Christianity and then, **“I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”** Philippians 4:13.

**“A life in Christ is a life of restfulness... Your hope is not in yourself; it is in Christ. Your weakness is united to His strength, your ignorance to His wisdom, your frailty to His enduring might... Let the mind dwell upon... Christ in His self-denial, Christ in His humiliation, Christ in His purity and holiness, Christ in His matchless love... It is by loving Him, copying Him, depending wholly upon Him, that you are to be transformed into His likeness.”** SC 70,71.

~Pastor Bill Lehman (condensed from **Christ Our Righteousness**, chapter 16)



# SANCTIFIED BY THE WORD

We will continue our study of sanctification by looking first at this statement of Paul: ***“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.”*** Galatians 5:22,23. Fruit is the harvest. If you have all these things, would you say you are sanctified?

The problem is: How do we produce this fruit? ***“The Saviour does not bid the disciples labor to bear fruit. He tells them to abide in Him.”*** DA 677. ***“He that abideth in Me, and I in you, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without Me ye can do nothing.”*** John 15:5.

Then He says: ***“If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.”*** John 15:7.

***“It is through the word that Christ abides in His followers.”*** DA 677.

***“Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth.”*** John 17:17. Many people study and read the Bible, but they do not appear to be sanctified. How does the Bible sanctify us?

We are to ***“live by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.”*** Matthew 4:4. ***“Living in Christ, adhering to Christ, supported by Christ, drawing nourishment from Christ,”*** (DA 677) we bear fruit like Him. It is more than reading the Bible, it is more than studying various Bible topics; although those things are good. Having the word abiding in us means just getting Christ right inside of us. Jesus said to Satan that ***“man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.”*** Luke 4:4. In that word is the enabling power, the motivating power, as well as the principles of everlasting life. This is what the Lord wants us to realize and experience.

***“The life of Christ that gives life to the world is in His word. It was by His word that Jesus healed disease and cast out demons; by His word He stilled the sea, and raised the dead; and the people bore witness that His word was with power. He spoke the word of God, as He had spoken through all the prophets and teachers of the Old Testament. The whole Bible is a manifestation of Christ... When His visible presence should be withdrawn, the word must be their source of power.”*** DA 390.

When the people said, ***“Never a man spake like this Man”*** (John 7:47), they were not only amazed, but what they said was literally true. This is the Man who spoke all things into existence by the word of His mouth. ***“Let there be light: and there was light.”*** Genesis 1:3. Jesus said, ***“The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.”*** John 6:33. Eat it, absorb it, get it inside of you. There is a power that comes inside.

Nicodemus had memorized great portions of the Scripture (or else he could not have belonged to the Sanhedrin) but somehow he missed the very heart of Christianity. Why?

***“Nicodemus had read these scriptures with a clouded mind.”*** 35

DA 174. Something was wrong; but after his discussion with Jesus, we are told that Nicodemus ***“searched the Scriptures in a new way, not for the discussion of a theory, but in order to receive life for the soul. He began to see the kingdom of heaven as he submitted himself to the leading of the Holy Spirit.”*** DA 175. When you study your Sabbath School lessons throughout the week, do you study it so in class you can discuss a theory... and prove yourself right? Or do you study it for life for your soul?...

***“The creative energy that called the worlds into existence is in the word of God. This word imparts power; it begets life. Every command is a promise; accepted by the will, received into the soul, it brings with it the life of the Infinite One.”*** Ed 126. It brings that creative power that makes me a different person, which I desperately want to be.

***“It is by beholding His love, by dwelling upon it, by drinking it in, that we are to become partakers of His nature. What food is to the body, Christ must be to the soul. Food cannot benefit us unless we eat it, unless it becomes a part of our being... We must feed upon Him, receive Him into the heart, so that His life becomes our life. His love, His grace, must be assimilated.”*** DA 389.

Too often we think that if we will just subject ourselves a little bit to the word and sort of bombard our brain with a few choice thoughts, then something will happen. The word has such power that something does happen, but it is minor compared to what He wants to take place in your life. We must eat to live. Life produces action. ***“The truth***

***of God is to sanctify the soul... and be carried with us to our business... to our dealings with our fellow men. It is to abide in our households, having a subduing power upon the life and character... Practicing the truth...means sanctification.”*** MLT 261.

What do we call all of this? Obedience. We have trouble when we talk about obedience, and right away we arouse certain prejudiced thinking. Sanctification is not a theory that gets in your mind and stays there and then you are sanctified. It must be in you but it must come out, too. You cannot be the source of it, but He will abide in you and then reproduce His life coming out of you in your dealings with people, in your homes, and everywhere you go. Without the reception it does not get inside, and without the obedience it does not get outside where it produces action.

Every command of Jesus, every promise is saying literally to you and to me: ***“Follow Me.”*** He does not demand that we follow Him, He only asks if we will choose to follow Him. ***“If ye love Me, keep My commandments.”*** John 14:15. We read this so differently and say, ***“I must do it.”*** He does not say that. He says obey if you love Him. When His law is in my heart, I delight to do His will. When His law is not in my heart, I hate to do His will. I want to do my own will.



We do not do what is right in order to be good enough to be saved. It is not trying to earn your way to heaven. It is serving Him because you love Him supremely. All other motivations are wrong.

When we read about the commandments and obeying Him, we begin to look at our activities, our works, to see how we are doing or not doing. The Lord says we are to behold Him and abide in Him if we love Him. Loving Him comes first, then the obeying, and not the other way around. All that works can tell you is that you do not love Him or that you do love Him. It is not how good or bad a particular work or activity is right or wrong. It is more a matter of, are you showing your love for Him or not showing your love for Him? Are you following Him, or departing and going your own way?

We have argued too long about what is right and wrong, and left out the love of Christ which makes it all right or all wrong in the first place. If you love Him, do the right things. We are to look at Jesus and behold Him, and not always be looking at our works no matter how good or bad we think they might be. Christ is to be my life, my inspiration, my example, my righteousness, my motivation. It is not just a matter of doing right because it is right. It is doing it because I love Him. He came and first loved me that I might love Him and show my love. This is a different way of looking at the Bible.

This is the way Jesus lived. He said, ***"The words that I speak unto you I speak not of Myself: but the Father that dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works."*** John 14:10. He said He did not decide what words to say and what works to do, but that the Father spoke and acted through Him.

***"As the Father hath loved Me, so have I loved you: continue ye in My love. If ye keep My commandments, ye shall abide in My love; even as I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love."*** John 15:9,10. Jesus obeyed His Father because He loved His Father and was happy to obey Him. You cannot separate love from the activity of love.

***"He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me: and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him."*** John 14:21. John the beloved wrote, ***"For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments: and His commandments are not grievous."*** 1 John 5:3. As soon as He has my heart, I begin to do what He does, because He is in charge and has control of me.

These Scriptures are quickly and easily misunderstood and distorted. Some say that loving is keeping the commandments. I love you and I love the Lord, so everything is fine, but at the same time they say the law is done away with. Those who believe in the law jump in the opposite ditch and say, "I keep the law and that proves I love Him." But it probably does not prove it. The Jews claimed they kept the law and they killed Jesus. We can profess to keep the law, then turn and bite and devour one another. And our enemy laughs and laughs and laughs. How can we say we do not steal from our neighbor, but eat up their reputations and characters by gossip? Have you noticed how gullible we are to gossip, especially if one of your best friends tells you? Your best friend cannot be wrong. If they said it, it must be true. Then you go and tell the next person, and then that person goes and tells someone else. You would be amazed at how many people have been ruined by misunderstanding and gossip. Many are busy with the task of rooting out evil, and they think that is loving the church.

Jesus says that when we love Him, we love one another; and the activity of the last six commandments becomes a reality. He does not love us because we obey. He loves us in order that we might obey. He does not say, "Behold My laws and you will keep them." It is true that we may see His love and His character in the law, but He says we are to look unto Him, the Author and Finisher of our faith. This is the way it is accomplished...

***"Obedience is not a mere outward compliance, but the service of love."*** SC 60. The Jews were most zealous for the law, yet they had all kinds of conflicts with the Master who wrote the law because they thought they understood it correctly; and those are the ones who killed Him; and they believed themselves to be right in doing that. We can profess to be law-keepers and do the same thing if our obedience is merely an outward compliance. Our hearts must be focused on Jesus.

***"By His perfect obedience [Jesus] has made it possible for every human being to obey God's commandments. When we submit ourselves to Christ, the heart is united with His heart, the will is merged in His will, the mind becomes one with His mind, the thoughts are brought into captivity to Him; we live His life. This is what it means to be clothed with the garment of His righteousness. Then as the Lord looks upon us He sees, not the fig-leaf garment, not the nakedness and deformity of sin, but His own robe of righteousness, which is perfect obedience to the law of Jehovah."*** COL 312. Do not misunderstand that.

A woman gets married and gives her whole heart to her husband because she loves him so much, and she cannot think about anyone else but him. When all this happens by love, what will happen to the woman? She will live his life. I illustrated this from a woman's standpoint because they are the submissive ones in love by their own natures. Men are more aggressive, so women need to explain to their husbands what it is like to submit. Submission is a quality that is difficult for men to accept. They are taught not to submit and to never give in, even if it kills them. The church is to be the wife of Christ, and we all are to submit to Him. Our wills are to be wrapped up in His will, and our hearts are to be absorbed in Him.

When, by the study of the word, you find this marvelous Christ, you submit and receive His word into your innermost soul, then you live His life.

***"Love never faileth."*** 1 Cor. 13:8. Nothing is so great as God's love...God wants us to see Jesus in the Bible, and fall so completely and absolutely in love with Him, until those in our house will get disturbed with us because we are always sitting at the feet of Jesus looking at Him. And oh, what words you will hear Him say. As you accept Him as your personal Savior, as the One who wants to abide in you because He loves you, you can say with the apostle Paul, ***"For me to live is Christ."*** Philippians 1:21. And you will ask others, "Don't you love Him, too?"

Friend, do you long for Jesus to come? We almost never talk about it. We warn people of His coming, and we frighten them, but do we teach them to long for Jesus to return and to love His appearing?

Before Jesus returns, all the real Christians will be lovers of Jesus, and they will spend so much time beholding Him in His word that their very lives will be a demonstration of His presence.

~Pastor Bill Lehman (condensed from **Christ Our**



# WHERE IS YOUR CONFIDENCE?

Often as Christians, we assume that conversion is some kind of an empowering or enabling act that puts us in the position where now we can perform, where before we could not perform. We know the unjustified cannot keep the law because of **“what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh.”** Romans 8:3. But apparently the justified Christian has at least the potential of doing this because **“the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us.”**

Verse 4. Has the flesh been made strong where before it was weak? Do we now have a capability that we lacked before?...

Paul asked the question: **“Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?”** Galatians 3:3. God gives us new life in the Spirit; but do we then accomplish perfection or sanctification by the flesh, by our own works in and of ourselves? The confusion about this arises out of the strong assertions in the Bible concerning the freedom that is ours in justification and conversion.

**“Jesus answered them... Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin... If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.”** John 8:34,36.

**“For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness... But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.”** Romans 6:20,22. Paul says over and over again that you have been made free from sin.

**“For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.”** Romans 8:2.

We ask the question: Are we free? Yes! As Jesus said, **“free indeed.”** Then can we live without sin? It says free indeed—no captivity. You must in no way diminish the freedom that the Bible talks about, but we must not make some conclusions about that freedom that are unwarranted.

Paul said concerning himself: **“But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.”** 1 Cor. 9:27. **“For we... [meaning the true Christians] rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.”** Phil. 3:3.

**“For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.”** Gal.5:17.

The flesh and the Spirit do not get along. Paul, who wished to be led by the Spirit, said he finds his flesh at war with the Spirit of God in him. He did not like that, and said he had to keep under his body and bring it into subjection. The flesh is an enemy that can do damage to me and keep God out of my life. He did not want that to happen to him.

John wrote, **“It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing.”** John 6:63. These bodies of ours are of no profit, spiritually speaking. This is in total agreement with what Paul said about having no confidence in our flesh.

As Christians, we often believe that once we are converted and have a good experience with the Lord, then we have good bodies. We get new hearts, or new minds, but new bodies come later. At the time of His return, Jesus **“shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body.”** Philippians 3:21. At the second coming of Jesus, the righteous will be given new bodies. Paul taught that having these vile bodies is a problem.

**“For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.”** 1 Corinthians 15:53. In

the twinkling of an eye this will happen. Up to the time when we are either resurrected or translated, we will have vile, corrupt, bodies bringing death upon us. Paul often wrote about the difficulty of living in this kind of body that has all these problems. He recognized that he had that kind of body. He had to keep it under subjection; and he looked with all his heart for the time when it was going to be changed.

**“And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.”** Galatians 5:24.

**“Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin.”** Romans 6:6,7. Back in verse 2 he reasons: **“How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?”** How can a dead man sin? Can the flesh be crucified and yet still be alive? I want to give you a few more texts about Paul’s life and the life of other Biblical characters in order to help us derive the answer.

**“I die daily.”** 1 Corinthians 15:31. Paul elsewhere talked about having been crucified with Christ. Here he said he dies every day. Why?

Let’s put another text with it where Paul said he was **“always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.”** 2 Cor. 4:10.

He said he was always dying with Jesus. **“For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus’ sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.”** Verse 11. I am always dying but never seeming to be dead. How can it be that you die every day? Crucified, yet still dying, but not dead, and having to die daily?

37 The answer is found in two definite facts that you must



always remember in the sanctified life. ***“Sanctification is not the work of a moment, an hour, or a day. It is a continual growth in grace. We know not one day how strong will be our conflict the next. Satan lives, and is active, and every day we need to earnestly cry to God for help and strength to resist him. As long as Satan reigns we shall have self to subdue, besetments to overcome, and there is no stopping place. There is no point to which we can come and say we have fully attained.”*** 7BC 947. The two facts are: sanctification is not the work of a moment but of a lifetime; and there is no plateau where we can stop and say we have arrived.

Many of the problems we have with self are because of someone outside of self, Satan. The victories we have over self are because of a power—a Person—outside of self. And for this reason, one death is not sufficient.

How is it that the devil is still able to tempt us and bring us back to trusting in self? ***“When Christ took human nature upon Him, He bound Himself to humanity by a tie of love that can never be broken by any power save the choice of man himself. Satan will constantly present allurements to induce us to break this tie, to choose to separate ourselves from Christ. Here is where we need to watch, to strive, to pray, that nothing may entice us to choose another master; for we are always free to do this. But let us keep our eyes fixed upon Christ, and He will preserve us.”*** SC 72. Even though self is crucified, choice is not, and that is a good thing. It is a freedom given through the grace of Jesus that every one of us has.

Sometimes in our Bible studies and sermons we want to deprive people of the freedom of choice. You cannot coerce people into being Christians. You love them into Christ. That is how we come to Him, and that is how we stay with Him. We still have a choice and God wants us to have it. You do not have to love Him. It is just like marriage. You chose to be married to that person and you can always separate.

In this marvelous love affair with Christ, He asks, “Do you love Me today, or do you want to leave Me today?” And when particularly attractive temptations come along, He asks, “Do you still love Me, or do you love that sin more than Me?”

***“In the matchless gift of His Son, God has encircled the whole world with an atmosphere of grace as real as the air which circulates around the globe. All who choose to breathe this life-giving atmosphere will live and grow up to the stature of men and women in Christ Jesus.”*** SC 68

I can reject Jesus. I do not have to follow Him. I can indulge self. I can turn my back on Him. Satan knows that, so he is always hanging around the edges, waiting for a chance to allure us into a new love affair. He dangles out such nice things to us, and he makes Christ look so difficult to follow by portraying Him as exacting and demanding and oppressing. Jesus said that Satan is a liar and the father of liars, but often we believe the devil more than we believe the Lord.

***“It is not only at the beginning of the Christian life that this renunciation of self is to be made. At every advance step heavenward it is to be renewed. All our good works are dependent on a power outside of ourselves.”*** MH 455.

When I first read the book *The Sanctified Life* by Ellen White, I thought I was going to learn everything about sanctification. When I finished the book, I concluded that it did not say one thing about sanctification. Why was it titled *The Sanctified Life*? All I read about was Joseph and Daniel and others, and I could not see a thing in there about sanctification. I finally realized that she was talking about

their maintaining that condition of walking with God, and how everyday they had to abide in Christ and choose Him. That seemed a very strange concept to me concerning sanctification. But this is exactly what the book teaches.

***“You are to maintain this connection with Christ by faith and the continual surrender of your will to Him; and so long as you do this, He will work in you to will and to do according to His good pleasure.”*** SC 62,63.

***“For if ye live after the flesh [if we follow its dictates] ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.”*** Romans 8:13. Mortify means to die or to kill.

***“Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry.”*** Col. 3:5.

***“For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit... For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.”*** Romans 8:5,14.

***“Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.”*** Galatians 5:16.

In the sanctified life, as you begin to ask what you can and cannot do, you need to realize that it boils down to this: you can choose. Every morning the devil hecks to see if you have forgotten or decided not to make contact with Christ that day. If that was your choice, he knows you will be vulnerable. He lures our affections, our interests, our attentions, and suddenly we find ourselves walking another road.

But the problem is the separation! Go back and make the contact. Find the power again. He is still waiting there. He promised He would never break the tie that binds us to Him. The tie can be broken by no power except your choice. It was not your sin that was the problem, but rather your choice to not abide in Christ.

***“Thus saith the Lord; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord... Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is.”*** Jeremiah 17:5,7.

It is all found in making the choice of whom you put your confidence in. ***“I am crucified with Christ: [but I am still alive and free to choose] nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me.”*** Gal. 2:20

We are told that when James White was dying and Ellen was at his bedside, over and over she asked him the question, “James, do you love Jesus?” Let me tell you, she knew what it was all about. Everyday the questions are: Do I love Jesus? Do I choose Him? Am I delighted to know Him, to be close to Him? Is there anything in this life more alluring, more precious, than being with Christ?

Friend, God has done marvelous things for us. What a privilege to choose. Let’s make sure that we do not force our children and church members, pressuring them to do what we think they should do. That is not Christianity. Liberty of conscience should be foremost within our ranks like no other people on the face of the earth.

As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. Choose this day whom you will serve. May you see the allurements of Jesus until every day and every moment He is so precious to you that you would never choose anyone else.

~Pastor Bill Lehman (condensed from **Christ Our Righteousness**, chapter 18)



# BETTER, BETTER, BETTER

Our title for this chapter poses a misunderstanding that many Christians have. Many think that sanctification is becoming good enough so that we are finally accepted into heaven. The idea is that I can arrive some day to a certain level of performance, then the Lord will accept me into the kingdom. This concept of getting better and better makes it almost impossible to accept Christ as our righteousness.

When you use the criteria of pursuit of excellence for acceptance into heaven, you run into a multitude of problem. For instance, Jesus said, *"But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first."* Matthew 19:30 And *"If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all."* Mark 9:35.

Here's another one. *"Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you."* Matthew 21:31. The publicans and the harlots are certainly not very good performers, are they? You cannot exactly say that they have been pursuing excellence. How do they have an entrance before others who thought they were doing very well?

One of our problems with this subject is that we use worldly standards of achievement to measure our qualifications or our excellence in Christianity. Jesus reminded us that His kingdom was not of this world. The value system in His kingdom is not like the value system of this world.

Christ said, *"for that which is highly esteemed among men [here in this world] is abomination in the sight of God."* Luke 16:15. There are a few texts that illustrate this. *"But all their works they do for to be seen of men."* Matthew 23:5. They like to be on display. Then there are those who *"love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, And greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi."* Verse 6. *"But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted."* Verse 11. This is the complete opposite of worldly criteria of success. We like to do our works to be seen of men, don't we? We like titles, we love high positions, and have adulation for those in high positions.

The perfect musicians who perform flawlessly are esteemed among men. We praise athletes and the finest artists and craftsmen. All through life the emphasis and praise centers on the pursuit of excellence. We cannot blame the students and the schools and the faculty because father and mother believe it at home. We have been brainwashed into believing that this is a good system, and almost everyone follows it.

It is not easy to convince people that this is contrary to the kingdom of heaven, because we like this system. Jesus taught something different, *"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt*

*love thy neighbour as thyself."* Matthew 22:37-39.

Does the system of rewarding a few, but not others, truly demonstrate loving your neighbor as yourself? Most people like to be rewarded. But suppose someone else gets rewarded but you do not? You feel like you are a failure.

Does anyone deserve heaven? You say that the "A" students deserve the reward because they worked harder. Do you mean the others were more lazy or neglectful or disinterested?

Consider what Jesus meant by the parable of the laborers where those who worked one hour received the same wages (or reward) as those who worked twelve hours. The ones who worked all day long *"murmured against the goodman of the house."* Matthew

20:11. They did not think he was fair. The owner of the vineyard said, *"Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny?"* Verse 13. They had agreed to that, but now they had many arguments and good logic to try and get more than those who had only worked for one hour. The owner replied by saying he had treated them nicely. He gave them all the same reward, no matter how long or hard they had worked.

This challenges our theology, because we use worldly ideas of success to determine if we are becoming righteous enough for heaven. The Lord does not judge as man judges, and thank God

for that, or most of us would be left out.

I am trying to help you see how God thinks about all this in comparison to what our ideas are. The ways of the world create a terrible problem for everyone, and people suffer more than we realize with this worldly system of rewards. Whenever you reward winners you create losers. When you reward success you create failures who are not as successful. When you acclaim the few, you discredit the many. Making people feel that they are successful is most difficult. Success, prestige, and esteem are like money. You become addicted and can never get enough.

Jesus did not believe in a system like that. We like it because it motivates people and drives them to achieve, beyond their limits sometimes. It does not matter to us if they end up in the hospital with ulcers or in a psycho ward. When that happens we say, "Oh, that poor person. They just didn't know how to handle it." But we continue to increase the pressures to drive more people to more excellence, and we trust in this system. We take vacations to escape the pressures; and we cannot invent enough entertainment to get rid of the pressures.

Jesus condemned this system when He said, *"For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers."* Matt. 23:4. We are overloaded with pressures, and yet parents use this system with their children, our churches use it in promotions, we think it works well in politics, and teachers would not know what



to do without it when it comes to the grading system.

People argue with me and say, "But Elder Lehman, in heaven they have systems of awards and rewards. Will not some be nearer the throne than others? Will not some have more stars in their crowns than others? Will there not be certain prestigious groups like the one hundred and forty-four thousand with special privileges? Heaven has a system like that." No, they do not have a system like that. It is true that some will stand near the throne, and some will have more stars and all these things, but those awards and rewards are vastly different than you think.

In heaven, the work that is rewarded is not that work done for ourselves. *"And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me."*

*"Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand, Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."* Matthew 25:40,34. Jesus will say, "Come ye blessed because you have been working for Me and for souls, and not for self."

There is another aspect to heaven's reward system that is different. *"For who maketh thee to differ from another? [Why are you brighter than others?] And what hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?"* 1 Cor. 4:7. Why do you brag about your skills as if they were yours, and why do you boast of them and accept awards for them?

Peter and John at the beautiful gate of the temple raised up a crippled man, and people began to worship them. They told the people they did not heal the man through their own power, but through the name of Jesus. This is true of all gifts. God is not only the Giver and the Originator of our talents, but He fosters their development, for without Him we can do nothing. All the praise for every talent should be to Him and never to ourselves.

*"The exorbitant price charged by physicians in this country when called upon to attend suffering humanity is robbery, fraud. God gave physicians their wisdom and skill. It is not man who saves life; it is the GREAT RESTORER."* MM 121.

Whatever skill you look at or whatever ability, it is all of Him. Those who are in the kingdom of heaven know that. Read in the book of Revelation about how the inhabitants of heaven constantly praise Him day and night. He is the giver of every good and precious gift according to James 1:17. Therefore, the status and honor that heaven bestows is on those who praise God for the blessings received and used, and they are used for the benefit of other people.

Jesus spoke the following parable when He was visiting the home of Simon the leper: *"There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most. And He said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged...Wherefore I say unto thee [Simon], Her [Mary's] sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little."* Luke 7:41-43,47. Mary looked upon herself as a terrible sinner who had been forgiven for an enormous debt. But Simon thought he was a good fellow and needed forgiveness for little.

*"Those whom Christ has forgiven most will love Him most. These are they who in the final day will stand nearest to His throne."* MH 182. The greatest lovers are the ones who have been forgiven most, and they will be the closest to Jesus. Why do they love Him so much? Because they have been forgiven for so much. Our praise is in proportion to how much He has done for us. What has

He done for you? It is not how right you are in all of your theology, even though that is important. It is how much you love Jesus, and why you love Him, and what you do to and for others because you love Jesus so much.

Remember that love is righteousness. God is love, and the law is a transcript of His character; so righteousness is love. The better, better, better concept in the kingdom of heaven is more and more. love for Jesus and for others.

Love is a strange thing when it comes to excellence. The excellence that we try to develop is always seeking our own eminence, our own achievement. It is always looking at self and striving for perfection in self. But love does not seek its own. 1 Cor. 13:5. Love esteems every man better than himself. Love seeks another's welfare. Love is not mindful of self but always mindful of others, and doing for others.

Jesus described this love: *"If any man will come after Me, let him take up his cross and deny himself."* Luke 9:23,24. Therefore, self-denial is the way of eminence and excellence in God's kingdom of grace. Self-achievement is the way of excellence and ability in this world. We confuse the two in Christ our righteousness, but there is no similarity. One is total forgetfulness of self. The other one is total absorption with self.

The worldly concept of how to gain the kingdom of heaven is vastly different than what men suppose. In self-development, I look at those things inherent in me—my abilities, my talents, my intellect—and I try to use them to grow and to progress. But love is a different thing. In fact, it is not even in me, for *"love is of God."* 1 John 4:7. You can strive to be loving but you must receive all love from Him.

*"If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another."* 1 John 4:11. All the love that comes from me out to you is the result of His love to me. As I come closer and closer to Jesus, I see my own sinfulness more and more, and I have more reason for forgiveness. And as He forgives me more, I love Him more. We hate to hear about our sins because we do not think He forgives; yet He can hardly wait to forgive us. *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."* 1 John 1:9.

Where sin did abound, grace did much more abound. I bring His love and grace into my very soul until it is like a living fountain, bubbling over and refreshing to me and to others. To those who have this experience, the Lord will say, *"Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."* Matthew 25:34.

Why are we so anxious? Why are we striving and struggling to perfect self when Christ waits to bestow all that we need to enter into the kingdom of heaven? We must feel our need, for only those who hunger and thirst after righteousness will be filled. The self-sufficient who believe they are doing a pretty good job are not hungry. It is the needy souls, those who feel sinful, lost, such failures, and inferior that He tells to come to Him and be filled with acceptance and love.

There is no other pressure in God's kingdom but the pressure of love. Nothing else but the love of Christ constrains me. And people will marvel and take note that we have been with Jesus because the transformation is so great, and the excellence of character and morality so mighty. They will ask, "How did those people become like this?" And we will answer, "How can I help but love Him when He loves me so much? How can I possibly thank Him when He is so good to me? All praise to Him from Whom all blessings flow!"

~Pastor Bill Lehman (condensed from **Christ Our**



# RAGS, RIGHTEOUSNESS, REPENTANCE

Many today assume that since they keep the Sabbath and do not commit adultery, or kill, or steal, or lie, then they must be righteous. And since they are righteous they believe they are assured of an entrance into God's kingdom. Others who have problems keeping the commandments do not view themselves as commandment keepers. Because of their habitual sins, they do not claim to be righteous, and therefore they feel that they cannot get into the kingdom.

Could both groups be wrong about their assumptions? When you keep the law, you assume that your law keeping is righteousness; therefore this qualifies you to stand in God's presence. The message that came to this denomination in 1888 says loudly and clearly that [our lawkeeping] is not good enough. This problem of righteousness is more than attempting to be good.

Righteousness is symbolized in the Bible: **"And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints."** Revelation 19:8. Sin produces a strange kind of undressed condition. **"And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed."** Genesis 2:25. But then they were tempted, and as we know, Eve partook of the forbidden fruit and tempted her husband, and he partook. **"And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons. And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden. And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou? And he said, I heard Thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself."** Genesis 3:7-10. Was Adam still naked when God came to the garden? No, he was not. It might not have been the most fashionable covering, but Adam and Eve were wearing fig leaves.

**"Naked and ashamed, they tried to supply the place of the heavenly garments by sewing together fig leaves for a covering. This is what the transgressors of God's law have done ever since the day of Adam and Eve's disobedience. They have sewed together fig leaves to cover the nakedness caused by transgression. They have worn the garments of their own devising, by works of their own they have tried to cover their sins, and make themselves acceptable with God."** COL 311. They might have been good at sewing fig leaves, but it did not seem to help.

**"Nothing can man devise to supply the place of his lost robe of innocence... Only the covering which Christ**

**Himself has provided can make us meet to appear in God's presence. This covering, the robe of His own righteousness, Christ will put upon every repenting, believing soul."** COL 311.

Many have the idea that if they try hard enough, or if they have done the best they can, they will be good enough to appear in His presence.

This thought was expressed by Jesus in a parable where a man entered a wedding feast clothed in his common dress. He had refused to wear the robe provided by the king. **"And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment. And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and**

**cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."** Matthew 22:11-13. No problem seemed to exist as they waited for the bridegroom who tarried, but when the king came in, then he was speechless.

Referring to Adam and Eve, Ellen White wrote: **"The love and peace which had been theirs was gone, and in its place they felt a sense of sin, a dread of the future, a nakedness of soul."** PP 57. Not of body but of soul. We try to make ourselves acceptable to people, but God looks on the heart.

We know about the time when Christ drove the money changers out of the temple, and how He looked into the hearts of those Pharisees and Priests. They ran for fear even though they were leaders. Was it because of the whip in His hand? They felt undressed before Him. What will the King see in me when He comes in? My garments do not hide a thing from Him. That is the way Adam and Eve felt, standing there with nothing concealed.

**"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. It makes apparent the unhallowed desires, the infidelity of the heart, the impurity of the lips. The sinner's acts of disloyalty in making void the law of God, are exposed to his sight, and... he loathes himself as he views the pure, spotless character of Christ."** SC 29.

Somehow we think that when we feel that way, the preacher did it, or our parents did it, or the teacher. I become sensitive and say, "Get off my back and stop criticizing me!" Did God criticize Adam and Eve? Not a word. He had come every day in the cool of the day, because they were His friends. It was a pleasant occasion to meet together during that heavenly visit in paradise. But with just one act of sin they supposed that a God of love was a God of hate.



Our paranoid condition is inherent in transgression. Adam and Eve tried to blame it on each other and on the serpent, but there was none to blame but themselves. God had not criticized them or harassed them. But they were afraid and tried to defend themselves, which is exactly what we do.

We have so many misconceptions of God. Because of our problems and our sins, we think that He is no longer our friend and that He is against us.

Think of how the righteousness of Jesus was preached in 1888. In reality they were preaching the Laodicean message; and that was an unpopular message then as well as today.

Laodiceans have a clothing problem. The True Witness says, ***"I counsel thee to buy of Me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear."*** Revelation 3:18. Then He goes on to talk about the eye salve that we all need in order to rightly see our condition.

The Laodicean message is the voice from the True and Faithful Witness, Jesus (Rev. 1:5, 3:14). He says He is speaking to us, and wants to know if we can hear Him [verse 20]. Adam and Eve were afraid when they heard God's voice; but Laodiceans do not run and hide. In fact, they do not even think they are naked ***"Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art...naked."*** [verse 17]. God speaks, but somehow I am not afraid, and I do not even sense that I need clothing. Instead, I say I am dressed like a wealthy person. How is it that the people in Laodicea can have the voice of God speaking to them, and still be so satisfied, believing that they are clothed? How can it be that they do not feel naked and afraid?

Here is the answer: ***"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him and will sup with him, and he with Me."*** Revelation 3:20. Laodicea has trouble listening. If we could only hear Him knocking and then respond by opening the door, He would come in and we could be together with Him. As long as I can keep Him outside of the door, apart from me, I can be very comfortable. Therefore, I work hard at not hearing, and I avoid all occasions where I might meet Him.

We can have our daily devotions without ever meeting Jesus or hearing Him. We may study our Sabbath school lesson, and visit our friends, and discuss theology, and even preach, yet never meet Jesus, and never hear His voice. We have become experts at avoiding Jesus. In fact, we can talk about Christianity and theology and never mention His name. Are you comfortable talking about Jesus, as comfortable as you are about talking about the Sabbath? Or do you get uneasy when someone asks, "Do you love Jesus?"

Even when you get critical of me, I can excuse and justify everything I do. But Jesus just looks and does not say anything. He does not come to make us afraid. He comes because He loves to be with us. He comes to protect us, to clothe us, so that we can stand in His presence with no fear. We don't believe Him. We have been afraid of Him for so many years. We have been taught that God is against us unless we are totally right in commandment keeping. But it is impossible for us to qualify ourselves, or make ourselves worthy to meet with Him.

How do you hear His voice? ***"You who in heart long for something better than this world can give, recognize this longing as the voice of God to your soul."*** SC 28. I hear many **42**

people expressing a dissatisfaction with their experience. That is the voice of God. Ask Him to give you repentance, to reveal Christ to you in His infinite love, and He will do that. Do not run away and be afraid of the One who loved you so much that He died for you. Paul said, ***"Be ye reconciled to God."*** 2 Corinthians 5:20.

There are those who think they are righteous enough but, ***"when the light from Christ shines into our souls, we shall see how impure we are; we shall discern the selfishness of motive, the enmity against God, that has defiled every act of life. Then we shall know that our own righteousness is indeed as filthy rags, and that the blood of Christ alone can cleanse us from the defilement of sin, and renew our hearts in His own likeness."*** SC 29,29.

We either fear to visit with Jesus, or we say we are good enough and do not need to spend time with Him. We isolate, or insulate ourselves from Him, even from His voice. We say, "He has nothing I need. I have it all". Christ knows He is coming back soon—more than we accept that fact. He knows every eye will see Him, and He wants all to meet Him in peace. He wants to enable us to stand now and forever.

God was pleased to say to Israel, ***"put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem,"*** Isaiah 52:1. Joshua the high priest was clothed in filthy garments and standing before the angel of the Lord; and the Lord said, ***"Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him He said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment."*** Zechariah 3:4.

Luke tells the story of how the prodigal son went back to the father, totally unfit, and how he said, ***"Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son."*** Luke 15:21. And the Father said, ***"Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him."*** Not just any robe, but the best he had... Then he made a great feast for the one who was dead and is now alive. This is what our God says...

The young man probably did not even have a bath, but the father said to bring forth the best robe and put it on him. Not until we come to Jesus in all our great need can the nakedness of our souls be covered. He has been knocking at the door of Laodiceans since 1888. He is saying, "Do not fear Me. Do not run and hide. I have stayed here so long because I want you and want to be with you. Let Me in."

The apostle Paul asks if we know that ***"the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?"*** Romans 2:4. Why do you think that God is delaying the return of Christ? He is especially waiting on the Laodiceans who are afraid to let Him in, and those who think that they are good enough without Him. He does not want to criticize us. ***"For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved."*** John 3:17.

It must break His heart that with all the demonstrations of His goodness, that we still think He is against us. The Lord is patient, longsuffering, longing for you as though you were the only soul in the universe. He wants to live with us now, and He wants us to meet Him in peace when every eye shall see Him, and with longing in our hearts say, ***"Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him and He will save us."***

May God help us to realize this day that ***"If God be for us, who can be against us?"*** Romans 8:41. May we let the Savior in.

~Pastor Bill Lehman (condensed from **Christ Our Righteousness**, chapter 20)



# RIGHTEOUSNESS BY UNFAITHFULNESS?

Our problem in this study involves the difference between faithfulness and unfaithfulness. John the Revelator wrote these words about Babylon: ***“And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen... And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, My people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.”*** Rev. 18:2,4.

How did God’s people happen to be in a condition called Babylon in the days of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Isaiah? Often we say they were captured and taken over there. While that is true in one sense, it only tells part of the story.

***“The Lord said also unto me in the days of Josiah the king, Hast thou seen that which backsliding Israel hath done? She is gone up upon every high mountain and under every green tree, and there hath played the harlot [talking about the places where they worshipped idols]. And I said after she had done all these things, Turn thou unto Me. But she returned not ... Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord; ... I will not keep anger for ever. Only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the Lord thy God ... Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord; for I am married unto you ... and I will bring you to Zion.”*** Jer. 3:6-9;12-14...

Righteousness by faith is in the context of a love relationship. The unfaithfulness of Babylon in God’s people is unfaithful to marriage vows, not just to some doctrines, not just to a church, or some ideas that people propound. It is faithfulness to a Person to whom we profess to be joined in marriage, as the Bible describes it in many places... In spite of her adultery, He loved her very much and appealed to her over and over again through the prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah; but she would not come back to Him. Before she went as a captive to Babylon, she was first captivated by their gods. She forsook her Husband gave her affections to many others and was found spending all of her time with them.

God had them build a sanctuary so He could dwell among them. This was His abiding place with His wife. He wanted to be close to her; and while He was there manifesting Himself in the Shekinah Glory, physically present in that glory, she still went off to inanimate idols and loved them more than the precious Lord Jehovah. It seems impossible, but that is what the Bible describes. They thought the gods of the heathen were more effective, more productive, and they thought they received more blessings from those gods. They envied the people outside the church.

He continued to appeal to her for many years. When she persisted in her love affairs with others, He finally permitted her to have her choice. Israel was taken captive after she was captivated. She went to find out what it was to live with those lovers twenty-four hours a day. You remember how they were commanded to bow down or they would be killed.

They had gone to live in a kingdom of force. Is that what they preferred?

God still wanted her back. What kind of love is this that desires her after all these activities? The law that God gave to Moses said that if you were married to another you could not go back to your first husband or wife. Jeremiah 3:1. His people had left Him, but He wanted them to return to Him. It would seem that this makes God a violator of the law that He gave.

Paul sheds light on this with these words, ***“The woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth...but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man. Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to Him who is raised***

***from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.”***

Romans 7:1-4.

The only way that Christ could take her back was to die. Otherwise He would be a violator of His own rule... Therefore, to justify a wife who left Him and joined herself to another, He died for all her sins, and then He arose from the grave so that she might be married to Him, a new lover, perfectly joined to Him.

My mind staggers at the concept and the depth of love presented here!“Oh love that will

not let me go,” the hymn writer wrote; and how little we understand what that really means and implies. He cannot let me go. ***“For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.”*** 2 Cor. 11:2.

***“Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.”*** Rev. 2:4. ***“I swear unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord God, and thou becamest Mine...And thou wast exceeding beautiful and thou didst prosper into a kingdom. And thy renown went forth among the heathen for thy beauty: for it was perfect through My comeliness [this is Christ our righteousness], which I had put upon thee...But thou didst trust in thine own beauty, and playedst the harlot because of thy renown...as a wife that committeth adultery, which taketh strangers instead of her husband!”*** ***“As a wife treacherously departeth from her husband, so have ye dealt treacherously with Me, O house of Israel, saith the Lord.”*** Ezekiel 16:8, 13-15, 32; Jer. 3:20.

The New Testament church, just like the Jews, loved the world and the things of the world far too much, and turned her back on the greatest Lover in the universe. God called His people again out of Babylon in the Protestant Reformation. He still is calling His people to come out of Babylon in this day and age. We understand from Rev. 17:5 that Babylon is the mother of harlots and how true today that there are many



denominations and churches guilty of adultery as described by James when he wrote: ***“Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.”*** James 4:4.

It is difficult for us to understand why someone who is friends with the world is the enemy of God, for we live in this world and like the things of this world. Apart from a love affair with Jesus, there is no way you can really understand this.

The Lord tries to make it plain in the following Bible texts: ***“If the world hate you, ye know that it hated Me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.”*** John 15:18,19. ***“I have given them Thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.”*** John 17:14. ***“And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”*** Romans 12:2. ***“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.”*** 1 John 2:15-17.

Love is by choice. But today the Christian churches, who profess to love their Master and Lord supremely, seem to have much love for the world. We love the world's approval, the world's entertainment, the world's food, the world's materialism, its wealth, its styles, its fads. We love the world's customs, its luxuries, its interests. We like its recreation, its education, its degrees, its prestige, its achievements...

He says the world will hate you if you are really His. Give Him your heart for He is not willing to share you with another. He wants all your affections. Is not love like that? The Husband of the church is very different from the world, and how little we understand the difference. He is the meek and lowly One. What a clash that is with the world. He is the humble and self-denying One. The world is the complete antithesis of self-denial and humility. He said that the foxes have holes, the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man had no place to lay His head. Such was His poverty. Do you love Him more than what this world has to offer? Do you love His kind of lifestyle better than the lifestyle of the world. All who profess to love Him supremely turn their back on the world and do not look back. Looking back is called backsliding, which is giving your affections to someone else. It is not just leaving the church, or violating some regulations of the church. Backsliding is falling away from your love affair with Christ.

Those churches that turn to the world are fallen. ***“They fell by...the desire of imitating the practices and courting the friendship of the ungodly... To secure converts, the exalted standard of the Christian faith was lowered, and as the result 'a pagan flood, flowing into the church, carried with it its customs, practices, and idols'...As the Christian religion secured the favor and support of secular rulers, it was nominally accepted by multitudes; but while in appearance Christians, many 'remained in substance pagans, especially worshiping in secret their idols.’”*** GC 383-385.

The church throughout the ages has formed love

associations with the kings of the earth (Rev. 18:3, 17:2) where we are told that she commits fornication with them while professing to serve the King of grace. The Bible calls it fornication, and the Lord does not seem to be happy about it.

***“Many of the Protestant churches are following Rome's example of iniquitous connection with 'the kings of the earth'—the state churches, by their relation to secular governments; and other denominations, by seeking the favor of the world.”*** GC 383. Being in Babylon is not only loving the things and activities of the world, it is also loving the rulership and the kings and what they can provide for the church.

Even in America today, supposedly the land of religious freedom where the conscience is supreme, it seems that many denominations seeking federal and state aid. The Lord, in my understanding, is strongly opposed to this for a very unique reason: love is a choice. It is a response, not a demand or exaction, so He does not command it.

Every dime that any church receives from the government is tax money. Someone was forced to give that money... who may not want to give to any church. But he loses that freedom of conscience. He is forced to support us when we go to the government for money. Some people cannot see anything wrong with this. The problem is that the church has a Husband already, and He is King. He has a government, a kingdom called the kingdom of grace that does not include forced taxation.

Suppose a wife comes home to her husband with a very expensive mink coat that cost far beyond what he can afford...Later she comes home with an expensive car, and then jewelry. All the time the husband asks, “Where did you get that?” And she always answers, “From a very nice man who likes me and gives me what I want.” If the husband loves his wife, he must care about her affections and where she places them. He is concerned about losing her love.

Jesus gives His church everything she needs and He gives Himself to her and says He is with her always. But He asks her to deny herself of some of these things that might lure her away from Him. He asks for a love that forgets self and gives to others, a love that is a benefit to others, which is the law of life for earth and heaven. Strange as it might seem, those in the church who go to the world can justify their activities by saying that getting funds from the government is good for the church. Just look at how we are growing. Look at how our institutions are prospering. We are finishing God's work, they say.

The New Testament church brought in multitudes, but what they brought into the church was paganism, and they were no longer wholly Christ's.

Jesus today is asking for faithfulness, not because you must or have to, not because He demands it or exacts it, but because He has loved you. And He simply asks the question, “Will you give Me all your heart, all your affections? Will you make Me the center of your whole life?”

He has not been finding fault with all our activities as many say. He has been simply asking, “Don't you know that if you love Me with all your heart you will depend upon Me alone, and be faithful to Me? Don't you know you can trust Me? I will give you everything that you will ever possibly need; and in the kingdom to come I will give you things you never dreamed about.”

Let Him know today that you love Him.

~Pastor Bill Lehman (condensed from **Christ Our**



# A MATTER OF AUTHORITY

One of the confusing aspects of Christ our righteousness concerns obedience. So it is [this] topic that we want to examine in more detail.

"And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand." "Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus." Revelation 14:9,12. There are two kinds of performance being contrasted here: obedience to the beast by worshipping him, or obedience to God's commandments.

The same was true in old Babylon. We all know the story about the three Hebrews in the fiery furnace. [Daniel 3]...They had to worship the image or else suffer dreadful consequences. Obedience in this case was demanded,... required and legislated.

In Revelation 13:12-15, it says that all who dwell on the earth will be killed if they will not worship the beast and his image. There are two kinds of obedience found here: obedience to the beast and his image, and obedience to God. Both are obeying, are they not? But they are obeying vastly different authorities. Every human being is obedient, but not necessarily to God. Disobedience to God is, in reality, obedience to an authority other than God.

Some people obey governments, some obey their employer, parents, friends, peers, desires, philosophies, or thought leaders. If you are primarily concerned with what is right and wrong, you might totally miss the meaning of obedience. The dictionary says "obedient" means "submission to control, to restraint, or to command." All authorities have restraints, not just God and the church. Your friends have restraints, such as never telling their secrets. The government has many restraints such as traffic regulations and paying taxes. Ultimately, obedience means unconditional surrender to some authority. When captured by a superior force in war, the vanquished lay down their weapons, the fight is over, and they obey.

"Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" Romans 6:16. If I yield to an authority, I willingly choose to serve that authority.

The slavery that Paul wrote about—the slavery of the Christian life, or slavery to sin or Satan—is vastly different than forced slavery. If we lack freedom of choice, then once we find ourselves subject to an authority, we can never escape. God has decreed and has guaranteed freedom of choice for everyone.

"You desire to give yourself to Him, but you are weak in moral power, in slavery to doubt, and controlled by the habits of your life of sin. Your promises and resolutions are like ropes of sand. You cannot control your thoughts, your impulses, your affections...What you need to understand is the true force of the will. 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. The power of choice God has given to men; it is theirs to exercise. You cannot change your heart, you cannot of yourself give to God its affections; but you can choose to serve Him. You can give Him your will; He will then work in you to will and to do according to His good pleasure. Thus

your whole nature will be brought under the control of the Spirit of Christ; your affections will be centered upon Him, your thoughts will be in harmony with Him." SC 47.

God knew that this freedom of choice was basic and the most vital point of all Christianity, because everyone at some point finds themselves serving the wrong master. How do I escape from servitude to the wrong master? Not by trying to stop sinning. But I may choose Someone who has the power to lead me in a different life. I can turn around and make a new choice by His grace, and start all over again with a new master.

Look again at what happened in Babylon: "And whoso falleth not down and worshippeth shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace." Daniel 3:6. Christians will choose death over obedience to the wrong master. But God countermanded the king's decree .

Daniel chapter 6 tells how the leaders in Media Persia (the daughter of Babylon, as she is called by the prophets) deprived man of the privilege of prayer [Daniel 6]. It was decreed that for thirty days the people could only ask petitions of the king and of no other authority. They knew Daniel would pray during that time, so they intentionally deprived him of choice because the only other option was to be cast into the lion's den. God changed the king's commandment. And those who came down to rob men of freedom of choice ended up in the lion's den.

God always wants a willing, conscientious decision, no coercion, no legislated worship. God does not break the will. He seeks the cooperation of the will.

When in the last days the ruling authority shall decree "that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed" (Revelation 13:15), God will intervene. People must be allowed the freedom to choose whom they will serve. The only true freedom is freedom of conscience.



Some people define freedom in a way that is pure permissiveness; but doing your own thing is not freedom, for it deprives another person of his thing, and that is not love for others.

Both the Bill of Rights and God Himself guarantees freedom to all people. Therefore, my freedom is in the context of your freedom, and yours is in the context of my freedom... It is individualized and personal when it comes to choosing a master.

God will allow me to choose self or Satan. Many will ask God why He did not stop them. He did not because He would deprive them of freedom. Otherwise He would be just like the authorities of this world and like the beast that would legislate your activity. Many have discovered that they can do anything they please; and they also discover that they are in slavery to all kinds of sins. Once you start obeying, you are in submission to that authority.

Man is always free to turn around and leave one master and choose another. The Old Testament's symbolism was beautiful about this in the book of Exodus: "If thou buy an Hebrew servant, six years he shall serve: and in the seventh he shall go out free for nothing... And if the servant shall plainly say, I love my master [notice the word love], my wife, and my children; I will not go out free: Then... he shall serve him for ever." Exodus 21: 2,5,6. The servant chose to stay because he loved his master. Some will say God forces them because they will die if they do not obey God. That is a perversion of the Scriptures.

As Jesus left the temple for the last time He said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" Matthew 23:37. The word would has to do with the will. A mother hen gathers her chicks for protection from a hawk or an eagle. The Lord tells His people that He has often wanted to protect them, and has sent messages of love to them through the prophets, and invited all that labor and are heavy laden to go to Him for rest. But many will not go to Him. They will not choose Him to rule over them.

God's plea to mankind has always been, "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" Ezekiel 33:11. Wherever you go, the Lord will seek to remind you that He has chosen you. There is no pressure or force, just the still, small voice of the Holy Spirit. God is not the accuser. He is the Savior. Choose you this day, is what the Bible says. He wants to allure me and win me, not force me. "Yield yourselves unto God." Romans 6:6,13. It is your choice.

"Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants [or slaves] of righteousness." Romans 6:18... Some people say that our choice is to either sin or to do what is right. I do not think so. I think we can only choose which master we will have to rule over us. I do not become righteous by trying to be good or by choosing not to commit this or that sin. There is only One who can make us righteous. and so we must come to Him...

"This is His name whereby He shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS." Jeremiah 23:6. The word "Lord" means Master. When I make Him my Lord and my God, He masters me, He controls me, He restrains me, He commands me; and it is my willing submission that permits Him to do that.

Some will say, "Okay, He wants me to obey, so I will try my best to obey." That is not it at all. It is not trying to obey Him, but rather surrendering and submitting to Him, and making the choice for Him to dominate you.

It is somewhat like getting married. Some young ladies are actively campaigning to put the fellows into slavery, and some fellows are just waiting for the right person to capture them. Getting married brings about certain restraints. But if you love the other person, those restrictions are not so bad, are they? It all has to do with choice.

The Lord desires freedom for you and for me. When we choose the right Master, we obey Him because we love Him, and we find ourselves doing what He wants, and His will is righteousness. We know that "righteousness is love." (MB 18) and "obedience is a surrender of the heart to the sovereignty of love." MB 46. It is not something demanded. If you demand someone to marry you they will say, "Forget it!" I am motivated by love to make the choice to submit and to tell God I want Him to rule me. When I am happy with Him telling me what to do, I have found true Christianity.

What a perversion we have made of obedience. Obedience is not trying to be good. It is not trying to do the right thing. Obedience is an absolute surrender to His sovereign love. I yield everything to God, and ask Him to take over and rule me.

In Ephesians 5, Paul puts all this in the context of Christ and the church by talking about wives submitting themselves to their husbands, and husbands loving their wives. If a wife is not convinced of her husband's love, she is submitting by force. A good husband will love his wife so much that she cannot keep from loving him and submitting to him. The church is the bride of Christ, and He asks us to submit ourselves to Him, and in so doing, He will make us happy. The devil knows that freedom of choice will lead to obedience to the right Master, and therefore to righteousness; and the fact that people willingly submit to the sovereignty of God's love proves that the devil is a liar. Therefore, he seeks to prevent us from exercising our freedom of choice.

The beast power professes to speak for God. He sits in the place of God, and claims to represent God. Many believe that God is like that—that we must obey Him... And too often we use the devil's tactics in coercing our children, our neighbors, our friends. We do not woo them by love. We restrict them. We exact of them, we demand, we threaten, we oppress, we do all kinds of things and think that we are doing God's work. That is not God's work.

The Lord said, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me." John 12:32. In these last days, when the devil seeks to misrepresent God, He wants a people to demonstrate a love that is courteous and kind and tenderhearted. He wants a people that will love others so much that they will grant them ultimate freedom of choice. And as they walk by your house they say, "You are a different kind of Christian. Everybody else twists my arm, but you make me feel free to choose. You use only love to win me over. I like your God."

The King of all kings says, "Don't serve Me by fear or by force. Choose Me because you see My great love for you. I love you with an everlasting love. I cannot let you go." Whom will you serve?

~Pastor Bill Lehman (condensed from Christ Our



# THE KING'S WORDS

We have looked at authority and obedience and how they are central to justification by faith and the third angel's message, which are one and the same thing. **"Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?"** Romans 6:16.

This is not a forced or legislated obedience because **"righteousness is love"** (MB 18) and obedience is **"a surrender of the heart to the sovereignty of love."** MB 46. Jesus is called **"the Lord our Righteousness"** in Jeremiah 23:6.

This makes the proper choice of kings vital to the Christian life. We have mainly been concerned about the things that the law says we must do or must not do. Ellen White wrote that **"Righteousness is right doing, and it is by their deeds that all will be judged."** COL 312. But we usually leave out the definition that **"righteousness is love"** MB 18. There is more to righteousness than merely the what of Christian living—what we must do, what we must eat, what we must say. We must also be concerned about the Whom in righteousness—whom will you serve?

Jesus taught that **"this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, Whom Thou hast sent."** John 17:3. **"Every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love."** 1 John 4:7,8. And **"love is the fulfilling of the law"** according to Romans 13:10.

When Jesus came to this earth, born in Bethlehem, He came as a King to rule over the kingdom of grace. **"The government shall be upon His shoulder."** He does not rule in glory at this time, but He rules in grace. The wise men from the east asked, **"Where is He that is born King of the Jews?"** Matthew 2:2. Jesus preached that **"the kingdom of heaven is at hand."** Matthew 4:17. It is here right now, and He invites people to come and be subjects of His kingdom.

Some people ask, "How can He rule when He is not here anymore?" Very few people in a kingdom ever saw a king before television came along, but they were still ruled by the king. He ruled through his laws, and the king's words were most important. Christ has left us His word. The King still rules, and through His words, we know exactly what He wants, what His desires are, what His plans are, His wishes, and what He is like. Therefore, we have adequate opportunity to serve Him knowledgeably and intelligently.

As soon as this King was born, His rulership was contested. Herod issued a decree to kill all children less than two years of age. He did not want any competitors. The ultimate antagonist of Christ was the dragon, **"that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan."** Rev. 12:9. This was made plain

in the third temptation of Jesus in the wilderness. **"Again, the devil taketh Him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; And saith unto Him, All these things will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me. Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve."** Matthew 4:8-10.

Since the fall of Adam and Eve, Satan has claimed ownership of all the kingdoms of this world. He says the inhabitants of this world belong to him, since they have all sinned. Satan does not mention that his rulership **"was that wrested from Adam, but Adam was to reign subject to Christ. When Adam betrayed his sovereignty into Satan's hands, Christ still remained the rightful King. Satan can exercise his usurped authority only as God permits. When the tempter offered to Christ the kingdom and glory of the world, he was proposing that Christ should yield up the real kingship of the world, and hold dominion subject to Satan."** DA 129,130.

This contest, or controversy between Christ and Satan, is seen in Isaiah 14:12-14. Lucifer is symbolized by the king of Babylon. **"For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High."** Lucifer wants to rule and dominate men, for he knows if we are ever won to Christ,

his cause is lost, and we will become righteous because we serve a righteous King.

We have come to the day and age when many despise authority. Everywhere this spirit of rebellion, this anti-authority, is rampant. Everyone wants to do his own thing. No one wants anyone to tell him what to do. This anarchy is sweeping all over the land.

Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, came to realize that God had given him his kingdom. He said, **"Your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings."** Daniel 2:47. But Nebuchadnezzar found out that another kingdom would come after his, and he did not like that. So he had an image built entirely of gold, not merely with a head of gold like in his dream, to show that his kingdom would be everlasting. Now he was in a contest with God who had given him the kingdom. To guarantee no one would come after him, he had all those he ruled gather together and worship this image, showing there would be no rebellion in his kingdom. Everyone bowed down except three; and you know the story as described in Daniel 3. When Nebuchadnezzar saw that



there was One like the Son of man in the fiery furnace with the three Hebrews, he discovered that there was Someone greater than he. ***“Then Nebuchadnezzar ... said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who hath sent His angel, and delivered His servants that trusted in Him, and have changed the king’s word.”*** Daniel 3:28.

After a while Nebuchadnezzar changed his mind, and he said, ***“Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?”*** Daniel 4:30. He no longer acknowledged that the King of kings had given him his kingdom. The result was a terrible humiliation. ***“They shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and they shall wet thee with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over thee, till thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will.”*** Daniel 4:25. God raises up leaders, and God takes them down. He is in charge, not you or me or a political party. God does not operate a democracy, which is a little shocking to those in countries like the United States.

The Lord had ruled His people through prophets down through the centuries. As He gave His commands and His words, the prophets went to the people with His messages. But the Jews desired to be like the world, just as we do today. The other nations had kings. Samuel told the people what would happen when men rule over them, and how they would be oppressed and enslaved and pay heavy taxes. They still said they wanted a king. So God gave them a king, under certain conditions. ***“The king was not to be an absolute monarch, but was to hold his power in subjection to the will of the Most High.”*** PP 611. There was a higher power over the king, and to make that clear, God Himself chose the king. ***“The government of Israel was administered in the name and by the authority of God ... God was to be recognized as the Head of the nation, and His law was to be enforced as the supreme law of the land.”*** PP 603. Why did He want to be over the king? ***“God desired His people to look to Him alone as their Law-giver and their Source of strength. Feeling their dependence upon God, they would be constantly drawn nearer to Him. But when a man was placed upon the throne they would trust more to human strength, and less to divine power, and the errors of their king would lead them into sin and separate the nation from God.”*** PP 606. The Lord knew what He was doing.

When king Saul went down to the witch of Endor and listened to a prophet of the devil, he was saying that he did not want the Lord to tell him what to do. He would rather let the devil tell him what to do.

All this gives us a better understanding of Revelation 12:17, where it says that Satan is angry with the remnant, and he goes to make war against those who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus: the Spirit of Prophecy (Rev. 19:10). God is ruling them. They not only keep His commandments, but they listen to His directions through His prophet. Satan is furious and he wars against them. He wants to rule in the place of God. He does not want anyone to listen to the King of kings. This is why the subjects of obedience and the Spirit of Prophecy are two of the most controversial subjects. You can also see why, in the last days, Satan raises up so many false prophets and teachers claiming to speak for God. When he finds you obeying the commandments of God and listening to the

directions of His prophet, it frightens him.

In modern Babylon, we still have the same issues, for modern Babylon ***“reigneth over the kings of the earth.”*** Revelation 17:18. Satan has always had a beast, or a kingdom, so he can rule over the people of the world, and the beast is so successful that the people ask: ***“Who is able to make war with him?”*** Revelation 13:4. The Bible provides the answer: ***“And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and He that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He doth judge and make war.”*** Revelation 19:11. Christ conquers Babylon, establishing Himself as King of kings and Lord of lords.

Prior to that time, the devil wants to make sure you are not saved. ***“Satan will not only appear as a human being, but he will impersonate Jesus; and the world that has rejected the truth will receive him as the lord of lords and king of kings.”*** 5BC 1106.

Are you beginning to understand these concepts of obedience and authority and rulership? We have envisioned it as someone telling us what to do, and we do not like that. We say, “Get off of my back and leave me alone.” That is not the problem at all. There are two kings contesting for your allegiance, your loyalty, and your service. It is a fight unto death for us and for them.

We may choose whom we serve, but we must also know whom we serve. If we do not know Christ, we can never know Satan. If you cannot tell the difference, it simply means you do not know Jesus. His word makes it clear who God is. Before He returns, Christ is counting on you and me to demonstrate to the world what it is like to be like Jesus. This is a most important thing.

We can never be like Jesus while we try to be righteous by ourselves. We can never be like Jesus while we do not know Him, or by trying to do what is right. We can only be like Jesus by submitting to the sovereignty of His love and obeying Him as our loving King. Jesus is humble, meek and lowly; totally self-forgetful and mindful only of others and their needs. He came to serve and to bless others and to demonstrate God’s love. Our King wants us to be like Him. The world will never know God until Christians obey the King of righteousness, because they love Him. They will demonstrate to the world what God is like. Jesus is waiting for this, but the devil says it will never happen. He claims that humans are as selfish and greedy as he is, and he still claims that we are all his.

The Bible teaches that ***“of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage.”*** 2 Peter 2:19. Since Satan has overcome us, he says we are his. But Christ said that Satan is the originator of all lies. The truth is that Christ has conquered Satan. He has defeated the king who claimed to own us, and now all that belonged to Satan now belongs to Jesus. The Lord says to us, “I have already won you in battle, redeemed you with My precious blood, and you belong to Me!” There is still a choice we must make even though He has won. We must decide if He has won our heart, our affections, our time, our interest, our money, our plans. What do you say?

Christ, the King of kings is coming to claim all who acknowledge that He has won them. He wants you to be in that precious group. This is our God, and He is our King. ***“Lo, we have waited for Him, and He will save us.”*** Isaiah 25:9.

~Pastor Bill Lehman (condensed from **Christ Our**



# THE PATH TO THE HEART

The subject of medical ministry is intimately related to the subject of Christ our righteousness.

You may recall the experience of John the Baptist while languishing in prison. This mighty man of faith began to have some doubts, and he sent his disciples to ask some questions of Jesus. **“When the men were come unto Him, they said, John Baptist hath sent us unto Thee, saying, Art Thou He that should come? or look we for another?”** Luke 7:19-23.

**“The Saviour did not at once answer the disciples’ question. As they stood wondering at His silence, the sick and afflicted were coming to Him to be healed. The blind were groping their way through the crowd; diseased ones of all classes, some urging their own way, some borne by their friends, were eagerly pressing into the presence of Jesus. The voice of the mighty Healer penetrated the deaf ear. A word, a touch of His hand, opened the blind eyes to behold the light of day, the scenes of nature, the faces of friends, and the face of the Deliverer. Jesus rebuked disease and banished fever.**

**His voice reached the ears of the dying, and they arose in health and vigor. Paralyzed demoniacs obeyed His word, their madness left them, and they worshiped Him. While He healed their diseases, He taught the people. The poor peasants and laborers, who were shunned by the rabbis as unclean, gathered close about Him, and He spoke to them the words of eternal life. Thus the day wore away, the disciples of John seeing and hearing all. At last Jesus called them to Him, and bade them go and tell John what they had witnessed, adding, ‘Blessed is he, whosoever shall find none occasion of stumbling in Me.’ Luke 7:23, R.V. The evidence of His divinity was seen in its adaptation to the needs of suffering humanity. His glory was shown in His condescension to our low estate.”** DA 216-217.

What a testimony John’s disciples took back! John had read Isaiah 61 concerning the Messiah, so after hearing his disciples’ report, he knew this was the Christ. This was Immanuel—God with us. He was verily God who had taken human flesh. Healing and teaching the people was the common routine of His ministry. He left some villages where there was not one sick person left. This was the evidence of His divinity and that He was the Messiah.

We have had many concepts of righteousness that revolve around ourselves and our own improvement; but His whole life revolved around doing for others and thinking about others.

By now we should all know that **“righteousness is love”** (MB 18) and that obedience is the **“service and allegiance of love”** (SC 60). Righteousness and obedience both involve being a blessing to others.

In Matthew 25, there is a scene of the righteous and their reward in the Judgment. Notice that they did the same activities as Christ did. They gave food to the hungry, clothing to the naked, visited the fatherless and widows in their affliction; and as He speaks about this, they ask Him

when they saw Him hungry, and naked, etc. Christ responds in verse 40: **“Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me.”**

The neglect of these things—the lack of concern for other human beings—was met with punishment. This idea that sin is the neglect and abuse of people is a different concept of sin than we have often had. Sin is not just a mistake I make, or some slip in my life. The wicked are punished because they just do not care about people. The Lord loved people. Every human was precious to Him. Those who really love Jesus love His people; and they cannot bear to see them hurt.

**“Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?”** Isaiah 58:5,7. John asked, **“He**

**that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?”** 1 John 4:20.

Isaiah continues on in verse 10: **“And if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noonday.”** When Jesus came,

**He was called “the true Light.”** 1 John 1:9.

**“The light of His glory—His character—is to shine forth in His followers. Thus they are to glorify God, to lighten the path to the Bridegroom’s home, to the city of God, to the marriage supper of the Lamb.”** COL 414.

**“It is the darkness of misapprehension of God that is enshrouding the world. Men are losing their knowledge of His character. It has been misunderstood and misinterpreted. At this time a message from God is to be proclaimed, a message illuminating in its influence and saving in its power. His character is to be made known. Into the darkness of the world is to be shed the light of His glory, the light of His goodness, mercy, and truth.”** COL 415.

We are told that this is the very last work. **“Those who wait for the Bridegroom’s coming are to say to the people, ‘Behold your God.’ The last rays of merciful light, the last message of mercy to be given to the world, is a revelation of His character of love.”** COL 415.

**“All around us are heard the wails of a world’s sorrow. On every hand are the needy and distressed. It is ours to aid in relieving and softening life’s hardships and misery. Practical work will have far more effect than mere sermonizing. We are to give food to the hungry, clothing to the naked, and shelter to the homeless. And we are called to do more than this... If Christ is abiding in us, our hearts will be full of divine sympathy.”** COL 417.

49 The world today is asking the question: “Where are the people of God?” They want to see Jesus. When we feed and clothe those who need our help, it is the same as doing it

“ The last message of mercy to be given to the world is a revelation of His character of love. ”

unto Jesus. **“For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in My name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward.”** Mark 9:41.

Another reason for taking up this work is found in the words of Solomon the wise man. **“He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord; and that which he hath given will He pay him again.”** Did you ever think the Lord would want to borrow something? When I take pity on the poor and give to them whatever it is that they need, I am not just giving to them. The wise man teaches I am lending to God, and He will repay me again.

In these verses and others, the Lord is teaching us that all humanity belongs to Him. All of us **“are bought with a price.”** 1 Corinthians 6:20. **“Behold, all souls are Mine.”** Ezekiel 18:4. **“The earth is the Lord’s, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.”** Psalms 24:1. Humanity is His property. What is your interest in people and how do you feel about them? They are God’s property.

We live in a time of great mistreatment of people, from the wars that rage throughout the world to strife in our own families. Our children feel greatly neglected, not for lack of things, but for lack of dad and mother. The parents are so busy obtaining the things they think their children need and want that the children do not have the benefit of time with them. We are rushing through life in our mad pursuit of things, and people have become unimportant. The old people in your community, the singles both young and old, even students far from home, can all tell you how unimportant they are. It is difficult to find somebody who cares. We need friends, but how little time we have for each other. The Lord said that the last work is to understand people’s needs and to minister to those needs. If Jesus came all the way from heaven to spend all day long doing things like this, then who and what is more important than this type of activity? Almost everything we are doing could be left undone if we only took time for people. Helping just one human being brightens the whole day, does it not? And that night when you kneel down to pray, you thank the Lord and say it was a good day.

Some people believe all this, but ask, “What can I do?” Jesus only said to give them what you have. It can be kind words, or a firm handshake. We need to get close to people. We need each other. What you have may not be food. It may be a room for a while in your home or kind words. Just give what you have. And everyday the Lord will send the right people to you.

**“In the gift of His Son for our redemption, God has shown how high a value He places upon every human soul, and He gives to no man liberty to speak contemptuously of another. We shall see faults and weaknesses in those about us, but God claims every soul as His property—His by creation, and doubly His as purchased by the precious blood of Christ.”** MB 56,57.

We are always judging people by appearances, and some people just do not look like His property. But God does

not judge us by our appearance or by what we are now. He judges us by our potential. **“I will make a man more precious than fine gold.”** Isaiah 13:12. It is not what a person is; it is what the Master Craftsman can do with human clay. Let us not minimize the Potter, for we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us. When the Lord goes to work on us, we are like jewels in His crown, precisely cut. We all know people who we never dreamed would become such agents for the Lord. Those students, those wiggle worms and rascals, often turn out to be missionaries and outstanding leaders, very dedicated to the Lord and His work

**“The medical missionary work... is the heaven-ordained means of finding entrance to the hearts of people.”** MM 241.

Medical ministry is unique because it has to do with life, and nothing is closer to our hearts than life—our own and that of our loved ones and friends. The hardest hearts, the most difficult to reach, will be reached by those in this ministry. Therefore, God says that not only the physicians and nurses and paramedics must get involved, but the ministers and lay members must get involved in meeting the physical needs of people, because this is the path to the heart.

Jesus said **“I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.”** John 10:10. As His followers, we establish that by bringing them the physical life first. Then the heart is open to receive the spiritual life.

The destroyer has come to bring death; and all of those on the Lord’s side are fighting the enemy of mankind and fostering life, whether it be providing food or clothing or a home or friendship or in attacking and fighting sickness. This activity is true righteousness. If I understand Isaiah 58 correctly,

when we do this work, motivated by love for man and for God, concerned about life and God’s property, then it will be that this chapter is fulfilled: **“And if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noonday.”** **“Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and He shall say, Here I am.”** We will see answers to prayer, almost immediately. **“And the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not.”**

You will be like a refreshing stream that gives life to all around. This is a precious work the world is crying for.

It is wonderful to love people; and the next time we meet someone with the love of Christ in our hearts, they can feel it all the way down to their toes.

The Lord still has this plan for us, doesn’t He? Through Him, we may manifest this compassion and kindness that the world might know that God is love. And He will say to us, along with millions of other people as we get to that heavenly home, **“Well done, thou good and faithful servant. Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.”** Matthew 25:21.

~Pastor Bill Lehman (condensed from **Christ Our**





# OWNED AND OPERATED BY?

Who controls you? Who tells you what to do? People these days like to say they do their own thing. In a previous chapter we discovered that obedience to the right authority brings righteousness. ***“Know ye not that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey, whether of sin unto death, or obedience unto righteousness.”*** Romans 6:16.

Obedience and authority are not very tasteful words to many people these days. We have been told so many times that we must or must not do this and that, and when we discover we are unable to do some of those things we are required to do, we experience great guilt; and we seek to avoid that by avoiding authority. This is a different kind of obedience than most of us think about.

***“Obedience is the surrender of the heart to the sovereignty of love.”*** MB 46. This obedience is not legislated or forced. It is not demanded or exacted. Obedience is the willing surrender of the heart to love. If Jesus is our Lord He becomes the Lord our Righteousness—the Master and King of righteousness in our lives.

Satan knows this better than any of us, and he seeks to hinder or impair it in a most unique way. ***“For there shall arise false christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.”*** Matthew 24:24. There will be false christs and false authorities who have false laws and directions. People will follow and serve them and therefore be led to unrighteousness, or to a false concept of serving God. We assume that we cannot be deceived by a false christ. But there exist many authorities, many voices claiming to speak for God, and many misrepresentations of God.

***“And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, and His tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven.”*** Revelation 13:6. Paul described the same power this way: ***“Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.”*** 2 Thessalonians 2:4. Satan has set up other authorities who demand obedience instead of winning it. Everyone will obey some Christ or some god, but not necessarily the true God. All will say they are obedient, all will say they are righteous, and all will be content that others are not obedient because they serve a different god. This presents a very confusing picture.

The Bible says that the false christ will blaspheme God. When Jesus forgave the man let down through the roof by his friends, the Jews said he blasphemed God, for He, being a man, made Himself to be God, claiming the rights and prerogatives of God. The Bible teaches that Satan will do this through certain agents and powers in the earth today. Authority asserts itself through laws and decrees. If you obey those laws and decrees, you

become the subject of that authority.

We know that Satan has set up a power that will ***“seek to change times and laws.”*** Daniel 7:25. He attacks the authority of the Lawgiver and attempts to make the law of no effect. A decree will go forth where people must worship the image to the beast. ***“And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do... and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed.”*** Rev. 13:14,15.

Satan is most interested in attacking the one commandment that points out the authority of the Lawgiver. ***“The fourth commandment only, of all the ten, brings to view both the name and the title of the Lawgiver. It declares Him to be the Creator of the heavens and the earth, and thus shows His claim to reverence and worship above all others. Aside from this precept, there is nothing in the Decalogue to show by whose authority the law is given.”*** GC 452. The fourth commandment is the object of Satan’s wrath and attacks, because he wants to be the authority. He wants to be like God.

***“The duty to worship God is based upon the fact that He is the Creator and that to Him all other beings owe their existence. And wherever, in the Bible, His claim to reverence and worship, above the gods of the heathen, is presented, there is sighted the evidence of His creative power.”*** GC 436,437. ***“Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for Thou hast created all things.”*** Revelation 4:11. ***“The importance of the Sabbath as a memorial of creation is that it keeps ever present the true reason why worship is due to God... The true ground of divine worship, not that of the seventh day merely, but of all worship, is found the distinction between the Creator and His creatures.”*** Ibid.

The Bible points out that God is our Father, the source of all life, and the provider and sustainer of all that live. ***“The Lord hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master’s crib: but Israel doth not know, My people doth not consider.”*** Isaiah 1:1,2. Animals, as far as they are able to manifest it, have affection for their owners and their providers. When the farmer walks in the barn, the cattle react in a certain way, like a dog that wags his tail. The good master, the one who cares for them, has come. And they obey.

The Lord wonders how His people, whom He constantly provides for, can constantly rebel. How can they be so unfeeling and insensitive? By creation and redemption, God owns us. He feeds and nourishes us. There is One that oversees everything in life, Who keeps the sun rising and the rain coming in due season, Who never slumbers or sleeps. As we sense His protection and provision, our hearts



respond. If you love your Master, obey Him.

There is another aspect of this creatorship of God. **"If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."** 2 Cor. 5:17. This new creation is the heart and soul of righteousness by faith in Christ. Satan knows the centrality of conversion and the new life, and he seeks to attack this in a most unusual way. He claims that man cannot keep God's law, that it is impossible to obey God. Far too many today believe that Satan is right, but in Christ we can do all things. Satan leaves Christ out of the picture.

Our heavenly Father intervenes when man has fallen, and demonstrates His law (or His character), which is love, to man. As He loves the fallen man, who is still in the image of God and rightfully the property of our heavenly Father, man responds. This is what God is talking about in Isaiah, regarding animals that know and obey their owners. Will the animals respond and obey better than we?

**"The light shining from the cross reveals the love of God. His love is drawing us to Himself [not demanding, not exacting]. If we do not resist this drawing, we shall be led to the foot of the cross in repentance for the sins that have crucified the Saviour. Then the Spirit of God through faith produces a new life in the soul. The thoughts and desires are brought into obedience to the will of Christ... Then the law of God is written in the mind and heart, and we can say with Christ, 'I delight to do Thy will, O my God.' Psalm 40:8."** DA 176.

The devil does not want anyone to hear these words, because if God can make a new life in you, you will be brought into harmony with God, and His law and character of love. If we respond by loving Him who first loved us you begin to be righteous—you begin to obey the right authority.

**"In the new birth the heart is brought into harmony with God, as it is brought into accord with His law. When this mighty change has taken place in the sinner, he has passed from death unto life, from sin unto holiness, from transgression and rebellion to obedience and loyalty. The old life of alienation from God has ended; the new life of reconciliation, of faith and love, has begun."** GC 468. The devil says we cannot keep the law, but Jesus says that He will love His people, and they will love Him, and then they will keep the law, for love is the fulfilling of the law.

Only the Creator can recreate, and there is only one Creator. The false christ cannot. He can give you a marvelous experience. In fact, you might jump up and down and holler. You might speak in gibberish and get goose bumps all over. You might even do miracles. But that is not conversion. Those things might be related to conversion, or they might not be, but the Bible teaches that conversion is a new heart and a new mind that is brought into harmony with God and His law. We love His law and His way, loving Him supremely and our neighbor as ourselves. This is what the Creator does in us, but the other experience is vastly different.

Our Father claims us as His, and as we respond to His love, He recreates His image in us. The devil does not like us to think about the Creator. In order to prevent that, he gets people to forget the Sabbath, because the Sabbath is a constant reminder of a marvelous Creator who made man in the beginning and is able to remake and recreate us. The devil wants us to forget that, for it would lead to obedience and righteousness. Satan must attack the law in order to eliminate the Sabbath, and this he does in many ways. For years he perverted the law in my mind. I made the law all "thou shalt not

shalt nots" and "thou shalt." I made the law a list of demands, and I made the Judgment, where we are judged by the law, a God looking down on me with a microscope looking for every flaw and deviation to see how bad I was, so He can make me burn. Jesus never understood or taught the law that way.

I would like to suggest that the Judgment is looking to see if we respond to His love. Or do we rebel against His love? When I see His magnificent love for me, do I in turn love Him supremely and my neighbor as myself? Do I adore Him as a Father and a provider? The Bible teaches that He will give me a heart of flesh, and how meaningful that symbol is. He will take away the heart of stone—the unfeeling, insensitive, lukewarm, and careless heart. Half of the commandments deal with our feelings for people. It is not trying to avoid telling lies. It is having feelings for people so that I do not want to hurt them. It is not avoiding adultery or coveting. Is my heart concerned for you? Is there any sensitivity there? Is your life precious to me? Our God has such a tender regard for all life, even for the sparrow, as Jesus taught. The Bible teaches that God's people will be like Him when He comes—compassionate, perceptive, and sensitive. And He wants us to let this light of love shine all over the earth, to every human being that they might know the Fatherhood of our God; that they might know our Creator who made all good things for man, and Who wants to restore in him the image of God. He wants the world to see that God is love—not a permissive God, but a God of grace who understands.

I discovered years ago that I had a heart of stone when it comes to people. I could say I loved people, but I could think evil thoughts about them. Can you? I could misinterpret their actions. I could have vengeful thoughts, lose my temper with people. I could even figure out ways to get even. The Bible says that this is an unfeeling heart—a heart of stone. The Lords wants to take it away and give us a heart of flesh, a tender and compassionate one. But Satan wants us to have a heart of stone that is demanding and exacting. This is the legislated and forced heart. Do what I say, or else. Satan's followers will be manifested especially in the death decree when they legislate to take life, and all because others do not think as they think.

In the last days, there will be two kinds of people: those with hearts of stone, and those with hearts of flesh. There will be those who love life and those who destroy life. There will be those who love and adore the Life Giver, and those who have allegiance to the destroyer. And the contrast will be great. Like Jesus, the righteous will pray for those who seek to take their lives, for we cannot bear the thought of them being lost for all eternity. It will break our hearts because they are precious to Him. Jesus will look at those who follow the destroyer and say as He said to the rebellious Jews, **"How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!"** Matthew 23:37.

The Sabbath is at the heart of this controversy because it points out a loving Creator and a loving Father. May God help us to understand in these very confusing times what He is really like and what He is trying to do for everyone of us. And may we have, by the miracle of His re-creation, those beautiful, tender hearts that manifest the marvelous attributes of the Life Giver.

**servant. Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."** Matthew 25:21.

~Pastor Bill Lehman (condensed from **Christ Our**

**Righteousness, chapter 25)**



# THE GOD MAN

One of the most controversial aspects of Christ our Righteousness is the humanity of Jesus. In 1888, Elder A. T. Jones strongly emphasized the humanity of Christ as it relates to Christ our righteousness. Whatever your concept of the humanity of Christ is, determines your understanding of righteousness by faith in Christ and the plan of salvation.

There are essentially two main divisions of thought. One is that Christ took the nature of Adam prior to his fall. Another group believe that He took the fallen, sinful nature of man after the four thousand years of sin. I would like to suggest that there could be other opinions.

I would like to give you some of the evidence each group uses to support their view. *"And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit... The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven."* 1 Cor. 15:45,47. These verses establish that Jesus was the second Adam: *"the Lord from heaven"* (verse 47); and some people that say since He was the second Adam, then He must have been like Adam before he sinned.

Here are several quotes used to support the idea that Christ took the nature of Adam prior to his fall: *"Be careful, exceedingly careful as to how you dwell upon the human nature of Christ. Do not set Him before the people as a man with the propensities of sin. He is the second Adam. But not for one moment was there in Him an evil propensity."* 5BC 1128. *"The incarnation of Christ has ever been, and will ever remain a mystery. That which is revealed, is for us and for our children, but let every human being be warned from the ground of making Christ altogether human, such an one as ourselves; for it cannot be."* 5BC 1129. *"Christ is called the second Adam. In purity and holiness, connected with God and beloved by God, He began where the first Adam began."* MLT 323. *"He [Christ] vanquished Satan in the same nature over which, in Eden, Satan obtained the victory."* 5BC 1108.

Many quotations are used by both sides of this issue. For example: *"He was born without a taint of sin, but came into the world in like manner as the human family."* (LHU, p. 345), and: *"We should have no misgivings in regard to the perfect sinlessness of the human nature of Christ."* 1SM 256

There are also many examples of texts and quotes that seem to support the idea that Christ took man's nature after four thousand years of sin. *"Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil."* *"Wherefore in all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people."* Heb. 2:14,17.

*"It would have been an almost infinite humiliation for the Son of God to take man's nature, even when Adam stood in his innocence in Eden. But Jesus accepted humanity when the race had been weakened by four thousand years of sin. Like every child of Adam He accepted the results of the working of*

*the great law of heredity. What these results were is shown in the history of His earthly ancestors. He came with such a heredity to share our sorrows and temptations, and to give us the example of a sinless life."* DA 49. This quote is quite specific that Christ took man's nature after four thousand years of sin, and not prior to Adam's sin.

Here are a few more examples used to support this view: *"He assumed the liabilities of human nature."* 1SM 226. *"He became flesh even as we are."* MH 422. *"For four thousand years the race had been decreasing in physical strength, in mental power, and in moral worth; and Christ took upon Him the infirmities of degenerate humanity."* DA 117. *"He bore the sins and infirmities of the race as they existed when He came to earth to help man."* 5BC 1081. *"Taking upon Himself our fallen nature."* QD 657. *"He took upon His sinless nature our sinful nature, that He might know how to succor those that are tempted."* MM 181. *"He took man's degraded nature and defiled by sin."* 4BC 1147.

I would like to suggest that you do not have to go to either view. Often (but not always) the right opinion is somewhere between the two. There is one thing we must make certain of about Christ as we study: *"The first Adam was in every way more favorably situated than was Christ. Christ was tempted by Satan in a hundredfold severer manner than was Adam."* MLT 323. So Jesus certainly did

not have as many advantages as Adam had; He also did not have advantages over mankind in general. *"If Christ had a special power which it is not the privilege of man to have, Satan would have made capital of this matter. The work of Christ was to take from the claims of Satan his control of man, and He could do this only in the way that He came—a man, tempted as a man, rendering the obedience of a man."* 7BC 930.

In no way did Jesus have any privileges or opportunities or rights that we do not have, and He had far greater temptations than any human being will ever have. When all the forces of evil assailed Him, everything depended on His resistance to temptation.

Some people believe that we are born guilty because of our parents' sin and because of Adam's sin. Others say it cannot be. I would suggest that we become guilty by our own acts and not by our parents' acts. Dealing with our own humanity: *"As related to the first Adam, men receive from him nothing but guilt and the sentence of death."* 7BC 9. *"The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be."* Romans 8:7. *"Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil."* Jeremiah 13:23. *"In his sinful nature he [man] could not keep the law of God."* PP 373. *"[Man] has no power and no disposition to resist Satan."* PP 53. *"Our hearts are evil and we can not change them."* SC 18. *"In our own strength it is impossible for us to deny the clamors of our fallen nature."* DA 122. *"The image of Satan was upon men and Christ came that He might bring to*



them more power and efficiency." 7BC 925.

Man's fall was radical and severe. "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me." Psalms 51:5. Job asked, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one." Job 14:4. "We are all as an unclean thing." Isaiah 64:6. Do these texts that describe our human condition refer also to Jesus? Some would say He must be identical to us or He cannot be our example and our Savior; and therefore, He must be contaminated, or unclean.

But then we are left to explain what the Bible means when it says, "And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee [Mary], and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." Luke 1:35. Was it necessary for Jesus to be converted, or born again? He was baptized, but "Jesus did not receive baptism as a confession of guilt on His own account." DA 111. He set a right example. But He was not baptized with confession of His own sin, neither by birth nor performance.

It is certain that I need to be born again and I need to be cleansed. I must have a new birth, the Bible teaches. I would like to suggest that the humanity of Jesus was not like us in our first birth, but like us in our second birth. Now let me show you why I believe this.

Jesus taught: "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." John 3:5,6. When I have been born of my mother, I am only flesh. When we are born again by the Holy Spirit, then we are spirit, too. This happened to Jesus, I believe, at His first birth. "The angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost." Matt. 1:18-21.

Jesus was conceived by the Holy Ghost at His birth, but we are not born of the Spirit until our second birth. "And that ye put on the new man [the new birth], which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." Ephesians 4:24. Man is recreated, born again, converted in righteousness and true holiness, because he is born of the Holy Spirit. Apparently, since Jesus was conceived by the Holy Ghost, He was holy because of His Father, the Holy Spirit; yet He was human because of His mother.

Another reason for so many disagreements about the humanity of Christ is His duality of nature. We are told that the disciples "had not understood the mystery of His incarnation, the dual character of His nature." DA 507. "But although Christ's divine glory was for a time veiled and eclipsed by His assuming humanity, yet He did not cease to be God when He became man. The human did not take the place of the divine, nor the divine of the human. This is the mystery of godliness. The two expressions 'human' and 'divine' were, in Christ, closely and inseparably one, and yet they had a distinct individuality. Though Christ humbled Himself to become man, the Godhead was still His own. His deity could not be lost while He stood faithful and true to His loyalty." 5BC 1129

In addition to His duality of nature, Jesus came to be the second Adam. We are told that Jesus "stands at the head of humanity." MH 399. Christ takes Adam's place, and in this position, He must conquer where Adam failed, redeem what Adam lost, be righteous where Adam was sinful—for the whole human family. He made provision to save the whole human family.

"Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned... even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." Romans 5:12-19. Did He save us in His humanity alone? "Humanity died, but divinity did not die." RH May 22, 1894. Therefore, how then did He save us?

The answer is an important one for us. "No sorrow, no agony, can measure with that which was endured by the Son of God. Man has not been made a sin-bearer, and he will never know the horror of the curse of sin which the Saviour bore. No sorrow can bear any comparison with the sorrow of Him upon whom the wrath of God fell with overwhelming force. Human nature can endure but a limited amount of test and trial. The finite can only endure the finite measure, but the nature of Christ had a greater capacity for suffering; for the human existed in the divine nature, and created a capacity for suffering to endure that which resulted from the sins of a lost world." 5BC 1103.

Jesus had this capacity because He had both divinity and humanity. "The agony which Christ endured, broadens, deepens, and gives a more extended conception of the character of sin, and the character of the retribution which God will bring upon those who continue in sin. The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ to the repenting, believing sinner. Justice demanded the sufferings of man; but Christ rendered the sufferings of a God. He needed no atonement of suffering for Himself; all His sufferings were for us." FLB 102.

Jesus provided the sufferings of a God. How much can God suffer? While He suffered in His humanity, divinity also suffered for us. This totality of Jesus produced a capability that pays all my debt and all my punishment; and how happy and grateful we should be. There is no other one like Jesus.

As a result of all these various aspects, it appears to me that Christ did take man's simple nature after four thousand years of sin. But He does not become like man in his natural birth, but rather like man in his rebirth. This does not give Him any advantage that I cannot have. I am still human. I still have to walk this earth faced with all manner of temptations; but now I have an enabling power brought to me by Jesus. Therefore He can be a perfect example, perfect righteousness, and perfect hope for me.

We have no connection with God except through Jesus. "No man cometh unto the Father, but by Me." John 14:6. All our hope, all our help, all our power, all the enabling is in the divinity of Christ. He trusted in the divinity of His Father, and we trust in His divinity. If He had not come, how utterly helpless we would be, for without Him we can do nothing. (John 15:5). All this power that you and I need—the power to recreate fallen man—is in Jesus. That power bridged the gulf of the separation that sin brought, and God came over to our side of the gap in the person of Christ, to take our fallen nature that He might bring us power, and salvation, and redemption, and hope, and righteousness.

This is my Jesus, and yours. I may not understand all about Him, but I know He did this because we are so extremely precious. May God help us to grasp the fullness of what He has done for us, and the enormity of the atonement.

~Pastor Bill Lehman (condensed from **Christ Our**



# THE LAW IN CHRIST OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS

The law is an important part of the topic of Christ our righteousness, and there is a large controversy concerning it. Many of the advocates of Christ our righteousness are accused of diminishing the importance of the law, and even bypassing it. Those on the other side of the question are accused of being legalists and of attempting to keep the law in their own strength. Then there is another group of people who emphasize only the spirit of the law and are not so concerned with the letter of the law. They are often termed as permissive or liberal concerning Christian behavior. Each group believes it is right and they are convinced the other is wrong. Whenever good people argue, there is correctness on both sides, and we must make the effort to learn where we are wrong.

Somehow we have not preached the law correctly or we would not find such statements as this one: ***"We have preached the law until we are as dry as the hills of Gilboa, that had neither dew nor rain. We must preach Christ in the law, and there will be sap and nourishment in the preaching that will be as food to the famishing flock of God."*** COR 48. If you leave Christ out of the law, you are preaching old covenant law.

Does God change His law in the new covenant? ***"For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put My laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to Me a people."*** Hebrews 8:10. Where is the law in the old covenant? It is on stone, and that is the only place it is. Where is the law in the new covenant? The heart. The difference between the law in stone and the law in the heart is primarily a change in location.

***"Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart."*** 2 Cor. 3:3. This is speaking specifically about the Ten Commandment law, for no other law was written on "tables of stone." The law does not change, but when it is in my heart it changes me.

***"The terms of the 'old covenant' were, Obey and live: 'If a man do, he shall even live in them' (Ez. 20:11; Lev. 18:5); but 'cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them.' Deut. 27:26."*** PP 372. The terms of the old covenant were that we must obey the Ten Commandment law and live; but if you do not obey them, you will die. And if you do not keep all of them all of the time, you will die. Some of us have attempted to live under the old covenant not realizing its requirements. The law cannot save and we are incapable of keeping it. ***"Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil."*** Jer. 13:23.

When you accept the Bible teachings about man's incapability in righteousness, you are ready for God to do something for you that you cannot do. Too many of us are preaching only the law on stone, and it only condemns and

frustrates people.

The Scriptures teach that Christ is the Mediator of a better covenant that was established upon better promises. ***"The 'new covenant' was established upon 'better promises' [Heb. 8:6]—the promise of forgiveness of sins and of the grace of God to renew the heart and bring it into harmony with the principles of God's law."*** PP 372.

***"This shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts... I will forgive their iniquity, and will remember their sin no more."*** Jeremiah 31:33, 34. God is going to forgive our sins by His grace, and He is going to renew our hearts and bring them into harmony with the principles of His law.

Notice that it is by His grace that my life is brought into harmony with His laws. It is His work, not my work. For a long time we have thought that sanctification is a life long

struggle to bring our lives into harmony with God's law; but sanctification is what He accomplishes as He renews my heart by divine grace. It is vastly different than we have often taught.

***"I will put My laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts."*** Hebrews 8:10.

The Bible also teaches that

the law is written ***"with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart."*** 2 Cor. 3:3. He promises to do it, He wants to do it, and He is able to do it.

The preaching of the law in stone alone will never make us righteous. We try to obey, but it will accomplish little unless Christ has written His law in your heart. The law and Christ our righteousness correctly understood are so intertwined and interrelated that you cannot separate them.

***"The same law that was engraved upon the tables of stone is written by the Holy Spirit upon the tables of the heart. Instead of going about to establish our own righteousness we accept the righteousness of Christ [the same context as writing it in our hearts]. His blood atones for our sins. His obedience is accepted for us. Then the heart renewed by the Holy Spirit will bring forth 'the fruits of the Spirit.' Through the grace of Christ we shall live in obedience to the law of God written upon our hearts. Having the Spirit of Christ, we shall walk even as He walked."*** PP 372.

***"The law requires righteousness,—a righteous life, a perfect character; and this man has not to give. He cannot meet the claims of God's holy law. But Christ, coming to the earth as man, lived a holy life, and developed a perfect character. These He offers as a free gift to all who will receive them. His life stands for the life of men. Thus they have remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God. More than this, Christ imbues men with the attributes of God. He builds up the human character after the similitude of the divine character, a goodly fabric of spiritual strength and beauty. Thus the very righteousness of the law is fulfilled in the believer in***

***"God is going to forgive our sins by His grace, and He is going to renew our hearts and bring them into harmony with the principles of His law."***

**Christ.”** DA 762. We are the clay, and He is the potter. We are the good ground, and He is the farmer.

Jesus taught us that the law is supreme love for God and to love our neighbors as ourselves. (Matt. 22:39). The Bible teaches that **“God is love.”** 1 John 4:16. And since the law is a transcript of God’s character, when God writes His law in our hearts, He writes His divine love in our hearts.

**“Love is the fulfilling of the law.’ Righteousness is love, and love is the light and the life of God. The righteousness of God is embodied in Christ. We receive righteousness by receiving Him.”** MB 18.

The Bible says, **“We love Him, because He first loved us.”** 1 John 4:19. **“The light shining from the cross reveals the love of God. His love is drawing us to Himself. If we do not resist this drawing, we shall be led to the foot of the cross in repentance for the sins that have crucified the Saviour.”** DA 176. There is only one way you can avoid coming to the

cross, and that is to dig your heels in and say, “I will not come.”

When you resist it long enough, you hardly sense you are putting on the brakes. You can come to church all the time with the brakes on. You can almost see the smoke and smell it in church. The Lord said to Saul, “It is hard for you to kick against the pricks.”

And Paul asked, “Who are you?”  
“I am the Lord Jesus. You are not fighting with anybody else, you are fighting with Me.”

Jesus draws us by the love of the cross, and if we do not resist, He will lead us to the foot of the cross in repentance. **“Then the Spirit of God through faith produces a new life in the soul. The thoughts and desires are brought into obedience to the will of Christ. The heart, the mind, are created anew in the image of Him who works in us to subdue all things to Himself. Then the law of God is written in the mind and heart, and we can say with Christ, ‘I delight to do Thy will, O my God.’ Ps. 40:8.”** DA 176.

Nicodemus thought he understood everything; yet he had to ask Jesus to explain how a person can be born again. Christ referred to the experience of the brazen serpent where the children of Israel were bitten by poisonous serpents and were dying. A serpent made of brass was put up on a pole, and all who looked at it would live. **“Whether for the healing of their wounds or the pardon of their sins, they could do nothing for themselves but show their faith in the Gift of God. They were to look and live... To refuse to look was to perish.”** DA 175.

**“There are thousands today who need to learn the same truth... that was taught to Nicodemus by the uplifted serpent. They depend on their obedience to the law of God to commend them to His favor. When they are bidden to look to Jesus, and believe that He saves them solely through His grace, they exclaim, ‘How can these things be?’ Not through controversy and discussion is the soul enlightened. We must look and live.”** DA 175.

God’s question to me is: Can you trust Me?

The matter of believing and looking and acting on the commands of Jesus is described in an experience of a man

who had been crippled for thirty-eight years, and who came every day to the pool of Bethesda hoping to be healed.

**“The poor sufferer was helpless; he had not used his limbs for thirty-eight years. Yet Jesus bade him, ‘Rise, take up thy bed, and walk.’ The sick man might have said, ‘Lord, if Thou wilt make me whole, I will obey Thy word.’ But, no, he believed Christ’s word, believed that he was made whole, and he made the effort at once; he willed to walk, and he did walk. He acted on the word of Christ, and God gave the power. He was made whole.”** SC 50. He believed the impossible, and he was healed.

Notice the sequence. First the command, then the belief, and then acting on the belief. We usually say we will act first. I will do good, and then He will love and accept me. Jesus did not put it that way. He bids us to rise up, to walk. We believe Him because He is so good and so trustworthy, and then we act on the command. And that is the obedience of righteousness.

**“You are a sinner [just like the helpless paralytic]. You cannot atone for your past sins; you cannot change your heart and make yourself holy. But God promises to do all this for you through Christ. You believe that promise. You confess your sins and give yourself to God. You will to serve Him. Just as surely as you do this, God will fulfill His word to you. If you believe the promise—believe that you are forgiven and cleansed—God supplies the fact; you are made whole, just as Christ gave the paralytic power to walk when the man believed that he was**

**healed. It is so if you believe it. Do not wait to feel that you are made whole, but say, ‘I believe it; it is so, not because I feel it, but because God has promised.’”** SC 51.

Everything is accomplished by looking unto Jesus! He is righteousness, He is love, He is law, He is obedience, He is salvation. Allow the beauty of Christ to attract you with the magnetism of the cross. **“And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.”** John 12:32.

If you do not resist, He will bring you right to the foot of the cross. And there your heart will be melted. As I recognize what I have been doing to Him, then by His Spirit He writes His law in my heart. My sins are taken away at the cross. And I delight to do His will, for His law is in my heart. It is a thrilling, joyful experience. Realize that the cross is for you, and that Jesus would have died for only one soul. Let your heart be filled with that scene until you cannot take your eyes off of Him.

I believe we have been pretending to be Christians for years, without the law in our heart. Trying and striving and frustrated and condemned and guilty, when the Lord wants to say, “You are forgiven, and you are Mine.” He wants to make it possible for people to be law keepers. By His marvelous presence in our lives we are able to do things we never thought possible. The Lord is waiting for His love to melt the hard hearts of people all around the earth, but He wants to start in your heart today.

~Pastor Bill Lehman (condensed from **Christ Our**





# THE ILLNESS AND THE MEDICINE

This chapter will deal with a conflict that arises between our public relations efforts as an organized denomination and the truths of Christ our righteousness.

Let me first explain how our public relations operate. In our publications, in interviews and speeches, and in other ways, we advertise how successful we are as a people and as a denomination. We tell about how we are building more schools, hospitals, and churches, and how we are growing with more member and students. We advertise our success in the mission field and with health programs and community service work. We like it when the world is told that, due to a better lifestyle, we have better health, less cancer, and more endurance than the rest of the population. We announce to the world that we give more offerings, have more schools and more missions in foreign countries than any other protestant denomination.

Obviously we are doing great things for God, and He is doing great things for us.

Don't you like hearing about all these things? Your mind is probably quite suspicious about where I am going with this; but is it not true that we say and write these things? Yes, we do, and when they appear in newspapers, magazines, and on television, we say, "Yes, there is no one like us." And we swell with pride.

This emphasis on the good work we are doing draws certain conclusions, one of which is that God must be abundantly blessing us, or we could not do all those things. We conclude that we must be right with God. In order to finish God's work, all we have to do is get more people doing the same thing we are already doing. And that worries me because that is the condition that the True Witness (Jesus) speaks about in Rev. 3:17. We think we are blessed and rich and have no needs. The condition of being in need of nothing keeps Christ outside, according to Rev. 3:20, and the absence of Christ or the presence of Christ makes an enormous difference. Don't get too upset with me as I try to help us see a problem that exists.

***"It is a solemn statement that I make to the church, that not one in twenty whose names are registered upon the church books are prepared to close their earthly history, and would be as verily without God and without hope in the world as the common sinner."*** CS 41.

***"Not one in a hundred among us is doing anything beyond engaging in common, worldly enterprises."*** 8T 148.

***"Many, so many, who assume the name of Christ are unsanctified and unholy. They have been baptized, but they were buried alive. Self did not die, and therefore they did not rise to newness of life in Christ."*** 6BC 1075.

***"I am filled with sadness when I think of our condition as a people. The Lord has not closed heaven to us, but our own course of continual backsliding has separated us from God. Pride, covetousness, and love of the world have lived in the heart... Grievous and presumptuous sins have dwelt***

***among us. And yet the general opinion is that the church is flourishing and that peace and spiritual prosperity are in all her borders."*** 5T 217. We are complacent and happy, and that is why we are lukewarm.

***"There is not one in one hundred who understands for himself the Bible truth on this subject [justification by faith] that is so necessary to our present and eternal welfare."*** COR 87.

Does the Laodicean message, which is identified with these criticisms, have any application today? Or has it carried out its task and completed its work so you do not have to worry about it? ***"I asked the meaning of the shaking I had seen and was shown that it would be caused by the straight testimony called forth by the council of the true witness of the Laodiceans."*** 2SG 270. The Laodicean message "was designed to arouse the people of God to discover to them

their backslidings, and lead to zealous repentance, that they might be favored for the presence of Jesus, and be fitted for the loud cry of the third angel." 2SG 224. Have you seen the shaking, or the loud cry yet? Is the third angel's message going everywhere? Then we still need the Laodicean message.

Why does God say those things about us when we seem to be enjoying such success? If success is numbers, if success is more schools and hospitals, if success is bigness, if success is materialism and wealth, if success is acclaim and prestige, then we are very successful, but there are other denominations that are more successful than we are. Some churches make us look like tiny ants by their hundreds of millions of dollars in wealth and by their bigness. The criteria we have used are the standards of the world

regarding success. Apparently the True Witness, who is Jesus, has a different yardstick when it comes to measuring success. In Revelation 3:17, He points out five defects, or deficiencies: wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked. In verse 18, there are three remedies for those defects, which are gold, white raiment, and eye salve. The source of all the remedies is found in one statement of the True Witness: ***"Buy of Me."*** Everything we need, everything we must have, every deficiency will be supplied in Christ. He has it all.

Laodicea's lack of success and her deficiencies are due to the lack of Christ. He is knocking on the door attempting to obtain entrance. This is a different measure of success than we usually think about. Do you measure the success of your home, or of a hospital, school, or church by the presence of Christ in its members or the institution? We never talk about that. We assume He must be there or we would not have the bigness and the growth, but Jesus does not equate the two.

Laodicea says she is comfortable and satisfied and successful. This is a deception. We might call it Christianity, we might try to prove it from the Bible, we might show many good works, but without Jesus there is no Christianity. The only comparison, the only yard stick, the only standard, is Jesus. This



is much different than the world's concepts of success.

The True Witness says that Jesus is knocking, and if you hear His voice and open the door, He will come in. (Rev. 3:20). The riches that we should consider as the criteria of success are **"Christ in you, the hope of Glory."** (Col. 1:28). Laodicea says they are rich, but He says they have the wrong riches. All those riches we have focused on will be destroyed. But those who possess Christ have more than things. He is from everlasting to everlasting. He has promised that He will be with us if we open the door.

**"I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you."** John 14:18. **"At that day ye shall know that I am in My Father, and ye in Me, and I in you."** John 14:20. **"I in them, and Thou in Me."** John 17:23.

Jesus, in His sermon on the mount, said, **"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you."** Matthew 7:7. Do not just ask Him to help you or bless you. Ask for Him. That is different from the way we usually pray. Are you content with things when you may have the God of heaven as yours?

Christianity is not just receiving blessings from God. Christianity is having God all the time. He promised to be with us always, and never to forsake us because we are so precious to Him. It is not enough to know about Him; you must know Him. **"And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, Whom Thou hast sent."** John 17:3. It is not just receiving the truth about Jesus, it is receiving Jesus as the truth. It is more than receiving the law on stone tablets as the standard of righteousness. It is receiving Jesus into my heart who is the very personification of the law. He is the standard of righteousness and obedience, the law perfectly lived out. Receive Him and you receive the law and the character of the Father. It is not receiving a principle of love alone. It is receiving Christ who is love by His very nature. It is not receiving Christ as a sacrifice who died two thousand years ago for us. It is receiving Christ in person who sacrificed for me. We must embrace Him, and not simply accept information about Him. When Christ is outside trying to get in, we have no love, no hope, no truth, no righteousness. He is the only source of those things.

The Greeks went down to Jerusalem and said, **"Sir, we would see Jesus."** John 12:21. They did not say they wanted to see the temple. When Jesus' disciples **"came to Him for to shew Him the buildings of the temple"** Jesus answered them by saying, **"There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down."** (Matt. 24:1,2).

Hezekiah showed the Babylonians all the wealth that God had blessed them with; and they became envious and came back from Babylon to obtain those things, even the vessels of the temple.

When people come to our churches, they are not impressed with our carpet, or chandeliers, or pews, or even us. Many come seeking only Jesus. Our edifices and all our modern facilities do not help the people who are hurting and depressed, the guilty those who are ready to give up hope when they feel lost. They need Jesus. They want to see Him in us, and not just hear lectures about Him. It seems that today the world is crying out, "We want to see Jesus. Where is He?"

**"Have we not been seeking the friendship and applause of the world rather than the presence of Christ?"** 5T 218.

**"The closer you come to Jesus, the more faulty you will appear in your own eyes; for your vision will be clearer,**

**and your imperfections will be seen in broad and distinct contrast to His perfect nature. This is evidence that... the Spirit of God is arousing you... If we do not see our own moral deformity, it is unmistakable evidence that we have not had a view of the beauty and excellence of Christ."** SC 64.

When I am without Jesus, I look good to myself but as soon as I am brought into His presence, I will be like Isaiah when he exclaimed, **"Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts."** Isaiah 6:5.

Jesus is so wonderful, He is so precious, and we must go back and make sure He dwells in our hearts and that we have not walked off and left Him. The illness of the church is the absence of Jesus. But we may literally possess Him, for God so loved the world He gave Him to us. **"But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name."** John 1:12. **"He that hath the Son hath life."** 1 John 5:11,12.

Many want Jesus' power to heal them or to give them all manner of things, but they do not love Him. They want Him to bring peace into the home and help them, and they love His help, but they do not want Him to stay. They want more money and more education and more this and more that, but they do not want Jesus. Jesus says we may have Him. Do you want Him, or do you want what He has and what He is able to do for you?

It is like a man whose plumbing gets stopped up in the middle of the night, so he calls a good friend and asks for his help. His friend goes over and fixes the plumbing, and the next day the man sees the plumber on the street and does not even say hello to him or thank him. We do that to Jesus. In my desperations and emergencies, I cry out for God to help me. Fix my emotions, fix my heart, fix my family, fix my job. And He asks, "When are we going to be friends so that we will never part? When will you want Me and not just My help?"

The Bible says, **"Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near."** Isaiah 55:6. He has been knocking a long time, and Laodicea has said, "Don't bother us, we are doing fine." God wants us to see that this is a strange kind of deception, this idea that Christians do not need Christ. He is asking, "How can you get along without Me? How can you leave Me outside your heart and then sing, 'Jesus is all the world to me'? How can you talk about Me and not know Me?" The most pathetic person I can think of is a Christian who is without Jesus.

Many who are awaiting His return have not found Him. The Lord is not pointing the finger and finding fault and condemning. He is hurt that we could love money or blessings more than Him. He cannot imagine how we keep asking Him for help but do not want Him. Today He is knocking and asking, "When will you let Me inside and keep Me there and never let go? Christ is the medicine for all our spiritual illness.

Seek not just for His blessings, but for Jesus Himself. This is Christ our righteousness, for He is righteous. This is Christ our Savior, for He is salvation. This is everything, for Christ is everything. And when you let Him inside, then the Christian is successful because Jesus is there.

There is nothing so precious as Jesus. May we this day choose Christ above every other thing and every other person until He is truly all the world to you and to me.

~Pastor Bill Lehman (condensed from **Christ Our**



# OUR BLIND SPOT

What is righteousness? We discussed this in a previous chapter, but here we will examine this subject from a different viewpoint. Jesus said, ***“For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.”*** Matthew 5:20.

The Pharisees had their own unique idea of righteousness, which was described by Ellen White. ***“The greatest deception of the human mind in Christ’s day was that a mere assent to the truth constitutes righteousness. In all human experience a theoretical knowledge of the truth has been proved to be insufficient for the saving of the soul. It does not bring forth the fruits of righteousness. A jealous regard for what is termed theological truth often accompanies a hatred of genuine truth as made manifest in life.”*** DA 309.

She goes on to describe how those who professed to be righteous killed Christ because of His righteous life. Then she makes this statement: ***“The same danger still exists. Many take it for granted that they are Christians, simply because they subscribe to certain theological tenets... Men may profess faith in the truth; but if it does not make them sincere, kind, patient, forbearing, heavenly-minded, it is a curse to its possessors, and through their influence it is a curse to the world.”*** Ibid.

***“A profession of faith and the possession of truth in the soul are two different things. The mere knowledge of truth is not enough. We may possess this, but the... heart must be converted and sanctified.”*** COL 97. This strikes too close to home to be comfortable for any of us. Since we have been baptized into the right church, we believe and teach right doctrines such as Sabbath keeping, and tithing, we logically ask how we can be unrighteous

His sermon on the mount, Jesus brought out a different spirit of righteousness that we seldom think about. He said, ***“Blessed are the poor in spirit.”*** Matthew 5:3. The poor in spirit are those who do not think highly of their righteousness, and who recognize their spiritual poverty. ***“Blessed are they that mourn.”*** Verse 4. This mourning is related to repentance, and to those who mourn because of their sinfulness that crucifies the Son of God afresh. ***“Blessed are the meek.”*** Verse 5. This meekness is a lack of self-justification and self-righteousness. ***“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness.”*** Verse 6. This is because they realize that they do not have it. ***“Blessed are the merciful.”*** Verse 7. Do we treat other people as Christ treats us?

***“For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.”*** 59

Romans 10:3. If we try to establish our own, or produce it, or build it up, it verifies that we are ignorant of His, and that we have not submitted ourselves unto His. This is difficult for us to see because we believe that we must be performers of the law; therefore, we set out to do what the law requires. But this is not the way to righteousness.

The Jews were told to ***“love thy neighbour as thyself”*** Leviticus 19:18. When Jesus came, He called this a new commandment, changing the way it was understood. ***“A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.”*** John 13:34. In doing so, He adds, ***“that you love one another as I have loved you.”*** This was new. The Jews had come

to accept the idea that their neighbor did not include everyone. A lawyer had a certain idea as to what it meant to love his neighbor, but he did not consider everyone, especially Samaritans, to be his neighbor. (Luke 10:27, 29). When Jesus had finished giving the parable of the good Samaritan, He asked, ***“Which now of these three thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves?”*** Verse 36. The Jews would not even answer the question lest they defile their lips by saying the word “Samaritan.”

Many today have the same attitude towards people and towards loving our neighbor. Jesus taught that the only right standard of loving your neighbor is to love your neighbor as He loves us. Many people who do not profess to be Christians are good, upstanding citizens. They also try hard to be good. They do not get thrown into jail or get into trouble with their neighbors; but they do not go to church, either. Nor do they read their Bibles. If they are righteous because they try to be good, then you do not need Christianity to be righteous.

Those who believe in the law easily misunderstand righteousness as much as those who do not believe that the law exists. We tend to think that the law is merely a checklist of rules where, if we just discipline ourselves to avoid the “thou shalt nots” and force ourselves to do the “thou shalt,” then we are righteous. If this is your concept of righteousness, then you do not have very much, for the law is not in the heart. It is just a matter of rigidly conforming to a list of rules. Many who hold this concept of righteousness stand up and say they are going to be righteous no matter what, but their spouse and children and fellow church members will not think so, because they know how such people can act when their will is crossed or when someone steps on their toes.

When we discover that the law is love, we have a tendency to think that we have arrived, that now we understand righteousness. But then you must discover what genuine



love is. To some, love is merely doing your own thing and satisfying self.

When Jesus said, **"A new commandment I give unto you that you love one another as I have loved you"** (John 13:34), He was really saying that the only standard of law keeping, the only standard of righteousness, the only standard of love which God honors, is that which meets the life of Christ.

**"The Lord Jesus came to our world to represent the character of His Father. He came to live out the law, and His words and character were daily a correct exposition of the law of God....Jesus was a living manifestation of what the law was..."** ST March 14, 1895.

The devil realizes that the sinful heart is selfish and proud, so he dangles before us what we can do; and then he says, "If you will only do a little bit better." And we struggle and strive and labor trying to be good enough for God to love us, and to save us, and to call us righteous. We quibble, we quarrel, we compete simply because we think we must struggle to attain to a righteousness that the Lord will approve. Love never comes into the picture

The Bible says, **"There is none righteous, no, not one."** Rom. 3:10

If you have a standard other than the life of Jesus, then you destroy righteousness by faith in Christ, because righteousness by faith is based on what righteousness is.

Let's look at justification by faith, which is conversion, and see what it is like when you begin to see that the standard of righteousness is Christ, and not self. What happens to you in the new birth? **"Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for His seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God."** 1 John 3:9. You have no doubt seen someone's daughter and said, "She looks just like her mother." How did she get that way? She was born that way. What happens to a born-again Christian when they are born of God? What happens when we are made a new creation in Christ? What are people like when they are **"created in righteousness and true holiness"**? Ephesians 4:24

If righteousness is just a human invention, then being born again, justified by faith in His righteousness, accomplishes almost nothing Here are a few descriptions of genuine conversions: **"The grace of Christ received into the heart... fills the soul with love. He who is at peace with God and his fellow men cannot be made miserable [not should not be, but cannot be]. Envy will not be in his heart; evil surmisings will find no room there; hatred cannot exist. The heart that is in harmony with God is a partaker of the peace of heaven and will diffuse its blessed influence on all around. The spirit of peace will rest like dew upon hearts weary and troubled with worldly strife."** MB 27,28. **"In the heart renewed by divine grace, love is the principle of action. It... sweetens the life and sheds a refining influence on all around."** SC 59.

**"The heart of him who receives the grace of God overflows with love for God and for those for whom Christ died... He does not love others because they love and please him, because they appreciate his merits, but because they are Christ's purchased possession. If his motives, words, or actions are misunderstood or misrepresented, he takes no offense, but pursues the even tenor of his way. He is kind and thoughtful, humble in his opinion of himself, yet full of hope, always trusting in the mercy and love of God... An angel presence is in the home... Love is manifested in kindness, gentleness, forbearance, and long-suffering... Christ abiding in the heart shines out in the faces of those**

**who love Him and keep His commandments... The sweet peace of heaven is revealed."** COL 101,102.

Then it goes on and tells how it strengthens and changes the whole life by partaking of divinity. And finally one little sentence, perhaps the most important of all: **"A new standard of character is set up—the life of Christ."** COL 99.

The big question is: How do you obtain such righteousness? How do you become like Jesus? The process is simple. Bring your righteousness to Christ, and then see what happens. You, like Isaiah, will say, **"Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips."** **"All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags."** Isaiah 64:6; 6:5. You will loathe yourself when you see Jesus.

This is a difficult experience. In the past, we have compared our righteousness to everybody else's, which is what I call comparative religion—better than, holier than. That is the very opposite of Christianity. There is only one comparison we can make and that is with Jesus, because the Bible says that **"when He shall appear, we shall be like Him."** 1 John 3:2. It is not enough to be better than the pastor or the elder. You are going to have to do much better than that because they are not going to get there because of their goodness, not one of them. They are going to be there because of Jesus and no other reason.

"He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained." Acts 17:31. I would like to suggest that we are judged by comparison to Jesus, because we have had offered to us the righteousness of Christ. God will simply look at us to see if we have received it God asks, "Is he like Jesus?" for we are to be like Him.

**"We must renounce our own righteousness and plead for the righteousness of Christ to be imputed to us."** 5T 219. Paul said he wished to be **"found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."** Philippians 3:9.

If Jesus is righteous, then, when we have received Him as our salvation and our righteousness, we have His righteousness as a free gift from heaven—not because I am worthy, but because God is so good.

John wrote, **"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God."** 1 John 3:1. His love has that quality of God which, when we were yet rebels and enemies, sinning against Him, He so loved us that His Son came all the way from heaven to be one of us, to buy us back with His precious blood, to make us clean, forgiven, pardoned, and to take away our penalty. **"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus."** Romans 8:1.

It is this kind of love that breaks my heart and melts your heart. It is this kind of love that He wants to manifest to the world in you and me—in my thoughts and deeds towards others, my attitudes, my feelings, my words, my gentleness, my compassion, my understanding, my sensitivity to you.

This is the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus, the righteousness He wants to give you at this very instant. This is the righteousness that exceeds that of the Pharisees. He wants to push away all the other concepts and standards of righteousness by the supreme definition of righteousness—that we love one another as He has loved us.

~Pastor Bill Lehman (condensed from **Christ Our**



# I CAN DO IT!

For years we have believed that if we could only convince people that the law of God is still to be kept, that the standards are still to be observed, then they will do it; and if they fail to do it we think they need more convincing, or perhaps they should pray more or try harder. This concept of righteousness has been held for many years...

Is man able to obey after conviction? ***"It was possible for Adam, before the fall, to form a righteous character by obedience to God's law. But he failed to do this, and because of his sin our natures are fallen and we cannot make ourselves righteous. Since we are sinful, unholy, we cannot perfectly obey the holy law. We have no righteousness of our own with which to meet the claims of the law of God."*** SC 62. Since Adam and Eve sinned, mankind has lacked the ability to obey the law, and often we do not recognize this.

***"It is impossible for us, of ourselves, to escape from the pit of sin in which we are sunken. Our hearts are evil, and we cannot change them. Education, culture, the exercise of the will, human effort, all have their proper sphere, but here they are powerless."*** SC 18,19. The idea that it is necessary only to develop the good that exists in man by nature is a fatal deception.

Others say: Just do your best and Christ will make up for the rest. What can a sinner do that is his best? Then there are those who say we must help people find self-worth, self-esteem, self-love. Is that true?

In the account of early man, we find that after only ten generations, the Lord said, speaking about the human family, ***"that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."*** Genesis 6:5. The Bible is the history of the intrusion of sin. We sometimes think that those who lived back then were ignorant and that we are wiser than they. This is a gross assumption.

As the result of sin, ***"we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags."*** Isaiah 64:6. Another prophet said, ***"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?"*** Jeremiah 17:9. Paul wrote, ***"There is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God... there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit... whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: their feet are swift to shed blood: destruction and misery are in their ways: and the way of peace have they not known: there is no fear of God before their eyes."*** Romans 3:9-18. This is not only talking about people two thousand years ago, it is talking about us today.

***"Sin not only shuts us away from God, but destroys in the human soul both the desire and the capacity for knowing Him...There is in his nature a bent to evil, a force which, unaided, he cannot resist."*** Ed 28,29. ***"In our own strength it is impossible for us to deny the clamors of our fallen nature."*** DA 122. ***"Sin has degraded the faculties of the soul. Temptations from without find an answering chord within the heart, and the feet turn imperceptibly toward evil."*** MH 451.

Many give up in discouragement when they sense these inabilities. But the Lord wants us to seek for help. Only Jesus can accomplish the change. Without Him we can do nothing, but with Him we can do all things.

***"It is impossible for us, of ourselves, to escape from the pit of sin in which we are sunken. Our hearts are evil, and we cannot change them. Education, culture, the exercise of the will, human effort, all have their proper sphere, but here they are powerless. There must be a power working from within, a new life from above, before men can be changed from sin to holiness. That power is Christ"***. SC 18.

For years, we have not acknowledged that the nature of man has to be changed. We teach obedience, and then we assume we have been changed when we have not been; and without that change we are helpless. ***"The***

***Saviour said, 'Except a man be born from above,' unless he shall receive a new heart, new desires, purposes, and motives, leading to a new life, 'he cannot see the kingdom of God.' John 3:3."*** Ibid.

Another difficulty we have is not realizing how complete the change must be. Strong willed people can give the appearance of an outward correctness of behavior by changing one or two habits, but no human being can change the heart. You often find in those who try to perform outwardly a bitterness coming out of the inside. The person may not be different at all. All you have to do is cross that person's will and vile things come out of the inside.

***"The whole heart must be yielded to God, or the change can never be wrought in us by which we are to be restored to His likeness. By nature we are alienated from God. The Holy Spirit describes our condition in such words as these: 'Dead in trespasses and sins;' 'the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint;' 'no soundness in it.' We are held fast in the snare of Satan; 'taken captive by him at his will.' God desires to heal us, to set us free. But since this requires an entire transformation, a renewing of our whole nature, we must yield ourselves wholly to Him."*** SC 43.

When I have been changed by His grace and by His power, do I then have two natures, or one nature? Many is the argument that rages over Romans chapter 7, contending



we have two natures after conversion, or the new birth. But the Bible talks about the death of one nature and the life of another. Some would have the growth in Christian life to be a gradual dying and a gradual living. In other words, I am not yet quite born again. Or I am just a babe and not grown up; and I am not quite dead, I am just dying. This is sort of an evolutionary death and evolutionary life, but not a creative life, which the Bible teaches very strongly. Do we gain victory by evolution? Then how do you explain that some seem to gain victory immediately, overnight, to which many thousands can testify? Some say that because I still have the old body, even though the heart has been changed, sometimes I serve the old, and sometimes the new.

If you go back and study this well, you will find out that only one thing is changed in the new birth, and that is the heart. The body will not be changed until resurrection or translation. And the reason why the heart is changed is that it can command the body and rule. How is that sometimes I serve the Lord and sometimes I serve self, after I have a new nature? The problem is always with the heart. **"For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies."** Matthew 15:20. The Lord knows this, so He says He will give us a new heart, or a new nature, that will function differently.

The one key issue of the heart is that before conversion, after conversion, and all during your Christian life, you can always choose. The reason for this is that Christianity is a love affair. The conscience cannot be forced. It is always free to

choose, every moment, every hour, every day. And it is not one choice for life. The Lord always asks you, "Do you still want to be Mine?" Sometimes we go through the whole day and do not acknowledge the fact that we belong to Him, but He would like to know. In all our decisions that day, He asks us one thing: "Are you still Mine? Or have you given your affections to another lover? God would have us to be His. And He shows this in thousands of ways.

Because of this option, this power of choice, we sometimes choose Him today and choose the world tomorrow. God tells us that there is no harmony between Him and the world, but He will take us back—even from prostitution, if I read Hosea correctly. Because of His longsuffering and patience, we can go on and on with two lovers. But we are always troubled and dissatisfied by this. Something seems not quite right in our inmost souls. When you come back to the Lord you sense a strange distance or coldness, and you say, "It used to be so warm and satisfying here." The problem is with our memories. Where was I the night before? If I could just forget that other lover, then there would be no distance between me and God. And Jesus senses a strange lack of warmth, too, and almost no communication. But He waits, and He woos, and He continues to love in spite of our waywardness and unfaithfulness. He does this for years because He loves us so much He cannot let us go.

The Christian life is like the national life of Judah and Israel. He continued to want her, but she chose to go to Babylon. Read how she worshipped their gods and brought them to Jerusalem. She insisted on loving the heathen's customs and practices.

Strange things happen to our spouses in love affairs where

we go off and share that love with someone else. Over the months and the years, the coldness gets colder and the gap gets wider. We cannot see how He can still love us when we have chased around so much. He still does, but we cannot see how He can. Eventually we become unbelievers in His love for us. It is dangerous to share your love with someone else

I do not think that there are two natures living in me that back and forth are dominating me. I think there is the power of choice, all day long, every day. We may choose whose side we will be on and whom we will serve.

**"The will... is the governing power in the nature of man, the power of decision, or of choice... The power of choice God has given to men; it is theirs to exercise. You cannot change your heart, you cannot of yourself give to God its affections, but you can choose to serve Him. You can give Him your will; He will then work in you to will and to do according to His good pleasure. Thus your whole nature will be brought under the control of the Spirit of Christ; your affections will be centered upon Him, your thoughts will be in harmony with Him."** SC 47,48. This is Christ our righteousness. It is making Him Lord, Master, King, Ruler of my life.

Amazingly, an understanding and acceptance of our inabilities is the one thing that leads us to Christ. **"The less we see to esteem in ourselves, the more we shall see to**

**esteem in the infinite purity and loveliness of our Saviour. A view of our sinfulness drives us to Him who can pardon... The more our sense of need drives us to Him and to the word of God, the more exalted views we shall have of His character, and the more fully we shall**

**"The idea that it is necessary only to develop the good that exists in man by nature is a fatal deception."**

**reflect His image."** SC 65.

It is easy to misunderstand this. We do not want to be told about our inability, our proneness to failure, our deficiencies, the evil nature of man. We insist that there is some goodness in us that can be nurtured and made to grow. We think we are much better than that. Can I not develop that inherent goodness in me? And so we try, we invent new gospels, new theories, and we search for Bible texts and quotations to prove our theories. But we are depraved people. Look at our selfishness, our self-centeredness, our neglect of our own children. We give them things but we do not give them ourselves. Look at our politics, our competitive natures, our vengeful spirits, our abuse of others, our envy, our jealousy, our seeking for the highest place. We, like Adam, blame others for our troubles. All my problems are with my spouse, my children, my church, my neighbors, my boss I will do anything to justify myself. Everyone around me knows I am wrong, but I refuse to admit it.

God wants to give us the knowledge that leads us to Jesus, that will warm our hearts as we sense how precious we are to Him. Our value is not what we are, but what He wants to make us. We are priceless to Him, not because we are so good, but because of what He can do if He is allowed to work in us. Is there anyone else in the universe like Him? Then choose Christ; and you will be crowned with success as you let Him come into your heart and work an entire transformation by His love and grace.

~Pastor Bill Lehman (condensed from **Christ Our**



# THE DEVOTIONAL LIFE

In order to benefit from what you have been discovering about Christ our righteousness, these principles must be absorbed more and more so that they become part of your everyday life, and so that your natural, legalistic tendencies will be pushed out of your system. I have learned that I must continually bombard my mind with the grace and goodness of the Lord and His righteousness, or I will revert back automatically to struggling to be righteous in my own self. I hope you will continue to study these things, and to pray without ceasing that the Lord will give you not only the theory, but the experience of receiving Christ and His righteousness. The Lord is giving us an abundant opportunity before probation closes to understand more about His grace and Christ our righteousness.

One of the biggest problems confronting Seventh-day Adventists is not the necessity of obedience, but how to obey. Those who have grown up in the church, and even those who are converts to it, have learned a great deal about what to obey concerning the moral law, diet restrictions, and so forth. The problem we have is in doing all these things.

Many will say that the way you obey is to try harder, but that is putting confidence in the flesh, which the Bible says will not work. Others say the way to obey is to pray more, which is still confidence in the flesh. Others say we must study more. But Christ our righteousness is more than something to study. It is an enabling power that does something for us.

Some believe the way to obedience is to teach people more about how bad their sins are. We think that by telling people how bad smoking and drugs are, they will stop. Education does not necessarily stop people from sinning.

Still others say that psychology, or psychotherapy, is the way to obedience. Many people have catalogued the whole history of their environment, their circumstances, their heredity and everything else, and they still go on the same way. They end up with lots of knowledge about themselves, but they do not obey. Many have tried all these things for years and have come to the conclusion that you cannot be obedient.

Why do human beings fail in all their attempts to be righteous? In the book of Exodus, after God had given Moses His law, all the people answered with one voice, "All the words which the Lord hath said will we do." Exodus 24:3. The Spirit of Prophecy comments on this, **"Before there could be any permanent reformation the people must be led to feel their utter inability in themselves. They had broken His law, it condemned them as transgressors, and it provided no way of escape. While they trusted in their own strength**

**and righteousness... they could not meet the claims of God's perfect law... It was only by faith in Christ that they could secure pardon of sin and receive strength to obey God's law. They must cease to rely upon their own efforts for salvation, they must trust wholly in the merits of the promised Saviour, if they would be accepted of God."** PP 524.

It seems that the sinner is always saying like a little child, "Leave me alone. I want to do it myself. Just give me more time and I can do it." It is our nature to be independent, thinking we can do it. But the Bible asks, **"Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil."** Jeremiah 13:23.

We have heard this many, many times, yet we believe it so little.

Of himself the sinner is helpless to obey. Jesus said, **"Without Me, you can do nothing."** John 15:5. There is no power in the sinner to do good unless he is connected to a power outside of himself. And that word connected is crucial. Jesus also said, **"I am the Vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit."** John 15:5. The power is in the Vine.

Several years ago, as I pastored a church, I discovered one winter's day that the furnace would not work. I turned on the thermostat, went around and

checked everything, but it just would not work. I tried some of the lights, and they would not work, either. My logical brain concluded that there was something wrong with the circuit breakers, so I reset all of them, then I checked the furnace and the lights again, but they still would not work. I decided to go outside and check the fuse box. Sure enough, a fuse was burned out. I bought another one, plugged it in, pulled the switch down; and then all the lights were burning and the furnace was going full blast. Why? The power had always been available, but we were not plugged in.

Faith is the channel of communication that connects us with the power of Christ. When I have sinned, I must immediately come back into communication with Him, and get plugged back in to the power. **"When we know God as it is our privilege to know Him, our life will be a life of continual obedience."** DA 668. When we read this, we want to give up. The question is not whether you can continually obey, but whether you can continue to know Him and abide in Him. Are you taking the time to know Him? The obedience will come automatically when I know Him.

**"It is His grace that gives man power to obey the laws of God, [and] ...to break the bondage of evil habit."** MH 115. What must I be concerned about? My evil habits? No, I must be concerned that I know His grace, that I thrive in it, that I bask in



it, that I take hold of it by faith. His grace gives me power.

***“When we seek to gain heaven through the merits of Christ, the soul makes progress.”*** 1SM 364. Put the emphasis on the things that you can do, instead of on what you cannot do. We can acknowledge and claim His merits by continually beholding His spotless, unselfish life, and we can concentrate on knowing God, seeking Him with all our hearts. We can seek Him first every day, submitting our wills to the sovereignty of His love, which gets us plugged into the source of power; and we can learn as much as we can about His grace until our lives become permeated with grace. These are things that bless us and enable us to obey.

***“Human effort without the merit of Christ is worthless.”*** RH, August 19, 1890. ***“By His perfect obedience [Christ] has made it possible for every human being to obey God’s commandments.”*** COL 312. When I find myself imperfect, not obeying, I must look at His perfection, His obedience, His merits. That is where the power is.

***“He came to show man how to obey, how to keep all the commandments. He laid hold of divine power, and this is the sinner’s only hope.”*** MYP 165. I must reach out by the hand of faith and plug into the power. I do this by thought processes. I choose to think about Him, read about Him, behold His righteousness and His grace, and then impart that grace to others. All these things make me a different person.

I have discovered that when I have plenty of time for a devotional life, my life is much different, and I am much happier, and I am much easier to live with. When I neglect this, my old life takes over and I am totally unlike Christ. Don’t come around me then.

***“Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.”*** 2 Peter 1:4. We should memorize this verse. Partaking of the divine nature is where the power is. I must take these promises as though God had made them personally to me, and through these I connect with God.

Paul speaks of the children of Israel and how ***“they could not enter in because of unbelief.”*** Hebrews 3:18. God had made a promise to them of a land of milk and honey, a beautiful place of rest, but they could not enter into it. Why? Unbelief, the Bible says. Promises are only effective when we have faith in the promises and in the One who promises. We must have faith in Him, and we must believe that He means to do well for us.

Without belief and faith, there is no righteousness. You say you believe our doctrines, but are you a believer in God’s goodness to you, and are you a believer in all His promises made to you? Do you apply them to your life?

***“A belief that does not lead to obedience is presumption.”*** MB 146. ***“Obedience is the fruit of faith.”*** SC 61. If I truly exercise faith in Christ, obedience will naturally result. This is where we fail. I have looked at my own heart too many times and been frustrated over and over again. Why can’t I stop disobeying and start obeying? What is wrong with me? I scrutinize the causes for my bad temper, looking back at what may have happened that day, or what I had not done, and I just get more frustrated. After a while, the Spirit of God in His patience asks me how long it has been since I sat down and had a good connection with the Lord. When you have truly made contact with God, you feed your soul each day and go out feeling bolstered, encouraged, and strong; and all day long a verse, a song, or some precious thought

goes through your mind over and over again.

I will never forget one day when I discovered a quote that says God’s blessing will come by faith when we surrender to Him. That thought went through my mind for forty-eight hours. This is how God can communicate with us through the devotional life. When you go to bed at night and can still remember a text or quotation you read that morning, and it still means something to you, and you are still pondering it, then you know that God is blessing you and making you stronger.

We can get so wrapped up in trying to obey that we forget that it is faith that leads to obedience. Believing is also obedience, for believing is a good work. Jesus literally said that. ***“This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent.”*** John 6:29. And we always thought that works and believing were separate.

When people in spiritual need come to us and ask what they should do, we tell them they must keep the Sabbath; and do this and don’t do that. The apostle Paul was not against the Sabbath, or tithing, or missionary activity; but he taught that if you want to be saved there is one thing you must do, and that is to believe. When the keeper of the prison Paul was about to escape from asked, ***“Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”*** Paul answered, ***“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.”*** Acts 16:30,31. ***“Whatsoever is not of faith is sin.”*** Romans 14:23. When I believe and am connected to Him, He produces good results in my life.

We must make certain that our faith is in Him, and not in our own ability to obey. ***“There are many who, though striving to obey God’s commandments, have little peace or joy. This lack in their experience is the result of a failure to exercise faith. They walk as it were in a salt land, a parched wilderness. They claim little, when they might claim much; for there is no limit to the promises of God. The Lord would have all His sons and daughters happy, peaceful, and obedient... Through the exercise of faith the believer comes into possession of these blessings. Through faith, every deficiency of character may be supplied, every defilement cleansed, every fault corrected, every excellence developed.”*** AA 563. Do not kick yourself because you fail. Find out where the switch is that is off, or where the blown fuse is. Get plugged back in! That is the secret of the Christian life.

***“If we gaze even a moment upon the sun in its meridian glory, when we turn away our eyes, the image of the sun will appear in everything upon which we look. Thus it is when we behold Jesus; everything we look upon reflects His image, the Sun of Righteousness. We cannot see anything else, or talk of anything else. His image is imprinted upon the eye of the soul.”*** TM 388. As we behold more and more of the glorious character of Jesus, whenever we look at the church, we see Jesus instead of all the problems. When we look at our spouse, we see the image of Christ instead of their defects. We cannot see anything else, or talk of anything else. Behold Him constantly, and if you do not resist, you cannot avoid being like Him.

May God take away our striving to be better, and may He help our unbelief. May we maintain a precious contact with Him, sitting at His feet and plugged into that marvelous power that is able to transform us. May we so behold Jesus that as we turn away, His image is superimposed on all of life.

~Pastor Bill Lehman (condensed from **Christ Our Righteousness**, chapter 31)



# PERFECTION

The subject of perfection is closely related to Christ our righteousness. Your concept of perfection influences your understanding of Christ our righteousness; and conversely, your concept of Christ our righteousness will influence your understanding of perfection.

In the King James Version, the two English words "perfect" and "perfection" are translated from many different Hebrew and Greek words. There are times when those words would be more correctly translated as complete, finished, integrity, exactness, etc. This adds to the confusion about perfection.

The Bible teaches that we have been born of sinful parents, and we live in a sinful environment, and we carry about a body that Paul called "**our vile body**" in Philippians 3:21. Our bodies are called "**corruptible**" in 1 Cor. 15:53. Therefore, perfection in this kind of body has some problems. Since God is absolutely perfect with no background or history of sin, then there may be a difference between His absolute perfection and human perfection.

Some will point out that Jesus said, "**Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.**" Matthew 5:48. If absolute perfection is not possible, why did He say that? "**He tells us to be perfect as He is, in the same manner.**" (MB 77) meaning, "like this," or "in the same way." "**As God is perfect in His sphere, so man is to be perfect in his sphere.**" MM 112,113. God has a different sphere than we have. Ours is a limited one, and His is widespread.

The biggest question we have is: Is perfection possible to any extent? The Bible provides several answers. "**Let us go on unto perfection.**" Heb.6:1. (The margin of my Bible says "full growth or maturity.") "**Now the God of peace... make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ...**" Hebrews 13:20,21. "**I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them, as Thou hast loved Me.**" John 17:23. "**Every man perfect in Christ Jesus.**" Col. 1:28.

The Spirit of Prophecy agrees with the Bible. "**The Lord... expects from us the perfection which Christ revealed in His humanity.**" CG 477. "**God requires perfection of His children.**" COL 315. "**If you make God your strength, you may, under the most discouraging circumstances, attain a height and breadth of Christian perfection which you hardly think it possible to reach.**" 4T 567.

The problem is that we look at ourselves and wonder how this can be possible. Ellen White wrote: "**While we cannot claim perfection of the flesh, we may have Christian perfection of the soul.**" 2SM 32.

What kind of perfection is perfection of the soul? Will it be as good as Adam's before he sinned?

"**Human perfection failed in Eden, the paradise of bliss.**" 5BC 1132. Would we be well off if we had the perfection of the

angels? The very next sentence in the above quotation says, "**Angelic perfection failed in heaven.**" Many of the angels, with all their perfection, sinned. I don't care how perfect you become in your sinlessness, your perfection will not save you.

I want to go back to the previous quote and give you the entire context of the quotation. "**The death of Christ upon the cross made sure the destruction of him who has the power of death, who was the originator of sin. When Satan is destroyed, there will be none to tempt to evil; the atonement will never need to be repeated; and there will be no danger of another rebellion in the universe of God. That which alone can effectually restrain from sin in this world of darkness, will prevent sin in heaven. The significance of the death of Christ will be seen by saints and angels. Fallen men could not have a home in the paradise of God without the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. Shall we**

**not then exalt the cross of Christ? The angels ascribe honor and glory to Christ, for even they are not secure except by looking to the sufferings of the Son of God. It is through the efficacy of the cross that the angels of heaven are guarded from apostasy. Without the cross they would be no more secure against evil than were the angels before the fall of Satan. Angelic perfection failed in heaven. Human perfection failed in Eden, the paradise of bliss. All who wish for security in**

**earth or heaven must look to the Lamb of God. The plan of salvation, making manifest the love and justice of God, provides an eternal safeguard against defection in unfallen worlds, as well as among those who shall be redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. Our only hope is perfect trust in the blood of Him who can save to the uttermost all who come unto God by Him. The death of Christ on the cross of Calvary is our only hope in this world, and will be our theme in the world to come. Oh, we do not comprehend the value of the atonement!"** 5BC 1132.

How does the cross guarantee against future sin? First of all, the cross of Christ is one of the most unique types of righteousness, or obedience, that is found any place in the Scriptures. "**For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of One shall many be made righteous.**" Romans 5:19 This is seen in the experience of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. "**And He went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me: nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt....He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O My Father, if this cup may not pass away from Me, except I drink it, Thy will be done....And He left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words.**" Matthew 26:39,42,44.

You must dwell on what was going on there. If Jesus took the cup of our sins, He would be separated from the One who had eternally loved Him and He feared that separation



would be eternal. By obeying His Father, He would have to leave His Father. If He loved us, He would take the cup. If He loved His Father, He would not take it. This was a terrible enigma for Him. And the only thing that carried Him through was that He knew that His Father could be trusted. He loved His Father, and He knew His Father loved Him, and so He submitted to the wishes of His Father. Have you ever seen such obedience? The One who was perfect in humanity so totally distrusted Himself that He would not follow His own logic or His own thinking. He simply submitted to whatever His Father willed. The cross of Calvary stands all by itself as the epitome of perfection and righteousness. This is obedience, and obedience is righteousness. I suppose the best way to describe it is the self-denial and the total confidence of relying on someone else who is trustworthy.

The whole Bible is filled with this, but we do not often see it. Christ presented the law in Matthew 22, where He talked about supreme love for God. According to Deut. 6:5, this love is to be **"with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might."** If all the heart and soul and might were wrapped up in love for God, what else would you love? He is an all-consuming affection. There is no room for self-love. God takes over all my plans, all my ideas, all my interests, all my thoughts.

Also in Matthew 22, Jesus went on to talk about loving our neighbors as ourselves. What kind of love is this? **"In the light from Calvary it will be seen that the law of self-renouncing love is the law of life for earth and heaven; that the love which 'seeketh not her own' has its source in the heart of God."** DA 20. This is the kind of love that Jesus had. **"Love is the fulfilling of the law."** Romans 13:10, and the fulfilling of the law is righteousness and perfection.

Christian perfection is not looking to see how I am doing. It is what I am doing for others, and what I think about them, not because I want to become perfect, but because I love them and forget myself. **"Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."** Philippians 2:4,5. In the life of Jesus, this supreme love for God and consuming interest in the needs of others took over and guided Him in every step of life. He loves you and me so much so that He would even accept separation from His Father. That type of self-surrender, of yielding and submissiveness, is truly the perfection of Christ.

Jesus said, **"If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me."** Matthew 16:24. It is on the cross that we die to self. "Kneeling at the cross, he [the sinner] has reached the highest place to which man can attain." 5BC 1133.

It is that total distrust of self, that total confidence in God, and that total surrender to Him that is perfection. It is easy for the worst sinners, and it is difficult for the best sinners. The bad sinners do not trust themselves because they know how weak they are, and how they have never been able to rise above bad sins. They have always been a failure. They know desperately they need help, and so they gladly submit to the One who can help them. The good sinners, the ones who are proud of their goodness and doing quite well, externally, are the ones who do not need much help, and it is difficult for them to submit to someone else. They think more highly of themselves than they ought. Therefore, they do not submit. They say, "Let me try." And the Lord asks, "When will you discover that all your trying is nothing but failures?" He is waiting for us to learn that only in Christ can

I accomplish anything. Even our best deeds are tainted with self, and yet we call our good works and our attempts at obedience righteousness.

When we submit to Jesus and He rules the life, life will be different. Jesus point out **"the character of the righteousness that all who enter heaven will possess. Throughout the Sermon on the Mount He describes its fruits, and now in one sentence He points out its source and its nature: Be perfect as God is perfect. The law is but a transcript of the character of God... God is love. Like rays of light from the sun, love and light and joy flow out from Him to all His creatures. It is His nature to give. His very life is the outflow of unselfish love....He tells us to be perfect as He is, in the same manner. We are to be centers of light and blessing to our little circle, even as He is to the universe. We have nothing of ourselves, but the light of His love shines upon us, and we are to reflect its brightness. 'In His borrowed goodness good,' we may be perfect in our sphere, even as God is perfect in His."** MB 77.

Our sphere is that little neighborhood where we live, the office where we work, or the classroom, or the dormitory. In that sphere we are to shed light and blessing on all around us. We can only give it as we receive it. We are told that when we give, **"it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over"** Luke 6:38. The great givers are always great receivers. The channel of blessing becomes bigger as our hearts love people more and more.

How big a giver can God make you? I am not talking about money, but about encouragement, or a loaf of bread, or watching the neighbor's children, or the prayer at the bedside of someone who is sick, and visiting the dear lady in the rest home who has not had a visitor in two months. I am talking about all the common, ordinary things of life where we forget ourselves and go out to bless other people. All day long the Lord was doing this. And at night He filled back up the reservoir. Always, every day, serving mankind, forgetting Himself that others might be blessed.

I would suggest that the life of service, of total self-forgetfulness out of a great love for others, always lightening their load and always blessing them, has more to do with perfection than any other thing I know of. This life of service has a closer connection with the cross than any other type of activity. Distrust of self, and total confidence in God, makes us safe in heaven for eternity. The cross teaches that lesson. If Christ would not trust Himself under those circumstances, but only His Father, when can you trust yourself? Total trust in Christ is perfection. What can God do with a human being who submits to Him totally? The Bible says, **"Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us."** Ephesians 3:20.

In that glorious kingdom above, when we gather there on the sea of glass, we will all be amazed at the others who are there; and we will stand there marveling at what God has done with weak human beings. None will take the praise to themselves. All the praise will be to Him.

God is singling us out in these last days to be an example and an encouragement of what He can do so that they can know that God is not only love, but powerful. May the Lord make you perfect in every good work through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

~Pastor Bill Lehman (condensed from **Christ Our Righteousness**, chapter 32)



# *Abbreviations*

- AA The Acts of the Apostles
- BC The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary  
(1BC, 2BC...etc., for volumes 1-7)
- COL Christ's Object Lessons
- COR Christ Our Righteousness (by E. G. Daniels)
- DA The Desire of Ages
- CG Child Guidance
- CS Christian Service
- Ed Education
- EW Early Writings
- FE Fundamentals of Christian Education
- FLB The Faith I Live By
- GAG God's Amazing Grace
- GW Gospel Workers
- LHU Lift Him p
- MB Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing
- MCC The Matchless Charms of Christ
- MH The Ministry of Healing
- MLT My Life Today
- MM Medical Ministry
- MYP Messages To Young People
- PP Patriarchs and Prophets
- RH Review and Herald
- SC Steps to Christ
- SD Sons and Daughters of God
- SG Spiritual Gifts (1SG, 2SG...etc.)
- ST Signs of the Times
- 1SM Selected Messages, Book 1
- 1T Testimonies for the Church  
(1T, 2T...etc., for volumes 1-9)
- TM Testimonies to Ministers

***“One interest will prevail, one subject will swallow up every other—  
CHRIST OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.” E.G. White, SD 259***

The Loud Cry of the third angel of Revelation 14:9 is the last message according to the book of Revelation. There will be no greater message sent from God than this precious truth— the message of Christ our Righteousness. According to Revelation 18:1, this final message will lighten the earth with the glory (character) of God, bringing to a close God's final work on the earth. When God's people fully take hold of this most encouraging and hopeful message, it will lead to genuine revival and reformation. Then God will pour out His Spirit and enable His people to proclaim the Loud Cry of the Third Angel.

This book was written by a man who truly loved Jesus, which is very evident in all his writing, sermons and books. Pastor Lehman served as an SDA minister in five North American Union Conferences, Canada, and also Rwanda. He had a deep desire to see people respond to the Master's call: "My son, give me thine heart." Proverbs 23:26.



*"In the light from Calvary it will be seen that the law of self-renouncing love is the law of life for earth and heaven." DA 19*