STUDY OF HEBREWS

Jack Sequeira

Chapter 1

Christ, God's Final Word

Hebrews 1:1-3

The Greek of Hebrews is very unlike Paul. Therefore scholars say that linguistically it could not have been Paul who wrote the book. So many people have been considered as the authors of Hebrews. Besides Paul there is Timothy, Barnabas, some say it is Luke, some say Silas, some say Peter, some say Apollos and even some say it is Priscilla. If it is Priscilla it is the only book written by a woman in the New Testament.

I will give you my opinion, I feel that Paul wrote it, but he did not write it in Greek. He wrote it either in Aramaic or Hebrew because He was writing for the Jews. It was translated possibly by Luke and we have lost the Hebrew manuscript and all we have is the Greek text. By the way, Ellen White took the position that it is Paul who wrote the book. No matter what position you take we

must all agree that this is the inspired word of God. That's what counts.

The second thing I would like to say about the book concerns its destination. To whom was it written? Even the title of the book tells us very clearly that it was written to the Jewish Christians. Now there was quite a community of Jewish Christians in Rome and there was quite a community of Jewish Christians in Jerusalem. Many feel, and I think they are right, that it was primarily to the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem, but I'm sure that it included the Jewish Christians in general.

The next thing is the date and I think this is important. We do not have the exact date but it was approximately between 64 A.D. and 67 A.D. Now why is that date important? What took place in 70 A.D.? Jerusalem was destroyed, including the temple. Remember that the temple to the Jews was everything. It symbolized to the Jews the presence of God. The destruction of the temple meant that God had departed from them. If you have read

Daniel nine you will know that Daniel's prayer concerned the restoration of the temple in Jerusalem. That meant that God's favour was back on them.

If you go today to Jerusalem a portion of the wall is still existing. Do you know what they call it? The Wailing Wall. Why? They cry that the temple may be rebuilt. Now something else has been built over the rubble of the destroyed temple. It is the Dome of the Rock, which is a Muslim mosque. For them to rebuild the temple on the original site of the temple of Jerusalem they would have to destroy the Dome of the Rock. If they did that all hell would break loose. The Arabs would never take that sitting down. They think that rock upon which the Mosque is built is where Ishmael was offered by Abraham and the Jews and the Bible says that it was there that he offered Isaac.

So we have Abraham the father of the Jews as well as the father of the Arabs. I think Abraham will shed many tears when he discovers in the kingdom what havoc he caused by not sticking to

faith in God’s promise.

God, I believe, was preparing the Jews for the crisis. Three to five years before the destruction of Jerusalem the book of Hebrews was written. The purpose of the book was to turn their eyes from the temple and the rituals to Christ. We don’t know how soon but we are going to face a similar crisis. And I believe that the book of Hebrews can be of tremendous meaning to us. It will help us to turn our eyes from social security, from welfare, from the plastic card that can buy anything in America....

When we first came here it was in the middle of winter and my wife was freezing. I was in the immigration office and she walked out; when she came back she was wearing boots. She had no money and I knew that. I said, “Where did you get that?”

“From the shop,” she replied.

“How much did you pay?”

“Nothing,” she said. “I showed them this plastic card that you gave me.” It was a [department store] plastic card.

I said, “That was for emergencies.”

She said, “This was an emergency!”

I said, “Okay.”

If you look through the book of Hebrews, the theme therefore is that Jesus is the fulfilment of all that God had promised in the Old Testament. He is the reality. Therefore, the key word in the book of Hebrews is, “better.” Christ is the “better” revelation as given in the first four verses of chapter one. Christ is the “better” hope in chapter seven verse nineteen. He is the “better” priesthood in chapter seven. We will cover all of this in detail. He is the “better” covenant and promise in chapter eight verse six. He is the “better” sacrifice in chapter nine verse twenty-three. He is the “better” possession in chapter ten verse thirty-four. And He is the “better” resurrection in chapter eleven verse

thirty-five. So you see Christ is presented here as the "better" of all the types that were promised in the Old Testament. Christ is the anchor of the soul it says in chapter six, because He is "the better"

If you read the book of Hebrews you will not find it to be a theological book. It is not a book that explains the rituals and the types of the Old Testament. The main purpose is to present Christ as the total answer to every human need. That's the purpose of the book. Jesus Christ is the answer to every human need. He is the same yesterday, today and forever. He is still the only answer to every human need. Therefore Hebrews is the clearest and most systematic presentation of Christ—His person, His earthly ministry, His heavenly mission and ministry. In Hebrews, type and antitype are compared and contrasted.

Hebrews is the finest book if you want to study about the person of Jesus Christ. You may say, "What of the gospels?" Well, the gospels are an historical account of the acts of Christ. But in terms of the person, His earthly mission, and in

terms of our redemption, His heavenly ministry, the book of Hebrews is the best book. That is why we need to study the book of Hebrews because we need to know Jesus Christ.

There were two problems the Jewish Christians were facing. Both of the problems can be related to our situation:

1. The Jewish Christians were getting a bit discouraged because they were told that Christ was coming soon to establish the kingdom. And now thirty, thirty-five years later, He had not yet come. We have been preaching for over one hundred years that Christ is coming and a lot of our young people are saying, "Where is His coming you have been promising us?" And so, many of the Jewish Christians were discouraged. They were reverting back to Judaism. That's why Paul is trying to convince them. "Please don't go back, because you are taking a backward step."

2. The Jewish Christians were facing a lot of persecution. This was mainly from their fellow

Jews because, of course, these Jews said, “You’re a traitor to the synagogue, you have left the truth” (i.e., Judaism). We have a similar problem today in the Middle East. When we baptize muslims in the Middle East we have to do that secretly, because our own fellow Christian Adventists will not accept that a muslim can be converted. So that if a muslim becomes an Adventist Christian he is persecuted as a traitor not only by his former muslim brethren but by our own people. We were lucky if we can baptize three muslims in a year. We were extra lucky if we could keep them for one year. There is coming a time here in America when our own relatives and friends and people will persecute us. We need to have an anchor when that happens. To go one step further, when a home breaks up, the ones that suffer most are the children. They are pulled between two people. Their security is gone and they need an anchor. Jesus said, “I will never forsake you.”

Going back to the Jewish Christians, we need to see the pressure they were under when the book of Hebrews was written. They were going through

what we would call today backsliding. They were stopping church attendance. They were discouraged. And that is why in the book of Hebrews you will read, “Please don’t forsake the assembling of the saints or the brethren.”

Let us now turn to Hebrews chapter one. I am not going to rush through this book. I know that in America we are always rushing. Rush [downtown], rush back, rush here and there but I will not do it when I go to the Word of God. The Bible is hidden treasure and you will not find the treasure unless you spend some time digging. And that’s what we’re going to do here, we’re going to dig.

Let’s notice how the book of Hebrews begins. We will read the first three verses. We will be using the King James Version but will also refer to other translations.

God who at sundry (different) times and in divers (different) manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days

spoken unto us by his Son, Whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by Whom also He made the worlds; Who, being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.

I want you to look at two phrases in verses one and two. The first one is “time past” and the second one is “last days.” These two phrases are used to divide the history of this world into two periods. The “time past” is the Old Testament period. God in time past spoke to our fathers or our ancestors through prophets. You will discover that during this time all that God was doing was giving them the promise of a Messiah through the prophets.

So when you read the words “last days,” you must not project Adventist understanding of “last days.” What do we mean by “last days”? The words “last days” here refers to the New Testament period, in contrast to the Old Testament period,

which is the reality.

In other words, in the Old Testament God spoke to us in different ways and in different manners through the prophets, giving us the promise through types. But now in the last days, that is, since the coming of Christ, He no longer speaks through types and symbols but He speaks to us by His own Son. So the book of Hebrews is saying that Christ is God's final word to us. God is not going to add anything more to Jesus Christ. God's final word to this human race is Jesus Christ. The world needs to hear and see Jesus Christ.

Who is Jesus Christ? Number one it says He is His Son whom He has appointed heir of all things. That means He's the ruler of all things. Turn to Luke chapter four. Here we look at a dialogue between Christ and Satan. This is the temptation in the wilderness. Luke 4:5,6:

And the devil, taking Him up into a high mountain showed unto Him all the kingdoms of the world And the devil said unto Him, all this power

[authority] will I give Thee and the glory of them for they are delivered unto me.

Now, in Hebrews I read that Jesus Christ was appointed heir; He received the authority over all things. Who gave Him that authority? God. Was the devil right in offering Christ the authority of the kingdom? What did Jesus call Satan? He called him the Prince of this World. Christ said that. Paul calls him in Corinthians the "Lord of this world." So we need to know something here that is important.

When God created this world, for whom did He create it? For man. How do I know? Because Genesis one says, "Let man have dominion [authority]." But when Adam sinned and was taken into captivity by Satan, then Satan took over the authority of the world. What did Christ come to this world for? He came to redeem us from under Satan's authority. Why did He come to redeem us from Satan's authority? When Satan rules over you, what does he do to you? He is not concerned about you. He will use you and when he is

finished with you he will put you six feet under and keep you there.

Did Satan know that Christ was coming to redeem the world? Yes. Who sent him here? God. How could He redeem the world? By paying the price for our sins. And Satan was offering Him an easy way: “all you have to do is bow down to me and I will give you the world.” Was Satan really being honest? He’s a liar. Young people, when he promises you the world, don’t you ever believe him. He’s a liar and the father of lies. Did God buy back the world? Yes. When? At the cross. After He rose from the dead, who was the first person to see Him? Mary. And what did she do? She worshipped Him, but I’ll tell you, the English says, “Don’t touch me.” The Greek says, “Don’t hold onto me.”

She grabbed Him and said, “I am not letting you go.”

And young people, and my dear older folks, don’t you ever let go of Jesus Christ. But Jesus

said to her, “Mary, please don’t hold onto me. I have not yet gone to my Father.”

Why did He have to go to the Father? Who sent Him here? The Father. And He had to have the approval that His sacrifice was accepted. When He went up to the Father was His sacrifice accepted? How do we know? Because I read in Matt. 28:18: “All authority is given to Me.” God has given Him all authority to take us sinners to heaven. “Therefore go into all the world and preach the gospel.” Tell them the good news that they are no longer under Satan.

As far as Christ is concerned, He has redeemed all people. Never teach the doctrine of “limited atonement,” which is Calvinistic. That is that Christ only died for the elect, those whom God predetermined He would save. The Bible says “God so loved the WORLD.” But because God is love, He will not force Himself upon anyone. So we do have an opportunity to reject Him.

Will all mankind accept Christ? No. There will

be only two groups, those who have accepted and those who have rejected. The Bible puts them in all kinds of categories—sheep and goats, right hand and left hand, the kingdom of this world and the kingdom of heaven. Please remember that the believers belong to Christ. Therefore they are no longer truly citizens of this world. We are citizens of heaven. Here's one text: 1 John 5:19. Notice how John divides the world into two categories:

And we know that we (the believers) we are of God and the whole world lies under the control of the evil one.

There is no such thing as a free person. You are either under the control of God or under the control of Satan. There are only two forces in this world. Here is the problem: does Satan want you to accept Christ? Why not? If you do he will lose a citizen of his kingdom. Misery loves company. He wants you to burn in the fire with him.

I was told a story by an Egyptian when I was working in Egypt. It's a Muslim story but applies

to us as well. There was a mason who was working on a building on the third story. He slipped and fell right down. Before he hit the ground Satan grabbed him and saved him. The Arab said to him, “Boy, I was under the impression that you are a bad fellow. How come you saved me?”

“Because I have something worse for you.”

Sometimes the Devil does that. He may make life wonderful for you because he has something worse later on. Let us go to 2 Cor.4:3. The devil does not want you to accept Jesus Christ.

But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, Who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

Now how does the Devil blind the eyes of the mind? By perverting the gospel. The gospel is unconditional good news. It is not good advice.

Anyone who preaches the gospel as good advice is not preaching the gospel. What do I mean by “good advice”? If I tell Johnny, “If you study hard and get a good grade I’ll give you a bicycle.” Is that good news or is it good advice? It is good news if he follows the good advice, if he studies. It is conditional good news. In other words you have to be good first, study hard and get a good grade and then I’ll give you a bicycle.

We have been telling our young people the same thing very often. You have to be good first before Jesus can take you to heaven. The devil tried this with the Galatians. “It is not enough to believe Christ, you must do this and that, you must be circumcised, otherwise you will not make it.” Parents, please do not give your children the impression that God loves them only when they are good. We are losing between fifty and seventy-five percent of our young people. We need to bring them good news.

The Jews were facing the same thing, they were getting discouraged. Paul is saying, “No, Christ has

been made heir of all things." Then he goes back to Hebrews and goes step by step and he says, "This Christ is the Creator of the universe. He is the Ruler of the universe. He is the Sustainer of the universe. He is everything! And God has given Him the authority!"

So when we worship Christ, we are not merely accepting an ordinary man. He is the express image of the Father. He is God. He is not a god (like the Jehovah's Witnesses would like to teach us) but He is God who became man in order to purge us from our sins and now He is at the right hand of the Father. Has He been given authority to condemn us? No, to save us! Authority to meet all of our needs. That's why when Jesus was in this world He said, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God. Don't worry what you shall eat or what you shall drink or wear for the Father knows your needs in all these things."

We were having a tremendous famine in Ethiopia. I'm sure you heard about this America. And I was talking to a Coptic priest who was

complaining about the famine. While we were talking a sparrow came down. It was strong and fat and well fed. I said to the priest, “How come that sparrow is not starving? It also is living here in Ethiopia?”

He said, “That’s because God takes care of it.”

“Isn’t God taking care of you?” I asked.

He said, “I don’t know why He isn’t.”

I said, “Oh, you of little faith.” My dear people, Jesus is able to supply all your needs.

One more point before I close. “God who at Sundry times spake.” God spoke in the past in different ways. You link God with faith. Who is the One speaking? God. Through whom? What does this text say? It says the Old Testament is inspired. It is the inspired word of God. So if anyone says that the Old Testament is not inspired, here is a statement. God is the one who spoke. Yes, through the prophets. They are the ones who

wrote the Old Testament but who did the speaking? The message of the Old Testament is coming from whom? It is coming from God. We need both the testaments. The one is promise and the other is fulfilment. The book of Hebrews is trying to show us how Jesus Christ fulfilled the promises of God. Which is more important to you, the promise or the reality? If I promised you a million dollars that is wonderful. But what is better, the promise or when you receive the million dollars?

We are living in the last days. We are living in the New Testament period where no longer are we depending on what God promised us but the fulfilment in Jesus Christ. When you have Christ, you will be able to face anything in the world.

The persecution has not come yet. We have individuals who are going through difficult times but as a Christian church, as a denomination we have not yet known what it means to stand up and be persecuted for Christ. But it is coming. Before it comes we need to understand Jesus Christ. That is our main purpose for studying the book of

Hebrews and the sanctuary as well. It is all pointing us to Christ. He is the reality. This book is important because it helps us to know Him. Christ, God's final Word.

Chapter 2

Christ,
Greater than the Angels

Hebrews 1:4-2:4

I want to remind you that we must constantly keep in mind the purpose and the theme of this book. The book of Hebrews is not a theological book. It is a pastoral book written to a group of Jewish Christians who were getting discouraged and who were turning back to Judaism and giving up their faith in Christ. We are having a similar situation. Many Adventists are getting discouraged and turning their backs to Christ. They are giving up their advent hope and so the book of Hebrews is extremely important because it will restore our confidence in Christ. That is the purpose of the book.

Today we will deal with Heb. 1:4-2:4. The book of Hebrews like all the writings of the books

of the Bible is in units. These texts form a unit. The theme of this passage is “Christ is greater than the angels.” Please remember that the purpose of Hebrews is to show that Christ is superior to everything that is in the Old Testament. The key word of the whole book is “better.” The book of Hebrews is the finest, the clearest explanation of Jesus Christ.

In this passage, the writer of Hebrews is trying to show us that Christ is greater than the angels. We will see why this is important to the Jewish Christians. It is because the Old testament prophetic messages came through angels. In the New Testament period God speaks through His Son as shown in the first three verses. God’s final word to the human race is Jesus Christ. Before, He spoke through angels, and it was glorious, says the writer, but now He speaks to us through His Son, Jesus Christ.

With this in mind, let’s turn to Hebrews chapter one. In verses four to fourteen Paul tells us that there are three reasons why Christ is superior to the

angels:

1. In verses four and five, it is because Christ has a better name than the angels. His name is superior to the angels.

2. In verses six and seven, Christ is greater than the angels because of the demonstration of worship. When you worship somebody you are admitting that the person you worship is greater than you. When angels worship Christ they are admitting that Christ is superior.

3. The third reason is in verses eight to fourteen, in which it is argued that Christ is greater because of His authority.

We will study each of these and then look at the conclusion in the first four verses of chapter two.

Let's look at the first reason, Christ is superior to the angels because of His name. Today, names do not mean too much. We choose names because

they are words we like or it reminds us of our parents. In the Bible times names were very important and significant.

Now the contrast in verses four and five between Christ and the angels is given in the fact that Christ is called “Son.” Angels are called servants. Who is greater, the Son or the servants? The Son. Let’s read verses four and five:

Being so much better [note the key word, “better”] than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.

So Christ is greater than the angels because His name is greater than theirs.

For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee?

We must look at that word “begotten.” It has caused problems in the Christian Church and it has caused problems in our own church. Our pioneers

unfortunately, James White, Prescott, E.G. Waggoner, looked at the word “begotten” and got the idea that Christ had a beginning. We call that Arianism. We were semi-Arians. In fact, Waggoner in his Christ Our Righteousness said that Christ had a beginning but it was so far in the distant past that from the human point of view it is like eternity.

So there was a time in our history that we had a problem theologically about the beginning of Christ. But I thank God that He corrected us through Ellen G. White. That famous statement in The Desire of Ages, “In Him was life, original, unborrowed, underived,” was to correct our problem.

The problem was not only in our church. It was also in the early Christian Church. It comes from that word “begotten.” In English the word means born or produced. Now in the Greek we have two words both translated into English as “begotten.” They have two different meanings. ”Monogenay” is the word that is translated in your

Bible as “begotten.” The other word comes from the same root word, “monogenaytos.” Now these two do not have the same meaning. “Monogenatos” means born but that is not the word that is used. “Monogenay” means ”special.” So please remember that the word used here does not mean that Christ was produced by the Father or created by the Father but that Christ was very special to the Father. He’s God’s “Monogenay.”

By the way, that word is also used for us believers. We are very special to God through Jesus Christ. “Behold what manner of love God has bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God.” We will study that later.

Jesus is God’s very special Son compared to the angels who are servants. The word “angels” means “ministering spirits.” Paul is here quoting from several psalms: Ps. 39, Ps. 104 and 102 are here gathered into this one passage:

To which of the angels said He at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee?

And again I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son?

In Bible days, the father-son relationship was very special. I hope that can be restored in our church. There must be a clear bond. The son was very special. In fact if a wife did not produce a son for her husband she was a failure to him because the son carried the name. This is how it was in Jewish culture. Paul is using this relationship to give us an idea of father and son. Jesus was very special.

So the first point then is that Jesus had a better name than the angels. He is superior to the angels. The second point is that He is greater than the angels because of worship. Look at verse six:

And again, when he bringeth in the first begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship Him.

The words “first begotten” do have a connotation of a beginning. We must remember

that Jesus was both God and man. As God He never had a beginning but as man He did have a beginning. Now the word firstborn has two meanings. It could be a title or it could mean the first child. And here the term really refers to the title, but He also as a man, had a beginning.

When Christ was born in this world, when He took humanity, did the angels worship Him? Yes, the angels worshipped Him. They worshipped Him because God said so.

And again when He bringeth in the First Born into the world [i.e., when Christ was born in a manger in Bethlehem] he saieth, And let all the angels of God worship Him.

This was one of the signs that God gave the shepherds that this is the Son of God, the Messiah. In verse seven we are told:

And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire.

Of course, wind and fire are the two elements that man has no control over. What He is saying is that angels can control wind and fire but Christ is above that. He is above the angels. He is greater than the angels who have power over wind and fire.

Let us go to the third reason that Jesus is better than the angels. You see, the first two reasons are mainly geared to the Jewish mind, but the third one, Christ is greater by authority is important to us because of what He is. It is given in verse eight:

But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.

The Father is addressing the Son and how does He address Him? He calls Him "God." By the way, this is an excellent text to prove the divinity of Christ, because God is addressing Jesus Christ as God. I would like to mention a quotation from John Bunyan, "If Jesus Christ is not God then heaven will be filled with idolaters."

You see, in the Bible only God can be worshipped. Now if God says to the angels, "Worship my Son" and He is not divine then heaven is full of idolaters. The fact that the angels worshipped Christ is also proof of His divinity. We have then two evidences of His divinity. The first is that it was the Father Himself Who asked that Christ be worshipped and the second is that the angels were asked to worship the Son. Note the words of the Father who calls His Son "O God." That's the way He addresses the Son. "Thy throne, O God is forever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom."

So Christ is not only divine but He is the God of righteousness. And in verse nine, "Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity." Now this is in the context of His humanity. Even among the angels there was failure. One third of the angels fell, but Christ never failed. Even as a man He loved righteousness. So He is above the angels even in terms of His authority over sin. Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity.

There are approximately twelve words in the Bible for sin. Each word has a specific meaning. The word “iniquity” in Hebrew means “bent.” That’s the meaning of the word, just “bent.” When applied spiritually it means bent toward self. When David said, “I was shapen in iniquity from my birth,” he was saying, “I was born egocentric, or self-centred.” All of us are born self centred because of the fall. Isa. 53:6 “All we, like sheep have gone astray and we have all turned to our own way.” That is the meaning of iniquity.

The biggest fight that Jesus had on this earth was the fight against self. For example in John 5:19 he said, “I have come not to do my will but the will of the Father.” In Gethsemane He said, “Father, if it is possible remove this cup, nevertheless not my will but Thine be done.” The nature of Christ tried to recall Him from the will of God but He said, “No.” He did not yield to the pull of self not even by a thought for a moment. This is what the text is saying, “Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity.” This is

something that you and I will fight all the time. The greatest battle we will fight is right inside us. It is the pull towards self. We thank God that Jesus Christ conquered self and set us free. Otherwise we would never have made it. Go to verse ten:

And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands.

So Christ was not only the One who is righteous, He is not only God but He is now the Creator of this earth and the heavens. That is why Jesus is called the "Word of God." Who spoke when God created this world? It was Jesus Christ. He is the Word of God.

Here are several texts in the New Testament to remind us that Christ is the Creator. Verses ten through twelve in Hebrews one brings this out. We will read verses eleven and twelve first.

They shall perish [that is this creation will come to an end because of the fall] but thou

remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.

Isn't it wonderful that even though the creation has been ruined by the fall and it will have to come to an end, Christ has not been affected by the fall. He has never changed and He never will. He is to rule this world forever. "Thy throne is forever." Christ is Creator, Redeemer, and Restorer. The fact that He created is the foundation of the other two. That is very important. Now to John 1:1-3:

In the beginning [i.e., from eternity, in the Greek there is no "the," it is literally, "in beginning"] was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God.

Not "a god" like the New World Translation puts it because the indefinite article "a" does not exist in the Greek language. It says "The Word was God." It is a copulative word. You can interchange the subject and the object. You can say "The Word

was God" or "God was the Word."

The same was in the beginning with God and all things were made by Him and without Him was not anything made that was made. [In Him was Life, unborrowed, underived.]

Col.1:16: For by Him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him.

The third text is a very relevant text to us in the Laodicean message. It is in Rev. 3:14 where Christ is referring to Himself, He calls Himself the beginning of the creation of God in the last part of verse fourteen. The word "beginning" there means the source or the origin. So Christ is the source of creation. The word "create" in our language can mean many things. I can create an idea. I can create a picture. I can create a model. I can create many things but man creates by depending on pre-existing material while God created by depending

on nothing.

That is what Paul will bring out in chapter eleven of Hebrews verse three. By faith we believe that the world was created without any pre-existing matter. Do you know what that means? That God's word, Christ's word is energy. He can speak and it will happen. That means that He can do in us that which is impossible for us to do. God's word is energy! So when He promises us something His Word itself is POWER! When He spoke it happened.

The only thing in which He used His hand to create was man. He made him out of mud. Do you know why? Because I think He knew he would fall. In fact the Bible says He knew. Our fall would bring pride. Because man has become proud he needs to remind himself that he is made of dust. We are told by Ellen G. White that the work of justification by faith is to take the glory of man and bring it down to the dust. The gospel is not I but Christ. Christ is the One who gets all the glory. Now let us go to the closing verses of

chapter one:

But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool?

In other words, God is saying to His Son, “You sit here; I have given you all authority.” He never said that to the angels. The angels are simply ministers as given in verse fourteen:

Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?

God has ordained angels to communicate His blessings to us in Christ. Above the angels is Jesus Christ. And now comes the conclusion in the first four verses of chapter two:

Therefore, [in view of the fact that Christ is above the angels] we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.

Is it possible for a Christian, for a born-again Christian to drift away from Christ? Yes! Nowhere in the Bible does it ever teach once saved always saved. Here is a clear passage. "Therefore, we..." Who is the "we"? The believer or the unbeliever? To the believer who has accepted Christ, who has experienced the new birth, who has a hope in Christ, he said, "Please, we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip."

For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward....

God was very clear in His presentation in the Old Testament through the angels and remember that when God gave the law to Moses it was given in the hands of the angels. Gal.3:19 brings this out clearly:

Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was

ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator. [Moses was that mediator.]

What Paul is saying here in Hebrews is that if what God promised and what God said in the Old Testament was taken very seriously and anyone who disobeyed God's rules was punished, even though it was given by angels, then as Heb.2:3 asks:

How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him.

There are many Christians today belonging to the school of Calvinism who teach that if a Christian backslides and gives up Christ because he is a part of the elect he will be saved. Nowhere in the Bible is that taught. It is possible for you to lose your hold on Christ. Paul's concern here is "Please do not give up your faith in Christ."

God revealed in the Old Testament that if you

turn your back on God you will receive a recompense of reward according to the way you have acted. How much more if you neglect the gift of God?

Now why is he saying, “How much more”? Is it easy to keep God’s law or is it hard? Be honest with me. Is it hard to obey God’s law? Yes. Let us be honest. Is it easy to accept God’s gift? Is it easy to receive a gift? Sure! If you are punished in the Old Testament for disobeying a law and it was hard to keep it, how much more if you reject His gift.

At least you could say about the law of God, “I really tried but I failed.” You cannot say that about the gift because you cannot say, “I tried to fulfil the gift” because the gift is easy to receive. So you can’t say to God, “I tried to work my way to heaven.” He’ll say, “I didn’t ask you if you tried or not. I gave it to you as a gift. Why did you reject it? Why did you turn away from it?” You’ll have no excuse, in other words.

I want to conclude with this very important

fact. The real issue in the judgment is, “What did you do with My Son? I gave Him at tremendous cost to Me but I gave it to you as a gift.” And for those who turn their backs to the gift of Jesus Christ there is no way of escaping, because salvation is a gift. I want to remind you of the words of Jesus Christ in John 3:18:

He who believes shall not be condemned but he who believes not shall be condemned because he believeth not in the only begotten Son. [Look also at Mark 16:15,16.] Go into all the world and preach the gospel. He who believes and is baptized will be saved. He who believes not will be damned.

With this in mind, read Heb. 10:26, a verse that has caused endless problems in our church and in the lives of many Christians. We will not deal now with the details but what Heb. 10:26 is saying is exactly what Heb.2:3 is saying. We will come to Heb.10:26 some other time but I am only giving it as a cross reference:

If we sin wilfully after that we have received

the knowledge of the truth there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin.

You see we depend on only one definition of sin and that is that sin is the transgression of the law. But the word sin is not used in that sense here. Sin here, is used in the sense of John 16:9, the Holy Spirit will convince the world of sin "because they believe not on me." Remember, unbelief is also sin. In our next two studies we will see that the reason that the Jews did not enter into God's rest was because of unbelief.

If you deliberately reject God after you know the gospel and deliberately reject Christ after you know the truth there is no one who will die for you. The only sacrifice that saves you is the sacrifice of the cross. If you deliberately reject that there is no hope. That's what Hebrews is saying. Heb. 2:3 says if you neglect the gift that God has given you, if you refuse and turn your back on Christ and say, "I don't want Him any more," then there is nothing that you can look forward to but the judgment. You can't escape the judgment if you...

...neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord [when He said, “The kingdom of heaven is at hand”], and was confirmed unto us by them that heard Him [which were the apostles].

How can you escape it? One of the most valuable things you possess is your faith in Jesus Christ. Don’t you ever give it up no matter how discouraged you become. The devil will do everything to destroy your faith in Christ. Don’t you ever give it up because if you do you will end up with this result, you cannot escape the judgement of God. That is why we need to establish our people in Christ that they don’t give up their faith. This is why Paul is saying to these Jewish Christians, “You were very firm in the Old Testament, you accepted everything you were taught in the Old Testament. This was given through angels but Christ is greater than the angels therefore you should listen to Him more than you listen to angels. You must give the more earnest heed to what Christ says. Christ says “He who

comes to me in no wise will I cast you out."

So our anchor is Jesus Christ. The Devil will do everything to destroy your faith. Don't give it up. It is the most valuable thing you have. It's true, you can't see it. It is something inside you but it is the most valuable thing.

In chapter eleven he will show us how the people in the Old Testament were willing to die for Christ rather than to give up their faith. We must do the same. When the crisis comes don't give up your faith. You will lose everything else, your property, your house, your bank account. Give it up, but don't give up your faith in Christ because you will never escape the judgment if you do. Salvation is a gift but man has a part to play. He has to accept the gift. Having accepted it he must hold on to it. Jesus said, "He that endures unto the end the same shall be saved."

Chapter 3

Christ, God Who Exalted Man (Part 1)

Hebrews 2:5-18

Through Christ, man has been exalted above the angels. In fact, when you realize what God is saying here, it will really "blow your mind," to use a good American expression. In order for Christ to exalt us, He had to become one of us. He was God. He stepped down to be one of us and, of course, by doing that, He elevated us to where He is. This is one of the key passages in the New Testament on Christology. Turn now to 1 Cor. 2:9,10:

But, as it is written, eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that love Him.

What is Paul is saying here is, "We have no

idea for it is beyond human comprehension, it is beyond the human mind. It is beyond philosophy what God has prepared for us." While the secular man cannot discover this, ...

But God has revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.

I would like for you to see what God has revealed through His word. May the Holy Spirit give you understanding as to what He has done for this human race through His Son Jesus Christ. Look now at 2 Cor. 8:9:

For we know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that, though he was rich [How rich was He?...infinitely rich. Keep that in mind], yet for your sakes He became poor, that you, through his poverty, might be rich. [How rich? As rich as He is.]

Now turn again to Hebrews chapter two. In our last study, we covered the thought that Christ is

greater than the angels. He has a better name, they worshipped Him, and, as God, He is greater than the angels. Beginning with verse five, the comparison is not primarily with Christ and the angels but with man and angels. Now, by creation man was created a little lower than the angels. But by redemption they are above the angels. So we are better off because of the fall than if we had never fallen. Beginning in Heb. 2:5:

For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak.

God never intended for the angels to be elevated above their original creation. He never intended them to rule the world that is to come in the earth made new.

But [verses six and seven are dealing with man] one in a certain place testified [he is talking about David who testified in Ps. 8:4], what is man that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man [a Hebrew expression which means mankind], that thou visitest him?

Here is man who fell. What did God do? He comes and visits him. To do what? To redeem him. Why should God do that? Because He loves us!

Thou madest him a little lower than the angels. [That's what we are by creation—a little lower than angels.] Thou crowned him with glory and honor, and did set him over the works of thy hands.

You may be a little lower than the angels by creation but, by redemption, He has elevated us. Exalted us. How did He do it?

Thou has put all things in subjection under his feet.

God will one day give man rulership over His universe. Boy, that's fantastic!

For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him.

Have you got it? There is nothing that will not be under man. That blows your mind!

But now we see not yet all things put under him.

In other words, that is not yet a reality. That's future. The writer wants you to keep this in mind because to give up Christ is to give up everything.

Yes, we are living in futility today. We are living under bondage. Turn to Rom. 8:22:

For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain until now and not only they [that is, creation], but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.

We may be groaning today because things are going pretty hard for us. We may be groaning but it is only for a season. We are waiting and, therefore, in verses 24 and 25, Paul says:

We are saved by hope [hope and reality are two different things]; but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? [Do you hope for something that you already have? No.] But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.

So we are waiting for that, but I want you to know what God intends for us. What are His plans for us? It is to exalt us above every other creation. And this is what blows your mind. We don't have all this in reality, that's what he's saying in the last part of verse 8:

But now we see not all things put under him [the "him" is man, and he's using the word "him" in the corporate sense]. But we see Jesus [who is, of course, the captain of our salvation, Jesus is the one through whom we are going to receive all this], Who was made a little lower than the angels [now, please remember, He was above the angels, but to save us, He was made lower than the angels, He became one of us] for the suffering of death.

Why the suffering of death? Through that death we were redeemed from Satan and we were redeemed from death itself.

So we see Jesus, Who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor, that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man.

Now the actual Greek text doesn't say "every man." It says "every thing." The word "man" in Greek is "anthropos," from which we have anthropology. But the word Paul used here is "pantes," which means everything. Christ did not only die for mankind, but He died for the whole world to redeem it, so that He can restore it.

When God created man, He gave man dominion over the whole earth. When Adam sinned, not only did he bring damnation to us, his family, but he also handed the world over to Satan. That's why, in the New Testament, Jesus calls Satan the prince of this world. But, on the cross,

God bought the world back. It is now legally not Satan's. It's legally Christ's. One day He will restore it. Now look at Heb. 2:10,11:

For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things [Christ is the source of all things], in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren.

What Paul is saying here is that, when Christ became one with us, that we may become one with Him. Do you realize that, through Christ, we become the sons of God? See 1 John 3:1:

Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.

We were sons of man. Christ became a son of man in order that we may become sons of God. He became poor that we may become rich. Here is

what happened. The life that you and I were born with came originally from Adam. It is a life that has sinned. It is a life that has to die because the Law says, “The soul that sins must die.”

When Jesus came to this world, He did not come to change the death sentence. If He changed the death sentence, He would be changing His own law. He did not come to change His law, but to fulfil it. His law not only demands obedience, but it also demands justice. On the cross, the human life of the Adamic race actually died—not for three days, but forever. The wages of sin is not death as we know it, but it is forever. In exchange, God gave us the life of His Son that we may be resurrected. So the life we receive through Christ is His own life.

The life that God gave Adam was conditionally immortal. The life that God gives us through His Son is eternal life. You’re looking at me in horror, but the Bible is clear on this.

God so loved the world that He gave His only

begotten Son.

What exactly did He give? What does that mean, “He gave us His Son”? Turn to 1 John 5:11:

And this is the record [these are the facts] that God hath given to us eternal life [not conditional immortality, can you imagine the terrible risk that God is taking?] and this life is in His Son.

Where is the source of this life? It is in His Son. Now notice that John 3:16 does not say, “God so loved the world that He lent His Son.” But He gave His Son. There is a difference between giving and lending. Lending means that He will take Him back but giving means He is giving forever. That’s the gift of God. Why did He give us the life of His Son? Because the life we have which we inherited from Adam is the life that must die. That is called the great exchange.

Let me put it another way. Before the cross, Jesus is always called the Only Begotten. Remember we saw that the word “begotten” means

somebody special. Before the cross, God had only one special Son. Like, for instance, at John 1:14:

The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us [and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father], full of grace and truth.

After the cross Jesus is never called “the Only Begotten.” What is Jesus called after the cross? Look at Rev. 1:5:

And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the FIRST BEGOTTEN of the dead.

Now, what’s the difference between the only begotten and first begotten? If I say, “this is my only son,” what does that mean? I have no other son. If I say, “this is my first son,” that means I have other sons. Before the cross God had only one Son, but because He gave His life for us, no longer does God have only one Son. He has many sons and daughters of whom Christ is the first. He is, therefore, our elder brother. That is what Heb.2:11 is saying:

For both he that sanctifieth [that is, Christ] and they who are sanctified [that is us] are all of one: [we share the same life] for which cause [because of this] he is not ashamed to call them brethren. [He is our brother!]

I want to show this on the blackboard. First of all, I'll draw three circles. These three circles represent the Godhead—the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Okay, let's put the Father in the middle, the Son here, and the Holy Ghost here. This is God, Who rules over the whole universe. Below these are the angels who were created by God and, below the angels, man was created. This gives the status in heaven at creation.

Satan got hold of all of us and brought us down to the bottom of the pit at the fall. We are at the time of the fall down below all these. Now what did God do? "What is man that thou art mindful of him that thou visitest him?" Christ comes and becomes part of us to save us. Did He restore us back to our lost state? Wouldn't it be wonderful if

He had done that? Yes.

But I want to introduce you to one of Paul's favourite expressions, "much more." What does this expression "much more" mean? It means that, when God compares Adam and Christ in Romans five, He is saying that Christ has done for us much more than what we lost. He doesn't bring us back to where we were but back to where He is. We will sit with Him and reign with Him in the universe. He is the King of kings. Who are the kings of whom He is the King? We are.

That is what is mind-boggling. I know that some of you say, "This is impossible." Well, here are some texts. Remember, when Christ came to this world, God had one Son. We have seen that. Now look at Rom. 8:16,17:

The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God, and, if children, then heirs—heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.

Now what does the phrase “joint-heirs” mean? Do you know what a “joint account” means? It means that both people named in the account have access to the money in the account. “Joint-heirs” means that we are with Christ to have the privileges of all that are His. Now we don’t have it in reality today. Christ is already there but one day He is coming to take us where He is. Now we see through a glass darkly but then we shall see Him as He is. The term “joint-heirs” means that we will share with Him all of His privileges. It does not mean that we will become Gods—that’s Mormonism—but we will share the privileges that Christ has. Can you imagine that? Go to Gal. 4:4,5:

But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, and made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law [Who is under the law?...the whole world. Romans 3:19 brings it out, the whole world is guilty and is under the law] to redeem them that were under the law that we might receive the adoption of sons.

Now you know what the laws in this country are concerning the inheritance of adopted children. Does the adopted child have all the legal rights of the natural child? Yes. That's what he is saying here. And in Hebrew culture, an adopted child would have the legal rights.

For example, according to the prophecies of the Old Testament, Jesus was to sit on the throne of David and had to be a descendant of David. Now you can never get to the throne of David through the mother. It is always through the father. The royal line came through the men, always. But Joseph was not the real father of Jesus.

Have you ever compared the genealogy of Christ given by Matthew and Luke? They don't agree. Especially from David to Jesus, they totally disagree. I'll tell you why. One of them gives the royal line and the other gives the blood line. David had two sons. One was Solomon and one was Nathan and the genealogies are of these two. These two families never met until Mary and

Joseph. Joseph was of the Solomon line and Mary was of the Nathan line. The two married and through Mary, Jesus got the blood of David. Through Joseph, who was not His real father but was a foster father, He received the legal right (because of the Jewish system) to the throne of David. By the way, this is an excellent study to convince the Jews that He was the Messiah. Genealogies mean nothing to us living in America. Most of us just skim through them. But to the Jews it meant everything. And that's why it's there. So when the fullness of time came these two families met and Jesus was born.

Let us turn now to the facts that we shall reign with Christ. We are the adopted sons of God. We are the children of God in Christ. Now turn to Revelation twenty and let the Bible speak. Look at Rev. 20:6:

Blessed [happy] and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection...

Remember, there are two resurrections—one at

the second coming of Christ and the other at the third coming of Christ. Who has part in the first resurrection? Not those who are good, but those who are in Christ by faith. Paul in Thessalonians says, “The dead in Christ shall rise first.” Continuing in Rev.20:6:

...on such, the second death has no power...

Why not? Not because they are good but because they have already died the second death in Christ. You cannot die the second death twice.

...but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign [rule] with Christ for a thousand years.

What comes after the thousand years? Sustentation? No. In America you can rule only for two terms. This is not true in many of the third world countries. In Africa when a man becomes a ruler, he wants to rule forever. Haillie Salassie, for instance, if he had only stepped down! He was senile, he was eighty-three, so they got rid of him.

When men come into power they will do anything, use military power to keep that authority by might until they die. That's why they have so many countries in Africa that have a coupe. They have a one-party system.

We will reign with Christ for how long? Why only a thousand years? What will we do after that? The throne of God will move from heaven to this earth. Now turn to Revelation chapter twenty-two which discusses the New Earth. Look at verse five:

And there shall be no night there...

Just think of it—"no more night." In 1961, I canvassed in a town called Killina in Sweden. It was 115 miles north of the Arctic Circle. The sun never went down for six weeks. In fact, I photographed the first Friday I was there. I wondered, "What time does Sabbath begin?" Well, we decided we would keep it from the lowest point of the sun, about 6 o'clock and then it goes up again. Of course, in December the sun never rises for six weeks. But in the New Earth there will be

no sunset. We may have the glorious skies, but you kids can play all day long.

There is no night there, and they need no candle, neither light of the sun, for the Lord God giveth them light, and they shall reign forever and ever.

That is the privilege of being a Christian! Anyone who gives his faith in Christ up is crazy. And that is what the book of Hebrews was trying to tell the Jews: “Don’t give up your faith. You may not have received the reality right now. You are still suffering. You are being persecuted. You are being hounded by the people. Life is hard, but hold on to God, because our position is where? In Christ.” Look at Eph. 2:6:

We are sitting in heavenly places in Christ.

We are not there in reality but, in Christ, we are there. One day we will be there. So it doesn’t matter what you are today. You may be poor. You may be on welfare, but I’ll tell you, you are the

sons and daughters of God. Why are you discouraged? Don't you know who you are? We must remind ourselves who we are. The world in their foolish wisdom may laugh at us today, but I tell you, when they see us in the New Jerusalem and they are outside, I know what they will think, "We were fools and they were right." And we have a wonderful expression which says, "He who laughs last, laughs best."

God doesn't want anybody to be outside. So we have a job. There is room for every human being in the New Jerusalem. God gave His Son, not for the elect, not for a few, but for the whole world. And that's why He has delayed His coming, not because He wants to keep us suffering here. It's because He doesn't want anyone to perish.

So we have a job to do while we are waiting. The job is to tell the world the good news that, in Christ, we have been exalted to the throne of God. And that's the wonderful good news of the gospel.

Chapter 4

Christ, God Who Exalted Man (Part 2)

Hebrews 2:15-18

Turn again to Hebrews chapter two. In our last study we looked at two important truths that are revealed in this passage. We studied one of them, how through Jesus Christ, mankind has been exalted above the angels. Today we will see the other part of the truth which is what it cost God to exalt man.

To begin, I would like to say a little about the disciples of Christ as our introduction. The disciples were with Jesus off and on for about three years. They heard Him preach. They were taught personally by Him. They witnessed His miracles. And yet at the end of those three years at the last supper they were still a bunch of greedy, self-centred, self-seeking men. But less than two

months later they were turning the world upside-down with their preaching and their witnessing and their miracles. The question is, “what happened to the disciples?”

They were filled with the Holy Spirit. But there was something else that took place before Pentecost that was crucial, and I want to bring this to your attention. In the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ something happened. Actually, two things happened:

1. Their ego-centric dreams were shattered. They never expected the Messiah to die.

2. They beheld on the cross the true glory of our Lord Jesus Christ and His self-emptying love full of grace and truth.

This transformed their hearts so that they were full with deep heart-felt appreciation for their Lord so that they determined that from now on they would hold the attitude, “for me to live is Christ.” They were willing to live and die for Him.

Emptied of self, the Holy Spirit could fill them and use them mightily. The same thing must happen to us if we are going to turn this world upside-down.

This work cannot be done with budgets. Nor can we do it with promotional programs. Our hearts, too, must be filled with appreciation for our unspeakable gift, Jesus Christ. It is thus that we will also be emptied of self so that we can be filled during the Latter Rain of the Holy Spirit. Then the work will be finished. It is not time. It is not budget. It is not numbers. It is God's work and He will finish it. He wants empty hearts. Our hearts cannot be emptied unless we are filled with deep heart appreciation. Faith really is a heart appreciation of Jesus Christ.

There are two facts that must be realized in order to produce appreciation:

1. Our appreciation for a gift (because Christ is God's supreme gift to man) is based on how valuable the gift is to us.

If I gave you a fountain pen for your birthday you would say ”Thank you,” but in your heart you would say “Well, I can get one of these anyway.” But if I came to you and took out all the money I had in the bank and bought you a brand new car and said, ”This is my gift to you,” your appreciation would be much deeper, because the gift is much more valuable to you.

So number one, our appreciation of Jesus Christ is based on how valuable He is to us. That is why in our last study we discovered how valuable He is to us. We discovered that in Christ we have been exalted above the angels. In Christ, we have been made sons and daughters of God. In Christ, we have become joint-heirs with Him. In Christ, we will reign with Him. It is not only simply life that He gave us. Paul says in Rom. 5:17 that in Christ we don’t only receive eternal life but we will reign in that life. I’ll tell you when you realize how valuable that gift is your heart will be filled with appreciation.

2. This is what we’re going to cover today.

How much did it cost the giver?

For example, if Rockefeller would give you one hundred dollars or even a thousand dollars you would say “thank you,” but in your heart you will ponder, “What is a thousand dollars to Rockefeller? It is nothing.” In our service in Africa we learned this. In 1967, we had a drought there in Kenya. The third world depends on the rains for survival. If the rains fail, they have no irrigation there. If the rains fail, there is no food.

In 1967, the rains failed in Kenya. Good old America came to our aid. I was teaching in a boarding college. We had corn and oil and wheat that was sent from the United States so that our kids could survive. Now, unfortunately, the corn that America grows is yellow and Africans don’t like yellow corn. They like the white corn. One day in the cafeteria they took the food which had been made into a bread and were throwing it around. They were wasting the food. The people were starving. One of our missionaries from Modesto, California, got mad and he stood up

before the student body in the cafeteria and he said, “Don’t you appreciate what my country is doing for you?”

One young student said, “No.” And I’ll tell you the reason He gave. He said, “No American ever sacrificed to send us this food. You sent it to us from your surplus which you yourselves could not consume.”

In their thinking there was no sacrifice. This is one of the problems that you’ll face in the mission field. The word ”poverty” is a relative term. A lot of missionaries would say, ”We have sacrificed to come to Africa.”

They say, “No, you come with a car, with all the blessings of life. Where is the sacrifice?”

They are judging, of course, by their standards, not by the standards in America. To have a car in Africa means that you’re a big shot and a big shot doesn’t sacrifice. They saw no sacrificial participation.

In Ethiopia, when the country went Marxist, some of our young people fell for Marxism. There was a young man in my class who fell for it. What bothered me was the fact that he was an orphan. One of our Norwegian nurses took him under her wing. She paid his elementary school fees and paid his academy fees, fed him, and was putting him through college, and now this man turned to Marxism.

”Don’t you have any appreciation for what this dear sister did for you,” I asked, “that you should turn your back to God and hurt this dear sister?”

He said “Hurt her? Sacrifice? It cost her nothing. You missionaries are rich.”

The question is, “How much did it cost God to save us?” Supposing God would give you today a million dollars. Would it cost God anything to do that? No. He can turn stones into gold. All the silver and gold belongs to Him. But when He gave us His only begotten Son, He gave us something

that He could not replace. Do you know that?

How much did it cost God to save us? That is the question that we must look at as we look because when we realize how valuable Christ is to us and we see what it cost Christ to save us, we can never treat Jesus Christ lightly. Our heart will be filled with appreciation and God can use us mightily.

Please turn to Heb. 2:7 and let me remind you what is said about us. We were created a little lower than the angels. Remember it was Christ, Who is God, He's the Word of God, who created us. Now look at verse nine:

But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels.

Here is the Son of God who created the universe. All things were created by Him. Now He's willing to be captured in His own creation. He is willing to become one with us. How much oneness was there? Look at verse fourteen:

Forasmuch, then, as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise [notice the emphasis there] took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

He was made a little lower than angels. Look at the word “made.”

What does it mean? It means that He was made something He was not. He was God but He was made like us. He was made one with us. This is the “in Christ motif” that we have introduced before. Why was He made like us? “For the suffering of death.” Crowned with glory and honour that by the grace of God He should taste death, not only for every man, which your English Bible says, but for everything.

Here is another parallel passage which goes a little deeper into this whole issue. Go to

Philippians, chapter two. We call this passage the "kenosis doctrine." The word "kenosis" is the Greek word which means "self-emptying."

How much did Christ empty Himself to exalt us? Paul gives us seven steps in this chapter. Beginning in verse six:

Who, being in the form of God...

The word "form" is "morpheae," which is the very substance, the very reality of God. This is a very good text for Jehovah Witnesses. They don't believe that Christ was divine but here is a very clear statement. "Who, being in the form of God." So Christ by nature, by native right was God. He was equal with the Father. Here then is the first step:

Christ thought it not robbery to be equal with God. He did not cling to equality with God.

You know when we human beings reach a high position we like to cling to that position. We do

not like to step down. We have this problem, not only in the world but even in the church. I have yet to see a young pastor who has a big church who wants to go down to a small church. That's a demotion! We are always trying to climb up and up, even in the work of God, unfortunately. But Christ did not hold unto His equality.

This is the problem we have in Africa. When a man becomes the president of a country, he wants to remain president forever. That's why we have to have laws in this country of democracy that you can't reign for more than two terms. That's our human problem. But Christ did not hold on to His equality. He made Himself of no reputation, which simply means He emptied Himself. How much did He empty Himself? The next step in verse seven tells us:

But made himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant,

Now are angels servants? Yes. Angels are ministering servants. So if He became an angel

would He be stepping down? Yes. But He did not become an angel. He was made in the likeness of man who are lower than angels. Let's go to the next statement in verse eight:

And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself.

Even as a man He humbled Himself. Can I ask how many of you were born in a stable? Even in Africa, the Third World, it is a rare thing. I know of only one African who was born in a stable. It's a disgrace to be born in a stable. And here is the Son of God, Who was equal with God, born in a stable. So, even as a man, He humbled himself. Supposing He was born in Herod's palace. Would that have been humiliating for Christ? Yes. But He was not born in Herod's palace. He was born in a stable. Now, please, He was not born in an American stable which is nice and clean and smells good. Have you ever been in a Middle East stable? It stinks. It's full of flies and fleas. That's where He was born. The Son of God! Why? For whom? For us! He became poor that we may become rich.

Now to the next step:

Having humbled Himself as a man He became obedient unto death.

Death is the wages of sin. How many sins has Christ committed? Even as a man He didn't deserve to die, for He was obedient. Three times He prayed to His Father, "Father if possible remove this cup from me." The Father said, "No." Why? Didn't He love His Son? Why did He say, "No"? It was because He loved us! If He had said "Okay, Son, I will liberate you from this death," we would never have escaped the wages of sin. But He died that we may be delivered not only from death but, as Heb. 2:15 says, from the fear of death to which we are in bondage. He died that we might be liberated from the fear of death.

A maternity nurse was telling me that every baby in this world is born with a fear of being dropped. That's why when you hold a baby upside down it cries, because it's afraid of falling. I told her, "No, the baby's not afraid of falling, the

baby's afraid of death." We are born slaves to the fear of death. And what happens is that when the baby grows up he discovers that there are more ways of dying than falling so the fear increases and we become victims to fear. Jesus Christ delivered us from that fear. Paul says in Phil.1:21:

For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

Is Paul crazy? "To die is profit," he says. Why? Because for Paul, death no longer is death, it is sleep. And when you're a hard worker for Christ, sleeping is wonderful. A Christian never dies. He only goes to sleep. He is waiting for the resurrection. Now the last part of Philippians two. He did not only become obedient unto death, but Paul adds:

Even the death of the cross.

What did Paul mean by that? I will answer that question later. Going back to Hebrews, we will touch one aspect of what Paul meant when He said, "even the death of the cross." In Heb. 2:9, we are

told in the last part of the verse nine the reason that He became lower than the angels when He became man was for the suffering of death that “by the grace of God He should taste death for every man.”

What does it mean that “He tasted death for every man?” Did He taste death for Peter? Yes. And for Paul? If you say “yes,” then why have they died? He did not taste the first death for everything, but He tasted the second death. Remember what God said to Adam when he sinned. There in Gen. 3:17-19, He said not only are you going to suffer and your children but also cursed is the ground. You see, Adam did not only bring the curse to mankind but also to the ground.

What did they put on the head of Christ at the cross? A crown of thorns. Do you know what that signified? Of course, the Romans did it out of mockery. But God takes the foolish things of this world and He gives us wisdom. He was bearing the curse on His head. He was tasting the death that we deserve at the end of the millennium. He was tasting the second death. He was willing to

say on the cross, “goodbye to life forever.” You see, when Christ hung on the cross He could not see through the portals of the tomb. Read Desire of Ages, page 753:

“He could not see through the portals of the tomb. Hope did not present to Him a resurrection. He felt that sin was so offensive to the Father that the separation was to be forever.”

Was Christ willing to say “goodbye” to life forever, that we may live in His place? Yes. That’s how far He went down. He was willing to say “goodbye” to heaven forever! That is mind boggling! But that’s a fact. He was willing to say “goodbye” and that’s what He meant in Gethsemane when He cried to His Father three times, “If possible remove the cup.” It was not the first death that He was crying for deliverance from, but the agony of the second death—the death of God abandonment. What did the Father do on the cross to Him? What did Christ cry, “Father, Father, why hast Thou forsaken me?” Why did He cry that? It was because when He became a man He

became totally dependent upon the Father. The Father was the source of everything to Him. “I can do nothing of myself,” He said. He was depending on the Father for the resurrection. When the Father forsook Him, what happened to the hope of the resurrection? It went.

The devil came three times: once through the soldiers, once through the leaders of the church, and once through the thief on the left-hand side. Three times: “Come down from the cross and save yourself. Don’t be a fool, save yourself!”

Could Christ do that? Yes. The devil never tempts you to do anything you can’t do. He has never tempted me to turn stones into doughnuts. He knows I can’t do it. He has tempted me not to pay tithe. Yes, that I can do but he has never tempted me to do miracles. Why? Because the devil is not dumb. He may have long ears and horns but he is not dumb. He will never tempt you to do something that you cannot do. He knew that Christ could come down and save Himself. Why did Christ not come down? It was because He loved us

more than Himself. This is why He tasted death for every man. Let's go back to Heb. 2:10:

For it became Him for whom are all things and by whom are all things in bringing many sons into glory to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through suffering.

In order that we might be exalted somebody had to suffer. Who? Christ. The word "suffering" in Hebrews, the second chapter, appears twice. You see, Christ had to be made perfect in order for us to be made perfect because He came as our substitute. If He was not made perfect, you would not be made perfect. Did you know that? How much did He suffer and where did He suffer, in order to be made perfect?

1. Well, if you look at the Bible, He suffered in the flesh in order to make us positively perfect.

2. He suffered on the cross, which is the second death, in order to make us legally perfect.

The word “justification” is a legal term. Without death, by the way, there is no justification. Rom.6:7:

He that is dead is freed [Greek word is “justified”] from sin.

In Christ we have been freed from that curse and the condemnation of sin because He suffered the death that we deserve.

Let me give you a few more texts regarding Christ’s suffering in the flesh to make us positively righteous. When did the suffering of Christ begin? When did Christ begin to suffer for us? From His incarnation or from Gethsemane onward?

I am not talking of the mental suffering. I’m talking of the flesh. He had no flesh before creation. You’re right, God always suffers because of sin. God is love. Whom does He love? He loves us. Do you love your children? I hope so! When your children suffer, do you suffer? So God loves us and when we suffer, He suffers. God

hates sin because of what sin does, not to Him but to us. He hates it because it brings suffering, sickness, death to us. And He loves us; so please make a distinction between sin and sinners. God doesn't love sin. He hates sin but He loves the sinner. And we must keep this in mind. We human beings sometimes don't make that distinction. We look at somebody who has done something wrong and we hate them for what they did. No, please. We must hate the sin but never the sinner.

Look at Heb. 2:18. The suffering in verse eighteen is different from the suffering in verse nine of Hebrews two. In verse nine, the suffering is linked with His death. In verse eighteen, His suffering is linked with temptation. How often was Christ tempted? All of His life. Heb. 4:15 says:

He was tempted in all points like as we are.

Paul says here that when He was tempted, He suffered. Where did He suffer and why? Heb.5:8,9:

Though He were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which He suffered; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him.

In other words, He suffered in order to save us. He was made perfect through suffering. He suffered in the flesh every time He was tempted. But why did He suffer? 1 Peter 4:1:

Forasmuch, then, as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh [in His human nature], arm yourselves likewise with the same mind.

What kind of mind did Christ have? By the way, the passage that we just studied in Philippians two is in the context of the same issue. In Phil. 2:5 it says:

Let this mind be in you which was in Christ.

What kind of mind did Christ have? He had a mind that was totally emptied of self. Now let's

read all of 1 Peter 4:1:

Forasmuch, then, as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: For He that suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin....

Do you know what this text is telling me? What kind of flesh did Christ have? I know that this is a big controversy. The humanity of Christ is a big issue not only in our church but in the Christian church. I will not get into a fight over this. I'll tell you why and that is that we as a church take both the positions. You won't be disfellowshipped if you take one.

Some take the position that the flesh of Christ was like Adam before the fall. Others take the position that the flesh of Christ was like us after the fall. I can go right from the top to the bottom in our denomination and I can find groups in both camps. If I go to Andrews University, to Dr. Mervyn Maxwell, he takes the postlapse (after the fall) position and I go to Dr. Rouel Dederen and he

takes the prelapse (before the fall) position. I go to the North American Division and Bradford takes the postlapse position. I go to William Johnson, Editor of the Review and Herald, he takes the prelapse position. So right from the top to the bottom the division is there. And in this church if I called for a stand I'm sure we would divide ourselves.

I'm not going to fight over that but I will tell you one thing. The only way you can suffer in the flesh is when you have a flesh that loves to sin. You see, Jesus never yielded to His flesh. Every time His flesh drew Him to self, the mind said, "No," and who suffered? The flesh suffered. The flesh was deprived of its desire.

Give me just one text where Christ is ever compared in terms of nature to Adam. I'll give you many texts where He is compared with us, with Abraham, with David. I believe, folks, that He took the postlapse, but if you want to take the other position I will not condemn you. Just be honest with the Word of God. I have, in fact, written a

book on it and will make it available if you want it. To me, Jesus did not come half way. In fact, when we come to Hebrews chapter five, we will discover that one of the qualifications to be a priest is that He must be chosen from among men.

By the way, what is a priest? How does a priest differ from a prophet? Can you give me the difference between a priest and a prophet? What is the function of a prophet? A prophet is a human being who represents God before the people. A priest is the opposite. He is a human being who represents the people before God. And in order for him to represent the people he has to be taken from among the people. Can you imagine a Russian representing America? Will you agree to that? No way. He has to be an American. Christ came to be the priest not of unfallen man but of fallen man. He came to represent me. Therefore, He can sympathize with me. I know that this is a big issue and if you want to talk privately as Christians and friends, I will not fight you.

When I first came to the Nampa Church my

head elder was Dr. Holt and he was in the other camp. He was my head elder. I said, ”Russ, let’s sit down and hash this out as Christians.”

He was the editor of Signs Magazine. Well, he read my book and we discussed it a little bit. It was about three years ago. He came to me and said “Jack, I have changed my position.” But please study for yourself and don’t condemn each other. We won’t solve any problems that way.

But I’ll tell you, folks, I know that Jesus Christ can sympathize with me. He understands my struggle and my battles because He went through it Himself. I see in Heb. 2, which is a key Christological passage, that He was made in all points like us. Verse 17:

Therefore 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.

This is what the passage is saying, Christ

became one with us but He never yielded to temptation. He overcame temptation and, therefore, His character was perfect, so I may stand perfect in Him. But His perfect obedience could not justify me because the wages of sin is death. He took this humanity to the cross and submitted to the wages of sin and there He suffered the wages of sin and, by His perfect life and by His perfect death, He set you and me free. It cost Him everything. It is a gift to me but I cannot take that gift lightly. I cannot say it cost Christ nothing to justify me. It cost Him everything. When I know how much He has exalted me and how much it cost Him to exalt me I can never be the same again. My heart is filled with appreciation and I will say with Paul, "For me to live is Christ."

Do you know the best way I enjoy my vacation is to hold seminars on Christ Our Righteousness. That's my vacation. Most of my vacations the last five years have been holding seminars all over the country. There is a policy that I can't take more than two or three appointments outside of the conference or the church. They'll shoot me but I

can do it during my vacation. I have a legal right to take four weeks. One time I was holding seminars in Africa and we were working. I was preaching from eight in the morning until five in the evening. One of the pastors said to me, ”I think I know why you work overtime.”

I said, “You do? Why?”

He said, “Because you are being paid extra.”

I said, “Brother, you are dead right.”

He should have known better. He knew our policy. Some of you have worked for the church. Since when has the church given you overtime? But folks, the love of Christ must constrain us. And the love of Christ will constrain us because we know how much He suffered for us. He who was God was willing not only to become one with me, but was willing to take all that I deserve in terms of sin and punishment. He was willing to suffer in the flesh for thirty-three years. He said “No” to temptation. Not even by a thought did He consent

to sin. We should never drag His mind into sin. His mind never consented even by a thought to sin. Why? That I may stand righteous in God's eyes in Him. He went to the cross and tasted death for us all that we may never die. Do you know that? There is no need for a single human being to ever experience the second death because Jesus bore that death on the cross for us and set us free.

So this is what Hebrews two is all about. We have a high priest, a merciful and faithful priest. Verse seventeen:

Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren...

To be honest with the context, the word "brethren" here means His fellow Jews. But you and I are made of the same material as the Jews.

...that He might be a merciful and faithful [legally faithful—just] high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.

That is the kind of Saviour we have!

Chapter 5

Christ, Greater than Moses

Hebrews 3:1-6

Today we will be studying Hebrews 3:1-6. But I would like to start off by summing up what we covered in our last study, Heb. 2:5-18. According to this passage Christ became a man for three main reasons, and I want you to keep this in mind because this is important for us sinners:

1. He became a man in order to recapture and restore our lost destiny. We lost that destiny when Adam fell. Christ came to restore it.

2. He came to release us from our present bondage to sin and the fear of death. All of us are born with the fear of death. There is a statement that says, "There are no atheists in fox holes." When you are in a fox hole and you are facing the enemy's gun you turn to God because your life is in danger. Christ came to release us from that fear

of death. A Christian who is still afraid to die needs to understand the gospel. Paul says, “For me to live is Christ and to die is gain.” There are no more worries. You are just resting until Christ comes.

3. Christ became a man in order to become a faithful and a merciful High Priest. This is brought up in the last part of Hebrews 2. It is this third reason that Paul expounds on in the first six verses of chapter three.

I would like to start off by mentioning the two words, “faithful” and “merciful,” so that we can be clear as to what Paul is trying to get across. Christ can be our faithful High Priest because in our humanity He fully redeemed us completely and is, therefore, legally qualified to be our representative and our advocate before God in heaven. He is a merciful High Priest because, as one of us, He understands our weaknesses. He understands our struggles and He is able to help us. That’s the kind of priest we have.

This is the major difference between Christ and

the law. You see, the law is good, it is holy, it is righteous, just like Christ is. But there is a difference:

1. The law does not know how to sympathize with you.

2. It is also incapable of helping you.

If you go to the law and say, "I want to be good, please help me."

The law will say, "That's not my responsibility. All I can do is command you to be good, but I can't help you."

The law is incapable of helping us. The law is incapable of sympathizing with us. That's why most people don't like policemen, because they represent the law. Very often a policeman may not be sympathetic and He may have good reasons, because he is there to uphold the law. But Christ is sympathetic, He understands our weaknesses and He can help us in time of need. With this in mind,

let us turn now to the first six verses of chapter three of Hebrews:

Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus; Who was faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house. For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house. For every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God. And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after; But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.

That's the passage I want to deal with today. Let's look at the two terms that Paul uses to describe the believers. He calls them "holy brethren." That's a very lofty, wonderful name to call Christians. He does not say, "you struggling

Christians," but calls them holy. If Paul were to address our church, would he call us "holy brethren" or would he call us "a bunch of sinners"? What would he call us?

I'm going to take the worst church in the New Testament. The ones who had terrible problems in terms of Christian living. They were fighting like cats and dogs. There was jealousy in this church. They were practising fornication of the worst type. They were taking each other to court. I want you to notice what Paul calls them.

Of course, I am talking about the Corinthian Church. It was not the best church in the New Testament. Paul was not condoning what they were doing. He was correcting them. Notice what he calls them. Turn back to 1 Corinthians. 2 Corinthians was commending them for listening to him, but 1 Corinthians was really a letter of rebuke. 1 Cor. 1:2:

Unto the church of God [notice he calls them the church of God] which is at Corinth, to them

that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints,...

The words “to be” are supplied. It is not in the original. Paul did not say, “to be saints,” he simply said, “called saints.” Please notice, they are sanctified and they are called saints because of what they are in Christ, not because of what they are in themselves.

...called saints, with all that in every place [i.e., not only are you Corinthians called saints but all Christians in every place who...] call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours.

That is, any one who accepts Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour, God will call a saint. Or in the words of Ellen G. White, “God looks at you as if you had never sinned.”

Let me give you another statement in 1 Cor.6:9. Here Paul is rebuking them for their poor Christian witness and behaviour.

Don’t you know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?

Then he gives a whole list of illustrations as to what he means by the unrighteous—fornicators, idolaters, abusers, covetous people, drunkards, and so on, in verses nine and ten. Now look at verse eleven:

And such were some of you [this is how you were]: but ye are washed [past, present or future?...past tense, in the Greek, the aorist tense, a historical tense], but ye are sanctified, [past tense] but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

What Paul is saying is, “Look, you are holy now in Christ, please let holiness be your behaviour. Let the righteousness of Christ become your goal. Stop living like worldly, sinful people.” In chapter three he tells them, “Your conduct tells me that in behaviour you are no different from the unbelievers. Shame on you,” he says. Remember

that we are holy, not because we are good but because we are in Christ.

This is where the big distinction is between Roman Catholic teaching and true Protestantism. The Roman Catholic teaching tells us that God's makes you good and then He calls you a saint. If you ask a Catholic, "Are you a saint?"

He will say, "No. Joseph is a saint and Christopher is a saint."

"When will you be a saint?"

"Well, I don't think while I'm here on earth. We have to go to purgatory to make up where we have failed in this earth. When we have made it, then we go to heaven." The good news of the Bible is that the New Testament calls all believers saints, holy brethren.

Let's go back to Heb. 3:1. The second thing that Paul says about us, and it is important that we know this: "We are partakers of the heavenly

calling." What did he mean by that? "We are partakers of the heavenly calling." When Jesus Christ came to this world, He came to bring what for us? Did He come to make heaven real for us? Did He fulfill that? Have you accepted it? Yes. Therefore, heaven is yours. You're not there as yet. That's why he states it is a calling. But that's your destiny. Look at a couple of texts. Eph.2:6:

We are sitting with Christ in heavenly places.

In other words, our destiny is heaven. I know that some of you say, "When I retire my destiny is the southern part of America. I don't want any more of these winters." When you get to fifty-five or sixty you begin to worry where will you retire. You'll find that wherever we have colleges, we have lots of people retiring. Walla Walla is no exception. I don't blame you, but I'll tell you Walla Walla, too, has its problems. The real kingdom is heaven. And that is what Phil. 3:20,21 says:

Our citizenship [that's the Greek word, the

King James Version says “our conversation” because in old English that meant citizenship] is in heaven where we look forward to the coming of Christ.

Why? Because when He comes He will take us to where we belong. So he is saying to these Christians (remember, he is writing to discouraged Christians), “Don’t be discouraged:

1. you are holy in Christ, and
2. your destiny is in heaven.”

That’s why he calls them that. Remember that the book of Hebrews is a pastoral letter. It is not a theological dissertation.

Back to Hebrews three. Consider Jesus Christ. Now he calls Christ two things:

1. An Apostle, and
2. A High Priest.

Now, the word “Apostle” literally means “to be

sent.” So then, we speak of a missionary, in a sense, as an apostle. But the word ”apostle” is used in more than one sense. In this sense, it simply means someone who lays a foundation or who begins something. Christ laid our foundation to heaven. He is the One who laid it. 1 Cor. 3:11:

Other foundation can no man lay than that which is already laid, which is Jesus Christ.

So our foundation, our hope is based on a concrete foundation. You remember the story that Jesus told when He was here about building a house on sand? And building a house on a rock. When the storm comes which house remains solid? The one built on the rock. That is why you must remember the foundation of our salvation is Jesus Christ. The other text is Eph. 2:19,20; it is talking of our position in Christ:

Now, therefore, you are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles, and prophets, Jesus

Christ himself being the chief cornerstone.

Please remember that the foundation that the apostles laid down in their preaching was Jesus Christ. By the way, you will find very little of the preaching of the apostles based on Daniel two when they had evangelistic sermons. They probably used John 3:16, “God so loved the world that He gave us His only begotten Son.” Please remember, that is the foundation.

The second term is “High Priest.” Christ is our High Priest. Remember that a prophet is a person who represents God before the congregation. A priest is a person who represents the congregation before God. Christ is our representative in heaven. Just like we have senators who represent us, Christ is the one who represents us before God. He represents us on the basis of His faithfulness. That’s the point that the apostle Paul wants to bring out in the this passage. Look at Hebrews 3:2, this Christ who is our High Priest:

Who was faithful to Him that appointed Him.

There are two “hims” here in verse two. Christ was faithful to Him. Who is the “Him”? God the Father. The Father appointed Him to be our High Priest. On what basis? On the basis that God sent Him to be our Saviour. You see, Christ became our High Priest after He finished redemption. You remember what He cried on the cross? “It is finished.”

Go to John seventeen and listen to the prayer of Jesus just before the crucifixion. It was the prayer that He prayed before He finished His mission on this earth. Look at John 17:4:

I have glorified Thee on earth. [Jesus is talking to His Father.] I have finished the work that Thou gavest me to do.

When God sent His Son to this world He sent Him to do a job. What was that work? Was it to take pictures of the Empire State building? No, because that wasn’t existing then. What was He sent here for? Look at John 3:17:

God sent His Son, not to condemn us, but to save us.

Or look at Gal. 4:4,5:

When the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman and made under the law, to redeem us from under the law that we might be adopted as sons.

So Jesus Christ was sent by the Father to save us and to redeem us and to adopt us as children of God. Did He finish His work? Was it perfect, as far as the earthly mission was concerned? He is not finished in the sense of making it all a reality; so He still has a priestly ministry. But as a Saviour did He do His job? Yes. Did the Father accept Him? You remember when Mary saw Him on the resurrection morning, she grabbed Him and said, "I'm not letting you go."

He said, "I have not yet ascended to my Father and to your Father and to my God and your God."

Why did He have to go to the Father? To get the green light saying, “Your sacrifice has been accepted.” Did He get the green light? When He came back He said, “All authority [power] has been given unto Me.” Matthew 28:18. What authority is this? The authority to take us miserable sinners to heaven. God gave Him that authority. Therefore, He says:

Go into all the world and preach the gospel and make disciples of them. They who believe, baptize them and give them this hope.

Was Christ faithful? Yes. This is what Paul is bringing out in Heb.3:1-6. To do this, he is comparing the faithfulness of Christ with the faithfulness of Moses. Was Moses faithful? Yes. Was Christ faithful? Yes. Let’s look now at verse two:

Who was faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house.

There is a word that is repeated in verses 1-6

very often. The word is “house.” What did Paul mean by the word “house?” Did he mean a building? To us the word “house” means a building. Look at the first part of verse six. There we are told what the word “house” means.

But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we....

So the house of God is not buildings. It is God’s people.

Now, are we saved because of our faithfulness or are we saved because of Christ’s faithfulness? Please remember that.

So when you look at the word “house” here, please remember he’s not talking about buildings. And, by the way, the Christian church owned no buildings during the first two centuries of its existence. The church had no houses in terms of buildings like we have. So when the New Testament talks about the house of God in such and such a place, it does not mean a denomination or a

building. I was discussing one day with a Church of God minister in Idaho. He said, “My Church is the true church of the New Testament and yours is wrong.”

I asked, “What grounds do you have?”

He said, “Nowhere in the New Testament do you ever read Seventh-day Adventist, but in the New Testament you do read, ‘The Church of God.’” I reminded him that it is not the name that makes it the right church but it is the truth.

Now notice what Paul is doing in these verses. He is comparing Christ to Moses. Remember that he is writing to Jewish Christians. To them, Moses was number one. It was to him that God gave the law. To them Moses was everything. And if Christ is greater than Moses then Christ should be a stronger anchor than Moses. Before I give you the two reasons that Paul uses to prove that Christ is greater than Moses, I would like to point out something that you need to notice. Look at verses 3-5:

For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house. For every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God. And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after....

Moses was a faithful steward as a testimony of something that will be spoken after. What did Paul mean by that? Paul meant that Moses was a type of Christ. If you look at 1 Cor. 10, it comes out clearly. They were baptized into whom? Moses. I would like to emphasize here that when you study the Exodus, look at it as a type of the plan of redemption and you will receive a tremendous blessing.

Was Moses faithful? Yes. In regard to delivering God's people out of Egypt, were that people appreciative of what Moses was doing? Were they rebellious? Did they give Moses a hard time? How hard? Keep this in mind because when I

go to the mission field and the African says to me "Please, we don't want you here any more. You can leave your money here—your budget—but we want you to go back home."

Would you still work for them? This is one of the biggest problems that we are facing in the mission field today. The hardship in the mission field today is not physical. It is not material. It is psychological. Today, missionaries are not appreciated in the Third World. Why? Because it gives them the impression that they are still backward. We send missionaries to backward countries. That is the mentality of most people. If someone would say, "I'm sending you as a missionary to America," you would be insulted. You would say, "We don't need missionaries." Is that true? Did Moses retaliate for their rebellion? Turn to Ex. 32:9, I want to show you how faithful Moses was, as a type of Christ.

And the Lord said to Moses, I have seen this people and behold it is a stiff-necked people [they are stubborn, they are rebellious, they are

unappreciative]. Now, therefore, let me alone that my wrath may be hot against them that I may consume them, and I will make of thee a great nation.

What a privilege. "Moses, no longer will Abraham be the father of my people, you will." Moses turned around to God and said, "Thank you, I've been waiting for this." Did he say that? No. Listen to what he said in Ex. 32:31,32.

And Moses returned unto the Lord, and said, "Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin...

Here was a people who were murmuring against Moses and making life hell for him and he asks God to forgive them. But he did more than that and this is what I want you to notice:

...And if not, [if legally you can't forgive them] blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written."

What did he mean by that? Deprive me from eternal life that they might live. Did Christ do the same thing on the cross? Yes. Moses was faithful even though the people were rebellious. The reason I'm stressing this is that, in our next study, Paul will use the rebellion of the Jews in the Exodus as a warning for us. Let us not make the same mistake.

Let us go back to Hebrews and emphasize two reasons why Christ is superior to Moses. Moses was faithful, but Christ was superior. Therefore, His mission is much greater than Moses. The reason is that Moses could not really save them. He was a type. Moses could not really give them the full rest. We will see this later. But Christ could, for two reasons. Number one: Heb. 3:3:

For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house.

You have a house and you have the builder.

Which is greater? The builder or the building? Can you have a building without a builder?

Was Moses really a saviour? Or did he need to be saved himself? Yes, he needed to be saved himself. So he belonged to the house that needs redeeming. He delivered the Jews out of Egypt but he himself could not save them from sin. That was God's job. So God is the builder and that's why in verse four he says:

For every house is builded by some man [the Greek doesn't say "man," but it is implied] but he that built all things [he that really saved His people is not Moses] is God.

God saved mankind not through Moses but through Christ. Therefore, Christ is greater because Christ is the true Saviour of mankind. Now look at verse five:

And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony [is all]... But Christ as a son over his own house.

So Moses was a servant but Christ was a Son. Who is greater, the servant or the Son? The Son. But please remember that what Christ did is much more important than what Moses did. What Moses did was a type. Yes, he was faithful but he was only a type. He could not truly give that peace but Christ can and because He was faithful in His earthly mission He is now going to be a faithful High Priest. So He is faithful not only as a Saviour but He is faithful as a High Priest.

And now I want to conclude with the big "if" of Hebrews 3:6:

....if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.

Now here is Christ. He is faithful. The problem is not Christ. The problem is us. Can He defend us in the judgment if we turn our backs to Him? If not, why not?

I made a statement to a Russian Marxist one

day in Ethiopia. He was a communist. He said, “When the communists take over, we clear the country of all crime.” He had a point there. There is very little crime in China and there is very little crime in Ethiopia. He gave me an example. He said, “If communism says ‘No more smoking,’ we don’t have to have five-day plans like you Adventists. Our people stop smoking.”

I said, “How come?”

He said, “Because we give them no choice. What we tell them, they do. Otherwise, we bury them.”

Now, God cannot do that. God can’t say, “I’m going to save you whether you like it or not.” He can only save those who accept Him. Now these Christians had accepted Him but they were getting discouraged. And in their discouragement they were in danger of saying “Goodbye” to Christ. What Paul is saying here is, “Look, God is faithful, Christ is faithful, He will defend you with everything, but if you say ‘Goodbye’ to Christ you

are putting Him beyond the ability to save you, not because He is not faithful but because you have chosen to turn your back on Him."

So we must remember that our salvation depends upon God's faithfulness as long as we believe in Him as our Saviour. This idea of us holding on to our confidence in Christ is very important. You may lose confidence in your pastor. You may lose confidence in your church. You may lose confidence in the General Conference, and there are some Adventists who are losing confidence because of many events that took place and all kinds of things. The Devil destroys confidence in these to use them as stepping stones so that you will eventually lose confidence in Christ. Your pastor may fail you. Your church may fail you, but Christ will never fail.

And it doesn't matter how badly you are mistreated by the church, don't give up your confidence. Paul tells us later that the one way that the Devil destroys your confidence is to remove you out of the church. He says in chapter ten, "Do

not forsake the assembling of your brethren." Don't give up your church attendance even though things are not right. Be careful, it is just a stepping stone. The plea of Hebrews is, "Please, hold on!" And I want you to see, for example, chapter four verse fourteen:

Seeing that you have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.

Then go to chapter ten verse twenty-three:

Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering (for he is faithful that promised).

You will find this all through Hebrews—the plea to the Christian is "HOLD ON!"

Go to John 13:1. Jesus Christ comes to the end of His life. He is facing the cross and here John says:

Having loved His own which were in the

world, he loved them unto the end.

He was faithful in His earthly mission. 1 Thess. 5:24:

Faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it.

There are many more texts but I would like to give you one that I have already given you and will repeat one hundred times, Rom. 8:38,39. It is my prayer folks that every one of us will be able to say what Paul says here:

For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

It is not our love for God but God's love for us which was demonstrated in Christ, who loved us to the end. We must remember that God will never

let us down. You may let Him down many times but He will never let you down. That is the anchor of your soul. My prayer is that we will hold on to Him no matter what happens.

You will be mistreated. Even those who work in the church are mistreated. I'm talking from experience, but I'm not employed by the church. I am employed by Jesus Christ. He called me to be a minister. So if the brethren mistreat me, I don't care. That's their problem. They will have to answer for themselves. If there are people who have done wrong in the church to you, they will have to answer in the judgment. But your Saviour is not the church or your pastor or your conference, it is Jesus Christ. Please remember, all of us without exception are one hundred percent sinners but saved by grace. We may not do the terrible things that we talk about other people doing but given the same environment, the same circumstances, and the same opportunity, we are capable of doing every sin committed in the world, including what Hitler did and what Idi Amin did in Uganda. And we must have the attitude, "There go

I, except for the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ."

I thank God that we have a Saviour who is able to save us to the uttermost. Our part is to not give up our confidence. So when things go wrong, terribly wrong, it isn't because God has stopped loving you. We are living in enemy territory. We must expect problems. God has a reason why He has allowed it but it is not because He doesn't love us. So hold on to God and, when He comes, you will never regret it. You will say "It was worth it." It is nothing compared to what He has for you. My concern is to build up your faith so that, no matter what comes, you will know that He will never let you down.

Chapter 6

Warnings From Israel's History

Hebrews 3:7-19

Moses was faithful in delivering Israel out of Egypt, and out of the clutches of Pharaoh, and Christ was faithful in redeeming the human race. So they were both faithful. But now, what Paul does in verse 7 onwards, is he turns the card, and he deals with it from a different angle. "Was Israel faithful to Moses?" That's the question. Yes, Moses was faithful to Israel, in spite of their murmuring and grumbling and all that. But was Israel faithful? And the answer is, "no." And what Paul is doing is, he's taking this experience of their unfaithfulness and he's using it as a warning upon us Christians that we do not make the same mistake. And, therefore, this has a very important lesson for us because we are in danger of doing the same thing. Now, with this in mind, please look at

verses 7-9 of Hebrews 3:

Wherefore as the Holy Ghost saith today, If you will hear His voice...[we must not do something....] harden not your hearts, as in the provocation [i.e., the exodus] in the day of temptation in the wilderness: when your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years.

They saw God's works, they saw God's hand, but they still had a hard heart. And he is saying, "We must not make the same mistake." Verse 10:

Wherefore I [i.e., God] was grieved with that generation and said, "They do alway err in their heart and they have not known My ways."

Now, please notice where the problem is: the problem is not just their behaviour. It is where? In the heart. And then in verse 11 he says:

So I swear in my wrath, "They shall not enter into My rest."

Now this is extremely important, I am going to spend the next two studies on this one term, the word, “rest.” Because, you see, in chapter four, the word rest is linked with the Sabbath. And we need to understand God’s rest in terms of the Sabbath because we have a message that needs to be brought clearly to the world. But that is for our next two studies. Okay now, what I want to do is look at the Exodus, and to look at some of the statements in this passage. Look at verse 11:

So I swear in My wrath, “They shall not enter into My rest.”

Now if you take this statement at face value, it sounds like God is saying, “You rascals, I will not give you salvation!” That’s the way it sounds, doesn’t it? The problem is folks, we have a tendency of judging God by our standards. So when we look at the word, “wrath,” we human beings think of wrath as anger. And I want to be clear on this, that when the New Testament and the Bible use the words “God’s wrath,” it means

something different. First of all, in James 1:20 we read:

The wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

In other words, man's wrath is sinful. When man gets angry he does it in the context of sin. When God's wrath comes, it is in the context of righteousness. So what James 1:20 is simply saying, "Man's wrath and God's wrath are not the same thing." And I would like to remind you of Isaiah 55:8,9:

God's ways are not like our ways, and His thoughts are not like our thoughts.... Just like the heavens are way up there and the earth is here, so are God's ways and thoughts higher than ours.

In other words, between God and us there are millions of light years, folks. We can't compare it. So never project human wrath unto God.

Okay, having said this, what is God's wrath?

We need to keep this clear. The best passage that explains the wrath of God is Romans 1. So keep your finger in Hebrews, and turn to Romans chapter 1:18. I'll give you a little secret on how to read Paul. You see, Paul is the champion of the gospel, but you need to know how [he presents that gospel]. You see, Paul will normally make a statement, that's the method that he uses, he makes a statement, then he either proves the statement, or he expounds on the statement, or he defends that statement. And what we need to do when we read Paul is look at the statements, and then the rest of it will make sense. Okay, the statement is found in Romans 1:18:

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hold the truth in unrighteousness.

So Paul is saying here that the wrath of God has been revealed from heaven against what? I heard the word "unrighteousness." Please, that is not what God's wrath is upon. His wrath is upon all ungodliness. Unrighteousness is the fruits of

ungodliness.

Now, what does “ungodliness” mean? It means that you have turned your back to God. And that’s what the Jews did in Exodus, they turned their backs to God. And he explains this. He says, for example, in verse 19 onwards, that the Gentile world had a knowledge of God, not an explicit knowledge of God from the Bible, but they had a knowledge of God from nature. But did they retain that knowledge? No. They refused to retain the knowledge of God. They turned their backs on God. And, of course, in chapter two of Romans, Paul says that the Jews did the same thing, even though they had the facts of the Bible, the oracles of God.

But what I want you to notice is, what does God do when people turn their backs to Him? Does He push them in the fire? I’ll tell you what He does, because in this passage—he says in verses 24, 26, and in verse 28, three times—he tells us what God does when men turn their backs to Him. And you will notice he uses the same expression.

Verse 24:

Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness.

Men turn their backs to God and want to enjoy sin. God says, “Okay, go ahead and see what happens.” He gives them up. Verse 26:

For this cause God gave them up unto vile affection.

And, if you look at the context of verse 26, it’s concerning homosexuality. He says, “You want to practise it, go ahead, I will not stop you. And see what happens.” And we know what happens, AIDS comes along. Verse 28:

And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge...

Please notice where the problem is, “They did not like to retain God in their knowledge”. What did God do to them?

He gave them up unto their reprobate minds.

In other words, God is love. He will never force salvation upon you. If you turn your backs to God, He'll say, "Go ahead and see what happens." And when man realizes that without God he can't live, then something says to him, "I better turn to God."

And this is how it was in the Roman world at the time of Paul. This is how it is today. As a country, we are turning our backs to God slowly. Do you know that? Secular humanism has come into this country. And that coin which says, "In God we trust," is only a cliche now. And you will notice that the moment a country, a nation turns its back to God, things get worse.

And that is the wrath of God. You see, the wrath of God is negative. You must not confuse the wrath of God with His judgments, that's a different thing. The wrath of God is simply God giving them up.

Okay, the Jews in the Exodus turned their backs to God in spite of the fact that God had given them tremendous evidence for forty years. Because they turned their backs to God, how many Jews that were over the age of 20 when they had left Egypt entered Canaan? How many? Two. What happened to the rest? Why? Unbelief! And unbelief is turning your back to God. That is the problem. And that's why Paul says in Hebrews 3:12:

Take heed [be careful], brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief.

And folks, at the heart of every problem in God's people is unbelief. And that is why we need to learn from the Exodus the lessons that are there for us.

Okay, now in verse 13, he's giving us some counsel, and what is that counsel? The counsel is that when you see somebody in the church whose faith is weakening, what do you do?

But exhort one another daily [How often? Daily.] while it is called today.

In other words, when you accept Christ, there are two things that you must remember: righteousness is always by faith. Is that clear? Righteousness in the New Testament and in the Bible is always by faith. Those who try to get righteousness by works will fail. But those who try righteousness by faith will succeed. Now the righteousness which saves us is in Who? It is in Christ. Where is Christ? In heaven, where no thief can go. So the righteousness which saves you is guaranteed, nobody can destroy it. But the faith that makes that righteousness effective is in us. That [faith] Satan can touch. And the moment you accept Christ, Satan will do everything to destroy your faith. And you need to be on your guard.

Sometime later I'm going to give a whole study on this when we come to the word faith itself. Because faith, folks, is a fight, you have to hold on to it at all costs. And briefly, there are three things

that Satan will use to destroy your faith. I'll go into detail some other time, but I'll just mention the three things:

1. By perverting the truth he can destroy your faith.

He tried that with the Galatians and nearly succeeded. Thanks to Paul's letter to the Galatians he stopped them. What do I mean by perverting the truth? Taking your eyes from Christ to yourself. Looking at your performance, and judging each other, whether you have made the grade or not. That's one way.

2. By dangling the trinkets of the world before you.

And Paul tells Timothy that Demas has left (Demas was an evangelist with Paul), "He has left me and gone back to the world." And so the devil will dangle trinkets, you know, materialism. And he will say, "Look, as a Christian, life is miserable; see what I will give you." And he'll pull you out of

Christ.

3. By persecution.

And persecution can by physical, it can be social, it can be mental. One of the greatest types of persecution we face in the mission field today is the reaction of the nationals. They will say, “We don’t want you. Go home!” And you get discouraged, “What am I here for?” And I had to remind myself, “I was sent here by Jesus Christ. Whether you like it or not, I’m going to be here and serve you.”

Can you imagine what would happen if Jesus said, “These Jews whom I’ve come to save, this world which I’ve come to save, doesn’t appreciate Me, I’ll go back.” What would happen to us? But He was faithful, Christ was faithful.

Look at Moses. Did they make life pleasant for him, or was life miserable for Moses? Terrible! But he was faithful. The trouble is, are we faithful to Christ? That’s the problem. Do we hold on? And I

want to remind you of verse 6, because verse 6 is the stepping stone of what we are covering. Look at that one word, “if.”

But Christ as a Son over His own house...[Christ as our High Priest, guaranteed He’ll save us]...whose house we are...[but there is an “if” there]...if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.

In other words, God will not save us, Christ cannot defend us, if we turn our backs to Him. He will defend us at all cost, as long as we accept Him as our Saviour. But if we turn our backs to Him, there is no hope. And folks, what this passage is telling us is that the unpardonable sin is unbelief. Every sin against the law can be forgiven, but unbelief cannot be forgiven. And I want to give you a statement from Jesus Christ. Turn to John 16, and I want you to notice how Jesus defines sin, the sin by which man is lost, and I can give you many texts, but I’ll give you just one from the words of Jesus Christ. The reason that I’m doing this is because both are in the context of the Holy

Spirit. The passage in Hebrews 3:7 says:

Wherefore as the Holy Ghost saith today, if you will hear His voice harden not your heart.

Jesus is saying the same thing in John 16:8:

When the Holy Ghost comes He will reprove [the Greek word means “convince”] the world of [three things: number one...] sin.

The moment you look at that word you think, that is transgression of the law. Remember, I preached on this, so I don’t have to repeat it, but I simply remind you of verse 9:

Of sin, because they believe not on Me.

Unbelief is unforgivable. If God can forgive unbelief, do you know how many people will be in heaven? All, and that’s a heresy. Universalism, which teaches that all men will be saved, irrespective of believing or not believing, is a heresy. The Bible doesn’t teach that. The Bible

says, as long as we have confidence in Christ, He will be faithful. Not that He doesn't want to be faithful, His love cannot use compulsion. That's the problem with God—God cannot use compulsion, Hitler could. The communists can.

You know, in Ethiopia, one Russian said to me, "When we say something, it happens." And he gave me an example: "When we pass a law: 'No Smoking,' we don't need five-day plans like you people."

I said, "What will you do? How can you stop people from smoking if they don't want to give it up?"

He said to me, "In communism, there is no such thing as 'Don't want to.' When we say, 'No smoking,' it means no smoking. Otherwise, we put them six feet under the ground. One way or the other we stop them from smoking."

God can't do that. God is love. He saved us at infinite cost, but He cannot force that salvation

upon you. But the Jews unfortunately refused to hold on to their God in spite of the evidence. And Paul is saying, “Take heed, don’t let this happen.” Look at Hebrews 3:14:

For we are made partakers of Christ...

That means we are made partakers of all the blessings of Christ—and there’s the word “if” again...

...if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end.

And these texts that you’re looking at, verse 6 and verse 14, are excellent texts for those who say, “Once saved always saved.” Because they believe in the doctrine of predestination, which says that if God decides you will be saved, you have no choice, you will be saved. And that’s communism, that’s not Christianity. God wants all men to be saved, but He will not force salvation. And the Jews who refused to hold the beginning of their confidence steadfast unto the end died in the

wilderness. And may I make a statement here: in the judgment there will be three groups—those who rejected Christ completely, and those who were true believers, and those who were still members of the church but who really had no faith in Christ, they were just coming there as a form.

Of these three people, the people who are members of the church but have no faith are the worst. I'll tell you why: because the people of the world at least enjoyed sin while they were alive. The true people of God who held on to Christ, they had a hard time in the world, but at least they'll enjoy heaven, which is, of course, better than the sins of the world. But the people in the middle, they did not enjoy Egypt, neither did they enjoy Canaan; they died where? They're the worst people. So folks, don't treat your religion lightly, take it seriously. By the way, there are many other passages in which Paul repeats this concept, "Hold on." Verse 15:

While it is said today, "If you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts as in the

provocation.”

And then he goes from verse 16-19 giving counsel:

For some, when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses. But with whom was He grieved forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose carcases fell in the wilderness?

Now the reason they did not go in is because they sinned, but please notice how that word sinned is defined in verse 18:

And to whom sweared He that they should not enter into His rest, but to them that believed not.

Please notice, the sin here is unbelief, ungodliness. So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.

And please, unbelief is the worst thing that can ever happen to anybody. Now what is unbelief? It

is the opposite of what? Faith. Please remember that genuine unbelief is positive. In other words, the person who has never heard the gospel and therefore has never accepted Christ, is he committing the sin of unbelief? No.

What is the prerequisite to commit the sin of unbelief? It is the knowledge of the truth. Unbelief is deliberate folks, it is a deliberate, willful, persistent rejection of God's salvation. Have you got it? It is deliberate, willful. It is persistent. When God comes to you with the truth the first time and you refuse, He doesn't say, "Well, that's the end of you." He will come again and again and again because God is long-suffering. He will come to you a million times, "Please, accept My gift!" But after coming to you millions of times and you keep on refusing and hardening your heart there comes a point when you will tell God, "God, please, get off my back, I don't want You." You have reached now the point of no return.

And we have a history in our church, Canright did that. He came into this church and out of this

church seven times. Member, successful preacher, and then he said, “Boy, this is a small denomination. If I leave this church, I’ll become a great man.” He left the church and he went down. He came back and he went down. I happened to speak to his secretary who, by the way, took the notes when she typed his book, The Truth about Adventists, which he wrote against us and Ellen G. White. She was at Andrews when I was studying there. She said that he would walk up and down in the office, and she would take it down as fast as she could in shorthand, and he would stop and put his head on the desk and he would say, “I’m a lost man.”

She said, “One day I felt burdened for him, and I took him to prayer meeting, and when the members knelt down to pray he became stiff, he could not kneel. And he rushed out crying, ‘I’m a lost man!’” She promised him that she would not tell anybody what he was writing, and she said at Andrews that she broke the promise because she was afraid of dying without confessing it. And she confessed and I think a book was produced

afterwards, I Was Canright's Secretary.

She said that he had said to her, "Don't you do the same thing that I did." But she said that he was so controlled by the devil that he could not stop dictating to her. And he would dictate two, three hours at a time, and then he would break up in a terrible sweat and cry in despair. And when, one day, the last attempt she made for him, he said, "Sister, I have reached the point of no return."

Now he same thing happened to Judas. Remember what happened at the Lord's supper? "The devil entered into him." All the time Jesus was pleading with him, "Please, don't turn your back to Me." And when the devil entered into him, he had sold himself to the devil, he had reached the point of no return. And Paul is warning us that this can happen to us folks, it can happen to us. And the lesson of Israel in the Exodus, must be a lesson to us.

Now I want to give you two passages. I want you to read that passage because it is extremely

important to us that we understand the Exodus, the greatest event in the Old Testament. Please turn your Bibles to 1 Corinthians 10 which deals with the same thing, with the same issue, it's dealing with the Exodus, and it's the same writer [as of the book of Hebrews] as far as I'm concerned, Paul. But what Paul is doing in 1 Corinthians 10 is, he's using the Exodus as a type of salvation. For example, look at verse 1:

Moreover, brethren...

And please, the word, "brethren" is not referring to Jewish Christians but to Gentile Christians because Corinthians was primarily a Gentile church. There were Jews there but it was primarily a Gentile church.

Moreover, brethren, I would not that you should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and all were baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea;...

In other words, Moses was a type of Christ, the crossing of the Red Sea was a type of Baptism, and the rest is obvious. Egypt was a type of the world, Satan was a type of Pharaoh. And, of course, Canaan was heaven. Now when the Jews crossed the Red Sea they were saying good-bye to Pharaoh, which is Satan, and they were saying good-bye to Egypt, which is the world. But they failed to say good-bye to one thing. They failed! And we need to know what they failed at. They said good-bye to Egypt, and to Pharaoh in a physical sense. Physically they were cut off now from Egypt and Pharaoh. But in the heart they were still in Egypt. And through all those years of wandering, their hearts were still there.

Therefore, they were not truly converted, their baptism was an act, that's all it was. That's why, by the way, God had to take them to Sinai, which is the wrong direction. If you have been in that area, you wonder why He went south because Israel or Canaan was north-east from Goshen. But He went south, taking them to this very mountainous area, and He gave them the law. Do you know what the

law does? It kills. That's the work of the law. Paul says in Romans 7:9:

I thought I was alive through the law once [because he had not understood the law] but when I understood the law, sin revived and [who died?] I died.

So the Jews,even though physically they had said good-bye to Egypt and to Pharaoh, the life of Egypt was still in their hearts. And so they always longed to go back to Egypt. "Oh, we miss the cucumbers and the leeks and the Kentucky fried chicken." They missed that. Now folks, the problem was not that leeks and cucumbers were sin. The problem was: where was their heart? That is why God could not take these Jews into Canaan. Even the ones that did go in, He could not take them unless they were rebaptized in the Jordan.

And if you look at the way He went, He went through Petra, which is a terrible road. (My wife and I and our children travelled through it in 1975; it was terrible. In fact, she wouldn't climb the

mountains up there because it was tough.) God took them the hard way, and they had to be rebaptized, because their first baptism had one thing missing: the self life was still with them. Because the formula of the gospel is, “Not I, but Christ.” And I’ll tell you, the hardest part is “not I,” that’s the hardest part. Christ is no problem, but the hardest part is “not I.” I want you to look at verse 6 [and verse 11] of 1 Corinthians 10:

Now these things were our examples [in other words, what took place in Exodus is our example] to the intent we should not lust after [evil things].

In other words, we should not lust after worldly things. You see, there are some Christians who want one leg in the church, because they want to go to heaven, and they want one leg in the world because they want to enjoy Egypt. You can’t have both, folks. You have to choose one.

And what’s happening in these last days is that God is separating the church from the world. And when you have one leg in both of these, you’re

going to have a split. You have to make a choice. And that is what's happening. People are either jumping back to the world and saying, "Look man, this is what I want," or you'll have to jump into the church and become fully converted and give up the world. But you can't be both. And Paul is saying, "We must learn from that example." But I want to look at verse 11, because verse 11 has an added statement.

Now all these things happened unto them [i.e., the Jews of the Exodus] for examples, and they are written for... [whose admonition?] our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

Folks, we need to pay attention to this. The Exodus has special lessons for the last generation of Christians. Because Canaan is very near, but the problem is that we can't enter in as long as we are linked with unbelief.

Let me give you one example. There is a big issue in our church today. "Is it possible for us to overcome all temptation? Is it possible for us to

live Christ-like lives?" That's the big argument today. The issue is not whether it's possible or not. We know that by ourselves we can do nothing. The question is, "Do you believe that God can do the impossible?" That's the question: do you believe? The issue is not whether it's possible or not, the question is, "Do you believe God?"

God came to Abraham and gave him a promise when he was 75. There was no problem, Abraham believed. But God waited 25 years folks, He waited until medically, scientifically, it was impossible for Sarah to have a child. Then He said to Abraham, "Do you believe?" And I want you to read Romans 4:18:

Against hope he believed, and he became the father of the faithful.

Abraham is our father, folks; he's our prototype. He believed not simply what God can do within the context of science, He believed that God can do something outside of nature, He can do that which is impossible. And the issue is not,

“Who is right and who is wrong?” The issue is, ”Do you believe in God?” That’s the issue, folks. It’s the issue of faith. And I would like to say here that this is why we need to learn.

I want to turn now to Philippians because we are dealing now with a Pharisee. Paul was a Pharisee! Don’t forget that. A Pharisee is one who is very zealous in self-righteousness. And to listen to Paul here...oh, it gives me great hope. Because if this Pharisee, who was a member of the Sanhedrin, could be converted to the full gospel, “not I, but Christ,” then there is hope for us, folks, there is hope for us.

In Philippians 3:3, Paul gives the true meaning of circumcision, because, you see, God gave Abraham a circumcision because even though he believed at 75, eight years later he did something terrible, his faith dwindled, because he produced Ishmael. You see, Ishmael was the result of unbelief, and so God had to remove that unbelief. And so circumcision is simply an outward sign of an inward experience: the removal of unbelief.

And here it is in verse 3:

For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit and rejoice in Christ Jesus [Who? That's the positive side.] and have no confidence in the flesh.

You see that the "not I, but Christ" comes in different forms here. In order for us to rejoice in Christ, we must have no confidence in ourselves. And then he gives an example of himself. In verse 4-6, he talks about himself as a Pharisee. Boy, he had a wonderful genealogy, he had a wonderful record, he was zealous for God, he was sinless as far as the law of God was concerned. "But" he says in verse 7:

What things were gain to me I counted loss for [Whom?] not I but [Who?] Christ.

Now look at verse 9, you can read verse 8 later on:

And I want to be found in Him... [that's the

“in-Christ motif”] not having my own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.

Folks, the Jews did not enter in because of unbelief. We will not enter in because of unbelief. Okay I want to close now and I’ve got a quotation for you. It’s from [Ellen G. White’s] Selected Messages, page 69, I want you to listen very carefully:

For forty years did unbelief [have you got it?], murmuring, and rebellion shut out ancient Israel from the land of Canaan. The same sins have delayed the entrance of modern Israel into the heavenly Canaan. [We are repeating, folks, their history.] In neither case were the promises of God at fault. It is the unbelief, the worldliness, unconsecration and strife among God’s professed people... [who is she talking about?] ...that has kept us in the world of sin and sorrow so many years.

And I don’t know how many years are left. But folks, I’m tired of this world. How about you? And so folks, let us learn from the Exodus; let us not make their mistake. When God says He can do something, please don’t say to God, “Prove it to me.” He has already proved it in Jesus Christ. There is nothing that God cannot do that He promises.

And that’s the difference between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant. The Old Covenant is based on man’s promise, and when man makes promises, he always breaks them or fails. But the New Covenant is based on God’s promise. God made a promise, and can He keep it? But He cannot keep it if we are full of unbelief. Because His hands are tied.

And He wants us to have confidence in Him no matter what our eyes tell us, and what circumstances tell us, He wants us to hold onto our confidence even though the world will fall around us. And my dear people, hold onto Christ! Don’t you give up your faith. It is the most valuable

thing you have. Even though you see people around you falling, don't you give it up, because one day you will enter the promised land. And you will say, "It was worth it." But the worst thing that can happen to you is to die in the wilderness. And you will not enjoy heaven, you haven't enjoyed earth, you're just miserable, dying in the wilderness. So may God bless us.

I want you to read very carefully verses 1-13 for our next study. I am going to spend two studies, one is a study on the passage, and one is going to give you a study only on the Sabbath in the light of the gospel, because we need to present the Sabbath in the light of the gospel. We need to present the Sabbath in a way that will convince the world, the Christian world, that the Sabbath is vital, because it's linked with belief. And in the last days, at the end of time, breaking the Sabbath is not simply breaking a commandment, it is the sin of unbelief. Because faith and the Sabbath are linked together.

He who believes has entered into God's rest.

And we need to see that connection, and I am going to give you a whole study on it so that you will witness about the Sabbath in the right way. May God bless us that we will learn from the history of Israel. It was recorded for our benefit, let us not make the same mistake.

Chapter 7

Christ, The True Sabbath Rest (Part 1)

Hebrews 4:1-13

We will focus on the first fourteen verses of Hebrews four in this chapter. I cannot stress strongly enough the tremendous importance of this passage to us as Seventh-day Adventists. Here are four reasons why this passage is important to us:

1. In this passage the gospel and, especially, the ultimate salvation that the gospel brings to us, is identified with the term “God’s rest.”

2. Entering into that rest is linked with faith.

3. Faith is equated with the keeping of the Sabbath.

4. The Sabbath is our major contribution to

Christendom.

So you can see that it is a very important passage.

We must admit that the Christian church as a whole, as a body has rejected our claims. Some time ago a group of about seven scholars got together and wrote a book to rebuttle Bacchiocchi's book, From Sabbath to Sunday. The title of their book is From Sabbath to the Lord's Day: A Physical, Historical, and Theological Investigation. The thesis of this book says, "Sunday is a new day of worship that was chosen to commemorate the unique salvation history, the historical event of the death and resurrection of Christ."

This book makes some wonderful statements that we can use. It admits that the Sabbath cannot apply to any other day than the seventh day. It admits that the Sabbath has a redemptive significance. It admits that the early Christians in the New Testament kept the Sabbath, including the Gentiles. Then why do they not accept our teaching

of the Sabbath. Is it our fault or is it theirs? That is what we need to look at honestly.

I plan to spend four studies on this one passage.

1. This is the first, and it is an exegetical study. We will try to discover what the passage meant to the original listeners, the Jewish Christians to which Paul wrote the book.

2. In our next study, we will look at the Sabbath truth in the light of the gospel, because that's where the issue is.

3. The third study, we will have to look at the true meaning of Biblical faith because here the word faith is identified with keeping the Sabbath. What does the New Testament mean by faith? We need to have that study as part of our investigation.

4. In the fourth study, we will discuss the keeping of the Sabbath in relationship to the law. What will be the central issue in the Sabbath-Sunday controversy at the end of time? What will

be the issue? Will it be a day or what will be the issue? That we need to cover.

These are the four studies but today we will look at this passage in terms of exegesis. What did the first listeners of this book understand when they read this passage? What was Paul trying to get across when He wrote to the Jewish Christians?

Then let's look at the passage. The first thing I would like to do is to remind you what we covered last study when we dealt with Heb. 3:7-19. We saw that in this passage the exodus was used as a type of the plan of salvation. The Israelites failed to enter into Canaan as God intended, because of unbelief. Remember we said that only two who were above the age of twenty years, Joshua and Caleb, came out of Egypt and entered into the promised rest. The rest of them died in the wilderness. With this as a background chapter four begins with a warning.

Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem

to come short of it.

What is he saying here? He is saying that just as the majority of the Israelites who left Egypt never entered Canaan—which, by the way, is a type of heaven—this same danger faced the Jewish Christians (and to us today also) who had accepted Christ but had not yet reached heaven.

It is possible for you to accept Christ today and be lost because you have turned your back to Him through unbelief. There is a danger and he's warning us. In other words, the ultimate salvation is linked here with Canaan and God's rest. You cannot fully enter into God's rest until you reach heaven.

I don't have to convince you of that. Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 15 that if life on this earth is all that Christians have, we of all people are most miserable. Do you know why? When you become a Christian you are like a person who is living in enemy territory, because the world is still under Satan. And he will make life hell for you. If he

hasn't, you better question your Christianity. Our ultimate goal is heaven and he says, "We need to hold onto Christ" and he is using the exodus experience as a warning. Now look at verse two:

For unto us [that is, the Jews of Paul's day] was the gospel preached, as well as unto them [the "them" refers to the Jews of the exodus].

Did the Jews of the exodus hear the gospel? Yes. How? Through the sanctuary service primarily, through the sacrificial system. Of course, the Jews of Christ's day and Paul's day heard the gospel through the proclamation of Christ. So both groups heard the gospel.

But [he says in the second half of verse two] the word preached did not profit them,...

The Jews of the exodus did not benefit from the message and from the promises of God and from the leading of God. Why? Was it because they were so bad? Did God say, "I will not take you to heaven because you have done this or that"? No, he

said:

...Because it was not mixed with faith in them that heard it.

[Now verse three:] For we which have believed do enter into rest, [then you'll notice he links this rest with the Sabbath] as he said, "As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world."

What is he saying here? He is saying that our salvation is guaranteed because it is not based on human works. It is based on God's promise which He had already planned (and when God plans something, it is an act) before the foundation of the world. Go to Eph. 1:3,4

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all [not 80%, but 100%] spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ...

In other words, in Christ, Canaan is already ours. That's what he's saying. Now look at verse four:

...According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.

We are holy and without blame in Christ since the foundation of the world. And this is what Paul is saying now in Hebrews. He is saying that our salvation was not something that God invented later on, but something that was already God's purpose before the foundation of the world. Since it was before you and I were created, we made no contribution to it because we weren't existing. In verse four of Hebrews four, he brings in the Sabbath:

For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works.

I have a question for you, "Why did God rest?"

I will answer that in our next study. Was He tired? Did He need a coffee break? Why did He rest the seventh day? That is a question I want you to wrestle with because it is important. God wants us to enter into whose rest? His rest! If we don't know why He rested.... Did He rest because He wanted to go skiing? No. Why did He rest on the Sabbath day? That's the question I want you to wrestle with and we'll cover it in the next chapter. Let's go on and look at verses five, six, and seven as a unit:

And in this place again, if they shall enter into my rest...

Please notice that all along in this passage the rest belongs to God. Keep this in mind because you will discover that the Sabbath doesn't belong to man.

When I was chaplain at Nairobi University there were five of us who were chaplains. I was the only Adventist. There was a Baptist and a Lutheran, a Roman Catholic, and two interdenominationals—Youth for Christ and World

Vision. One of them accused me of keeping the Jewish Sabbath. This is a common problem that we face. I said, “You are a Protestant?”

He said, “Yes.”

I said, “You stand on the platform of Scripture alone?”

He said, “Yes.”

I said, “Show me one text, that’s all, where the Bible says that the Sabbath belongs to the Jews.”

He said, “I will.”

I said, “O.K.”

He said, “Give me time.”

I said, “I’ll give you all the time you want.”

He came three months later and said, “Well, I’m still looking for it.”

I said, “You won’t find it.”

Well, one day he did find one. But it was in the Living Bible. I said, “Brother, if you were a layman, I would excuse you. You know very well that the text in the original doesn’t say that. That’s the Living Bible’s paraphrase.”

He said, “You are right, but that’s the only one I could find.”

I said, “Don’t you ever accuse me of keeping the Jewish Sabbath. I am not keeping the Jewish Sabbath. I am not keeping the Adventist Sabbath. I am keeping God’s Sabbath.” We must always defend it on that basis. Let’s go on in verses six and seven:

...seeing, therefore, it remaineth that some must enter therein...

What is he saying here? He is saying that there are Jews who still need to enter into God’s rest.

They claim to be God’s people but they have not entered God’s rest.

...they to whom it was first preached entered not because of unbelief.

The Jews of the exodus did not enter God’s rest because of unbelief. The Jews of Paul’s day had not entered into God’s rest for the same reason. In verse seven:

Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, Today, after so long a time; as it is said, Today if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

The expression, “hardening of the heart,” is synonymous with the word “unbelief.” Unbelief is a deliberate, willful rejection of the truth. Keep that in mind when you witness the Sabbath and people reject it; please don’t say, “I told you the truth, now you’re lost.”

The rejection of the truth has to do with the

conviction of the Holy Spirit. Our job is not to convict. Our job is to witness to the truth. The work of conviction is that of the Holy Spirit. That is why that we should never, never take the credit for soul winning. That is the work of the Holy Spirit. Our job is witnessing. Let God do His job. He doesn't have a problem. We have the problems.

I say this because I'm going to review a quotation from one of the greatest Reformers this world has ever known, Martin Luther. Listen to what he has to say about the Sabbath. This is a statement he made to the Saxon radicals in February of 1525. He was mainly addressing Carlstad, who was an Anabaptist: "Only that portion of the Ten Commandments is not binding which enshrines the natural law."

So what Luther did is basically what we did also, in a different way. We took the law of Moses and we divided that into ceremonial and moral. By the way, the Jews didn't do that. Luther took the Ten Commandments and divided it into natural and

ceremonial. This is what he said, “The natural law is: Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not commit adultery, etc.”

In other words, the natural law to him meant those laws of the Ten Commandments which men knows by nature that it is wrong to do. People know by nature it is wrong to steal and kill and commit adultery. Even pagan religions believe that. He called that natural law. “But,” he said, “not the injunction as to the Sabbath because the Sabbath does not belong to the natural law. It is ceremonial.” And this, by the way, is the position of modern Evangelicals. That’s why I’m exposing you to what Luther said. “If Carlstad,” he says, “keeps on, he will have us observing Sunday on Saturday.” He was against the idea of keeping Saturday as the Sabbath. This was Luther, a man Ellen G. White says will be in heaven. She gives him tremendous credit as a Reformer.

That’s why we need to wrestle with this passage. We need to ask ourselves what really will be the issue in the last days? Have we presented the

Sabbath sufficiently to convince the Christian world that they are wrong? We have to wrestle with that.

In verse seven, what Paul is saying here is that if you deliberately reject the truth as it is in Christ, if you harden your heart, there is no salvation. You cannot enjoy salvation. Here is another question that you may want to think about. If a person breaks the Sabbath commandment, is there hope for him? Is there forgiveness for breaking the Sabbath commandment? Yes, just like there is forgiveness for breaking the other nine commandments. If a person commits the sin of unbelief, is there forgiveness? No. That's the sin that God cannot forgive. Why? Because unbelief is the deliberate rejection of the gift of God. God can't say, "I'll take you to heaven even though you rejected Jesus Christ." The gospel then becomes meaningless.

I would like to present to you that the issue in the last days is not so much the law but the truth of the gospel. The law is linked and we will speak

about that. The reason why the Sabbath is a big issue is because it is linked with salvation in Christ. In the last days, breaking the Sabbath will be synonymous with deliberately rejecting Jesus Christ. That will be the issue. But that is for our next study. Now turn to Heb. 11:6:

But without faith it is impossible to please God. For he that cometh to God must believe that He is and is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.

God cannot give you the blessings of salvation if you say, “I don’t believe in Christ,” or “I reject His gift.” What Paul is saying is, “Don’t turn your backs to the gospel. Don’t harden your hearts like the Jews of the exodus. They came out of Egypt. They followed God, but they did not enter Canaan because of unbelief.” Look now at verse eight of Hebrews four:

For if Jesus had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day.

What is the “another day”? “If Jesus had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day.” I heard an evangelist use this text to prove Sunday is not God’s Sabbath. Please don’t use this text to fight against the Sunday keepers. We must never project to a text something that is a 20th Century problem. The Jews did not have a problem over Sabbath and Sunday. So why should Paul be writing about a problem that did not exist? So we must be honest with the passage.

The problem is the word “Jesus.” You see the word “Jesus” in Greek is the same word for “Joshua” in Hebrew. So the word “Jesus” is not referring to Jesus Christ but to Joshua. If you understand that the word “Jesus” refers to Joshua, who brought the Jews into Canaan? Joshua. Now was Canaan the ultimate rest or was it only a type of the ultimate rest? When did the true rest come? When Jesus Christ came.

So “another day” refers to the gospel, to the coming of Christ. In other words, what Paul is

saying here is that Joshua did not give the real rest. Let me put it this way: will all the Jews who entered Canaan and are living in Canaan, which is today Israel, will they go to heaven? No. “Therefore, the fact that you Jews are living in Israel does not mean that heaven is yours.” That’s what he is saying here. Joshua did not give them the real rest. Canaan was only a type of the real rest. So if they had moved into Canaan but reject Christ, do they go to heaven? No. Even though they had entered the type which is Canaan. With this in mind look now at verse nine:

There remaineth, therefore, a rest for the people of God.

The people of God here are the Jews, who are living in Jerusalem, which is Canaan. There still remains for them to enter into God’s rest. Now look at the Greek word for the word “rest” in verse nine. The Greek word is “Sabbatismos.” Translated literally, it is “a keeping of the Sabbath.”

There remains, therefore, a keeping of the Sabbath for God's people.

That's what the text is actually saying. Were the Jews keeping the Sabbath to whom Paul wrote? Were they keeping the day? Will they go to heaven? If they will go to heaven, then verse nine becomes meaningless. He says, "There remaineth, therefore, a rest for the people of God." In other words, if you keep the day and reject the Lord of that day, who is Christ, heaven is not yours. It is possible for you to keep the Sabbath and be lost. I am talking to Seventh-day Adventists. It is possible for you to keep that day and be lost. That is why we need to understand the connection of the Sabbath with the gospel.

When I was in Ethiopia, I was approached by the pastor of our Addis Abba Church, which is the church for the headquarters of the Union. The biggest theological seminary there is interdenominational. The professor called our pastor and told him that he was teaching a class which they called Comparative Religions. One of

the assignments he gave the students was to visit the services of four different denominations and write a term paper. To do that, the students were required after visiting the service to ask the pastor questions. One of the churches they chose was our church. And so this professor said to the pastor of our church, “My students have chosen to visit your church on your Sabbath and they would like to come next Saturday. And they would like to ask you some questions after the service. Would you please be willing?”

The pastor was scared. So he asked, “Can I call you back?” So he went to the president of our union, who was a Swede, and asked him, “What do I do?”

The president said, “Go ahead and invite them.”

The pastor said, “Fine, who’s going to preach?”

“Invite Pastor Sequeira,” suggested the president. I was the Ministerial Secretary at that

time.

He came and asked, “Will you preach?”

I said, “I’ll be very happy to.”

He called the professor and said, “Yes.” He then asked me, “What are you going to preach about?”

I said, “I’m going to preach about the Sabbath.”

He advised, “I wouldn’t do it if I were you. Why don’t you speak on something that we agree on?”

I said, “Why, are you scared?”

He said, “They will ask you questions.”

I replied, “That is exactly what I want.” I told the congregation that is one sermon that I will speak above their heads in. I’m going to use some Greek.” I knew these fellows were coming not to

listen but to bombard.

After the service, the first question came from a Baptist student. He said to me, “What you preached was wonderful. Here’s my question: is this what your church teaches?”

A Lutheran student said, “I would like to answer that question.”

I said, “I didn’t know you were an Adventist.”

He said “No, but my answer is that this is not true. What you preached is not the teaching of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.”

I said, “Look, I’m not here to defend the church. I’m here to defend the truth as it is in Christ. Can I ask you a question? What are you going to do about the truth?”

When I preached that Sabbath, I did not touch the law at all, only the gospel. And they had no way to refute what I said. I did not approach it

from the law but from the gospel viewpoint. That's what I will do in our next study.

What Paul is saying in verse nine is there remains a true Sabbath rest for whom? You see, to the Jews, the Sabbath was "do's and don'ts." There are 69 rules, if you look at the Mishna, on how to keep the Sabbath. Some of them are ridiculous. For example, the houses there are flat-roofed and in the evening they liked to put a ladder against the wall so they could climb up. You could never carry a ladder to climb up on Sabbath. But if you dragged it you were not breaking the Sabbath, but if you lifted it up you were working. Things like that. Well, we have similar rules sometimes. They were full of rules. That's what it meant to keep the Sabbath.

I was coming home from a program in England and a woman put her head out of a high window. All I could see [of her] was from her neck up. She said, "Excuse me, will you come and do me a favor?"

I said, “What would you like?”

“Can you switch my light on?”

It was a strange request. I thought she was a cripple, so I said, “Sure.”

When I went to the door, she opened it, and I saw that she was not handicapped. I looked rather amazed and she noticed it. She said, “You see, I’m a Jew, and it is a sin for us to switch the light because it is kindling a fire.”

She didn’t know who I was, so I thought, “Here I will have some fun.” So I said to her, “But the law says even the stranger within your gates should not work.” She was shocked that I knew the fourth commandment.

“How did you know it?”

“Well,” I said, “I read my Bible.”

Her response was, “Yes, but you are a Gentile.”

In other words, she was implying, “You are lost in any case. It doesn’t matter if you break the Sabbath.”

I asked, “Do you have your Old Testament?”

She replied, “Yes.”

“Can you turn to 1 Sam. 16:7?”

She said, “Yes.” Do you know what the text says?

Man looks at the outward appearance, but God looks on the heart.

I said, “Sister, I would be more than happy to switch your light on, but here is the problem. While my hand does the act, I’m doing your will and, as far as God is concerned, you turned the light on and if that’s sin, you are finished.”

“You are making it very hard.”

I said, “No, I’ll go one step further. It is not hard, but impossible. There’s only one way for you to be saved and that is to accept the Messiah, Jesus Christ.”

She said, “I was born a Jew and I will die a Jew.”

I said, “Sister, you don’t have to become a Gentile. Christ was a Jew Himself. But accept Him as your Saviour, your Messiah, your Anointed One.”

She said, “No.”

“That is your problem,” I said. “But if you’re trying to go to heaven by your works, you are trying the impossible. I hope you will discover that some day.” I switched the light on and left her.

I gave you this illustration because of verse ten:

For he that is entered into his rest [God’s rest], he also hath ceased from his own works, as God

did from His.

Why? Because the rest that God gives you is complete and perfect. You can't add to it. You can't improve on it. It's complete and perfect! That's what the text is saying. And the moment you try to improve on it you are rejecting it. Go now to Gal. 5:4:

He that is trying to be justified by the law is fallen from grace. Christ has become of no effect.

Now please don't say I'm against the law. I am dealing with the law here as a means of salvation, not as a standard of Christian living. That's a different matter. But we are saved by faith in Jesus Christ and nothing else. The rest that Christ gave us is complete. It is perfect, just like His creation was perfect and complete.

How much did Adam add to creation? Nothing. All God required of Adam was to enter into God's provision, which is His rest. Here's the problem. To enter into God's rest is labour. Verse 10 says:

Cease from works.

Verse 11 says:

Let us labor, therefore, to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.

I'll tell you what he means by labor: in order to enter into God's rest, you have to admit that you are spiritually bankrupt. That is hard on human pride. For you to admit, "Not I, but Christ," is hard on the human ego. That's why faith in the New Testament is a fight. It's a fight against your self-glory. That's why Sister [Ellen G.] White says that the work of justification by faith is to take the glory of man and put it in the dust. That, my dear people, is painful, very painful because of our ego. But, he says, that is what God's word does. In verse twelve:

For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing

even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit.

Soul represents “I” and “Spirit” represents God because the center of the self life is in the soul of our Adamic life. So what does the word do? It separates “I” from Christ. What does it do with “I”? It crucifies “I.”

I am crucified with Christ, yet I am living. Yet not I, but Christ lives in me. And the life I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me. Gal. 2:20.

Please remember the Word of God doesn’t join the flesh and the spirit. No. The Word of God crucifies the flesh and that is painful! But it is the only way. So we end with verse thirteen:

Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.

In other words, don’t try to deceive God. You

can deceive your pastor. You can deceive your neighbour. You can deceive your family. What do I mean by “deceive”? You can pretend to be truly converted. You can pretend to be holy but you cannot deceive God. God looks at your heart. He knows whether your faith is genuine or a sham. He knows whether you have died to self or not. He knows. Please don’t try to deceive God.

As I told that Jewish lady, God is not looking at your acts. He is concerned about your heart. For example, if I go Ingathering because I want to be number one in this church, what I’m doing may be good, but in God’s eyes it is terrible. Not because of what I’m doing but why I’m doing it. Therefore, Paul says, “Whatever you do, whatever you eat, do it to God’s glory” (1 Cor. 10:31). May God help us to understand that only those who enter into God’s rest have hope. How do we enter into God’s rest? How is the Sabbath linked with that rest? That will be dealt with in our next study.

Chapter 8

Christ, The True Sabbath Rest (Part 2)

Hebrews 4:1-13

In the last chapter we dealt with Hebrews chapter four. In verse three we saw that the Apostle Paul links the gospel rest that God gives us through Christ with the Sabbath. This is not something that we only believe in. It is something that many non-Adventist Sunday keeping Christians teach. For example, I have here with me a commentary on Hebrews by a top Evangelical preacher and Bible scholar, Ray Stedman. It's called What More Can God Say: A Bible Commentary for Laymen on the Book of Hebrews.

Let me read for you what he says about the Sabbath. He is dealing here with Heb.4:3-5. "Now what is this rest? In verse three we learn it is pictured for us by the Sabbath. You know the story

of creation. On the Sabbath day God ceased from His labour. He rested on the seventh day intending that to be a picture of what the rest of faith is." Absolutely correct. "It has been available to man since the beginning of the world."

Then he goes and hits at us. He doesn't mention our name but he says, "Certain groups have focused upon the shadow instead of the substance and have insisted that we must observe the Sabbath day much as it was given to Israel; that is what pleased God. But God is never pleased by the perfunctory observance of shadows or figures. Here is one of the great problems of the Christian faith. We are constantly mistaking shadows for substance, pictures for reality." Now, there is some truth in what he is saying. That's why we need to deal with this issue.

"The believer's rest was figured in the Sabbath and anyone who learns to live out of rest is keeping the Sabbath as God meant it to be kept."

What he is suggesting is that you can keep

Sunday as long as you are resting in Christ. And this area we will cover. I am just simply showing you what one Evangelical scholar is bringing out. His book is being advertised in a Christian book sales catalogue. This is what it says on the back cover. “A Biblical, historical, and theological investigation proposes that Sunday is a new day of worship that was chosen to commemorate the unique salvation history event of the death and resurrection of Christ, rather than merely being another day for celebration including the Sabbath.”

Today, Evangelical scholars, thanks to Bacchiocchi’s book, are admitting that they can never call Sunday a Christian Sabbath and defend it from scripture. There is no warrant for it. So they are approaching it now from a different angle. This catalogue advertises another book as follows, “Seven scholars contribute to Biblical and historical studies to prove that the Lord’s day is the special day for Christian worship. The Lord’s day commemorates the resurrection.” We will discuss these things.

In our last study I told an experience I had in Ethiopia with a professor who was teaching a class of seventeen students on Comparative Religions. He was an American from Ohio. He gave them the assignment to attend four different churches, observe their worships, and write a paper on it. The students were allowed to choose the four denominations and since we are a very strong church in Ethiopia, thanks to our relationship to the Emperor before he was deposed, they chose as one of their churches to visit our church in Addis Ababa.

The pastor was not willing to speak so they asked me. I chose the subject of the Sabbath. The title of the sermon was "The Sabbath and The Gospel." I did not touch the law at that time. I preached on the Sabbath in connection with the gospel alone. One of the accusations that has been levelled at us by many people who are non-Adventists is that the Adventist Church keeps the Sabbath under the Old Covenant. That's their main argument.

The Old Covenant simply teaches that you have to keep the law in order to be saved. We have to defend the Sabbath on the basis of the New Covenant, which is the covenant of grace. Is there any connection between the Sabbath and the covenant of grace? That was my approach. If we don't do that we are not convincing any other Christians that are real Bible students.

It was agreed beforehand that after the sermon the students could ask the speaker questions. So I stepped down from the rostrum. The members left the church and the students were in front. They brought their Greek Bibles with them and they brought notebooks and they scribbled. They were writing furiously. I told them "Now you can bombard me with questions."

The professor stood up and said, "Well, the bus is waiting for us, we have to leave."

The students turned on him and said, "Look, you promised us that we can ask questions."

He said, “Yes, but you know we need to consider Pastor Sequeira. His wife, I’m sure is waiting for him.”

I said, “I was aware of the question session. I have made arrangements for my wife to go home with somebody else. I am willing to stay here until midnight. So please don’t use me as an excuse.”

Well, he had no choice. So the first student that stood up was a Baptist, and this is what he said, “This is the first time in my life I have ever stepped into an Adventist church. This is the first time in my life I have ever heard an Adventist preacher. What you preached is excellent. I said ‘Amen’ to what you said.”

I said, “Thank you. What’s your question?”

He said, “Here’s the problem. What you preached from the pulpit and what we were taught in the classroom about Seventh-day Adventists keeping the Sabbath do not agree.” He was, of course, referring to his professor. But he was not

accusing his professor because he added, “Our professor documented this from Seventh-day Adventist literature. Therefore my question is, what you preached today, is that Seventh-day Adventist teaching?”

Another student stood up and said, “I would like to answer that question.”

I said, “Really? I didn’t know you were a Seventh-day Adventist.”

He said, “No, I’m a Lutheran. I come from a very strong Adventist community. Most of my schoolmates were Seventh-day Adventists. Some of them are today ministers. I have attended some of your evangelistic efforts. I have sat with some of these pastors who are my schoolmates and we have argued until we were blue in the face and all the time the argument was the law. Therefore, what you preached today is not the teaching of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.”

I said, “Brother, I am not here today to defend

the Seventh-day Adventist Church. I am here to defend the truth as it is in Christ. Can you answer me one question? What are you going to do with this truth?"

The professor didn't like it. He stood up and said, "Brother Sequeira, we have nothing against what you said. It was good. But does it matter which day we keep as long as we are resting in Christ?" That is the same argument that Stedman puts forth in his book. That's a common argument.

I had talked to the professor earlier before the sermon and had welcomed him. I discovered that he was a missionary in Ethiopia for the last seven years. So he knew Ethiopia pretty well.

So I had said to him, "Brother, you are familiar with the fact that forty-five percent of this country are Muslim?"

He said, "Yes."

Here's my question. "If a Muslim becomes a

Christian does he need to join the Christian church? Why can't he keep going to his mosque as long as he believes in Christ? Or would his attending the mosque be a denial of his faith?"

He said, "I see your point, but this is something that deserves time and we have an appointment and I want the students to come. We have to leave."

He used his authority and the students had to leave. As they were leaving four of them stopped by me and whispered, "Can we come and see you later?"

I said, "By all means."

Well, I never saw them again, at least for a long time. Two years later I was invited to a banquet. There was a well-known theologian who was passing that way. The ministerial leaders of the different denominations were invited to have fellowship with him. So I went. It was kind of a little party. There were ministers of all different churches and I like to mix with them because the

only way to defend the truth is to mix with people. An African, an Ethiopian, came up to me and said, “Do you know me?”

I said “No. At least, I don’t recall your face.”

He said, “I was one of those students who heard you preach on the Sabbath and I have never forgotten that sermon.”

In other words, it was pricking him. This was two years later. I said, ”Were you one of those four who said you would like to see me later?”

He said “Yes.”

I said, “Why didn’t you come and see me?”

He said, “Because when we went back to the classroom the professor told us that if we went and saw you he would report this to our denomination and, of course, that would mean no job.”

I asked, “Have you ever thought about the

topic?”

He said, “Yes, it’s been bugging me.”

I said, “Brother, you remember Paul on the Damascus road when Christ said to him ‘It is hard to kick against the pricks’? Brother, you will have no peace until you say to Christ ‘Lord, what do you want me to do?’ And the answer will become obvious.”

Well, folks, we need to defend the Sabbath in the light of the gospel. As I prepared the outline for this study, I realized that we would need more than one evening to cover the topic. So we will be proceeding slowly and thoroughly. The Sabbath is vitally linked to the gospel. We need to make this clear. It is vitally linked to God’s saving activity in Christ. That is why every feast day, there were seven of them, in the Old Testament pointing to the promised Messiah, was designated a day of Sabbath rest.

The Passover, the Day of Atonement, you name

it, was called a Sabbath. We call them ceremonial sabbaths. They were called sabbaths because they pointed to the rest that God had promised in Jesus Christ. This rest was fulfilled in Christ. Matt.11:28-30 is that statement that Jesus made, “Come all you that labor and are heavy laden.” He was not talking about physical labor here. He was talking of the Jews who were laboring to go to heaven and had no peace.

When the young man came to Jesus Christ in Matt.19:16 and said, “What must I do to be saved,” do you know what he was hoping Christ would do to him? He was hoping Christ would do to him what some of us do to each other. Pat him on the back and say, “Keep up the good work.” But Christ did not do that to him. Christ said, “If you want to go to heaven by being good, the measuring stick for doing good is the law.”

The young man said, “I have kept it since I was in primary Sabbath School. What is left for me to do?”

Jesus said, “You have not kept it perfectly. I’ll give you the proof. The law says thou shalt love thy neighbour as yourself. Do you love your neighbour as yourself? Prove it. Take your wealth. Give it to the poor and follow me. I’ll give you my wealth.”

Did he do it? No. Then Jesus turned to the disciples and used this as an illustration. You can only understand an illustration when you understand the Jewish mind. Jesus said, “It’s very hard for a rich man to go to heaven. In fact it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, [this was Christ’s humor] than for a rich man to go to heaven.”

I want you to read Matthew nineteen sometime and look at the reaction of the disciples. You will discover that they were amazed at His statement. Peter said, “Who, then, can be saved?”

Why were they amazed? According to Judaism, a rich man was always equated with a good man. In other words, if you are good, if you pay your

tithe, God will open the windows of heaven and pour you all the money you want, more than your bank account can handle. Their gospel was an "Eros" gospel. If you are good, God will make you rich. A poor man was a bad man. So when Jesus said it is hard for a rich man to go to heaven it was the same to them as saying it is hard for a good man to go to heaven. "If a good man can't go to heaven, who can be saved? What about us? We are just poor fishermen." Notice the answer of Jesus: "With man, it is impossible, but with God all things are possible." God can save sinners.

People who try to go to heaven by their own works are heavy laden. They have no peace. There are many Adventists who are in this category. They have no peace, no joy, no assurance because they are not sure they'll make it. Therefore their Sabbath keeping is a lie. They are not resting. They are not enjoying Sabbath. It is a necessary requirement to them, a burden. They think, "What time is Sabbath over so we can enjoy doing what we want to do, turn the TV on, etc., etc."

Since it is not a sin in America to travel on the Sabbath, some pack the car and are off for a good trip on the Sabbath. By the way, if you travel to different countries of the world you will find there is a great difference in what is right and what is wrong to do on the Sabbath. In our own church we have different rules on how to keep the Sabbath. Go to Scandinavia and you can swim on the Sabbath. Go to Italy, to Bacchiocchi's country, you play football on the Sabbath. It's a sin in America but in America you can travel on the Sabbath, which is a sin in Africa. So if you have a banquet [in another town] at 7:00 p.m. and the Sabbath is over at 6:45 p.m., you will travel; it's not wrong as long as you don't enter the party on the Sabbath. These are some of the things that you need to notice.

The Sabbath is vitally linked with the gospel. Jesus came to give us rest. In order to understand it we do not begin with the Sabbath in connection with us. We begin with the Sabbath in relationship to God. We begin there. Otherwise we'll go

wrong. If anyone ever tells you that you are keeping the Jewish Sabbath, ask them for one text that proves that. The Sabbath does not belong to man. Yes, it was made for man but it doesn't belong to him. It belongs to God alone. Ex. 20:10: "The seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord Thy God." Who owns it? The Lord Thy God. Ex. 31:13: "My Sabbath you shall keep." He didn't say "This is your Sabbath" but "My Sabbath." Isa. 58:13: "My Holy Day" and He qualified "The Holy of the Lord." The Sabbath belongs to God.

God's Sabbath is His seventh day, which is our first day. I'll tell you who opened my eyes to this. It was not even an Adventist writer but a fairly liberal theologian by the name of Karl Barth. He is the one that opened my eyes to this truth that the Sabbath is God's seventh day but our first day. By that I don't mean our Sunday. God spent six days working, creating, and on the seventh day He rested. On which of the six days did He create man? The sixth day. He created Adam first. Then he asked Adam to name the animals, giving him that privilege. Then He created Eve. Man is not

complete without Eve, folks. In fact if you will read the Living Bible on the creation of Eve, I can't quite remember how it describes Adam's comments when he first saw Eve, but it's something like, "Wow! This is it!"

At what point of time were men—plural, Adam and Eve—created in terms of the sixth day? At the beginning, middle, or end of the day? At the end. So what was the first day that mankind in Adam spent on this earth? The seventh day or Sabbath. So God's seventh day was man's first day. Now this is a very important thing. God worked six days and rested the Sabbath day. Man did not begin by working. He began by resting and then had six days of work. To Adam, six days of work was simply enjoying what God had created for him. In other words, God works and then rests, and we'll see why He rested. But man does not begin by working. He begins by resting and, when man rests on God's Sabbath, it signifies his accepting what God has done for him. So in terms of the gospel, we first receive righteousness by faith and then we show this righteousness by

works. Look at Eph. 2:8,9. This is one of the favourite texts of the evangelicals and it is an excellent text:

For by grace are you saved through faith and that not of yourself; it is the gift of God...

By the way, the word “it” in the Greek refers to grace and not to faith. In other words, the salvation is the gift of God. Faith is our response to it. Yes, it is the gift that creates the response so, in a sense, faith is a gift, too, but the word here refers to grace.

...Not of works lest any man should boast.

Salvation is a gift without works. In this gift I want you to notice something else in verse ten:

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them.

So when we receive Christ we receive what God has created us to do also and that is good

works. These good works don't save us. They are evidence that we have received Christ and we have received Christ not by works but by resting on God's day. It's a confession of faith! God does the work first and then rests. We do not begin with working but we begin with resting. And then we work, and "we work" means simply manifesting what we have already received.

Matt. 5:14: "You are the light of the world." Now in the original, the "you" is in the plural. The "light" is in the singular. Therefore, the light refers to Christ. In the gospel of John, Christ says, "I am the light of the world." He is telling the believers, "You are the light of the world." Which means, "You have received Me by resting in Me and have now become the light of the world. You are many, but you are only one light."

When we sing this little song, "This little light of mine," folks, the light is not little. The vessel is little but the light is big—Jesus Christ! In Matt. 5:16, Jesus goes on to say,

Let your light so shine that men may see your good works and glorify [not you, nor your denomination but] your Father which is in heaven.

The “works” are God manifested in you. This is the greatest proof that Jesus ever gave that He was the Messiah.

When Philip asked Him in John fourteen, “Show us the Father,” Jesus said, “Philip, have I been so long with you and you have not seen the Father? He who has seen me has seen the Father. If you don’t believe me, believe for the works’ sake because the works that I do it is not I that do them but the Father who dwells in me. He is the One who is doing the works.”

So what the world needs to see is not how good you and I are or how good the church is, because the U.N. is also good. Come to the Third World and see what they are doing there. What the world needs to see is Christ in you the hope of glory. The only way you can do it is if you rest in Him. You begin by receiving Christ. And, by the way, when

you receive Christ He gives you peace, He gives you assurance, but He also makes you the light of the world. At least He makes you an instrument.

God's seventh day is our Saturday. Please don't use the calender to prove it. The calender was not written by God nor by inspired man, so if the world changes the Saturday to Sunday, that's their business. But never use the calender to prove anything. Today's English Bible or the Good News Bible take the days of the Bible and give it the modern words. It talks about Friday being the day Christ died and Sabbath, it doesn't use Saturday but uses Sabbath as the commandment of God. So you can use that Bible to prove that Christ died on Friday and that Sabbath is our Saturday.

The Sabbath is the focal point in the Bible by which all other days are calculated. Matt. 28:1: "In the end of the Sabbath as it began to dawn towards the first day of the week." That is your English translation. The word "week" here does not appear at all in the New Testament. There is no such word there. What does the text actually say?

“In the end of the Sabbath as it began to dawn toward the first of the Sabbath.”

That’s how the Greek puts it. That makes no sense in English, so let me explain it to you. Every day of the week was measured by the Sabbath. So here is the Sabbath, Sunday was called the first of the Sabbath or the first day after the Sabbath. Monday was called the second day after the Sabbath, Tuesday, the third day, Wednesday the fourth day, and so on; so every day was counted on the basis of this central, focal word, “Sabbath,” and Friday was called “preparation day.” Preparation for what? Not a banquet but preparation for the Sabbath. You see the Sabbath was the focal point. They did not have words like we have: “Sunday,” “Monday,” etc. But because the English people would not understand “the first of the Sabbath,” the translation says, “the first day of the week.”

I am giving you this for another reason because there are some Christian laymen, not people who have gone to the seminary, laymen who do not know the Greek, they read this in the Interlinear

Greek Bible and read Sunday called the first of the Sabbath and they say, “There you are, the Bible says Sunday is the Sabbath.” They are twisting the text because they don’t know the language. I simply tell them, “Please go and see your Pastor who has been taught Greek and ask him if he believes in that and if he does, he needs to go back to the seminary.” That is not what the Greek means. The Greek means the first day after the Sabbath. Remember the Sabbath was a focal point even in the New Testament. Everything was measured by that.

Now we will see why God rested on the Sabbath day. Was He tired? No. Did He want a break? No. Why did He rest on the Sabbath? I am quoting from another evangelical scholar, Sessler: “Why did God rest? Because what He created was absolutely perfect. It could not possibly be improved on. His creation was brilliant, beautiful, matchless, and perfect.”

He did not rest because He was tired. He rested for two reasons:

1. What He had created was perfect.
2. What He had created was complete.

And God saw that it was very good. It was perfect. Go to Gen.2:1-3: “Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them.” So you could not improve upon God’s creation nor could you add to it because it was complete. It was perfect. It was finished. “On the Seventh day God ending His work (that’s how the Hebrew puts it) which He had made and He rested on the seventh day from all His works which He had made.” Please remember He rested on the seventh day because it was finished. Now I want you to notice how this scholar applied it to the gospel. He is right:

The cross of Christ so thoroughly, effectively, and completely accomplished what we need for salvation there is nothing we can add to it, no matter how hard we try we cannot possibly make ourselves more acceptable to God. We cannot be more certain of our heavenly destination and

eternal life. There is nothing we can add to the process of being saved or being known by God or becoming what Christ wants us to be. [In other words, the salvation that God prepared in Christ was also perfect.]

Here is an illustration advertising the book, “Sunday is a new day of worship that was chosen to commemorate the unique salvation history event of the death and resurrection of Christ.” That is the basic teaching of the Christian church. Sunday is kept to remember the resurrection. By the way, when the early church faced this problem and was asked to prove it from scripture, they had one text, Mal. 4:2. Please remember that the Christians were accused of worshipping the sun. It is true but they were trying to defend themselves. Here it is: “But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in his wings;” Please notice how the word “Sun” is spelt. Not S-O-N but S-U-N. Therefore they said, “The rising of the sun also points to Christ. Therefore Sunday represents the rising of Christ from the grave, the resurrection. And that is what brings healing.” Boy,

isn’t that twisting the word.

I want you to go back to our sanctuary studies. The courtyard was made up of two squares, eastern and western squares. The eastern square represents Christ’s earthly mission and the western square represents Christ’s heavenly mission.

Here is a question: “When did the earthly mission begin, at what point of time? At the moment Christ was born in this world He began His earthly mission. When was the earthly mission finished? The cross or the resurrection? When was our redemption obtained? At what point of time? When Christ died on the cross or when He rose from the dead? The New Testament is clear. Stedman says that the event that completed our salvation was the cross. Keep this in mind. So the cross is the saving event. This is when He finished His earthly mission, beginning at the birth and ending up at the cross. On what day did He die? Do you know what the Christian church calls it? They don’t call it Friday. They call it Good Friday. Why Good Friday? Jesus died on the cross and

that's the day our atonement was realized. Did Christ rise up the same day? No. What was the next day? He rested from all His work. Why? Because it was finished. It was complete. You can't add to it. You can't improve on it. It's finished!

But He rose from the dead to fulfill His second mission. The resurrection is the beginning of His second phase, which is His heavenly ministry. He will not finish this until He puts all enemies under His footstool and eradicates sin and that's the New Earth. I read in Isa.66 that when He does that from one Sabbath to next Sabbath all flesh will come and worship Him.

The Sabbath points to a finished work whether it's creation, redemption, or the new creation, which is the restoration. It is a finished work. God is the provider. Man is the recipient. To enjoy creation, Adam had to enter into God's rest. To enjoy redemption, you have to enter God's rest. And when you enter this rest, the ultimate rest is promised to you for God will finish the work that

He has begun through Jesus Christ. So the Sabbath is symbolizing God's finished work in Jesus Christ. That's the meaning of the Sabbath.

We do not have time to cover the fifth point I wanted to discuss, but let me just read it: "Both creation as well as redemption were accomplished by Christ." We will start on this topic in our next study.

Chapter 9

Christ, The True Sabbath Rest (Part 3)

Hebrews 4:1-13

We are continuing our study in Hebrews chapter four where the Apostle Paul has identified belief in the gospel with entering into God's rest, which is the Sabbath. In other words, the Sabbath here in Hebrews four is linked with the gospel. We will spend three or four more studies on this one issue because this is the truth that God has called this church to bring to the world. We need to come to grips with it.

First we will review what we have thus far covered on this subject and then go on to see the significance of God's Sabbath to man. There are four important areas I'm covering. The first one is the significance of the Sabbath to God. Then we'll look at the significance of the Sabbath to man,

which is what we're covering today. Then the significance of the Sabbath-Sunday controversy and, finally, the significance of the Sabbath to the law. We'll deal with each of these separately so that we can come to grips with the whole. Let us review the significance of the Sabbath to God.

1. We saw that the Sabbath belongs to God. If anyone says you are keeping the Jewish Sabbath all you have to do is to ask them to give you one text. Please don't allow them to use the Living Bible because there is a statement in it that says that the Sabbath belongs to the Jews. The Living Bible is a paraphrase. If you go to the translations—KJV, ARV, NIV, etc.—they do not give you any statement saying that the Sabbath belongs to the Jews. It always says it belongs to God.

2. We saw that God's Sabbath is His seventh day. This is extremely important. God worked how many days? Six days. Then He rested on the Seventh day. This Seventh day is not our Sabbath day. It is God's Sabbath day. On which day did God create man? The sixth day. So the first day

that Adam began in this world—and please remember that the word "Adam" means mankind—was God's Sabbath day. So we begin with the Sabbath and to Adam the six days of working were simply enjoying what he had received from God. So we do not begin with working. God begins with working and then resting. We begin resting in God and then enjoying what God has provided. This is extremely important in terms of the gospel.

3. The Sabbath is the focal point of the Bible by which all other days are calculated. The words, "The first day of the week," do not exist in the Greek Bible. It's our English Bibles that say that. Sunday is referred to as "the first of the Sabbath." That means the first day after the Sabbath. Therefore Monday will be Second Day after the Sabbath. Tuesday will be Third Day after the Sabbath, etc. When we come to Friday its called the Preparation Day, preparation for the Sabbath. All the days of the week were identified on the basis of one day—the Sabbath. The Sabbath was the focal point of the week.

4. God's Sabbath points to His finished work, which is perfect and complete. In other words, God did not rest on the Sabbath day because He was tired or because He wanted a break but because His work was finished. That is what we have covered so far.

5. Who spoke the word which created this world? Who said, "Let there be light"? Was it Christ? Was it the Father? Or was it the Holy Spirit? Or was it all three? Christ spoke. The New Testament is absolutely clear on that. We can't read all the texts but let us look at some of them. John 1:3. Now John introduces Christ as the Word. He is the Word of God. He is the written Word and He is the spoken Word. John here introduces Christ as the Word who was with God and who was God. Look at verse three: "All things were made by Him and without Him was not anything made that was made." So Christ is the source of our creation. Here are other texts that say the same thing: Eph. 3:9; Col. 1:16; Rev. 3:14.

In Rev. 3:14, the KJV says:

These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God.

There are some people, including some of our pioneers like Waggoner, Prescott, and James White, who misunderstood that text. That's why we were known as semi-Arians who believed that Christ had a beginning. Sister [Ellen G.] White corrected them. We have that statement in The Desire of Ages, "In Him was life, original, unborrowed and underived." It was to correct this idea. The Greek does not say, "He is the beginning of creation," but "He is the source of creation." This is not a problem among non-Adventist scholars. They agree because it is clear in the original language.

Christ is the Creator. If He is the Creator, if He is the One that did the work then the Sabbath belongs to Christ. That's why in Mark 2:28, He said:

The Son of Man is the Lord of the Sabbath.

Why does He identify Himself as the Lord of the Sabbath? Because He is the source of creation. Christ not only created this world and gave it to us but He also redeemed us. So He is both the Creator and the Redeemer: Rom. 3:24; 1 Cor. 1:30; Gal. 3:13; Col. 1:14; Titus 2:14; Heb. 9:12; 1 Peter 1:18; Rev. 5:9. Therefore Christ is the Lord of the Sabbath (rest): Mark 2:28; Luke 6:5; Rev. 1:10.

So when John said, “I was in vision on the Lord’s Day,” he refers to the day that belongs to Christ. Because the Jews rejected Christ they still needed to enter into God’s Sabbath rest. Were the Jews keeping the Sabbath? Yes. Was it the right day? Yes. Had they accepted the Lord of the Sabbath? No. So what was important, the day or the owner of the day? Which is the one that saves? Christ. The Lord of the day is what makes the day important. Without the Lord of the day the day becomes meaningless. Never separate the Sabbath from Christ our Saviour. We will come to the

significance of God's Sabbath and, when we come to it, I will deal with its importance.

Let us now go to the second phase of our study, which is the significance of God's Sabbath to man. God worked for six days. He created this world. Did He create it for Himself? No. Did He need an extension? Did God make heaven so small that he needed an extension when He created the world? He created the world for man, not for Himself. Remember what God says in Genesis 1:26-28:

Let us create man and let us give him dominion over everything We created.

So God gave man dominion.

How much did Adam help God in creating this world? What did God get from Adam? Nothing. God did not create Adam the first day and say to him, "I'm going to create a world for you and since it is for you I need your help."

Abraham received a promise that God would

give him a son. And through the son all nations would be blessed. Ten years after the promise Sarah came to Abraham and said, “You know God made a promise but He needs some help.”

And Abraham said, “I think you’re right because it is ten years now and we don’t have a child and we are getting rather old.” Did God accept Abraham’s help? No. Please read Gal.4:4. I’m sure of one thing, when Abraham goes to heaven and he looks at the history of the Middle East and looks at the Middle East crises, because it was all his fault, he will shed tears. “What have I done!”

When Adam came to God the first Sabbath, he came with an empty hand. He had nothing to bring. He could not do anything because the Sabbath was the very next day of life after creation. Therefore man made no contribution to creation but was only the recipient.

What did God do with the Sabbath? He did not only rest on the Sabbath but He sanctified it:

Gen.2:3. What does the word “sanctify” mean? Set aside for a holy use. That’s the meaning of sanctify. He set it aside for whom? For man or for Himself? For man.

Now there are some scholars today who say the word “Sabbath” does not appear until the Exodus. “The truth” appears in Genesis two. The word may not appear. How do I know that “the truth” applies to the Sabbath? What reason does God give for keeping the fourth commandment? Creation. Their argument is very poor to say that the Sabbath doesn’t appear until the Exodus. God sanctified the Sabbath for a holy use for whom? For man. Why? Please don’t say that man may have rest. We must never project our problem onto God.

Many people come to the Sabbath on Friday night and say, “Boy, am I glad that Sabbath is here. Life was so hectic this week and I can now relax.” Have you heard that? Well, that is wonderful, it is true. When God gave the Sabbath, man was perfect. He did not know what it meant to get tired. Am I correct?

So the Sabbath had its spiritual meaning. It was a covenant between God (The Provider) and man (the recipient). This covenant was made before the fall and, therefore, had a permanent significance and a spiritual significance. What do I mean by "permanent significance"? If Adam had not sinned would we still be keeping the Sabbath today? Yes. We would be keeping the Sabbath because it wasn't a temporary setting aside of a day. It was a permanent arrangement. Remember, the Sabbath was something spiritual and something permanent. Only after the fall did the Sabbath have a spiritual significance.

That's why, in Deut. 5:15, Moses told the Jews that God had delivered them from Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm and it is because of this He gave them the Sabbath. Notice that Moses applied the Sabbath to the gospel. Let me read the text of Deut. 5:15:

And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt [a slave, in bondage], and that the

Lord thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm: therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the Sabbath day.

The Sabbath is vitally connected with the gospel through our deliverance from sin.

After the fall, God gave the Sabbath a spiritual significance. Why? The fall destroyed the Sabbath's significance, since sin is turning from God-dependence to self-dependence. Isa. 59:2 says that your sin separates you from God. Gen. 3:19 is a good text. What did God say to Adam after he fell?

From now onward you will eat your bread by the sweat of your brow.

Before that, God worked for Adam. When you read about the Garden of Eden, it says it was God who planted the garden for Adam. Now God says,

From now onward you will eat your bread by

the sweat of your brow.

That means, “You will have no rest.” So the fall destroyed the significance of the Sabbath.

The creature/Creator relationship was always to be a relationship of total dependence. God never created man to live independent of Him. That’s why Jesus said,

Without Me you can do nothing.

Now we must apply this also in terms of salvation.

I am the vine, you are the branches. Abide in Me and I in you.

That was always. So when Adam sinned he departed from God-dependence. In order to restore the Sabbath rest to man, Jesus came to work again. He said “I must work the works of my Father.” What was the work that God gave Him to do? To save us.

Now comes the big question. At what point did Jesus redeem us? When Christ was born, the birth includes the conception and everything, He began His salvation. I have given you Matt. 1:21: Mary and Joseph were instructed but when Jesus was born, “He shall be called ‘Jesus’ because He shall save His people from their sins.” The word “Jesus” means Saviour.

When did Christ actually redeem the human race? At what point of His earthly history? Is it at the cross or is it at the resurrection? All Christians agree that it was at the cross. Why is Good Friday called “Good”? Look at John 17:4 where Christ says,

I have finished the work you have given Me to do.

Also, in John 19:31, on the cross when He said,

It is finished.

So our salvation involves two distinct works of Christ. Everything Jesus did up to including the cross involved the earthly ministry of Christ.

The sanctuary was made up of two squares: the western square representing Christ's heavenly ministry and the eastern square representing His earthly ministry. Both are required for our salvation. His earthly ministry began with His birth and ended at the cross. At the cross, Jesus became the Saviour of all men. There are many texts in the New Testament to that effect and there is no problem there. The resurrection began the second ministry which is the heavenly ministry and it will not end until the New Earth when He puts all enemies under His feet. Between the cross and the resurrection is the Sabbath. He finished His first work [earthly ministry] and rested. He will finish this second work [heavenly ministry] and He will rest. So the Sabbath in the context of redemption points to two things, a finished redemption and a finished restoration.

So when we keep the Sabbath we do two

things. We look backward to our security in Christ, the finished redemption, and we look forward to the restoration. So the Sabbath is a day of rejoicing because it points backwards to the cross which finished our redemption and it points forward to the blessed hope which we are given that God will restore this earth. That's why in Isa.66:23 it says,

From one Sabbath to another all flesh shall come to worship Him.

So please remember that the Sabbath point to a finished work.

How much did man contribute towards our redemption in Christ? Nothing! This redemption involves two phases: the doing of Christ, which met the positive demands of the law, and the death of Christ, which points to the justice of the law. So in this doing and dying Jesus met all the demands of the law in terms of our salvation.

So the sanctuary also had two phases: the daily,

which is the continual intercession, and the yearly is when He will eradicate sin and bring in everlasting righteousness. So you have two phases in redemption and two phases in the Sanctuary ministry but the Sabbath comes after He had finished the second phase. The work is finished and He rests.

So we here, beginning with the Day of Atonement, must keep the Sabbath because we are looking forward to His coming and the restoration. So the Sabbath has to be restored in the last days because of a crucial fact. His second ministry is coming to an end. We are pointing forward and pointing backward. I will give more on that in our next study in the Sunday/Sabbath issue.

In Matt. 11:28, Jesus said,

Come all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.

Because of what Christ did, can men now enter into God's rest? Remember, the fall destroyed the

significance of the Sabbath. What restored it? The redemptive work of Christ. So those who believe in the gospel do enter into His rest. What is His rest? It is peace, it is assurance, being justified by faith we have peace with God. No longer do we need to run away from God. We have peace! Therefore, the gospel has returned to us the Sabbath rest.

Turn to Heb. 4:9 where Paul is saying that the Jews still need to enter into God's rest. They still need to keep the Sabbath. Now look at verse 10:

For he that is entered into His rest he also has ceased from his own works as God did from His.

When you believe the gospel, you cease from your works just like God ceased from His works. The redemption that Christ did here was perfect but was it finished? Please look at Rom. 5:11:

We rejoice because we have already received the atonement.

The word “atonement” is synonymous with “reconciled.” We have been reconciled by the death of His Son. How much contribution did we make to this redemptive work in Christ? None. Was Christ’s work perfect? Yes. Was it finished? Yes. Can you add to it? No. Can you improve on it? No. So when you enter His rest, please don’t try to improve your standing before God by your own works. Heb. 4 is not dealing with works in terms of the fruits of salvation but in terms of the means of salvation. Can you add to the righteousness you receive in Christ? No. Can you improve on it? No. What happens if you do? Read the book of Galatians and especially chapter 3:3:

You began well in the Spirit but now you are trying to become perfect in the flesh.

Look at Gal. 5:4:

Those of you who are trying to become righteous by the law have fallen from grace.

Please do not try to add to the righteousness

you receive in Christ. It is perfect and it is finished. Therefore, he who has entered into God's rest will cease from works of redeeming himself, just like Christ ceased from His works. Why did Christ cease from doing His part? Because it was complete. Heb.9:28:

So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many and unto them that look for Him [those who look for Him are those who enter into God's rest] shall He appear the second time without sin.

What does Paul mean by "without sin?" He will not come a second time to give the world a second chance. He will not come the second time to finish the work that He left undone. He has already dealt with the sin problem. When He comes the second time He will come to give the reality of that work which is salvation. So He will not come the second time to deal with the sin problem. He has done that by one sacrifice. He has sanctified forever those who are being sanctified. Heb.10:14. This work is finished.

This is what gives me peace and assurance. So the Sabbath becomes a delight. I delight in the Sabbath because I can face the realities of life with assurance because I know in whom I believe. Christ is my righteousness!

If you try to add to this, which the devil wants to do, that moment you are fallen from grace and you have no right to keep the Sabbath. Those who keep the Sabbath are those who have entered into His rest. His rest points to a perfect and finished work. So please let us not give the Sabbath a legalistic meaning. Let us give it a gospel meaning and the world will see that the Sabbath is vitally connected with the gospel.

Can you see why the Sabbath is so vital? It points to a perfect and finished redemption in Christ; it also points to a perfect and finished restoration. By the way, how much help will you give Christ in restoring this world? None. He'll do it all. What is our part? To rest in Christ. The world needs to see a people who are resting in Christ, and God will do the rest.

When you are resting in Christ, He doesn't only give you peace, He doesn't only give you assurance, He also gives you victory. Because, I'll tell you, you can never conquer sin; sin is a power in you that is greater than you. If you don't believe me read Romans 7:

I want to do right, but I find I cannot.

And the question you will ask is, "I am resting in Christ, why is He not giving me victory?" Well, Abraham said the same thing about having a son. That's His job, not yours. Your job is resting in Christ. And He will give you, in His own way, in His own time. He has reasons sometimes for delaying because you are not fully resting in Him. So we need to rest in Christ, and the Sabbath is a sign, it's an outward act for an inward experience. The outward act has no significance without the inward experience. So if you keep the day for the wrong reason you're only fooling yourself. And that is why the truth of the Sabbath is more important than the day itself. The day becomes

meaningless without the truth. It is the truth that makes the Sabbath significant. And that is why we must restore the truth, then the day becomes significant.

Chapter 10

Christ, The True Sabbath Rest (Part 4)

Hebrews 4:1-13

Our next two studies are very important because they are going to look at the Sabbath as an end-time issue. As Adventists we know that in the last days the fundamental issue will be the Sabbath. Why will this be? What's so special about the Sabbath that it has to become the central issue in the last days? In this study we will look at the Sabbath/Sunday controversy. In our next study we will look at the Sabbath in relationship to the law. In our witnessing we need to know what the issue is going to be so that we present the Sabbath in a way that will help the people we witness to.

So far we saw two things. Number one, that the Sabbath belongs to God. It belongs to God because He is the one Who created this world and

Who redeemed us. The Sabbath points to His perfect and finished work. It is His day because He did the work. Then why are we keeping it? Because what He did was for us. So Sabbath to man is entering into His rest. It is accepting with open arms the wonderful gift of salvation and future restoration.

When you go to Africa and offer them a gift they will do something that may surprise you. Normally if I gave you a gift you will put out your hand and take it. But there they use both hands. My wife won't mind me giving you a personal experience in Africa. When we first went there was an old man who was selling trinkets up in the highlands where it was cold. He was shivering. So my wife gave him a glass of hot cocoa and he put out both hands to grab it.

She said "No, one hand," because in her culture in England if you put out both hands it says what you are giving is not enough. I had to explain to her that in African culture you never take things with one hand, even the smallest objects. It is

against their culture. When they take something with both hands they are saying, “Thank you” with both hands. That’s the meaning of the gesture. So when we rest on the Sabbath we are saying “thank you” to who? To God for all that He has provided for us. So the Sabbath points to man because it is a covenant agreement between a Holy God and sinful man that He will provide all our needs.

We saw that when man turned from God-dependence to self-dependence at the fall and, consequently, had to work for his survival, a human rest day became necessary. When Adam sinned we do not know which day it was but he broke that covenant. How do I know? Because in Gen. 3:19, God said, “From now onward you will eat your bread by the sweat of your brow.” So Adam had turned from God-dependence to self-dependence. He had turned from depending on the Creator to depending on the creature, on himself. The moment that he did that he discovered that he got tired and needed a day of rest and Sunday became man’s sabbath. I’m not talking about Sunday-keeping Christians. I’m talking of man in

the world, the human race. Man needed rest not in order to signify a perfect and finished work but because of a physical and a mental necessity.

Today, Sunday is the international day of rest instituted by the international labour union. Anywhere in the world you go Sunday is the official day of rest. Even in Muslim countries, in Hindu countries it is the official day of rest. I'm not talking of the religious day of rest but the official day of rest.

The Bible reveals that ultimately God divides the human race into two categories. We divide the world into nations, tribes, and all kinds of cultures and things. God accepts that but, ultimately, God divides men into two camps. That's all. The Bible divides them in many ways, sheep and goats, right hand and left hand, but the main terms that are used are "the kingdom of God" versus "the kingdom of this world." The kingdom of God is under Christ and the kingdom of this world is under Satan. In 1 John 5:19 we read these words, "And we know that we are of God, (who is the we? believers) and the

whole world lieth in wickedness." The KJV says, "in wickedness" but that's not the original. The original states "in the wicked one" which means under Satan.

Turn to John 15:19:

If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore, the world hateth you.

You did belong to the world once but I called you out to belong to my kingdom and because there is enmity between Satan and Christ, there's always going to be enmity between God's kingdom, the church, the body of Christ, and the world. So here we have two kingdoms. We will discover that both these kingdoms have capitals. Both these kingdoms have days of rest. The capital of the world is Babylon and the capital of God's kingdom is Jerusalem. Not the Jerusalem of Israel but the Jerusalem from above. We belong to Jerusalem from above.

Since man was also created a spiritual being, his departure from God to self also meant a departure from God-worship to self-worship (Baal). The Hebrew of Baal simply means “Lord.” Who is Lord? Not the God of heaven but what I make to be Lord. Rom. 1:18-32. That passage is what we call a solidarity passage. Paul is talking of the human race but, if you look at it very carefully, you can substitute the word “them” for the word “Adam.” This is exactly what happened to Adam in the fall.

Go to Rom. 1:18:

The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men...

What did he mean by “ungodliness” here? He meant departure from God. Unrighteousness is the fruit of ungodliness. The moment you depart from God the result is unrighteousness. The real problem in the world is not unrighteousness. That

is the symptom of the real problem. The real problem is ungodliness. The moment man departs from God, he ends up in unrighteousness. This is what Paul is explaining. Look at verse 19 and onward:

Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them.

The word “them” is mankind, but He also has revealed Himself to Adam:

For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse.

It isn’t that man began without a knowledge of God. He began with a knowledge of God. But what did he do? [Read] verse 21:

Because that, when they knew God they

glorified him not as God, [this is ungodliness] neither were thankful [for what he had done for them]; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened, professing themselves to be wise, they became fools [and then the result is...], And changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things.

So man turned from worshipping the true God to worshipping his own kind of god, which is Baal worship, including the planets. Of course, the biggest planet for earth is the sun. So they began worshipping the sun. Therefore Sunday, the day of the sun, became the day of worship for man. It is the day of worship of a god that they invented. Not the true God, but their god.

Now you will notice what God did in verse twenty-four:

Wherefore God also gave them up.

The result was what? Uncleanness, lusts, and all the sinful things. This is the result.

When man turns from God-dependence he also turns from God-worship to self-worship, worshipping the god that he invented. Today man worships his own mind, his own philosophy. Listen to the top leaders of the world. Today fifty percent of the world is under Marxism. Do you know the fundamental principles of Marxism? "We must depend on self-reliance." That's self-worship. "We can't depend on a god who is not even there," they say. "We must depend on man's ability to redeem himself." Man turned from God-worship to self-worship. Isa. 53:6:

All we like sheep have gone astray, we have all turned to our own way.

Phil. 2:21 says:

For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's.

This spiritual departure led men from righteousness by faith in Christ to righteousness by works or self-righteousness. The first instance I gave you was Gen. 3:7. When Adam sinned what did they do? They covered their nakedness with leaves. Wait until they get dried up. They won't last long. So man began to save himself by his own works. That is the "eros" religion.

Look also at Gen. 11:4-9, which is the story of the Tower of Babel. "Babel" comes from two words. We look at "Babel" as confusion but in the original language it comes from "Bab," which is "gate," and "el," which is "God": man reaching up to the gate of heaven, by his own works.

In the book of Revelation much is mentioned about the fall of Babylon. You will notice in the book of Revelation the fall of Babylon is always linked with the fall of literal Babylon in the days of Belshazzar. For example, in the Three Angels' Message, "Babylon is fallen, that great city," you need to know how Babylon fell, and why. You need to know by going to the book of Daniel. In

Daniel 4:30, after Nebuchadnezzar was warned by the vision, Nebuchadnezzar comes up on the balcony and makes this statement. ”Is this not Great Babylon which [who] built?” “I” have built. Who made it? “I” with whose power? “My” power. For whose glory? “My” glory. That is Baal worship. In verse 31, it doesn’t say “fallen,” but “Your kingdom is departed from you.” So he had to live on grass for seven years without any salad dressing. That put some sense into his head and he repented. Thank God he repented.

Now his grandson, Belshazzar, becomes King in chapter five. And what does he do? He takes the golden vessels of God’s temple and desecrates them. You need to listen to what Daniel tells him. He goes through the history of Belshazzar’s grandfather, Nebuchadnezzar. And he says, “This and this and this happened to your grandfather and he discovered the God of heaven.” Then Daniel ends up this way, “You knew all this but you deliberately, wilfully desecrated God’s sanctuary golden vessels. Therefore, you are inexcusable and you are found wanting. Your kingdom is departed.

Babylon is fallen."

So Babylon fell because she deliberately, wilfully rejected the God of heaven. Keep this in mind because this is going to be the issue in the last days.

Sunday not only became man's rest day from physical and mental work but also began to symbolize man's spiritual day of rest, the day of the sun. At its very foundation, Sunday rest represents self-righteousness in contradiction to the Sabbath rest, which is God's sign of righteousness by faith.

I have given you the Sabbath as a sign between Me and you that I, the Lord, will sanctify you. Ex. 31.

It is an everlasting covenant in verse sixteen.

These two opposing concepts of salvation, self-righteousness and righteousness by faith, can never be reconciled. There are two concepts of love

producing two concepts of salvation, Agape versus Eros. The fundamental issue in the New Testament is the battle between salvation by works and salvation by grace. This is the fundamental battle. Therefore, man must choose between God's righteousness and his own.

Please turn to Deut.30. I want you to listen to Moses' final message. Deut. 30:19,20:

I call heaven and earth to record this day against you that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing. Therefore, choose life that both thou and thy seed may live. That thou mayest love the Lord Thy God, and thou mayest obey His voice, and cleave unto Him for He is thy life, and the length of thy days: [in other words, He is your salvation, He is your righteousness] that thou mayest dwell in the land which the Lord sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them.

So that was Moses's final message to Israel

before he departed.

Then I turn to Josh.24, and you will notice that Joshua warns the Jews who are now in Canaan about the same thing. Look at verse ten onward. Notice the last part of verse ten:

I delivered you out of his hand.

Hand of who? Balaam and Satan. Then in verse thirteen:

And I have given you a land for which you did not labour [notice the Sabbath rest motif], and cities which you built not, and you dwell in them; of the vineyards and oliveyards which you planted not do you eat.

In other words, “You never laboured for these things; I gave it to you as a gift.”

Now, therefore, fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood,

and in Egypt [put away your idols, and idols are a symbol of self-worship] and serve you the Lord.

Please notice the issue here between self-worship and God-worship.

Satan wants to confuse the Christian church so what did he do? He took these two opposing concepts of salvation and married them, by marrying Agape and Eros into Caritas. The result was that he produced a third type of salvation that is a synthesis, which is unacceptable in the Bible. It is partly by God and partly by me. I am saved partly by Jesus Christ and partly by what I do: faith plus works. It is not faith plus works but it is faith that works that saves us. So the result is that we have two ways of salvation joined together in a synthesis.

A good example is the book of Galatians. Look at Galatians five and see what Paul has to say with these two views. Gal. 5:4:

Christ is become of no effect unto you,

whosoever of you are justified by the law...;

What he means by law is “the works of the law.”

...You are fallen from grace.

You can’t mix the two, he says.

For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which works or is motivated by love.

Paul had this problem. He was a Jew. He was a Pharisee. He was a member of the Sanhedrin. You know the Pharisees were very strict legalists. He was confronted with the gospel and I want you to see what he says in Phil. 3:3-9. In verse three he makes a statement:

We rejoice in Christ and have no confidence in the flesh [which is human nature].

Please notice it is not I plus Christ, but the formula is “Not I, but Christ.”

And then he says in verse four:

If any of you Philippians can boast about the flesh, I have accomplished more than you.

Then he goes down the line in verses five and six: “Circumcised the eighth day,” he was a genuine pedigree Israelite. He wasn’t a mixture; he says, I’m a pedigree Israelite. Even giving his blood line of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews.

As touching the law, I was a Pharisee. [That is, he was jealous of the law.] Concerning zeal, persecuting the church, [he was persecuting the church as a part of his zeal for God] touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. [Nobody can touch me.] But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.

Please notice he did not join them to Christ's righteousness. He gave them up for Christ's righteousness. Then in verse nine:

And be found in Him, that is Christ, not having my own righteousness [which is self-righteousness] which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.

What did he mean by that? A righteousness provided by God. He made no contribution to it. It comes from God but is accepted by faith. This is something that we need to realize.

Today, there are many sincere Christians who are keeping the wrong day for the right reason. Do you know that? We have made the Sunday/Sabbath issue an issue between Sunday-keeping Christians and Sabbath-keeping Christians. That's not the issue. The issue is between the church which is the body of Christ and the world which is under Satan. But today there is confusion. There are many millions of Christians who are keeping the wrong

day but for the right reason. They are resting in God's provision in Jesus Christ, but they are keeping the wrong day. They don't realize it.

Likewise, others, equally sincere, are keeping the right day for the wrong reason. Many are keeping the Sabbath, hoping that it will take them to heaven. Keeping the day won't take anyone to heaven because nobody keeps the Sabbath so strictly as the Jews. They are very meticulous. I'm talking of the orthodox Jew. But before the end comes the true gospel of righteousness by faith will be restored and preached for a witness. In other words, when the true gospel is preached in all its clarity there will be no more confusion. Then every person, Christian and non-Christian, will have to make a choice between life and death, between God and Satan, between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of this world. There will be no confusion then. That's the direction we need to point in. We need to lay the foundation because when the issue comes, Sister [Ellen G.] White says in Great Controversy that the arguments have already been presented but now they see it, and

they take their stand. Thousands will join the Sabbath-keepers because they were sincere in resting in Christ although keeping the wrong day. And thousands who belong to the right day will join the other camp because they were keeping it for the wrong reason. So there is going to be an exchange and we know that it is going to come.

So the fundamental issue is between righteousness by faith and righteousness by works. I have some very strong statements from the Spirit of Prophecy but I would like to remind you of a statement I have in the back of my Bible which is dealing indirectly with this issue. We are told that, "When the end comes, only one truth will prevail, one interest will prevail, one subject will swallow up every other—Christ Our Righteousness." Review and Herald Extra, 23 December 1890.

When that happens, every human being will have to take a stand. At that time, the Sabbath will point to resting in God and Sunday will be pointing to resting in man. It is not the Sunday-keeping Christians who will make the Sunday law. It is the

world who will make the Sunday law. It is true that apostate Christianity will give them all the encouragement but it is the world that will make the decision. They will say that Sunday has to be kept. When this happens the two concepts of salvation will polarize and will be in conflict again like it was in the New Testament. At that time, the Sabbath will become the seal of God or righteousness by faith in contradiction to Sunday which is the mark of the beast. The beast is simply an agent for the dragon, who is Satan. Satan gives power to the beast. So the real boss of the world is Satan. The great controversy will come into focus in a final conflict between these two groups.

What will Sabbath represent and what will Sunday represent? The Sabbath will represent "saved in Christ." Sunday will represent "unbelief in Christ"—a deliberate, wilful rejection of God's grace.

When the Sunday law is established, it will signify mankind's deliberate and wilful rejection of God's saving grace in Christ. This is the

abomination that maketh desolate. We know that the earth will be desolate. What is it that makes it desolate? The abomination. What is the abomination? Let's go to the history of the Jews quickly to discuss this.

Matthew twenty-three lets Jesus explain the whole issue. This is Jesus entering into Jerusalem at the time of the triumphal entry. He comes to the edge of the cliff. He looks down on Jerusalem and this is what He says in Matt. 23:37-39:

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, [Remember that Jerusalem is supposed to belong to God. Now she has become an apostate. You will see why.] Thou that killest the prophets and stoneth 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 you would not!

What did He mean by "you would not?" You would not accept the gift of God. It was their final rejection of Jesus Christ. Please remember the seventy weeks of Daniel nine. In the last week He

confirmed the covenant, the promise. And what did they do with the promise? They rejected it.

Now verse thirty-eight:

Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.

That, by the way, is the wrath of God. Remember Romans the first chapter. These people turned their backs to God and three times Paul says, “God gave them up.” They said, “We don’t want you, God.” Please don’t stop us. God said “O.K. I will withdraw from you.” God says, ”I leave your house desolate.” In other words, “I leave your house unprotected.” Do you know what happens when God does that?

For I say unto you, you shall not see me hence till you see Him that cometh in the name of the Lord.

It will be too late then, folks.

Turn now to Matt. 24:14-20, where Jesus is

talking of the last day events. In verse fourteen He says:

This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations and then shall the end come.

Notice that the word “witness” means something that is presented as clear evidence. We use witnesses in a law case. The jury decides on the witnessing of the people.

When you, therefore, shall see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whosoever readeth, let him understand:) Then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains: Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house: Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes.

Please run away!

What was the abomination of desolation? Well,

if you read Ellen G. White, it was the Roman insignia that was stuck on the temple door. When the Christians saw that and the Jews called it the abomination, a pagan symbol stuck on the temple door, the Christians fled. I believe that the Sunday law will be the abomination that maketh desolate. When the world deliberately demands all men to keep Sunday and refuses for us to keep God's day of rest, that becomes the abomination of desolation. In other words, that is the time, folks, when you will have to give up your wonderful homes and maybe have to live up there in the mountains. That is what will happen. In other words the Sunday law is the mark of the beast which is saying to God, "We deliberately, wilfully reject the gospel of Jesus Christ."

Look at the Three Angels Message. The first angel has what in his hand? The everlasting gospel to preach to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. The second angel does not bring a new message because the word "follow" in the Greek means to "accompany" or to "join." The second angel joins the first angel that warns the world that

if you don't come out of Babylon you are in trouble.

Then the third angel's message gives the final call. He says, "Those who deliberately, wilfully receive the mark of the beast, they will receive the wrath of God which is poured out without mixture. To those who deliberately apostatize from the gospel and reject Jesus Christ there is nothing left but a fearful looking unto the judgment of God." So the Sabbath/Sunday issue is the issue of righteousness by faith and righteousness by works. The Sabbath is only the sign or the seal of the truth. The issue is not so much the day but what the day stands for.

Read for example Rev. 6:17, "Who will be able to stand?" That's the question. The same question was addressed by Jesus Christ Himself in Luke 18:8, "When the Son of Man comes will He find faith on the earth?" In Rev.7 God says, "Yes, there will be a people who will stand." But before they can stand God is saying, "I will hold the four winds so that God's people can be sealed."

I am using Romans four as an illustration of the seal. In Rom. 4:9-11 comes an issue. Paul tells us that circumcision has no contribution towards our salvation. So the Jews turned around and said, “If circumcision has no value why did God give it?” That’s a valid question. Paul answers it in verse eleven:

And he [that is, Abraham] received the sign of circumcision, a seal....

Circumcision did not save anybody, but it was a sign, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised:” Did Abraham have righteousness by circumcision? NO. Was Abraham declared righteous before he was circumcised? Yes. Then why did God give circumcision?...as a sign, as a seal. How old was Abraham when God called him out of his homeland? He was seventy-five. God said, “In thy seed I will bless all nations.” How many children did he have? None. But He promised him many. Eight years later he still had no son, and his faith

began to dwindle. In Genesis fifteen, God said to him, “Why are you afraid?”

Abraham said, “Because you have not kept your promise. The only son I have in my house is the son of my slave Eleazar. Is he the promised son?”

God said “No.” Then God took him for a walk and showed him the stars and said “This is how many sons you will have.” He repeated the promise. And we have that famous statement that Paul loves in verse 6: “Abraham believed and it was counted to him for righteousness.”

Two years later, Sarah came to Abraham and said, “Look, I don’t think God is able to keep His promise. He needs your help, so I have a suggestion. You go to Hagar, the surrogate mother, and produce a child.” Abraham said, “I think that’s an excellent idea. God needs our help. We’ve been waiting now ten years.” So he produced Ishmael. Then he said to God, “Here is the promised son. You made the promise and I helped

you."

God said, "No. He is not the promised son."

Do you know that God waited for Abraham and Sarah another fourteen years. Talk about the patience of the saints! Now it was impossible physically, scientifically, humanly speaking for Sarah to have a child. She had passed the age of child bearing. And God said to Abraham, "Do you still believe that I can give you a son?" Then you have those famous words in Romans 4:18, "Against hope he believed...." Against all scientific evidence he believed and he became the father of the faithful. And God said, "I want to enter into a covenant (and that was circumcision). I want you to remove unbelief and seal your faith once and for all." It was at circumcision that his faith was sealed.

Seventeen years later that faith was tried, it was a real test. God said, "Take this son through whom I'm going to bless the nations and sacrifice him." Heb. 11:17 brings it out. The Bible tells us in

Hebrews eleven that Abraham was willing to sacrifice him because he believed that God who gave him the son when it was impossible could raise him back to life. Therefore, he passed the test.

The Sabbath will become the seal. The issue of the Sabbath is not so much “Are you obeying God’s laws” but “Are you resting in Christ?” when all evidence around you shows that He has forsaken you. Can God produce a people who rest in Christ even though their feelings and the outward evidence shows that God has forsaken them? Can God produce such a people?

Did Christ feel forsaken on the cross? Or was He acting when He cried, ”Father, Father, why hast thou forsaken me?” How did He remain there on the cross? How? What gave Him the power? In Desire of Ages page 756 we are told:

Amid the awful darkness, apparently forsaken of God, Christ had drained the last dregs of the cup of human woe. In those dreadful hours He had

relied upon the evidence of His Father's acceptance heretofore given Him. He was acquainted with the character of the Father; He understood His justice, His mercy, and His great love. By faith He rested in Him whom it had ever been His joy to obey.

It was by faith that Christ was the victor and it is this kind of faith that you and I have to develop. It is easy to believe in Christ when everything goes well.

In the last days breaking the Sabbath is not so much breaking the commandment but it is rejecting the gift of God. You see, if you break a commandment there is forgiveness but if you reject Christ you are committing the unpardonable sin. So the issue of the Sabbath will be the rejection of the gift of God in Jesus Christ. That will be the issue. And that is what we need to explain to our people.

We had twenty-two students at our university in Halie Selasie in Ethiopia who had an exam on the Sabbath. Twenty-two students who had an

exam in zoology. They asked me if I would go and speak to the professor. He was a tough man. He was a German.

I said, “Before I speak I want to ask you a question. If he says ”No” will you take the exam? If you say “Yes” I’m not going to speak to him. I will only speak if you will not take the exam even if the answer is “No.”

They said, “Boy, this is tough.” And I’ll tell you what they did, they said, We’ll spend three days in fasting and prayer.” They spent three days. Now remember that in Africa only the cream of the crop goes to university. To give up university is being the greatest fool in the world. Out of those twenty-two only five said to me, “We are willing to deprive ourselves of a university education but we will not let our God down.” Only five out of the twenty-two. The rest said, “It is too much of a sacrifice.”

So I went to the professor for those five students. I tried to explain to him but he stopped

me. He said, “You don’t need to explain. I come from Damstaad where we have lots of Adventists. I know your policy. He went to the drawer and said, “Here are the exams. You give it to them on Sunday. Keep them in your home. No trouble at all.”

So I took the five exams and kept them at home for Sabbath. They were not allowed to leave our home. On Saturday night after sundown I gave them the exam. I don’t know what was behind the professor but all five passed with flying colours. The others failed. Whether he did it deliberately or not I don’t know or if they did poorly, I do not know, but he never penalized them. He told me, “I wish we had students that were as loyal as these five.” Even though he was a Sunday-keeping Christian, he said, “I wish we had Christian students who were loyal to Jesus Christ like these five.”

The loyalty in these last days is to Jesus Christ. And I will come to the relationship of Sabbath to the law in our last study but please folks, the issue

in the last days is not giving up Sabbath as a day, it is giving up your faith in Christ.

Chapter 11

Christ, The True Sabbath Rest (Part 5)

Hebrews 4:1-13

This is our concluding study on the Sabbath. It has to do with the Sabbath in relationship to the law. I have here a document written by a Christian. It says, “Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.” Here’s the question, “Are Christians under the law of the Sabbath?” In other words, “Are Christians required by God to obey the fourth commandment?” I will give you the official answer of the church, i.e. the Adventist Church. I will take my answer from the Church Manual under the heading of: Baptismal Vow and Baptism: “In the presence of the church the following questions should be answered in the affirmative by candidates at the time of baptism, or those received on profession of faith.” Here is number six:

Do you accept the ten commandments as still binding upon Christians and is it your purpose by the power of the indwelling Christ to keep this law including the fourth commandment which requires the observance of the seventh day of the week as the Sabbath of the Lord?

So our answer to the question posed by this man is “Yes.” Of course their [Sunday-keepers] answer is “No.” They have two main arguments with which you need to be familiar. They are both presented by the Evangelical Christians, by Sunday-keeping Christians. They are both sincere answers. We need to address ourselves to both these arguments. One is as old as the Reformation. The argument came from [Martin] Luther himself. The other is also a very common argument and is the argument of this manuscript. Before we look at the arguments, let’s hear his conclusion. What does he say about Christians who still keep the Sabbath? He says:

1. They have bound themselves to the law which did not impart the indwelling Spirit of God.

2. They have bound themselves to the covenant which made nothing perfect and could not produce righteousness.

3. They have frustrated the grace of God by trying to combine the covenant of bondage and death with the covenant of liberty and life.

Then he makes this appeal, “Friend, if your soul is bowed down under a humanly devised system of doctrine and commandments may God give you the grace and the courage of conviction to break the shackles and walk as a free man in Christ.”

Now we have to address this because this is coming from a sincere Christian. What is the argument of this manuscript? The argument is that the ten commandments, that is the law, belongs to the Old Covenant and not the New. If you ask them “What do you do with the commandments in the New Covenant? You mean it is O.K. to kill or to steal?”

The say, “No, but nine of the ten commandments have been restored in the New Covenant, but not the fourth commandment.” The fourth commandment is not part of the New Covenant.

Well, I was discussing this with a minister of the Church of Christ in Idaho, and he gave me the this very argument. Of course I was aware of it, so I turned around to him and said, “O.K., please start with commandment number one and go all through and give me every commandment that you claim has been restored in the New Covenant.”

He said “O.K.” He took his Bible and turned to Acts fourteen which is the experience of Paul and Barnabas in Lystra. They had performed a miracle by healing a crippled man and the people around said, “This must be Gods in human flesh.” So they bowed down to worship Paul and Barnabas who were horrified that such a thing should happen. Listen to what Paul says in verse fifteen:

Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, [we are sinners like you] and preach unto you that you should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all the things that are therein.

And I said to this Pastor, “That is a quotation from the fourth commandment and not the first.” And he was horrified. I turned to Exodus twenty and asked, “Please show me what commandment Paul is quoting from, the first or the fourth?” I turned to Ex. 20:11 and read,

For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea and all that in them is and rested the seventh day, wherefore the Lord blessed the seventh day and hallowed it.

So I said, “You are quoting the fourth commandment. Therefore, by your own argument, the fourth commandment has been restored in the New Covenant.” He had a hard time. We stopped the argument there. He didn’t even go to the

second commandment.

He said, “I didn’t realize.”

I said, “I know you didn’t realize it, but here it is, brother. I will give you some other statements, for example, the Three Angels Message: ‘And give Him glory who made heaven, and earth and all that in them is.’ And that’s in the context of the everlasting gospel. That happens to be the everlasting covenant—The New Covenant.”

If they bring up this argument simply ask them to show you where the nine commandments were restored in the New Covenant. When they begin with Acts fourteen you have an answer.

Here is the second argument. It’s an argument that originated with [Martin] Luther so I’m going to read Luther himself. The title of the article is, “Against Saxon Radicals,” which happens to be the Anabaptists under the leadership of Carlstadt. This was written in February, 1525. Carlstadt, the Anabaptist, was demanding that we restore the Ten

Commandments to the Christian Church.

Luther said this, and this is a common argument among Evangelicals today. This is the exact quotation, translated from the German: “Only that portion of the ten commandments is now binding which enshrines the natural law.” So he divides the ten commandments into natural and ceremonial laws. Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not commit adultery, etc., but not the injunction as to the Sabbath. Luther rejected the Sabbath. “If Carlstadt keeps on he will have us observing Sunday on Saturday.” So Luther admitted that the fourth commandment had to do with Saturday. But he said that it was not binding on the Christian because it did not belong to the natural law. In other words, the New Covenant only restored the natural law.

Now what does he mean by “natural law”? He meant the law in which human beings by nature know right and wrong. They don’t have to be Christians. Their conscience tells them that it is wrong. Like killing, stealing and like adultery.

What do you do with that argument? Turn to Romans seven. What Luther has done is to strike at the very foundation of Christian ethics by that argument. We human beings look at sin only as an act. God looks at sin as a motive. This is what Jesus brought out in the sermon on the mount. The Pharisees said, “We have never committed murder.”

Jesus said, “If you have hate for somebody without a cause you have committed murder already. Or If you look at a woman to lust after her even though you have not done the act you have committed adultery.” It is in the this context I want you to turn to Rom.7:7:

What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. I had not known sin but by the law for I had not known lust except the law said, Thou shalt not shalt not covet.

Is that an act? Or is that a desire that is cherished? So Paul is saying, “I did not know by

nature that it is wrong to desire somebody else's property, except the law has said it."

In other words, if you were to walk the streets of Walla Walla [Washington] and you passed an 1988 Porsch sports car (now I'm talking to the young people, because the old people will not think much of that car) and you say to yourself, "Boy, I wish I had that car," and you covet that car, can a policeman arrest you? No. But had you broken the law of God? Yes. So coveting is not a natural law. It is a law that was given by God which hits at the heart of sin.

In James 1:14, James traces the process from temptation to sin. There are three things:

1. Temptation. [Is temptation a sin? No.]
2. Conception of that Temptation.
3. The Act.

The result of the act is death.

When does temptation become sin? When it is

conceived in the mind or when you do the act? The Jew said, “When you do the act.” God says, “When it is conceived.” And that is not natural. If you say that only the natural law is sin then you are destroying the foundation of what God calls sin which is a desire that is in the mind. Luther does not touch the law, Thou shalt not covet. He doesn’t say it is natural because he knows that it is not natural for a man to take coveting as an act of sin. To them sin is only when you do something wrong.

Giving them answers or objections to their opposition is not sufficient. We have to present the Sabbath in a way that is convincing. There are two ways to look at the law. The first thing I would say is this. The law of God, the Ten Commandments, is God’s measuring stick of righteousness. Whether you talk of it in terms of the Old Covenant or the New Covenant the measuring stick of righteousness is the same. The only difference is that in the Old Covenant man is saved by his own works; that is, by promising God to be good, to keep the commandments and be saved by his own

works, and in the New Covenant we are saved by the righteousness of Christ.

Paul tells us in Rom. 10:4 that Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to all who believe. By "end," the Greek means the completion, the fulfilment. Now there are two ways to look at the law. One is in the letter and one is in the spirit. In the Old Covenant, the law was written on tables of stone. That is the letter. In the Old Covenant, the law was rules, do's and don'ts, with the resulting punishment if you don't. A good example of the letter of the law is Gal. 3:10. That is an example of what I mean by the letter. Rules written on a piece of stone, they were permanent, that's why they are on stone. That is how it was in the Old Covenant.

In Gal.3:10, we are told:

For as many as are of the works of the law [i.e., the Old Covenant] are under the curse: for it is written, 'Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law

to do them.’

In the New Covenant, the law is not written on tables of stone but on the heart. If a Christian has died and you have an autopsy will you find the law written in the heart? No. Then what does the New Testament mean when it says, “God will write the law in your heart?” It is not talking about rules. It is talking about the spirit of the law.

Now what is the spirit of the law? First go to Romans seven, which is really a passage dealing with the deliverance from the Old Covenant into the New Covenant. This is what he says in verse six:

But now we are delivered from the law... [that means we are delivered from legalism, that’s the context] ...that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.

Now what is the spirit of the law? Let Jesus answer that question.

According to Jesus, the law of God is established on the principle of agape love. In Matt. 22:36-40, a young man—in fact, he was an expert on the law, trying to trap Him—came to Jesus and said, “What is the greatest commandment in the book of the law [i.e., the Torah, the five books that the Jews described as the book of 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.

Remember, the question is, “What is the greatest commandment in the book of the law?” So Jesus is not inventing a new commandment. He’s simply quoting from the book of the law and the quotation is from Deut.6:5.

Jesus says,

This is the first and great commandment.

Then, in the next verse, He says,

And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

How many commandments? Two. The reason I'm emphasizing two is that there are some Christian psychologists who have taken this passage and made it into three commandments. They say 1. Love God. 2. To love your neighbour you must first love yourself. 3. Love your neighbour like yourself. Jesus did not say, "Upon these three commandments." This idea of loving self is called "narcissism." It comes from a young man from Greek mythology called Narcissus. He had low self-esteem and one day he was walking downcast along the path and he came across a pond. In those days they had no mirrors. He looked down and for the first time he saw himself and he realized that he was quite a handsome fellow. He fell in love with himself.

So these Christian psychologists say that we must first love ourselves before we can love our

neighbours. No, Jesus did not say “You must love yourself in order that you may love your neighbours.” He said, “You must love your neighbour in the same way that you love yourself.”

Going back to our study on “agape” and “eros.” God placed into the heart of Adam agape love because Adam was created in God’s own image. “God is Agape” (1 John 4:8,16). That means that he had a love that went towards others and not towards himself because agape does not have self in it. 1 Cor. 13:5: “Agape seeketh not her own.” There is no self in agape. So this is Adam before his fall.

Now what happened when Adam sinned? If you read Steps to Christ, we are told that love disappeared and selfishness took its place. That is a correct description. Adam’s agape love became bent toward self. Therefore it became eros. That’s what happened at the fall. Human love was the agape bent toward self. In the Hebrew language this word of bending is called iniquity. The Hebrew word for iniquity means to be bent.

All we like sheep have gone astray. We have all bent to our own way.

Every human being is born with self-love. We don't have to try to love ourselves. The day you do not love yourself you are a sick person. You would need to go to the hospital.

Even the person who commits suicide loves himself or herself. They can't face the issues of life. They don't care about how much it hurts their loved ones. They want to get rid of their problem and the only way is suicide. So self-love is spontaneous. Eros is a U-turn agape. How many of you have ever prayed, "Dear Jesus, please help me to love myself." Have you ever prayed that? No.

Tell me, when you have been travelling on the highway and you broke the speed limit, and don't tell me you haven't. I haven't had any ticket as yet but my last car was a diesel and it couldn't break the speed limit, but now I have a Subaru and I'm

always in danger of doing that. But let's say you break the speed limit and a policeman stops you. You plead with him. You say, "Officer, I was in a hurry. I have an appointment." Are you sorry because you love the policeman? Are you sorry because you love the law of the country or are you sorry because you love your pocket? Why are you pleading for mercy?

You love yourself also when you are bad. Am I correct? That is why when you preach the gospel to the world you have to show them. You have to come to them at the level they are. As the book Evangelism says, "You have to show them that there is a heaven to win and a hell to lose." What are you appealing to? Their egocentric love. That's all they have. When the young man came to Jesus and said, "What good thing must I do to be saved?" he had missed the gospel.

Jesus said, "Keep the commandments."

He said, "I have been keeping it since I was in Primary Sabbath School."

Jesus said, “Alright, let me test you. If you love your neighbour as yourself, then give your wealth to your neighbour and follow me and I will give you my wealth.”

Did he do it? No. Why? Because he loved himself. If you read further in the passage, you will come to Peter. He was a wonderful fellow. He spoke before he thought and he said, “Jesus, we have given up everything for you. What is our reward?” The great Peter! Jesus knew that he still had not been fully converted.

Jesus said, “Peter you have not given up anything without receiving one hundred fold from me.” He did not rebuke Peter; He met him on his level. But later on Peter understood the gospel and he was now ready to die for Christ. That was afterwards.

Agape is the ingredient by which the law is kept. Without agape you cannot keep the law. Now here’s the problem. Men do not have agape,

they have only eros, which is self-love. Self-love only knows how to sin.

By the way, if I keep the Sabbath because I want to go to heaven, am I keeping the law? Or am I keeping sin? While sin is the transgression of the law and love is the fulfilment of the law, please, love can also be the fulfilment of sin. Self-love is the fulfilment of sin. Agape is the fulfilment of the law.

Our problem is that we do not have agape. We have only self-love. That is why the Bible teaches that by the works of the law no flesh can be justified because we don't have the ingredient for justification. Have you ever tried cooking spaghetti when you have no water? You won't get spaghetti, at least you won't get the kind that I like. So remember that it is impossible for us to keep the law without the ingredient of agape.

We human beings do not have agape. Can we generate it by trying? Agape is a gift from God to the believer. It is the supreme gift. Sinful man

cannot generate this agape love and, therefore, in and of himself he cannot fulfill the law of God. A good example is Rom.7:22-24. Paul, in talking of the corporate man says, “I delight in the law. I want to keep the law but how to keep it I find not. I cannot do it. Oh, wretched man that I am!” Why? Because we do not have the ingredients.

God’s agape love is the supreme gift of the Holy Spirit to the believer. 1 Cor. 12 and 13 is in the context of spiritual gifts. Please turn to 1 Cor. 13 and begin with the last verse of Chapter twelve to get the context of the thirteenth chapter. Paul has been talking in chapter twelve about spiritual gifts. In verse thirty-one he says, “But covet earnestly the best gifts and yet show I unto you a more excellent way. Here I will show you the supreme gift of the Holy Spirit.” And what is it? The gift of agape.

Here is a believer. God gives him agape. This is what the New Covenant is. “I will write the law into his heart,” simply means “I will put my love into his heart.” Now here comes the problem. If

God gives me agape and I use this agape to love Him back, to return it back to Him, you have a problem. You make God Eros. That's the problem. Because you can't generate agape. It is a gift of God. Has He given you this gift so that you may love Him back? The answer is "No." So what do you do with the problem?

Well, I want to show you something that you may not have noticed. The New Testament speaks very little about the first four commandments. Almost nothing. All it talks about is the last six. For example let me turn to Gal.5:14:

For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

There is no mention of God here. Or look at Romans thirteen where Paul talks about Christian ethics and you will find verses eight to ten discuss Christian living. We should not owe any man any money and we should love one another. He quotes not the first four commandments but the last six. Beginning with verse nine, "For this thou shalt not

commit adultery, thou shalt not kill etc." In verse ten, "Love worketh no evil to his neighbour, therefore, love is the fulfilment of the law."

So what do we do with the first four commandments, since we don't have agape? If we look at the New Testament very carefully the first four commandments are kept in the context of faith. In other words, God gives us the gospel and we in return believe in God. Faith is the fulfilment of the first four commandments. In other words, if I accept the gospel I will have no other gods before [God the Creator]. If I accept God as my Saviour and Creator I will not have any images.

Please notice that if you read Rom. 1:18 and onward where Paul is talking about people who have turned their backs to God, what do they do when they reject God? They make their own gods. Faith demands that you have only one God, that you have no idols, that you do not take His name in vain and that you rest in God alone. So the keeping of the Sabbath must be understood in the context of faith.

Turn to 1 John 3:23, “And this is his commandment, [under the New Covenant] (1) that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ [some translations add, “Whom God hath sent”] and (2) love one another, as he gave us commandment.” In other words, our faith is our response to the first four commandments. What does God do to those who believe? He in turn brings agape into your heart so agape comes vertically down into your heart—not to go back to Him but that it may go horizontally to others. And when the world sees agape coming out of us toward them, then Jesus said,

By this shall all men know that you are my disciples.

So the first four commandments must always be understood in the context of faith.

Go now to Matthew six:

Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His

righteousness.

How do we seek the kingdom of God? By pilgrimage? No. By paying money? No. How? By faith alone. So faith is our obedience to the first four commandments. That is why in the New Testament faith is equated with obedience.

Now for a passage that has to do with the Jews, who kept the day but did not obey the gospel. They kept the Sabbath. In Rom.10:16:

But they have not all obeyed the gospel.

Then he proves it by quoting from Isaiah:

Lord, who hath believed our report?

So with Paul believing is synonymous with obeying. So the first four commandments are obeyed by faith. Now when you have got this then what do we do with the Sabbath commandment? In this context Sabbath keeping becomes the seal of righteousness by faith. Those who enter into God's

rest will not try to produce their own righteousness. Why? Because they are resting in the righteousness of Christ. They are obeying the law of God—the first four commandments. They have no other gods before them, not including themselves, not including materialism. They do not have idols. They do not take His name in vain and they rest in the righteousness of Christ.

That is why when we present the Sabbath in the light of this, then the Sabbath becomes the seal of righteousness by faith. Why? Because the Sabbath demands that we have no other gods. Our confidence is in God who created us, who redeemed us and who will restore us. And that is exactly what Paul is saying to the people in Lystra. Don't worship us. Worship the true God who created heaven and earth and the sea.

The Three Angels Message is saying, "Give glory to God because He is our Creator, He is our Redeemer and He is our Restorer." Our confidence is in nobody else. The issue is where will your stand be? Will you be resting in Christ alone of

which the Sabbath is the outward sign, or will you be resting in your government or in your bank account or in that plastic card or in your ability?

In the Time of Trouble we are to live by faith alone. If you are depending even a little bit on yourself and in your ability and in your knowledge you are not resting one hundred percent in God. You are breaking the fourth commandment. That is why the Sabbath will be the fundamental issue in the time of trouble. Because the issue is between two concepts, faith and unbelief. There will be only two camps, those who totally put their faith in God and those who totally put their faith in themselves. There will be no in-between. There will be no mixture in the end of time.

That is why we have to have the faith of Abraham who is the father of us all. Abraham had a faith that was unshakable. But Abraham was only a type. I want to go to the reality, Jesus Christ. He hung on the cross. As far as His feelings were concerned He was forsaken of God but by faith He was victorious.

I want to give you the real issue in the time of trouble. We are told from Dan.12:1 and Jer.7:13 that the time of trouble will be something that has never been experienced by any human being or any generation in the past. Jeremiah says that it is Jacob's trouble. What was the issue in Jacob's struggle? All of his life Jacob had been trying to fulfil God's promise by his own scheming. His schemings had failed. Now he was wrestling between himself and his faith. He held on even though he was crippled. He said,

I will not let you go until you bless me.

That is the kind of faith that God wants in His people. He wants a people that will not let go of God even though the heavens fall.

Here is the issue in Isa. 54:5,6:

For thy Maker is thine husband; the Lord of hosts is his name; [the word "Maker" is synonymous with the word "Creator," so here is

Christ the Creator] and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall he be called. For the Lord hath called thee [the church] as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth, when thou wast refused, saith thy God.

Now look at verse seven,

For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee.

The issue in the great controversy is very simple. Satan will say to God, “Yes, these people are loyal to you because you have built a hedge around them. You are protecting them. Remove that hedge and give them into my hands and I will show you that they will turn their backs to you.”

God says, “O.K. I’ll forsake them. You can do anything you like. You can persecute them. You can starve them. You can harm them. You can do anything you like but you can’t kill them. That you can’t do.”

God will remove His protection from us and we will feel...He will not forsake us...but we will feel forsaken like Christ felt forsaken. The devil will play on our feelings. That's why we should never equate feelings with faith. He will say to us, "Do you know why God has forsaken you? Because you are lost." He will say to other Christians, "Do you know why you are not raptured? It is because you are lost." He will not say that to us because we do not believe in the secret rapture. He will say to us, "You are lost because you are a sinner." And you will feel a sinner. Even though you may not be sinning, you will feel a sinner. Your only hope is to have the faith of Jesus Christ.

Jesus was victorious by faith. Satan will get so mad when we refuse to let go of our hold on God he will pass a decree that we should be killed. That's when God will step in. God will say, "No, I did not give you that permission."

During that time we will be hiding in the caves and in the rocks from these worldly people, those

who have rejected God. Then we will hear and feel that earthquake and we will look up and see the sign of the Son of Man. Those people who came to kill us will take the vacant holes and the caves that we leave because they will not be able to bear the coming of the Saviour.

That is why the Sabbath is the crucial issue since it is the commandment which points to a people who are resting totally and completely and fully in their Creator and their Redeemer. That's why the Sabbath will become the seal of righteousness by faith. It is only as we look at the first four commandments in the context of faith that we can present the Sabbath in the light of the New Covenant. May God help us.

Now I've given you some heavy stuff to chew on. Can you see why it is an important study? And please remember that all through the book of Hebrews the message is, "Do not give up your confidence in God." And Jesus said in Matthew 10:

Only he who endures unto the end will be

saved.

Now it's okay to endure to the end today, but in the Time of Trouble you will have to have the faith of Jesus Christ to endure to the end, because God is going to allow that generation of Christians to go through a Time of Trouble that has never been experienced even by the martyrs of the second century or even by the martyrs of communism today. We will actually feel forsaken of God. And I thank God for this promise:

For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath, [please remember on the cross Jesus suffered the wrath of God] I hid my face from thee for a moment.

Now please don't ask me, "How long is a moment?" I don't know. You know, Jonah was in the belly in the whale three days and three nights. Read his book. He says, "I was in the belly of the whale forever." It looked to him as though it were eternity, and it may look to us as though it were

eternity. I don’t know.

In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment. But with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer. For this is as the waters of Noah unto me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth, so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. For the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee....

Folks, do you have a faith in God that He will never forsake you? That’s the question. And the Sabbath is a sign, because when we keep the Sabbath in the last days, it will be in deliberate violation to the commandment [of men].

Chapter 12

Christ, Our Great High Priest (Part 1)

Hebrews 4:14-5:10

Jesus Christ rested on the Sabbath when He finished His first phase of the plan of salvation. After the resurrection He went to heaven and was installed as our High Priest. His priestly work is not for the world but for the believers.

We will begin our study on the high priesthood of Christ at Heb. 4:14 and go through to chapter 8:6. And even beyond that Paul gives his attention to Christ as our High Priest. Why does Paul spend do much time on Christ as our High Priest? I want to remind you that Paul is writing to very discouraged Christians. They are Jewish Christians who are being persecuted and who are discouraged because the coming of Christ in their thinking was delayed. There were those who were being tempted

to give up their faith and go back to Judaism and so he is spending all this time because Christians need to know that they have a Mediator in heaven Who is on their side. Now I would like to give you three main reasons why a priest is important to us:

1. A priest is a mediator or a "go-between" for a holy God and sinful man. We need that go-between. Now Christians, even though they stand justified in Christ, are still sinners. We are still sinners and, because we are sinners, we need a Mediator. Here are some texts that point that out. In these chapters that we are studying you will notice that Paul is comparing Christ's priesthood to the Levitical priesthood and he says that Christ is superior. In verse six of chapter eight he says:

For now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the Mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises.

The Levitical priesthood could not really mediate because they were using the blood of bulls

and goats and lambs and that cannot remove sin. We have a better Mediator and better promises in Jesus Christ.

Turn to Romans chapter eight and you will notice that when Jesus went up to heaven after finishing a perfect work on this earth He did not go there on sustentation. He did not go to relax. He went there to work for His work was not finished. He had only finished His past phase, which was good, wonderful, perfect. Yet we need a priest to bring the restoration. In Rom. 8:34 we read:

Who is he that condemeth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, Who is even at the right hand of God, Who also maketh intercession for us.

We need an intercessor. And He is spoken of again in 1 John 2:1:

My little children, [I'm giving you the good news, not that you will condone sin, but if you fall, if you sin...] we have an Advocate with the Father,

Jesus Christ the righteous.

So number one, we need a priest because we are still sinners. We need a Mediator.

2. We need a priest because we are still living in Satan's territory. Satan gives the believers no peace. If he gives you peace, watch out; you're in trouble. It's because you're lukewarm and he's quite happy with your lifestyle. Christians are living in enemy territory. They are constantly coming under fire from Satan. It may be physical persecution or it may be mental or social. He will bombard you with all kinds of problems. We need a Mediator who will give us assurance in our struggles of life. Here is a text in Heb.10:19-22, talking to discouraged believers:

Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus.

One of the most powerful methods Satan has is to put Christians under guilt. He will convict you that you are not good enough to be saved. It

doesn’t matter how young you are or how old you are, he always enjoys putting us under guilt. Too often we fall for his suggestions. Now, he’s right. We are not good enough to be saved, but we are saved because God is love and we are saved by grace. So we can come boldly to God’s very presence in the holiest of all through the blood of Christ:

By a new and living way, which He has consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; And having an high priest over the house of God; Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

What does it mean to have our bodies washed with pure water and our conscience clean? You see, in Christ we have two wonderful standings with God:

A. In Christ, we stand perfect in character.
B. In Christ, we stand perfect in nature.

He has redeemed both by His doing and dying. He took to heaven a perfect redemption for us. So whether it is our nature that condemns us or whether our performance, we must remember that we have a Saviour and we can come boldly to Him. We need a Priest.

3. Life in this world is always a struggle. This struggle can take all forms. It can be economic problems. It can be spiritual. It can be physical or it can be social. Whatever they are, we need a priest Who understands our problems, Who sympathizes and can help. We human beings have a tendency to go to some other human being for sympathy. We go to our pastor or someone else whom we think we can trust for sympathy and help. I'll tell you, though, that human sources are not reliable. You never know when they will let you down. Christ will never let you down. He understands your problems. He can sympathize and, above all, He can help.

When people come to me for counselling, I try

to lead them to the wonderful Counsellor. By the way, He doesn't charge you fifty dollars an hour. He is a free Counsellor and a most wonderful Counsellor. You cannot find a better counsellor than Jesus Christ. In Heb. 2:17,18 we are told:

Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, [the word "behoved" means, "it was necessary in all things to be made like us." Why?] that he might be [two things—number 1] a "merciful" and [number 2] a "faithful" high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that He himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour [or help] them that are tempted.

He understands our struggles. He has gone through it and He came out victorious. Therefore, He is able to help us and look after us. Go now to Heb.4:15,16:

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.

Let us, therefore, [in view of this] come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

In chapter 4, verses 14, 15, and 16, Paul is introducing to us Christ our High Priest. We will spend the rest of this study only on those three verses because they are loaded. I want you to notice how he introduces Christ as our High Priest. He says in verse fourteen:

Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, [that means in the very presence of God] Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.

In other words Paul is saying, “Please don’t get discouraged. God has not forsaken you. Christ is not relaxing up there enjoying yoghurt ice-cream. He is up there interceding for us. We have a high priest who has gone into the very presence of God for us.” And that is why he says, “Don’t be discouraged.”

The book of Hebrews is full of warning and encouragement. What we get here is encouragement, “Please don’t give up your faith because we have a High Priest.” Now to verse fifteen in more detail:

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.

This passage has caused a lot of problems in the Christian church. There are two things here that we need to look at:

1. The word “infirmities.”
2. The fact that He was tempted in all points like we are.

These are two things that have caused a lot of discussion, debate, controversy—you name it. Let’s start with the word “infirmities.” What does that word mean? First, I want to read the statement that he makes at the end of verse fifteen: “Yet without sin.” A German scholar by the name of

Weiss makes a statement on this section, “The words ‘yet without sin,’ Heb. 4:15, mean that, in our Lord’s case, temptation never resulted in sin.” He never committed the act. He was tempted like us but He never gave in. The Good News Bible (Today’s English Version) puts it very clearly, He did not sin:

Our high priest is not one who cannot feel sympathy with our weaknesses. On the contrary, we have a High Priest Who was tempted in every way that we are, but did not sin. [TEV]

Now the reason that I’m bringing this up is because some people, including some in our church, will say that “without sin” (KJV) means He had no pull towards sin in His nature. It was like Adam before the fall; you know the controversy. But here is a Greek scholar who tells us that this phrase “without sin” means that even though Christ was tempted, He never sinned. “Temptation never resulted in sin.” In other words, Christ never gave in, not even by a thought. Now let’s go to the word, “infirmities.” Let me quote him (Weiss):

”The word infirmities is “astheneia” [that’s the Greek word]. It means moral weakness that makes man capable of sinning. In other words, the totally depraved nature [interpreting this expression, ‘He Himself also is compassed with infirmities,’ Hebrews 5:2].... The High Priest has infirmities, sinful tendencies lying around Him, i.e., He is completely encircled by sin since He took a sinful nature which, if unrepressed, will control His entire being.” [In other words, what Weiss is saying that Christ was tempted like us through the flesh, but Christ never gave in.]

This brings us to the next point: “tempted like as we are.” There is a problem here. Did Paul mean that Christ was tempted by every temptation with which we are tempted? The answer is “No.” Christ was never tempted to overindulge in television. It never existed in His day. Christ was not tempted with the specific temptations that comes to rich people because he belonged to a poor family. And so we can go on and on.

Then what does Paul mean when he says Christ was tempted in all points as we are? Please notice that the text does not say that He was tempted with every temptation as we are, but in all points like as we are. Notice the words “like as we are.” How are we tempted? Let the Bible answer that. Turn to James 1:13,14; here James describes how we are tempted:

Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God [don’t blame God for your temptations]. for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth He any man [so God never tempts you]. But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust....

What is lust? Is there a difference between lust and desire? Is it wrong to have desire? No. Do we have desires as human beings? Yes, God gave them to us. He gave us hunger desire, sex desire, all kinds of desires. When do these desires become wrong? When they are controlled by the flesh rather than by the will of God. Is that clear? When

a desire becomes dominated by self rather than by the Spirit of God, it becomes lust. So a lust is a perverted desire.

How do you know the difference? Well, that's why God gives us guidelines. He gives us guidelines through the Scripture, He gives us guidelines in the Spirit of Prophecy through which you can distinguish, but He also does it through the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

Our question now is, "What is temptation?" In our human body, we have drives. We call them sinful drives because we have a fallen nature. What James is saying is that every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lusts and enticed. When then does that temptation become sin? Verse 15 tells us:

Then when lust has conceived....

When does lust conceive? When you do the act or when the will says O.K.? When does a temptation become conceived? The desire for sin

comes from our members. The flesh can never do the act without the consent of the mind. Let us say I am walking down the street and I look at the bakery shop and I see some hot-cross buns and the devil tempts me through my lust. I don't have any money in my pocket so I enter with my brother. (I'm talking of an incident that took place when I was a kid.) I tell my brother, "You keep the fellow busy." I had coveted that food, and I told my brother to keep him busy. This was on Africa, a market in the street, and I planned to steal the pastry.

My mind had already decided to steal. We must remember that we human beings define sin as an act, but God doesn't do that. The moment my mind says "yes" to the desire, it has become sin. And this is what James is saying. Please notice, he differentiates conception from the act. Listen to his next statement in James 1:15:

Then when lust hath conceived it bringeth forth sin, and sin when it is finished, [i.e., the act] bringeth forth death.

Please notice, the moment you say “yes,” it becomes sin. For example, if I’m travelling on the highway, it’s a hot day, and I’m travelling from here to, let’s say, Seattle, and I stop at Yukema. And I’m thirsty, and I go to a 7-11 place, and I fill up with gas, and I want a drink, and I go to the fridge and there’s no pop at all. And I go to the man and he says, “I’m sorry, there’s no pop at all. All we have is beer.”

And the devil says, “Why don’t you take a can? Nobody’s here that knows you.”

And I look around, and say to myself, “Surely, nobody knows me here in Yukema.” And so I say, “Okay, I’ll have one.” And as I look around, I see brother _____’s car driving into the place, and I say to the vendor, “I’m in a hurry; forget it.”

I haven’t taken the can of beer. Have I sinned, by the way? In God’s eyes, yes. In the shopkeeper’s eyes, I have not stolen; I have not sinned. And, maybe in my own eyes, I have not

sinned. So please remember that temptation comes from within, and is then conceptualized by a decision of the will, and then comes the act and, of course, the act brings death.

Now turn to Romans 7, and there Paul explains the problem. Now Romans 7, and I'll go into detail when we come to Romans sometimes in the future. The issue that Romans 7 is discussing is not whether it's a believer or unbeliever. The issue of Romans 7 is, "Sinful nature and a holy law," and the two are incompatible. That's what Romans 7 is dealing with, especially verse 14 onwards. He makes a statement in verse 14:

For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin. [And then he goes on to describe our situation.] For that which I do I allow not, for what I would, that do I not. But that which I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good, but then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwells in me.

[And then in verse 18, he makes the statement:]

For I know that in me, that is, in my flesh [i.e., in my human nature] dwelleth no good thing. For to will is present with me but how to perform that which is good I find not.

In other words, we human beings have a nature that is pulling us towards sin. And then in verse 22, he calls it, “the law of sin.” Please remember, the word “law” here means a principle, just like we have the law of gravity. Now, if Brother _____ would jump up from the balcony, would he go up or would he go down? Well, he will go up for a few seconds, and then he would go down. Why? Gravity. If he does it at midnight, would it apply? Or two in the morning? 24 hours a day? Yes.

The word “law” means a constant, unending force. Our willpower is not a law. Why? Because it’s not constant, it fluctuates, it moves in different directions. So it is possible by your willpower to defy temptation, the force of sin. But when the willpower gets weak, what happens? The force of sin takes over, and what happens? You do even that which you don’t want to do. And what Paul is

saying,

We have a law in our members that is causing us to do this. O wretched man that I am!

Now here's the problem: did Christ have this force to struggle with?

The Son of Man has come not to do His own will, but the will of [Whom?]

What is He talking about? Was there a contradiction between His will and God's will as God? No. But as a man he struggled with this folks, he struggled. Now can you conquer the power of sin? No. Can God do it? Did He do it? In Whom? In Christ. But does Christ understand your struggles? Yes. Can He sympathize? Yes. Can He help you? Yes. Let me give you a text, Romans 13:14:

Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh.

But now we still haven't answered the question, "in all points." [Hebrews 4:15] What did Paul mean by "in all points"? As I already mentioned, he did not mean, "by every temptation." Temptation is always to sin. What is sin? The transgression of the law. Remember, we divided the law into two parts: the first four commandments are towards God. And remember, I explained to you that we keep the first four commandments by faith. Our faith turns towards God. Faith is turning your eyes to God.

Okay, what's the opposite of faith? No, not works. It's unbelief. Unbelief is a willful, deliberate, turning your back towards God. So by the way, is unbelief sin? Yes, it is a sin against God. When we commit the sin of unbelief we are breaking the first four commandments. Keep this in mind, because the issue in the last days over the Sabbath is if you are breaking the Sabbath you are not simply breaking a rule, it is the sin of unbelief. That will be the issue.

Okay, the other six commandments in our

relationship to man can be counted as a sin of.... well, Paul will reduce all the six commandments into one word. And the heart of every sin against our neighbour is what?

I had not known sin except the law says, “Thou shalt not covet” [Romans 7:7].

In other words, we can divide temptation into ten points, and we can reduce those ten points into two. The first four are the sin of unbelief; the other six are the six against our neighbour. Was Christ tempted in both these points, in both these areas? Yes. You remember on the cross, how did the devil tempt him three times? “Come down from the cross and save yourself.” What was the temptation there? Self-reliance. “Don’t depend on God.” Why? “Because He has forsaken you. You must depend on Yourself.” But remember what Christ prayed in Gesthemane, “Not My will, but Thy will....”

Please remember that when Paul says He was tempted in all points like as we are, He was

tempted to sin against God through the sin of unbelief, and He was tempted to sin against His neighbour, just like we are: the six commandments. Therefore, when Paul says that He was tempted in all points like as we are, he means in every point that you and I can be tempted in terms of the law, the ten commandments, which is the measuring stick of righteousness. There is not a single temptation that cannot be included in the area of the ten commandments. If you can sin a sin that is outside the ten commandments, then the ten commandments are not a perfect rule of faith. But remember what Paul says in Romans 3:20:

The law gives us the knowledge of sin.

The law can't save us, but it gives us the knowledge of sin. Does it give you a knowledge of 90% of sin, or 100%? 100%! There is no sin that you and I can commit that's outside of those ten points. And that's how Christ was tempted. He was tempted to break every one of those ten points, just like you are. The temptation itself may not be the same.

For example, if I am tempted to withhold my tithe, Malachi calls it a sin of stealing. “You have robbed Me.” But if you were given some money by someone to take to a friend and you are tempted to put it in your pocket instead, you are being tempted with a different temptation, but the issue is the same. So all temptations can be reduced to only ten points. The temptation itself may not be the same. But the issue is always the same. And so Christ was tempted in every point that you and I are tempted. The only difference is, we give in. Did Christ give in? No. If He gave in only once, do you know that He never could have been resurrected? So He was tempted in all points like as we are, but He never sinned.

But now, was the struggle that He went through the same as ours, or worse? Why was it worse? Please don’t say, “Because He was God,” because remember, He laid aside the prerogatives of using His Divinity. I’ll tell you why it was worse, because the Devil will tempt you until you give in. If you don’t give in, his temptations become

harder, and harder, and harder—is that clear?—until you fall.

Since Christ never sinned, He experienced the full force of every temptation. He experienced it. The worst temptation was on the cross, where the temptation was good-bye to life forever. No human being has ever been tempted and will ever be tempted in that direction. Even the ones who are lost will never be tempted because they will have no choice. You see, a temptation is only a temptation when you have a choice. At the end of the millennium they will have no choice. Am I correct? Probation had closed. But Christ had a choice on the cross.

And that's why we have a statement, I will not give you the reference, you look for it, find it in the New Testament where it says, "How many of you have resisted unto death?" Only Christ, folks. Christ resisted even unto the second death. He resisted temptation. But I thank God that, because He struggled, He can sympathize with this rascal; He can sympathize with me. So when I go to Him,

I don’t go to somebody who doesn’t know my struggles, but Somebody Who has gone through it, but still better, somebody Who has conquered, Somebody Who can give me peace, Who can give me mercy, forgiveness, plus He can give me grace. And that’s how it concludes. Please look now at verse 16 of Hebrews 4:

In view of this, [in view of two things: 1] we have a High Priest Who can be touched with the feelings of our infirmities... [and 2] ...but was in all points like us tempted, yet without sin. Let us, therefore, [in view of this] come boldly unto the throne of grace.

And when we come, He doesn’t say, “Why can’t you get the victory!?” He doesn’t say that. He says:

1. We will obtain mercy, because we unfortunately fall.
2. We find grace.

Now the word “grace” here is used in the sense

of power. Please turn to Philippians 4:13 and you will see what I mean by the “power of grace”:

I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

That is the grace that He can give you. Or turn to 2 Corinthians 12:7-10. Paul had a problem, he doesn’t tell us what the problem is. He prayed three times. The problem was allowed by God, it came from Satan, it was...

...a thorn in the flesh, it’s a messenger of Satan to buffet me [to keep him humble] lest I should be exalted above measure. [Now look at verse 8...] For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. [And listen to the answer...] And He [i.e., Christ] said, My grace is sufficient for thee, for My strength is made perfect in weakness [in infirmities]. Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my [What? I’m quite happy to be weak] that the power of Christ may rest on me. Therefore, I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in

distresses for Christ's sake, for when I am weak, then I am strong.

That's the kind of priest we have folks. Number 1: He is a priest Who has mercy on you. So when the devil comes to you and says, "You are no good," turn to him and say, "I have found mercy." You know Paul said, "I was a persecutor, but I found mercy."

But also, number 2: please remember that He is a God that doesn't only forgive you, but also gives you strength to overcome. So we have "such a high priest" that we can go boldly, not afraid, because He is a God Who understands, He sympathizes, and He helps. That's the kind of priest we have, and that's the kind of priest we need to know.

Chapter 13

Christ, Our Great High Priest (Part 2)

Hebrews 4:14-5:10

Beginning with Hebrews 4:15, Paul introduces us to Christ as our Great High Priest. Before that he introduced us to Christ as the Saviour. To know Christ as a Saviour is not enough. We also need to know Him as our High Priest because we are still living in a hostile world and to survive in this hostile world we Christians need a high priest for at least three reasons:

1. As long as we are sinners we need a mediator between us, who are sinners, and a Holy God. And that's in verse fourteen of chapter four which we covered. "Seeing then we have a High Priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession." We have a priest who is bridging the gap between

us and God.

2. In our walk as Christians, we need someone who can sympathize with us in our weaknesses and our struggles. Christ can do that, and that's in verse fifteen of chapter four, and we also covered this in our last study. "For we have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feelings of our infirmities but was in all points tempted like as we are." The only difference is that He overcame.

3. We need a high priest so that He can help us and give us strength as we walk the Christian life. In other words, unlike the earthly priests, Christ is able to fully supply all our needs. And that is what Paul goes into in chapter five verses one to ten. This is what I want to turn to.

In the first four verses of chapter five Paul gives us the four qualifications of a priest. This applies to any priest. There are four qualifications that a man must have in order to be a priest. Here they are. In verse one:

For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God.

Qualification #1: A priest has to be a man in order to represent man.

When my wife and I became [U.S.] citizens in l975, I think they have changed the law now but, at that time, they made it very clear to us that no naturalized American citizen could be the president of the United States. The reason is that an enemy of this country could become a citizen and work his way to be president and then use his position to overthrow the country. So a priest has to be somebody who belongs to the human race which needs a redeemer. Why is this so? Because a priest represents the people before God. Now please notice that there is a distinction between a priest and a prophet. A prophet is a person who represents God to the people. A priest is a person who represents the people to God, and he has to be one of them.

Now, the wonderful thing is that Christ was

both. When He came to this world, He came as a prophet. When He went back to heaven He did not go as a prophet. He went there as a priest. So Christ is both a prophet and a priest. So we have a Representative who is sitting at the very right hand of God. That is comforting for us.

The second qualification is the second half of verse one.

Qualification #2: A priest must offer sacrifices in order to deal with the sin problem.

Turn to Isa.59:1,2:

Behold the Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save nor is His ear heavy that He cannot hear but your iniquities have separated between you and your God and your sins have hid His face from you that He will not hear.

Remember, sin separates us from God. Without the shedding of blood, there can be no remission from sin (Heb. 9:22). Without the

remission of sin there will always be a barrier. So a priest must be able to bring sacrifices to God that will remove the barrier between sinful man and a holy God. Remember, the problem is not God. The problem is us. Sin separates us from God. Heb. 5:1 says that a priest "must offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins."

The third qualification for a priest is found in verse two.

Qualification #3: "Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way;" or "those who make mistakes."

He then must be a person who can have compassion on the ignorant (those who are weak) and on them that are out of the way or those who make mistakes. A priest must be able to have compassion on sinful, weak humans. The only way is that if he himself has had to put up with human weaknesses and frailties. That's why we need to remember that Christ must not be separated from us in our struggles. These He experienced as

a man. Look at Heb. 2:17,18:

Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest.

So He was made like one of us so that He could have compassion on us. There are Christians who have never had to struggle with drugs so they look at some of these Christians who are struggling and say, “I don’t know why you are struggling. I never had a problem.” I can tell you that if you were in their shoes you would have a problem. We thank God that Jesus Christ was a person like us and was tempted in all points like we are. He understands our struggles. We are not going to somebody who doesn’t understand. He has compassion. He understands our frailties and we thank God for that. I would like to remind you of the last part of the sixteenth verse of chapter four:

Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and might find help in time of need.

He does not only have compassion but He is able to help us.

Now we come to the fourth qualification. Number one, a priest has to be a man to represent men. Number two, a priest must be able to offer sacrifices for our sins and number three, a priest must be able to have compassion on sinful, weak human beings. The only way of course is that He has understood our problems because He became one of us. Number four is an important point which is found in verse four of chapter five:

And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.

Qualification #4: A priest must be appointed by God.

He cannot be self-appointed. He cannot campaign and say, “Please choose me.” He cannot do that. He has to be appointed by God. These are the four qualifications of a priest. These are

general qualifications for any priest.

Did Christ qualify in all these points? Yes. Is His qualification better than the earthly Levitical priests? Yes. As a man Christ was one of us. As God He was one with the Father. His humanity comes down to where we are. His divinity is where God is and He is the one that has bridged the gulf between earth and God. The earthly priests could not bridge the gap. That's why they had to offer sacrifices for themselves. But Christ is both God and man and He has bridged the gap between us and God. We thank God for such a priest. None of the earthly priests had this qualification.

In Heb.5:5 Paul expounds on qualification #4, a priest must be appointed by God. He says:

So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest [in other words, Christ did not choose Himself to be made a high priest]; but He that said unto him, Thou art my Son, today have I begotten thee.

Now the word “begotten” in English means “I have created” thee. That is not the Greek word. There are two words in the Greek. This first is “monoganes,” which means “somebody very special.” I have given him a very special assignment. The second is “monoganetos,” which means “I have begotten you” in the English sense. The word here is “monogenes,” which means, “I have set you aside, I have appointed you as something very special.” In verse six:

As he saith also in another place, thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchisedek.

This is a quotation from Ps. 110:4. It is God speaking to Christ and God is saying to His Son, “I have appointed you a priest forever.” Now the word “ever” needs to be explained because in English it means something that has no end. That’s not what this word means. It’s the same with “everlasting fire.” As long as we need a priest, He will be a priest. The word “ever” is as long as there is a need.

For example, let's take "everlasting fire." The fire burns as long as there is something to burn. When everything is burned then the fire goes out. Turn to Jude 7, this is a very good text to give those who believe in eternal torture:

Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.

Sodom and Gomorrah are not still burning today. In fact when they excavated the area they found ash twelve feet deep. The soil was burned right down for twelve feet. So it took a pretty hot fire to do that.

Heb. 5:6 says:

God made Him a priest for ever.

That means, "He will not cease being a priest until He has vindicated us and defended us and has

restored us back to the kingdom." When that is over, when we go to heaven we will not need a priest. In fact, when probation closes, we will not need a priest, because the verdict will have been passed. The word "forever" doesn't mean that He will be a priest eternally. When He comes the second time He will not come as a priest. What will He come as? King and Conqueror and Ruler.

Remember that as long as we are living in this sinful world, as long as we need a priest, we have a priest who will never come to an end. He will remain a priest until He has brought all enemies under His footstool. He has defended us. Verses seven and eight go to other qualifications:

Who in the days of His flesh [when He was on this earth, during His earthly ministry, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared....

When Christ was on this earth did He pray for strength, did He pray for God's power? Yes.

Sometimes all night long. So does He understand what it means to struggle with the flesh? Yes. Christ understood what it meant to wrestle with God all night long. So this verse seven is not only applying to Gethsemane. Of course the main event we have here is Gethsemane where He prayed and sweat great drops of blood. Now look in verses eight and nine:

Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which he suffered....

As a man He denied Himself. God did not say, "You are my Son. I will exempt you from the struggles of humanity." No. "I want you to be one of them. I want you to struggle with them. I want you to understand so that you will be a faithful and merciful High Priest."

There is one difference between Him and us. He never gave in. He was victorious at all times. He learned obedience by the things that He suffered. What did He suffer? In every believer there is a struggle. Here is a text that will help you

understand what the struggle is. There are many Christians who think that when you become a Christian the desire for sinning should go. If it doesn't go you begin to question whether or not you are converted. Turn to Ephesians chapter two, which describes a human being before conversion. He is telling those Ephesians what they were like before they were converted. In verse two, he's describing the worldly people the unbelievers, those who are disobedient. Then in Eph.2:3, he says:

Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past [we all belong to the human race; in other words, we were all rascals] in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind....

In an unconverted person there is harmony between the human nature and the mind. Now turn to Gal.5:16:

This I say then, walk in the Spirit and you shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh.

Now go to Rom. 7:25, the last phrase:

So then, with the mind, I, myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh, the law of sin.

When a person is converted, the only change that takes place in him is in the mind, never in the nature. The nature will remain one hundred percent sinful till your dying day. What has taken place is a change of mind. The mind was in harmony with the flesh before. Now it has made a complete turn around and is looking toward God. That's what the word "repent" means. The Greek word "metanoia" means a change of mind.

So now a Christian has a mind that wants to serve God and a flesh that wants to serve Satan. Can the converted mind conquer the flesh? No. It can defy it. That's why people with a strong will have more success in terms of willpower, like giving up smoking, and appear sometimes more successful. You have people in the world who give up smoking just by will power. It's possible to

defy sin with a strong will. It is very hard when you have strong-willed men all in one committee. Then you have headaches.

But the solution of the gospel is not the willpower. The willpower is only to put our mind on the side of God. The struggle is between the Spirit and the flesh. There you have victory. Rom. 8:2 says:

The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death.

There are two forces. Can the Spirit conquer the flesh? Yes or No? Can God's Spirit conquer our sinful flesh? Yes. But where is the battle? Does the Spirit of God deal directly with the flesh? No. The battle ground is the human mind. The flesh says to the mind, "I want to do this." The spirit says to the mind, "No." Which of the two is the mind going to listen to? That is why we must put our will on the side of God. It is the Spirit that says, "No." But when the Spirit says "no," it says "no" to the flesh. The flesh is deprived of what it

wanted. If the flesh is deprived of what it wants, it is the flesh that suffers.

This is what Paul is saying. He is saying that Christ has suffered for us in the flesh. When Christ was obedient, He was obedient against the will of our flesh, which He assumed. Look at 1 Peter 4:1:

Forasmuch, then, as Christ has suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourself likewise with the same mind [a mind that is totally God-dependent]: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin....

So there is no victory over sin in this world without suffering. Don't ask God, "Please change my nature so that I will not have to suffer when I overcome sin." That will take place at the Second Coming of Christ when this corruption puts on incorruption. So in heaven we will not suffer, living righteously.

[Question from church member: "Why does God sometimes give the victory over drugs or other

sins so that we don't have a desire for it where we had it before?"]

Please remember, you must not confuse sin with a habit. You see, I can develop a smoking habit, and it becomes a sin; but it is a cultivated sin. There are people who have given up smoking and lost the desire for smoking. But don't say that they have given up the desire for sinning. The sins comes in a different form. We have inherited sinful tendencies and we have cultivated tendencies.

Let me give you an example, I enjoyed smoking before I became an Adventist. Now even the smell of cigarette smoke turns me off. Have I become less of a sinner?

[Same church member: "To me, you would be less of a sinner if you don't like that particular sin."]

I'm not talking of desire here. Is my nature any better? Is my nature becoming better and better

through victory? By the way, what happens to me when I get the victory? Is there a change in my nature or is there a change only in my character?

[Same church member: “I think there’s a change in both.”]

Give me one text, regarding nature.

[Same church Member: “The reason why is because you have righteousness by faith and works, and they go hand in hand, and that’s the physical and the spiritual.”]

Yes, righteousness by faith produces works.

[Church Member: “It would seem to me that if you’re going to have a change in the physical you are going to have a change in the spiritual.”]

Let me put it this way, sin in Romans 7 is a law, and the Greek word here is the same word here that we would use for gravity. Gravity is a law. The word law means “a constant force.” Does

this force decrease in the Christian experience or does it always have to be subdued by the power of God? Does this force get less and less? If you say yes, then if that is eradicated you'll end up with holy flesh. And that's a heresy, Brother. Yes, this law never changes till you dying day.

[Same church Member: "I can see where you'd still have a desire to sin, but why can't you get the victory?"]

We're not talking of victory now. Victory over sin does not mean the desire is getting less. It means that God's power is controlling you more. The pull is always there. The moment you relax, it'll get you. Am I correct? Paul says in Romans 8, "We are groaning, waiting for the redemption of the body." And I think that Paul had tremendous victories in his life. Or in Phil.3:20, he says, "We are looking forward to the coming of Christ, when He will change our vile body."

Let me put it another way. A Christian who wants victory over sin is always groaning over his

sinful nature. A Christian that is immature in his thinking is always looking to heaven in terms of golden streets, and walking riding a sabre-toothed tiger, living in mansions. Paul doesn't dwell on that. He says, "I'm looking forward to the coming of Christ because I want redemption from this body." Paul's concern is living a life that is fully glorifying God.

God gives you the victory by subduing the flesh not by changing the flesh. Here are the words of Jesus Christ to Nicodemus, because Nicodemus was trying to change his flesh. John 3:6:

That which is born of the flesh is always flesh.

You can't change it. But the more you behold Christ, the more you desire in the mind, not in the flesh, to serve Him and to live for Him. The sinful nature is unchangeable until the coming of Christ. Gal. 5:24:

They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

God’s answer to the flesh is the cross. Rom.13:14:

Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.

There is no change in the flesh but Christ can subdue the flesh.

Turn to Hebrews chapter two. I want to give you several texts that show that Christ became perfect through suffering. Heb.2:10:

For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.

There will always be suffering as long as we have this sinful flesh. Hebrews 2:18 also says:

For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted [He suffered because He said no], he is

able to succour them that are tempted.

In Heb. 5:8:

Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered.

Christ suffered all through His life. He put Himself in our shoes.

Now look at verses nine and ten:

And being made perfect, He became the author [the source] of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him; Called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedek.

What Paul is saying here is that the only priest that was made perfect was Christ. By His doing and by His dying Christ is the only Man that is qualified to be the source of full salvation. No priest in the earthly sanctuary was successful. Christ was.

And this is the difference between the order of Melchisedek and the Levitical priesthood. The first is perfect. Christ was perfect and, therefore, everlasting. The second was imperfect and temporal. That's the difference between Christ as a priest and the Levitical priesthood. Some of you try to get hold of me but you can't find me at the office and you can't find me at home and you say, "Where is he?" That is not true with Christ. He is available twenty-four hours a day for as long as the Christian needs a priest. Until probation closes. Then when He stands up and removes His priestly robes it is because His work as a priest is finished. So we have a perfect Priest and an everlasting Priest.

Why are we worried? Why are we discouraged when we have such a priest? Let's go to Him boldly. Let us remember that He is at the right hand of God representing us. We can face the hardships of life. We can face the struggles of life. He is a priest who can have compassion and, of course, He is able to help those that are weak and,

when we make mistakes, He is there to forgive us and to lift us up and say, “Come on. let’s go on. There is a battle to be won.” That’s the kind of priest we have. I thank God for such a priest!

So Christ is our Saviour and He is also our Priest. There are two phases of His saving activity. He saved us and He did not go to heaven until His work was finished. Now He has begun His heavenly ministry and He will not stop until it is finished. And the finished work of Christ as a Priest and as a Saviour is signified by the Sabbath. The Sabbath points to a perfect and finished work. So when we keep the Sabbath we are resting in a perfect Saviour and a perfect High Priest. That’s the kind of God we have. Thank God that we can face life in its hardships and problems like no other person can because the Christian has a hope which can give him peace such as the world can never give him. Never forget that we have a Priest!

Christ suffered until the very end, and we will have to suffer. By the way, will we suffer in the flesh after probation closes? Will we be agonizing?

Yes. Will we feel sinful? I'm not saying we will be committing sins, but will we feel sinful? Why? Because our nature is still 100% sinful. And that is why we should never get the idea we will not need a Saviour after probation. We will not need an Advocate, we will not need a Priest because the verdict has made. But we will always need a Saviour until the coming of Christ. When He has put all enemies under His footstool we will become one with Him and share His throne. And we'll have no more problems with the Devil.

Hebrews 2:9 states that Christ tasted death by the grace of God. Did Christ conquer the cross by Himself? No. Even though the Father had forsaken Him in terms of His feelings, it is by the grace of God that He tasted death for every man. Christ as a man could not do it by Himself; it took the grace of God. And so it's by the grace of God that we will endure the Time of Trouble. Don't think that you can ever do it by yourself.

Christ felt forsaken, but that feeling was real. He was not acting like some Hollywood star, when

He cried, “Father, Father why hast Thou forsaken me?” He actually felt God abandonment.

[Member of Congregation: “My father was a very heavy smoker for many years, and when he accepted Christ he gave it up. Many times I’ve heard him say how much his body suffered after that with the desire to smoke. Only the power of God kept him.”]

We will suffer with any temptation. The moment the Spirit says no to a temptation we are suffering, because you are depriving the flesh of what it wants. When we were in the mission field and our children were still small, we had a rule at home that we would not eat between meals. There were some things that we take for granted in America that were a luxury there. For instance, bubblegum. I was watching a group of missionary kids once, and one of them had received a single packet of gum. And so she wanted to share it with her friends, she chewed it for five minutes and then her friend chewed it for five minutes, and they shared it around. Awful. But one day we were in

Ethiopia, and one of the missionary kids got a package for Christmas which included some bubblegum and she gave a piece to my daughter. It was 11 o'clock in the morning, and my girl wanted to put it into her mouth. And she said, "Daddy, can I do it?"

And I said, "Jenny, you know the rule." She wanted me to say yes so that she would pass the guilt from her to me. This is a common thing with adults. They'll come to a Pastor and ask if it okay to do certain things. "What do you think about this?" And they want you to say, "It's okay. I don't see anything wrong with that." Then they'll go and do it and say, "But my Pastor said it's okay." It's a common problem. And I have a very typical answer. The church is the body of Christ. Who is the head? Christ, never the pastor. There's only one head. And so I say, "Why don't you ask the Head. Because I may be the toe. You're asking the wrong person, the part of the body."

When your flesh want's to sin, who does it ask? For example, if my stomach wants to drink a glass

of wine does it say to the hands, “Please take that glass and put it in my mouth”? No. Who does the stomach ask? The mind. The mind has to say yes. Then the mind says to the hand, “Open the bottle and take a swig.” The head of the church is Jesus Christ. Please don’t come to your pastor and ask if it is okay. Because he’s not the head. There’s only one head in the church, Jesus Christ. And so I simply say, “You ask the Boss.”

And so when I answered my daughter, “You know the rules.”

She replied, “Only one time, this once only.”

I said, “If you want to break the rules that’s your problem. But don’t ask me to change the rule.”

And she responded, she was a very little girl, “Oh, bad Daddy!”

Why? Because she was suffering, she was deprived of what the flesh wanted. And every time

your flesh is deprived, it suffers. But, please remember, Christ is glorified. And that is why the disciple said that they were willing to suffer with Christ that Christ may be glorified. And you can only do that when you have the assurance of salvation and you know that you are a child of God and you're no longer worried, "Will I make it to heaven?" That is something that no longer should bother us. Our concern is, "For me to live is Christ." And if I have to die it is profit Why? Because there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ. Well may God bless us. Let us pray:

Loving Father, we thank you. We thank you for Jesus Christ. We thank you that He was willing to suffer that we might be saved, He was willing to suffer to the very end, even willing to suffer the terrible agony of the second death. And being made perfect through His suffering, we thank you for such a High Priest, Who is able to sympathize, to understand, and Who is able to give us the power and victory over the flesh as He gave victory when He was on this earth. May we be willing to suffer with Him so that He may be glorified and

the world may catch a glimpse of Him once again through the church. This is our prayer in His precious name. Amen.

Chapter 14

The Cost of Abandoning Christ (Part 1)

Hebrews 5:11-6:12

Hebrews 5:11 to 6:12 is dealing with the cost of abandoning Christ. It is a very serious problem and a very important truth that is dealt with in this section. The book of Hebrews alternates between encouragement and warning. The last unit we covered was encouragement. We saw a High Priest who understands our feelings, who sympathizes with us. Now we are turning to a section that deals with warning.

Paul has just told us in Heb. 5:10 that Jesus Christ, after being made perfect through His life and death and thus becoming the Author of eternal salvation through His earthly ministry, God called Him to heaven and appointed Him as our High Priest after the order of Melchizedek. Then

immediately Paul digresses to warning. He says in Heb.5:11,12:

Of whom [concerning Christ as the Melchizedek High Priest] we have many things to say. For when ye ought to be teachers, you have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat [i.e., strong food].

He is using the illustration of a baby. You know we have some wonderful babies in our church and they are very cute and they are wonderful but if they remain babies for five more years and you feed them with milk alone what happens? What happens if the growth of a baby is arrested? Are the parents happy? No.

And herein is what he is concerned about. He has hit on one of the main reasons why people leave Christ. The main reason is that there is no spiritual growth. The fact that you have been a Christian for twenty years does not mean that you

have grown. Spiritual growth has nothing to do with time.

May I remind you, folks, that the main reason Paul writes the book of Hebrews was not to present a theological dissertation. The purpose the book of Hebrews was written was because the Jewish Christians were losing their faith. They were becoming discouraged. They were giving up Christ and returning to Judaism. They were giving up their faith in Christ. Paul is saying the main reason why you are weak is because you have not grown spiritually.

I want to show you another passage that is dealing with the same thing. This is as different church, a Gentile church, and that is the church in Corinth. Turn to 1 Corinthians 3. You will notice that both passages, Hebrews 5:11 onwards and 1 Cor. 3 are dealing with the same issue, and that Paul divides Christians into two categories. Look at 1 Cor.1:1-3:

And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as

unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ.

So he divides Christians into two categories — babes in Christ and spiritual Christians. He identifies babes in Christ as carnal. Now the word carnal is fleshy. It means that these Christians are dominated by their sinful nature. Look at verse two:

I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: [he is referring now to the time when he first came to Corinth and converted them] for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, [not able to take solid food] neither yet now are ye able.

Notice that the letter to the Corinthians was written approximately twenty years after the Corinthian Church was established. He is saying, "When I first came to you I could not give you heavy meat. I had to give you milk. Now twenty years later you are still not able to take heavy meat, 'neither yet now are ye able.'" Verse three gives us the identification marks of carnal Christianity:

For you are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?

What did he mean by that? He said, “Your behaviour is no different from worldly people. One cannot tell the difference.”

This is exactly what we are facing today. There is not enough spiritual growth. Now who do we blame? I suppose that the people in Paul’s day could say, “Well, we have no Bible so we cannot study. So the fault is with the pastors. They don’t feed us.”

But if anyone has no Bible in America he has no excuse. All you have to do is come to my office and I will give you a Bible. We have piles of them there. There is no excuse today for giving that excuse.

Now there is also a blame on us pastors. There needs to be more feeding. When I was holding a

seminar in _____, the [Adventist General Conference] man who was in charge of the "Tape of the Month," from the Ministerial Department, asked me to come and speak for the weekend at his church. Then he called me aside while I was staying at his home.

He said "Jack, we have a problem. I'm desperately hunting for tapes which are Biblical preaching. We have a drought, I've tried everywhere. The trouble is I cannot use non-Adventist preachers."

I said, "Why?"

He said, "Because I get tremendous reaction from the tape subscribers." (He had five hundred on the list.) "Please tell our pastors to preach the Word of God that we may have tapes to send around. We're desperate!"

So there is a problem. We need to go back to Biblical preaching, no more philosophy, no more stories. We need to feed on the Word of God.

There is a drought. This is not something that is in our denomination only. This is a cry from all denominations. Not too long ago I attended a seminar. It was a nondenominational seminar held by two very famous Biblical preachers in this country. They are both non-Adventist preachers. One is an Old Testament scholar by the name of Kaiser from Wheaton College. The other is from California, Ray Stedman. Both said that the Christian Church in America is going down the drain and one of the primary reasons is that there is not enough Biblical preaching in the churches. They pleaded, “Please pastors, go to the Word of God and preach it.”

But folks, when you get to the judgment-seat, you cannot blame God and say, “God, the pastor didn’t feed us.” Yes, God may rebuke the pastor for not doing his job but you can’t use that excuse because in this country you have learned how to read and write and the Bible is freely available. It is not enough simply to hear the Word from the pulpit. You need to study.

I have held four or five seminars in Los Angeles [California, U.S.A.]. There is a man there who is an elder of the church who has come to all the meetings and really rejoices in the gospel. He phoned me last night. They are having a huge seminar in Cedar Falls, Southern California. They have asked him to give two studies. He said, “I’m struggling.” He asked me a whole list of questions. He spent an hour; I don’t know what his phone bill will be like.

“I gave you all of this already,” I told him.

And he said, “Yes, but I did not study it for myself. I got it here [heart] and I’m rejoicing in it here, but to bring it out of here, I cannot do it.”

I said, “That is why God has opened the door for you to witness.”

And he said, “I’ve never studied so hard!”

So please do not just listen to the Word. Study it and witness it. Let’s go back to Hebrews chapter

five and see what Paul is saying here. He is saying, “There has been no spiritual growth, therefore I can’t even give you this heavy meat.” Have you ever tried giving Loma Linda Fried Chicken to a baby? When we went to the mission field we took a case of that fried chicken. You can’t get that plastic food there and so we took a supply. Our little girl chewed and chewed and chewed and couldn’t swallow it. She said, “This is like bubble gum except there’s no bubble in it.” So she had to spit it out, and the dog enjoyed what she spat out. She could not swallow it. It was too fibery.

The Africans have a wonderful system. They teach their kids to eat heavy food quite early and they tap them on their stomach to find out whether they are full. It’s a wonderful way of finding out whether they are full or not. If you do that year after year after year, the parents get tired.

We have a friend who has a foster-son who is nineteen years old. When he was a baby his real parents abused him and he is brain-damaged. So mentally he is like a three or four year old child.

He plays with cars, etc. It is not his fault but the thing is that it takes dedication and Paul is saying look, “How long are you going to remain babies?” Look at verse thirteen of Hebrews five:

For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat [food] belongeth to them that are of full age, [the Greek word means those who have reached maturity] even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

One of the problems of babies in Christ is that they are not able to discern truth from error. Every new idea that comes on the market they fall for it. Today we have a lot of independent ministries. Some of them are good and some of them are not good. We have all kinds of teaching and some people just fall for everything. You need to be able to discern truth from error and this is the only way for you to be mature Christians. Now look at chapter six verse one:

Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection [maturity], not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God....

How would you like to lay the foundation and then one week later say, “O.K. I have changed my plans.” So you break the foundation and lay another foundation and a week later say, “No I think I will make another design,” and you break it again. All you are doing is laying foundations.

When we were in Michigan they had an expression. They called it “basement dwellers.” People build a basement and then they stop there. They live in it like under-ground creatures. The house is never built. What Paul is saying here is that the foundation must be laid. What is the foundation? Repentance, which is conversion from dead works, from legalism (that is, dead works that produce no salvation or fruits), and of faith toward God. When you first come to Christ you turn from yourself to Jesus Christ. That’s the foundation. Continuing with Heb.6:2:

Of the doctrine of baptisms, [baptism is the beginning of the Christian experience] and of laying on of hands, [which was done in New Testament times for receiving the Holy Spirit] and of resurrection of the dead, [talking about the second coming of Christ] and of eternal judgment.

In other words, we must not keep on harping over and over and over again the same thoughts. He is not saying that we must put it away. We must build our knowledge into a clearer understanding of the gospel and the purpose of God. Heb.6:3:

And this will we do [referring to the Apostles], if God permits.

In other words, "I'm going to try and build you up, if God allows me. I'm going to continue my ministry with you."

Now we come to the most difficult section of Hebrews, verses four to six. What happens if there

is no spiritual growth? The danger is of losing your faith. We must make a distinction between a backslider and an apostate. A backslider is one who has stopped coming to church, who maybe doesn't pray any more, who has become what we might call a "non-attending believer," but he still believes in Christ. He still believes the doctrines of the church.

An apostate is a person who deliberately, wilfully rejects Christ as his Saviour. Now backsliding may be the stepping stone. I'm not encouraging backsliding, I'm simply saying that we must make a distinction because this passage is not dealing with backsliders. It is dealing with apostates, those who knew the gospel, who understood the truth and who were born again Christians but have deliberately, wilfully said "goodbye" to Christ. They want nothing to do with Christ.

This statement has brought tremendous controversy in the Christian Church, especially among the Calvinists because it is against their

doctrine of once saved always saved, which is based on predestination. Heb.6:4-6:

For it is impossible [That's exactly what the Greek says. There is no misinterpretation of the word.] for those who were once enlightened [That means, they had understood clearly the gospel of Jesus Christ], and have tasted of the heavenly gift [They were rejoicing in Christ. They had accepted the truth and were looking forward to the blessed hope], and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost [They were not simply influenced by the Holy Ghost but they had experienced the new birth, they had become partakers of the divine nature], and have tasted the good word of God [They were rejoicing in the Bible], and the powers of the world to come [i.e., the blessed hope of the second coming of Christ], if they shall fall away [Now the word "if" does not appear in the original text. What the word should be is "when" they shall fall away], to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.

What Paul is saying here is, “If you have truly understood the gospel and you have really understood and accepted the truth as it is in Christ, and you have been born again and you deliberately reject Jesus Christ (not backslidden), but you reject Him, you want nothing to do with Christ, it is impossible to be restored.” Not that God won’t accept you back. That is not the problem. The problem is that you are now doing something deliberately which before you did ignorantly. Now what are you doing deliberately? Look at the middle statement of verse six:

Seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh.

What does the word “afresh” mean? It means “again.”

Have we crucified Christ? You say, “I was not there.” Let me explain. That which crucified Christ was sinful, human nature. You see, the problem of our nature is that it is egocentric. We want to live for self. Now you cannot live for self

unless you push away anything that comes in your way. How far does the flesh want to rise? To what level will we rise in order to be happy?

Let me give you my experience. When I first graduated as an architect, I had to do one year of internship. In other words, I had to work under an architect for a year. During that year I began with a very low salary. I think it was $300 a month. We were in a six-floor building. Right down at the very bottom, at the entrance of this building, there was a leper. He was always there in rags. It was in Nairobi, Kenya, and if you think that Africa is hot, let me tell you that at six thousand feet above sea level it can get pretty cold. Addis Ababa was nine thousand feet and was awfully cold sometimes. Nairobi was six thousand feet and it could get cold.

I would give this leper on pay days sometimes ten cents and I said to myself, “When I get rich, I am going to buy this man a suit.” He was in rags. Now I was getting three hundred dollars a month and to me “rich” was five hundred dollars. Three months later my salary was raised up to five

hundred. Did I buy him a suit? No. I still had the desire but my definition of richness became seven hundred. So it went on and on and on.

Two years and I ended up with three thousand a month and I was still looking at this man and I kept saying, “When I get rich.” How rich is rich? When will human beings be satisfied? If God allowed us to have full sway, do you know how far we would go? We would go as far as Lucifer wanted to go: to take the place of God. The only way Lucifer could take the place of Christ who sat at the right hand of God was to get rid of Christ. How do I know that he wanted to get rid of Christ? Jesus said so in John 8:44. He told the Jews:

You are of your father the devil. He was a murderer from the beginning.

Who did he murder in the beginning? Nobody, as far as the act is concerned; but he wanted to get rid of Christ in order to take His place.

In Africa, we have a very strange system of

taxis. Here, when you pay for a taxi, you alone ride in that taxi, but in Africa it isn't so. They stop for every person who wants a ride. They can put in a small car eleven, twelve, twenty people. They have three layers. One is on the seat. The second row sits on the top of the first layer and the third row sits hunch backed. They have a word in Swahili which means move, "Songa." You may be packed in the taxi like a can of sardines and the driver stops for an additional passenger and yells, "Songa!" One day a car had an accident and they found eleven people in one small car, besides twenty-two chickens and some goats. One chicken went under the pedal and the driver couldn't put the breaks on because the chicken was there.

Satan knew that he could not say to Christ, "Move! I want to sit next to you." The only way that he could take the throne of Christ was by getting rid of Him.

At the cross, Jesus said something to the people who arrested Him. He said, "When I was with you in the temple nobody could touch me because my

hour had not yet come. But this is your hour and the prince of darkness." What did Jesus mean by that? God said, "I'm going to remove my protection from my Son and let sin have its full dominion, let the flesh have its full dominion." And what did the flesh do with Christ? It crucified Him. Pilate gave the Jews two choices: Barabbas, who was a criminal, and Jesus, in whom he found no fault. And what did the people chose? Barabbas! Why? "Because he was one of us. He may be bad but he is still one of us. This Man, let's kill Him."

What God revealed on the cross was that sinful flesh if given the chance will end up putting Christ on the cross. This means that all of us, without exception — all of us, including myself — have a nature, if allowed to control ourselves, will end up crucifying Christ. God is going to prove this at the end of the millennium. When the New Jerusalem comes down, what will the people under Satan do? Will they say, "You are so lucky; I wish we were there"? No, they will not say that. They will attack the city. They are revealing their true nature.

That's why God cannot take them to heaven. Because they are murderers in their hearts.

God will ignore this fact in terms of your ignorance. He will wink at our ignorance. But after you have discovered this truth and you have surrendered your flesh to the cross (that's where it belongs) and you have become a Christian and realize that it was our sins that put Him there, then if you turn your back you are saying deliberately, "Let us crucify Him!" It is no longer out of ignorance. How can we do that and then return back? Paul says, "You have reached the point of no return." That is why we need to establish our people in the gospel. The clearer they understand the gospel, the harder it is for them to say "goodbye." It is not easy to say, "I deliberately crucify Christ." It is not easy.

This is why we need to grow in maturity so that it becomes harder and harder to reject Christ. We Christians are in a danger here. The problem is not that we are lost. The problem with us Christians is that we are very easily swayed away from Christ.

And if you visit the backsliders you will discover that most of them have left the church for flimsy reasons. They were hurt by somebody. Nobody talked to them in the church. Are you going to give these excuses in the judgment? “Nobody talked to me in church so I gave up.” We must be clear, because Paul says that it is impossible for us to repent if we have crucified Christ deliberately. We are doing it deliberately, not out of ignorance.

Let me conclude now, because we’ll continue with this next study. When the Jews crucified Christ, God was willing to forgive them. They had not reached the point of no return. But when Christ rose from the dead and the soldiers came to give their report, “This man that you crucified must be the Son of God for He rose from the dead,” then they had no more excuse. They realized they had deliberately, wilfully crucified Him. They had discovered that they had crucified the Son of God for, when you look at Acts two, the first sermon preached by the Christian Church by Peter, do you remember what he said? After convincing them that Jesus was the Messiah he said in Acts 2:36:

Therefore let all the house of Israel [that is, the Jewish nation] know assuredly, that God hath made this same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ [anointed one]. Now when they heard this they were pricked in their hearts and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?

In other words, “Have we reached the point of no return?” And Peter said, “No, if you accept Christ now, heaven is yours.”

But what did Caiaphas do? He bribed the soldiers. In other words, Caiaphas had two choices. One of them was to admit that he was responsible for crucifying the Messiah. The other was to deny, and to cover up what he had done, and bribe the soldiers and Pilate. What did he do? He did the latter. He reached the point of no return. Remember what Jesus said, “I leave your house desolate.” And the final evidence of their rejection of the Christ was when they stoned Stephen to death. Now I’m talking of the Jews as a nation.

Remember that there were individuals in that group, like Saul, who had not yet been fully convinced. When he was convinced on the Damascus road, he turned around.

Paul is talking here about people who deliberately, wilfully say, “We want Him crucified.” In other words, there are only two things that you can do with Christ. That’s exactly what will happen at the end of time, only two things. We can either be crucified with Christ or we can crucify Him. There will be no middle ground. Gal. 5:24:

All who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

Also Gal.2:20:

I am crucified with Christ.

That’s one alternative. The other one is to say with the world, “Crucify Him.” There will be only two groups. The question is to which group will

you belong? That is why we need to grow in maturity because the weaker you are as a Christian and the longer you remain immature, the easier it is for the devil to pull you out; and you become an enemy of God.

I tell you, the greatest enemies of God's church in the last days will be people who have deliberately, wilfully turned their backs to Christ. And the reason they have turned their backs is that they have not taken the time to grow spiritually. So I plead with you to spend some time with the Word of God. I know that we are living in a country where life is hectic. It is so easy to get bogged down with many things, but always remember that if you do not grow spiritually, you are on dangerous ground. This is what Paul is warning about:

1. I can't feed you.

2. You are on dangerous ground.

3. When you turn your backs to Christ, and

give Him up completely, you have reached the point of no return.

May God bless us that we understand and heed this warning. Okay are there any questions in the few remaining moments.

[Question: “What should we study?”]

I can only give you my experience. I would suggest that you take a book of the Bible. You know, I’m really glad that during our Sabbath School lessons we are going through books of the Bible. Do not confuse studying the Bible with reading the Bible. There are some people who have read the Bible through and through a dozen times and have not studied. Let me put it in simple language, the Bible is hidden treasure. And for anyone to discover hidden treasure you have to do some digging.

We must not get the impression that you cannot study the Bible unless you have theological training. That’s a fallacy. In fact, the more

education that you have in theology, the harder it becomes. I'll tell you why: because you tend to depend on your intellect rather than the Spirit. That's the danger. So you have an advantage, laypeople. You don't need to know Greek and Hebrew. There are many tools that you can use that are available today.

But don't take a book and skim through it. Take every verse and analyze the verbs, look at the grammar, look at the sentences. Study it with all your heart! And if you do not understand a verse, please don't say, "Well, I'll skip this and go to the next passage." Don't skip any passage; wrestle with it.

I'll tell you, I wrestled for five long years with Romans 6:14. Not that I didn't study anything else. But I stopped there, I would not go further. I said, "God, give me an understanding of Romans 6:14." Every commentary I read, hours and hours, did not satisfy me. Now I can see some of you looking up the text:

Sin shall not have dominion over you because you are no longer under law but under grace.

What did Paul mean? Does it mean that a Christian doesn't sin? Well one commentary said that before you could sin often, but now as a Christian you sinned occasionally. No way! You sin once, and at that point sin has dominion over you. What did Paul mean? And I wrestled with that. And I'll tell you what you may want to do. Take a passage. Take a verse. Read it. Study it.

You know, we spend a lot of time in this country driving. When I was in Idaho one church was 25 miles away. Most of my members, about 60 of them, lived another 25 miles beyond that, in Boise. So I would spend two hours travelling just visiting one family. I wrestled with texts during that time. Or when I'm having a shower, I do the same.

Do not be satisfied until God gives you understanding. Even if you eat the wrong food, there is hope of some growth. But if you eat

nothing, you'll stop growing. Am I correct? So at least eat. Then I would suggest that you read as many books as you can that will feed you spiritually. The Spirit of Prophecy [by Ellen G. White] is excellent material to read. But even that can be heavy. You have to read her slowly, and take every sentence and understand it. So this is what I would suggest in answering your question. But please don't go to your Sabbath School lesson and read the text and remarks, have a prayer and close it. That's not enough, you need to go deeper than that.

Chapter 15

The Cost of Abandoning Christ (Part 2)

Hebrews 5:11-6:12

Let us review three things about a baby in Christ:

1. In Heb. 5:11 he tells us that immature Christians or baby Christians are incapable of understanding the deep things of God. That is why we need to spend time with God and that is why we need to grow. Babies feed on milk. They can't take solid food, Paul says, and spirituality it is the same thing.

2. In verse twelve he tells us that spiritual growth is not spontaneous. You can't say, "Look I'm a Christian. It's only a question of time, I will grow." That is not true. There has to be nurturing. There has to be feeding. There has to be time spent

on your spiritual walk for you to grow.

He is rebuking the Jewish Christians. He says, “You ought to be teachers. You should have grown and become teachers but instead you still need to be taught. In the last part of verse twelve he says, “And are become such as are in need of milk instead of strong meat.”

3. The third thing that he points out, and that is the main part, is that it can be extremely dangerous and very costly for you to be a babe in Christ. That does not mean that a babe in Christ is lost. It simply means that you are on dangerous ground. The exodus illustrates this point. The world is the devil’s territory, represented by Egypt. A Christian is a person who has left the devil’s territory and is on his way to Canaan. The moment you are in Canaan the devil cannot destroy you. I’m talking of eternal destruction. He can’t destroy you because now you are in Christ.

The thing is that he can shout over the Red Sea and say, “Why don’t you come back? There is lots

of fun here." If you keep on living around the shore of the Red Sea, you keep on hearing him and sooner or later you will get tired of this life of manna for breakfast and manna for lunch and manna for supper seven days a week and you will cross back over the Red Sea. That's the danger that Paul is talking about. But the further you go away from Satan's territory as you grow as a Christian, Egypt becomes less and less attractive.

Now the Jews, even though they were going physically towards Canaan, their hearts were in Egypt. So they could hear the voice of the Devil, not audibly, but they could feel the pull through the flesh and they were longing to go back to Egypt. That's the danger. As long as you are across the Red Sea, no matter how weak a Christian you are, salvation is yours, but as soon as you cross back to the devil's territory you are out of Christ. That is the danger that Paul is presenting.

Let us go now to Heb. 6:7-12. He has told us that if you cross back deliberately, wilfully, you are crucifying Christ afresh. Remember that before,

you crucified Him out of ignorance but now you are doing it deliberately. May I make it clear that in the end of time there are only two things that you can do with Christ. You can either crucify Him or you can be crucified with Him. Those are the only two choices the human race will be given.

Now we must look at this very difficult statement that once you have gone back it is impossible for those who have been enlightened, who have known the truth, for them to return back to Christ. Let's go to verse seven now and see what Paul is saying here concerning this aspect:

For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God....

He is using the early and the latter rain as an illustration. When spring arrives and the rain comes most people plant a garden. All the rain that may come from God is not enough. What happens if you neglect your garden? You get weeds. Look

at verse eight:

[If you neglect your Christian walk...] But that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned.

What do you do with weeds? You can't eat them. You burn them up. If you nurture your Christian experience, if you allow your yourselves to grow up in Christ then the end result is the same as when you have a garden. What happens at harvest time? You get lots of produce and you enjoy that. But if you neglect your garden you end up with weeds and you have to end up burning them. Paul is saying that the person who nurtures his Christian experience will end up with a blessing. Those who do not nurture their Christian experience will end up being rejected. Go to verses 9-12:

But, beloved we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak. For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which you

have shewed toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister. And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end: That you be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

Now what is Paul talking about here? As I mentioned earlier, this is a passage that has caused great difficulty in the Christian Church. A great section of the Christian Church is composed of what we call Calvinists. The Calvinists believe that a person is saved or lost on the basis of God's election. God has chosen some people to be saved and because He's sovereign, because He's boss, if He has chosen you to be saved, you will be saved. You can never be lost. And it is from this concept that we have the doctrine of "once saved, always saved."

Now what do they do with this passage that says that it is possible for a Christian to lose his salvation? They say, "Well, this is not true. These

people were not truly converted in the first place. If they had been converted God has elected them to be saved and, therefore, they could never be lost."

All through the book of Hebrews Paul is warning. Remember the book of Hebrews alternates between encouragement to press on and warning if you give up your faith. And I want to remind you that even though the righteousness that saves you can never be destroyed, remember that your faith is destructible. If you have had a good Christian experience, you can't depend on your past experience. Christian living is a constant battle. The moment you relax you are on dangerous ground.

In other words, there are two great powers in this world. There is God, Who is the Creator and Saviour of mankind and there is the Devil, who is the prince of the world. They both want you. The Devil wants you because he wants your company in the fire and God wants you because He wants you to enjoy salvation and eternal life at His side. But God will not force salvation. So it is possible

for you to lose your salvation. This is what Paul is warning in these verses. Turn to Heb. 10:38,39:

Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, [if any man departs from his faith, what does God say to him?] My soul ["Soul" can also be used as a pronoun. What it simply is saying is "I"] shall have no pleasure in him. [I cannot save a person who has said "goodbye" to his faith.]

[Verse thirty-nine:] But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul. [Your faith must endure unto the end.]

When I became an Adventist, there were two men who influenced me tremendously. One was a man who placed in my hand a "Youth Instructor" and said to me, "When you get to England and go to Newbold [College], wouldn't you like to join the ministry?" He was the M.V. Leader of the East African Union. Today he is out of the church and to all appearance has given up Christ. The man that was responsible for leading me to join the

ministry today is out of the church.

The other man was the treasurer of our Union. He was a brilliant young man. He was a South African and the division gave him a scholarship to Walla College. He had a tremendous voice. He was a tenor. One day he was singing for a program, I believe at Whitman College, and two men approached him and said, “You know, you are wasting your time and your talents in this denomination. We would like to offer you something.” They offered him one of the highest positions in the World’s Fair in New York, the job of assistant manager for the financing of the whole program. Well, he accepted that and gradually, in mixing with worldly people, he began drinking and smoking and today he is out of the church.

If you had told me when I was baptized that these men would leave the church, I would never believe it because they were very spiritual men. In fact, the last man was the pastor of the Nairobi City Church. Today, both of them are out.

I want to remind you also, folks, that the two men that God used tremendously to bring the message of righteousness by faith in 1888 both left the church. I remind you that Canwright, who was one of the greatest evangelists this denomination produced, left the church. So the fact that God has used you mightily does not mean that you are on safe ground. You need to press on.

When the Pacific Press moved to Idaho, we had some tremendous talents in all areas. I remember going to a couple who were used mightily by their church in California. I said, “We would like to use you in our church.” I will not forget what the lady said to me.

“We have worked so hard in our church in California that we feel we need a break.”

The moment you begin to relax and think, “I have worked so hard, I need a break,” you will discover that the Devil will use you slowly and steadily to get you out of Christ. There is no way you can relax in this world until the coming of

Christ. There is a battle for your soul and there is danger in relaxing your Christian experience. So I would plead with you as does Paul. Don't you ever do that. Don't ever relax in your Christian experience. The moment you do you will not remain stagnant but go backwards.

We have moved to our new house and we have a creek that flows through our back yard. It's quite a fast-flowing creek. If I could swim upstream in that creek I could make progress but the moment I'd relax I would go downstream. This is the problem. There is a current in the life of every human being. The current is towards sin, towards the world. You can't relax in your Christian experience. That is why, at the end of his life, Paul said to Timothy, "I have fought a good fight, I have kept the faith."

Let's look at some counsel from Jesus Christ in Matt. 10. He tells the disciples that when they become followers of Him they are going to face hardships in this world. Reading from verse sixteen:

Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves.

Now I don't know much about sheep and wolves but I do know about antelopes in Africa. They are always having one ear pricked up to hear the movement of lions and cheetahs. Even when they drink water you can see the animals are not relaxed because they know that any time one of those wild beasts will come and pounce on them. So they drink and they look up. Christ is saying that we have to face a similar problem in this world. The Devil is looking for every opportunity to destroy us. Now go to Matt. 10:22:

And you shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved.

Please notice there is the requirement of endurance. Turn to Acts 20. Here Paul is talking to the elders of the church in Ephesus. Paul has described to them the many things he had suffered,

but look at verse twenty-four:

But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.

Please notice: we have begun a race. Paul is saying, “I will finish the course.” By the way, in Paul’s writings, he will use racing only in terms of Christian living. He will never use it in terms of salvation. Salvation is a gift. But the moment you accept Christ, it’s like a race and you have to run with all your might to reach the goal. Now what is the goal? The goal is Canaan. What happens if you die in the wilderness? I am not talking of physical death because you can die physically here but please remember Eph. 2:6 where we are told that we are sitting in heavenly places in Christ. So, even though we are moving in this direction, our position is in Christ (i.e., Canaan). We can lose that by unbelief. Unbelief is the only thing that God cannot forgive. So please remember that this

passage is a warning. Hebrews six is a warning that you should not take your religion lightly. Going back to Heb. 6:11:

And we [the apostles] desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end.

Don't give up your faith until you arrive at Canaan. In other words, hold on to your faith until you arrive there. In verse twelve:

That you be not slothful....

Please don't say, "I am exhausted, I need to have a break." Now it is true that it is possible to be burned out, and God doesn't want that. I am not talking of a break for a few weeks I am talking about saying, "I don't think I will do anything this year for God." Then you begin to relax and the next year will come and you are in the habit of relaxing and you say, "I think I will wait another year." Gradually, you will find yourself praying less, studying less, and before you know it, you

will be coming to church less. It's very slow. You may not notice it.

When we were in the mission field we would come back to America every three years and we noticed the change in the lifestyle of Adventists. The people did not notice it because it was gradual. When we went to the mission field we would buy clothes not for one year but for three years. When we came back the kids were wearing clothes that we had bought three years before, and when we arrived in America they were like fish out of water because things had changed so drastically in those three years. The people didn't recognize it, but because we were away, we could see the suddenness of the change. You know, the devil is trying to get us. He is trying his level best to pull you out of Christ. So please remember that Christianity is a battle. We need to grow. We need to spend some time in study and growing.

There are many ways the devil will try to get you out of Christ. He will try to get you preoccupied with material things. He will try to

get you preoccupied with issues that are not healthful for your Christian growth. He will try to get you side-tracked from the gospel to items that have no relevance to your growth in Christian living. He will try to get you out of Christ by persecution, but please remember that you need to hold on until the end. This is why Paul spends so much emphasis in this passage to hold on. "Be not slothful. Do not relax your Christian grip but be followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promise."

Here are two more texts which say the same thing. Turn to Romans chapter five and notice the three steps that Paul puts forth. He's describing the progress of the Christian walk:

1. Peace

Romans 5:1 – "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." That's the first thing God gives you.

2. Growth

Romans 5:2 – “By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in the hope of glory of God.” There is now a growth that we must take.

3. Patience [Endurance]

Romans 5:3 – “And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience.” We need to develop patience.

Do you know what Christ said in Matthew twenty-four? “Because we have delayed His coming the love of many has become cold.” This has become a real problem in our church. We have been preaching the second coming of Christ since 1844, which is almost one hundred and fifty years. Our young people are saying “Look, we are tired of hearing that Christ is coming soon.” The result is that many of them are leaving because the love of many is waxing cold. Let’s go back to Romans 5:3:

Tribulation worketh patience and patience, experience [character]; and character produces hope....

Please notice the progress. Peter said the same thing, “Add to your faith....“ Remember the ladder? There has to be growth. In 2 Peter 1:4-9:

Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these you might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

And beside this, giving all diligence [please notice the same idea], add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge;

And to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness [which is character];

And to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, agape [i.e., God’s love which is

the ultimate goal of Christian experience].

For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that you shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But he that lacketh these things is blind [there you have the warning], and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.

If you don't grow, you cannot see Canaan. It's too far. You will have a tendency of looking backward to Egypt. That is why we must grow. We must help our young people to grow. There is no such thing as a stagnant Christian. There are two forces pulling you, God on one side and the Devil on the other.

Let me make it clear. The flesh is what the Devil will use. Your human nature is your greatest enemy and the Devil will use your flesh to pull you away from Christ. That is why there is some counsel I must give you in Gal. 5:24:

And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

Why? Why must we surrender the flesh to the cross? If you don't, the Devil will use the flesh to pull you back into the world. Jesus said the same thing in Luke 9:23:

He who follows Me must deny himself, take up the cross, and follow me.

To be a Christian is not the most enjoyable thing in terms of this world. There are hardships that we have to face. There is growth that we must experience because we are living in enemy territory. The end result is Canaan and when we get to Canaan, I want to remind you what we are told by the Spirit of Prophecy. We will look back at the troubles that we have gone through and we will say, "Heaven was cheap enough!"

But here we think it is very hard. Remember that the suffering is only for a season. It is not

worth enjoying the world for a season and losing eternity. But we human beings want everything now. And that's the problem. That is why we have to develop patience. That is why we must grow also, because the weaker the Christian we are, the easier it is for the devil to pull us from Christ. If we don't grow, we are on dangerous ground.

So it is my prayer that we will take time to study the Word of God; we will take time to spend with God and think about God and talk with God so that there is a growth and there is a greater desire to move forward towards Canaan rather than to look backwards, because the Devil will always be pointing backward. "See what you gave up. You are miserable. Think of all the fun you missed since you left the world."

Don't you ever believe him. He has only one desire and that is for you to join him in the lake of fire. He offers you nothing. We are told, "There is a way that seems right, but the end is destruction."

So please hold onto your faith. Don't give it up

because, as you see, the end approaching the difficulties will get harder. The attractions to join the world will be greater. That is why, as we approach the end, there will be a polarization. Those who have been faithful will remain close to God and those who have been lukewarm will be "spewed out." You cannot be lukewarm Christians forever. You must grow! If you don't grow, when the crisis comes, I'll tell you, you won't be able to face it.

I'm talking from experience. When communism came into Ethiopia, a lot of our people couldn't handle it. I'm talking of workers. I'm talking of men and women who were trained in this denomination, who were workers for God, who were leaders in the church. We had two hundred workers in our hospital in Addis Ababa. Only eleven remained faithful when the hospital was taken over by the government. They had to deny their faith. Only eleven were willing to die for their faith. Only eleven were loyal to Christ, out of 200. I dread to think what would happen if a crisis like that came here. That is why we must grow. We

must spend some time in nurturing our faith or else we will find ourselves out of the fold and then there is no hope.

Our next section will deal with Hebrews 6:13-20. We are going now from warning to encouragement again: the certainty of God's promises. God has promised wonderful things to those who keep their faith in Him. You may want to study ahead. Read it from as many translations as you can, look up any commentaries you may have, look at each verse, study the verbs, and see what God has in store for us.

Chapter 16

The Certainty of God's Promises

Hebrews 6:13-20

It is possible for us Christians to turn our backs to Christ and lose our salvation altogether. It's possible. So that's the reason that we have spent some time looking at this first half of Hebrews chapter six. We need to grow as Christians, especially in our faith. Our faith needs to become stronger and stronger and stronger so that the pull of Satan becomes less and less and less.

In other words, Satan will use all kinds of things. He will use persecution. He will use attractions of this world. He will use material things. He will use friends. He will use relatives. He will use anything to pull you out of Christ. The attraction is greater when you are babes in Christ. So you need to grow up and remember that when

you cross the Red Sea in your experience, even though you have said “goodbye” to Satan represented by Pharaoh, he can still shout across the gulf. The further you get away from the Red Sea and the closer you get to Canaan the less you hear him.

In Heb.6:13 onwards, the second half of the sixth chapter Paul goes from warnings to encouragement. He uses Abraham as an example. In this passage he is dealing with an idea that is not practised here in America so I need to explain where he is coming from. Let us first read the passage:

For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater he sware by himself, saying, surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee, And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his

counsel, confirmed it by an oath: That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us; Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

Let's go step by step. God comes to Abraham with a promise and to guarantee the promise He makes an oath. When we left Idaho and we were trying to sell our house we made an agreement with a realter who is an Adventist. We had to sign a paper as to how much we wanted and all the legal requirements. That is basically what we do in America. We sign a document; it becomes legal. Well, in the days of Paul and even today, in the Middle East, they do not sign a document very often. They swear by God. If you are a Muslim you will say, "In the name of Allah, I promise I'll do this." That oath to them means that they are promising to carry out that agreement. If they don't

the Muslims say that God will send down fire and destroy them.

It is in this context that we have the commandment “Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord Thy God in vain.” When you take an oath in the name of God you dare not delay to fulfil it. As you go to the courts today and swear on the Bible that you will tell the truth and nothing but the truth, you are not taking the name of God in vain if you do tell the truth.

Paul is saying that God gave a promise to Abraham. What was this promise? Well, Paul quotes only part of the promise in verse fourteen. “Saying, surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee.” But we need to look at the whole promise. When the Jewish Christian read part of the promise he knew the whole promise because they were familiar with the Old Testament. Go to Gen.22:17,18 where the promise is found. Verse seventeen is the same as in Heb. 6:14:

That in blessing I will bless thee and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.

This is the promise that God gave to Abraham. It came to Abraham when he was seventy-five years old. God said to Abraham, “I want you to leave this country that you are in and go to Canaan which is the promised land and I will make out of you a great nation.” Now how old was Abraham when the promise first came? Seventy- five. God waited twenty-five years. And during those twenty-five years Abraham’s faith began to waiver. So God made an oath to Abraham. He said, “Abraham, I’m going to make an oath so that you are clear in your mind that when I promise something I will keep it, I will fulfil it.”

The problem is that an oath is always made in the name of someone that is above you. Human

beings in the Middle East make an oath in the name of God who is the ruler of the universe. In whose name can God make an oath? There is nobody above Him. So we read in Hebrews six that He made an oath by His own name because there is no greater one that He could sware by.

The oath was that in thy seed I will bless the whole world. Through that one seed the whole human race will be blessed and through this seed you will have many children--as many as the stars of heaven and the sand of the sea. Who was that seed? The initial seed was Isaac but the ultimate seed was Jesus Christ. Turn to Gal. 3:16:

Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He said not and to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.

God said that in thy seed, which is Christ, I will bless all the nations of the world. That is verses thirteen and fourteen of Hebrews chapter six. Now let’s go to verse fifteen where he is still using

Abraham as an example:

And so, after he had patiently endured...

What did he patiently endure? How long did Abraham wait for God to fulfil the promise? It was twenty-five years. Abraham was seventy-five years old when the promise first came. He wasn't a young fellow. I suppose in those days he was middle-aged. How long did God wait to keep his promise? Twenty-five years. Did Abraham give up his hope in the promise? He did not give up but he tried to help God to hasten the matter. He felt that maybe God needed help. God corrected him for that. God came to him when he was ninety-nine years old which was twenty-five years later. Even though he knew now that his wife had passed the child bearing age God said to him, "Now do you still believe that I can keep my promise?" Did he believe God's promise at the age of ninety-nine? Yes.

Turn to Romans chapter four. Lets read a passage of which we need to remind ourselves

because Paul is saying that Abraham is a type of what we should be. Rom. 4:17 has to do with the same promise that we read:

[As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,] before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were.

Now I want you to take this and apply it to yourself spiritually. You have become a Christian and you are looking at your performance. Do you see success or do you see failure? What do you see? You become discouraged and the devil comes to you and says, “You know God will not take you to heaven because you are a failure.” Now please remember that you will always, even if God were to give you total victory, you will always feel a failure. In fact after probation closes you will be agonizing saying, “Is there any sin I have not confessed?” Because you will feel that you are still a sinner.

That is why you must remember that our

ultimate salvation is not based on our success but on God's promise, God's promise which he made to Abraham and through Abraham to us. Now from all evidence Abraham could not see how he could have a child. Just like Noah from all scientific evidence could not figure out how it would rain and flood the whole earth. Did he believe God? Yes.

Did Abraham hold unto his faith in God's promise? Rom. 4:17 says that God gave Abraham a promise even when he was dead, which simply means he was incapable now, humanly speaking of producing a child through Sarah. See verse eighteen of Romans four:

Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations;...

The word "father" here in the Middle-East concept is simply the idea of proto-type. Here is the basis of our faith. We must look to Abraham as our example.

...according to that which was spoken, so shall thy seed be.

What children will be like Abraham? He is not talking about the physical descendants of Abraham but he is talking about Abraham as a type of every believer who will ultimately be saved. Verse nineteen:

And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb.

He did not look at the outward evidence or the scientific evidence or medical evidence, he staggered not at the promise of God. He did not doubt that God would keep His promise.

He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform.

Now what was the promise? The promise was that in Jesus Christ God would save sinners. That was the promise! 1 Tim. 1:16:

This is a faithful saying, worthy of all acceptation that Jesus Christ came to save sinners, [and then Paul adds] of whom I am chief.

Going back to Rom.4:22 and onward:

And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness. Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; Who was delivered for our offenses and was raised again for our justification.

Did God keep His promise to Abraham? Did God redeem the world through that seed, Jesus Christ? Yes.

Now, before Jesus left for heaven, He made a promise. “I will come again.” Is God slack in

keeping that promise? We have been preaching that He is coming for how long? One hundred forty-four years [This series was presented in 1988]. Now turn to 2 Peter 3:9:

The Lord is not slack concerning His promise....

Did Abraham sometimes feel that God was slack? Yes. Are there Adventists today, especially our young people who feel that God is slack? Yes. But we need to remind ourselves:

The Lord is not slack concerning His promise as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

The trouble is that while God is waiting for the ungodly to turn their eyes back to Christ we believers are becoming impatient. Because His coming is delayed in the eyes of human beings the love of many is waxing cold. We need to go back to Hebrews and remind ourselves that God will

keep His promise.

I realize that some of you older folks had a dream. In fact I also did when I became an Adventist in 1958, thirty years ago. My dream was to see Jesus come while I was still alive. Now some of you who have one leg in the grave are saying, “I wonder if I’ll make it.” Well, maybe not, but your eternal destiny is guaranteed. All that will happen to you is that you will go to sleep. When you reach seventy years and above you deserve sleeping. You have been here long enough in this sinful world. Don’t be afraid to die. I know that in this country you get ten percent discount for senior citizens but a Christian should not be afraid to die because he is just going to sleep. And God has given you a promise. Will He keep that promise? Yes! Did He mean that He was coming soon to our pioneers? Yes. But why has He delayed His coming? Because He doesn’t want anyone to perish.

There is a prophecy that has to be fulfilled. “This gospel of the kingdom has to go to all the

world.” Who is to blame that this gospel has not gone to all the world? It is ourselves, really. We have in a sense delayed His coming. Peter tells us that we can hasten His coming. The problem is that we got too preoccupied with other things.

Lets go back to Hebrews six. Did Abraham, even though he wavered at times, did he hold on to the promise of God? Yes. Did he obtain that promise? The answer is “yes” in verse fifteen. Now verse sixteen:

For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife.

If I made a promise to you in Paul’s day or even today and you doubt my promise and you say to me, “Are you willing to swear by God that you will keep your promise?” That in the Middle-East means that you will not fail. I say, “Yes, in the name of God I will keep this promise.” Immediately the doubt goes. In America they will probably say something else, “Are you willing to sign a document?” “Are you willing to sign this

promissory note so that it's legal?" "Can you notarize this?" If you say, "Yes," then you have at least some hope. But even then, I don't know. You are signing it in terms of legal things. But in Paul's day you are signing in the name of God. I can run away from the law of America by going to another country and hiding there.

My parents came from Goa, and Goa is a very beautiful part of India. It has beautiful beaches. Several years ago it was filled with young Americans who were escaping what we called the draft. They were mainly kids of very rich families. They wanted to escape so they went to this place and they were living around the beaches and enjoying their money. They were escaping the law. That is for a time. I don't know whether or not the law caught up with them. But you can't escape from God. If you make an oath by God's name and you run to China, you may escape from America but you can't escape from God. Therefore when you take an oath in God's name you had better do it if you have that mentality. Paul is saying in verse sixteen:

For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife, wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath.

In other words, God made a promise that He would save the world but in case any human beings should doubt, He made an oath, which means that I will keep my promise. Now God made a promise to the disciples, “I will come again. You believe in God believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many mansions.” The actual Greek says many vacancies. Mansions are no problem for God but vacancies are a problem for us. What’s the use of a mansion if it is occupied? So what the text is saying is, “There are many vacancies.” How many vacancies are there in heaven for the human race? One for each person. That is our position.

Now the Calvinists say, “No.” They say there is one for only each of the elect whom God has predetermined that He will save. But the promise

was not to the elect but all men. “God so loved the world.” So please remember there is a vacancy for every human being that is born in this world. The trouble is number one, they don’t know it and number two some people after they know it will not accept it. The second part is their problem. Number one is sometimes our problem. They don’t know it because we haven’t done our job. So we need to witness the gospel. We need to tell them that there is a vacancy there. So there is no sign in heaven saying, “No vacancy.” That may be true of motels here but not in heaven. Now look at verse eighteen:

That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie.

Now what are the two? Number one is the promise and number two is the oath. By these two things, God’s promise and God’s oath, God will not lie.

We might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before

us.

Who is he talking about? Believers who have fled to Christ “for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us:” Now what is the hope? Is it the hope in this world or is it hope in the next world? What is the hope of the believer? Turn to 1 Cor. 15:19:

If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.

What is Paul saying here? What’s the context? The context is the resurrection which we call the blessed hope which is at the second coming of Christ. There were some Christians in Corinth who were saying that there is no resurrection. We will find that in verse twelve:

Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?

Paul is saying that if there is no resurrection and the only hope the Christian has is in this life,

we are of all men most miserable. So our hope is not in this life. We are still living in enemy territory. When is our hope then? What is our hope? The resurrection which takes place at the second coming of Christ. Look at verse twenty-three:

But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits;...

Has Christ already risen? Yes. Has Christ already gone to heaven? Yes. Finishing verse twenty-three:

Afterward they that are Christ's at His coming.

Now in Heb. 6:20 Paul doesn't use "firstfruits" but he uses the word "forerunner" which is the same thing. "Whither the forerunner is for us entered." Where is Christ gone? Heaven. Will we go to heaven? Yes, afterwards. After when? The second coming of Christ. So what Paul is saying here is that the blessed hope of the Christian is at the second coming of Christ.

We may have to suffer in this world. We may have to wait in this world. We may be persecuted in this world but we have a hope! What is the hope? Two things, the promise of God and the oath which He made. Now what should that do to us? Verse nineteen says:

Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul...

Remember that Paul is writing to people who were living around the Mediterranean as well as the Sea of Galilee. When a storm comes what do you do with your ship? You put an anchor down. What does the anchor do? It prevents the ship from drifting away and being dashed on the rocks and being destroyed. The devil wants you to drift away from Christ. What is the anchor that keeps us in Christ? Is it our performance? No. It is two things: the promise of God and His oath that He made that He would keep that promise. So Paul is saying, "Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul." Will the anchor hold when the storm comes? We have a song about it, "Will your anchor hold".

What is your anchor? Is it your faith in God's promise and His oath? Continuing in verse nineteen:

And which entereth into that within the veil...

This text has caused problems. Is it the first veil or the second veil? Is it the Holy Place or the Most Holy Place? Paul is not discussing Holy Place or Most Holy Place. He is not discussing the daily or the yearly. He is discussing the fact that through Christ we have entrance into the very presence of God. We must not take a text out of context and discuss our theological problems by it.

Here is another text that uses the same word in the Greek in Acts 16:24. It is the same Greek word that you have in Hebrew for "within the veil." This has to do with the imprisonment of Paul and Silas. In verse twenty-four it says:

Who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison [that's the same Greek word as for "within the veil"].

There was the outer room and the inner room. The outer room had a door that went outside but the inner room had no door or windows. You were inside. There was no escape. So the “inner prison” simply meant the one that was right in the inside where you could not escape. So therefore Paul is referring here to the very presence of God in terms of the Most Holy Place. But He is not discussing the daily or the yearly. Here are some statements from Ellen G. White, where she presents the same idea. Even though the Day of Atonement began in 1844 she says something here that has to do with 31 A.D. in terms of our approach to God. Desire of Ages, page 757:

“The great sacrifice had been made. The way into the holiest is laid open. A new and living way is prepared for all. The mercy seat upon which the glory of God rested in the holiest of all is open to all who accept Christ as the propitiation for sin.”

What Sister White is saying here is, “Those who have accepted Christ have direct access to

God.” It has nothing to do with the day of atonement. This simply is using sanctuary terminology. Where did God dwell in the sanctuary? In the Most Holy Place. Did the priest have access to the Most Holy Place every day? No. Only once a year and even then he had to offer a sacrifice for himself and his family. Do we Christians have access to God daily? Can we come boldly with assurance? Are we better than the priest? No. It’s because we have an advocate or a priest who has entered in our behalf.

“Christ came to demolish every wall of partition, to throw open every compartment of the temple, that every soul may have free access to God.” [Christ’s Object Lessons, page 386.]

Then in volume five of the Bible Commentary, page 1109, she makes this statement:

“A new and living Way, before which there hangs no veil, is offered to all.”

This does not mean that the day of atonement

began in 31 A.D. What Paul is saying here is that because God sent His Son, and kept His promise we have access now to God. Turn to Heb.10:19-22:

Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest [through the inner veil, in the very presence of God] by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, [Sister White is simply quoting from this passage] which he hath consecrated [dedicated] for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh...

Remember that something happened in the flesh of Christ. He condemned sin in the flesh. Whose sins? Our sins. And by condemning sin in the flesh He removed the barrier between a Holy God and a sinful human race. So we have access to God through the blood of Christ for by the blood of Christ He died for all sin, past, present and future. So we can come boldly to the throne of grace. Verse twenty-one:

And having an high priest over the house of

God; Let us draw near [near to God] with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

Are you still sinners? Yes. But in Christ have you been washed? Yes. Have you been made perfect? Yes. So in Christ you can come boldly. Verse twenty-three, the same thing as in Heb.6:

Let us hold fast [let us keep hold through faith of the promise of God] the profession of our faith without wavering; for He is faithful that promised.

Will God keep His promise? Will He come again? Yes. Does it seem that He is not coming again from our human point of view? Yes. The question is the one that Jesus asked in Luke 18:8 "When I come will I find faith in the earth?" That's the issue. Paul's concern is that we hold fast. Go now to verse thirty-five of Hebrews ten:

Cast not away therefore your confidence [in God's promise and in His oath] which hath great

recompense of reward. For you have need of patience, that, after you have done the will of God, you might receive the promise.

We go back now to Hebrews six. The promise of God which He gave by an oath is the anchor of our souls. We must not give that up! We must hold on! And we must remember that Christ is not sleeping in heaven. He has gone there for us as our representative, as a priest after the order of Melchisedec. Why? Because human priests died. When priests die what happens to your anchor?

But Christ is a priest forever. He doesn't go to sleep and His life doesn't come to an end. He will be our priest until He has fulfilled all His promises. And the promises to us are twofold:

1. He will come again and take us to heaven.
2. He will restore this earth to its original perfection and He will give us dominion over it.

Our part is to hold on by faith to His promises.

We must not waiver. Paul is encouraging us to hold unto our faith. Don't you ever give it up. Hold unto Christ. He is your only hope. As I mentioned before our only hope that we have in this world is not our bank account, not our plastic cards, it is not all the promises that the government has made on social security.

I asked one of the government officials, "Do you think that social security will collapse?"

He said, "No, when it collapses the government will collapse." He thinks that the government will never collapse. Therefore the social security will never collapse. I have better confidence in the Bible than his promise for I know that God will never collapse. His government is sure. Let's hold on.

Young people, don't give up your faith in Christ. It may seem that He has delayed, like Abraham felt, but hold on to Christ until either you die or until He comes.

Chapter 17

Preeminence of Christ's Priesthood

Hebrews 7:1-7:28

I hope you had time to read this whole chapter, because I'm going to deal with the whole chapter in one study. Part of it is mainly relevant to the Jewish Christians of Paul's day, but there is a very important section and I would like to spend some time with it today.

In Heb. 5:10, Paul introduced us to Christ as God's High Priest after the order of Melchisedec. Then in verse eleven he tells the Hebrews, i.e., the Jewish Christians that he was writing to, that he had many things that he would like to expound about this truth, but they were not in the frame of mind to hear him because they were still immature Christians. So he spends chapter six with warnings and encouragement in order to strengthen their

faith.

Having done that in chapter six, now in chapter seven he returns to Christ as the “High Priest forever after the order of Melchisedec.” He ends chapter six with that statement. In chapter seven he expounds on the meaning of this.

As you read Hebrews you will find that Paul again and again uses this phrase, “Christ, as High Priest forever, after the order of Melchisedec.” Now the sheer repetition of this phrase indicates that there is something very vital in this truth. This is what he brings out in chapter seven. The first three verses are extremely important and have tremendous significance to us. What I’m going to do is read the first three verses of chapter 7 and then I want to give you a little background which the Jewish Christians already knew because they were very familiar with the Old Testament. So let’s read the first three verses and then I’ll give you the background that will help us to understand what Paul is trying to get across here:

For this Melchisedec [he has already told us that Christ is a High Priest forever after the order of Melchisedec in verse twenty of chapter six], king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him; To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace; Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually.

These three verses can be fully understood only when we know the background in Genesis chapter fourteen. You need to read the whole chapter but I will summarize it. In Gen. 14 the first eleven verses have a description of a battle between four kings on one side and five kings on the other. In this battle in verse twelve we are told that Lot and his family who were living in Sodom were taken captive with all their possessions. Then in verse thirteen Abraham hears about this and he comes to the rescue. The odds were against Abraham but of

course God was on Abraham's side and God gave him a great victory. That's what Hebrews is referring to.

After this victory, and this is what I want you to be aware of, and you'll find this in verses seventeen to verse twenty-four of Genesis fourteen, after this victory, when Abraham rescued Lot and his family and brought back all of the possessions that were lost, Abraham was approached by two men, one was the king of Sodom and the other was king of Salem, Melchisedec. The king of Sodom offered Abraham a lot of wealth. In other words the king of Sodom said, "Boy, this man is powerful, I'd better get him on my side." He offered him a lot of money. You'll find this especially in Gen.14:22,23:

And Abraham said to the king of Sodom, I have lifted up mine hand unto the Lord, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth, that I will not take from a thread even to a shoelatchet, and that I will not take any thing that is thine, lest thou shouldst say, I have made Abram rich.

Melchisedec on the other hand only gave him bread and wine. That's all he gave him. Which one did Abraham accept? The gift of Melchisedec, bread and wine. And he didn't need it because he had come back with all the possessions. The Bible tells us, and this is what Hebrews 7 is alluding to, he accepted the gift of Melchisedec, bread and wine.

Now, you see, the King of Sodom represents the world with its riches. The bread and wine represents the gift of God. I want to remind you of John 6:53 and onwards. Remember what Jesus said:

I am the bread of life. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood [and these are the two symbols, bread and wine representing the body and blood of Christ] shall have eternal life.

So here is, number one, a gift of God. Remember, Melchisedec was not only the king of Salem but he was the priest of the Most High God.

So Abraham accepted the gift of God rather than the riches of the world. This is something that we must keep in mind. Abraham in the New Testament is called, “The father of all believers,” or the “father of the faithful.” He represents the true Christian who by faith accepts Christ rather than the wealth of this world. The issue is not, “Is it wrong to be rich?” That is not the issue. The issue is when you have to make a choice between God and materialism [or Sodom] which will you choose? Abraham made the choice of Melchisedec.

Lets now go back to Hebrews chapter seven. “For this Melchisedec, king of Salem...,” By the way Salem later became Jerusalem and the word “Salem” means peace. In Hebrew you have the word Shalom and in Arabic Saalam. That’s a common greeting in the Middle East today. So we are told two things about Melchisedec. The city he represents is the city of peace and that’s the New Jerusalem. The name of the King Melchisedec means “King of Righteousness.” That’s found in Heb.7:2. So Melchisedec represents the King of Righteousness since that’s the meaning of his name

and he represents the King of Peace because that's the city over which he rules. These are the two things.

We are told in verse one that Abraham met him after he came back from that tremendous victory. After he ate the bread and wine what did Abraham give to Melchisedec? He gave him a tenth part of all as told in verse four. Why did Abraham give him a tenth part? Tithe paying is simply an indication. To pay tithe means that God owns everything, not just one tenth. The one tenth is a symbol.

In other words, when Abraham paid tithe to Melchisedec who was the priest of the Most High God, he was saying, "The One you represent, the One most high, has the right of ownership over everything that I have." Please remember that without God, Abraham could never have won the victory. The odds were against him. He could never have made it. The king of Sodom was much stronger than Abraham's army, and yet he was defeated. So Abraham is saying, "What you return

to me is not mine. Everything I own is yours. Even my life is yours. I'm giving you a tenth as a symbol of my confession that everything I own is yours, including my life."

Let's go to the next point in verse three about Melchisedec. It says here, "Without father, without mother." Every time I read this text I am reminded of Ethiopia. This is a common phrase among the Ethiopian beggars. One day a beggar came to our house. He was at least sixty years old and he said to us, "I have no father and no mother." Yet he was sixty years old.

I said to him, "I have the same problem, I have no father and I have no mother."

In this context, what does it mean that Melchisedec was without father and without mother? Does it mean that he had no father? No. Does it mean he had no mother? No. It means he had no descent, neither beginning of days nor end of life. In the Jewish culture, and in the Middle East, culture genealogy was very important. What

Paul is saying here is that we have no record of the genealogy of Melchisedec.

One of the problems is in the second half of verse three, “But made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually.” Was Melchisedec Christ or was he representing Christ? Which? Please notice: the words “made like” tells us. He signified, he was a representative of Christ, but he was not Christ. This is clearly brought out in the Spirit of Prophecy and is the basic belief of most scholars. He symbolized Christ.

Which came first? Melchisedec or Levi? Who was a priest first? Melchisedec. He began as a priest before the Levitical priesthood. When the Levitical priesthood was done away with at the cross did he continue? Yes, Melchisedec represents the everlasting priesthood. In contrast to the Levitical priesthood which was temporary.

Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth

a priest continually.

Now I would like you to notice three words in this chapter. The first one is “continually” in verse three. The second one is in verse twenty-five:

Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

This is the same meaning as “continually.” Then the third one is in the last verse of chapter seven, verse twenty-eight:

For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity [i.e., weaknesses]; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore.

Now these three words are synonymous with the Hebrew word “Tamid.” This is the word that is used for the daily in the sanctuary service. We have two words: “daily” and “yearly.” The yearly is “Yom Kippur” and the “daily” is “Tamid.” So

these three words are telling us that when Christ went to heaven as a priest, He went there first of all to function as our everlasting Priest, continually.

What does this mean to us? What is the significance? The priesthood of Christ is eternal in the sense that He began as a priest in 31 A.D. When will He end His priesthood? Did the daily service come to an end on the Day of Atonement? Was the daily service also practised on the Day of Atonement? Yes, it was. Then Christ as our daily (continual priest) did not stop in 1844. He is still a priest today.

How long will He be our priest? Until He puts all enemies under His footstool. Now He will cease to be our Advocate after probation closes because we don't need an advocate but we will have a Priest and He will save us to the uttermost.

What does the word "uttermost" imply? When will your salvation be finished to the uttermost?...when you go to heaven and even after that when you come back to this earth, when

dominion and authority is given to the saints. So please remember:

1. He has an eternal Priesthood.
2. He has also a changeless Priesthood. (Why? Because He never dies.)
3. He has an unending priesthood.

How much time do you spend with God each day? Each of us are different but I would like to tell you how much time Christ is available to us: twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, fifty-two weeks a year, as long as we are living. That's how much He's available to us. When we come to Him, He is able to save us to the uttermost. Can you see why this was very important to Paul? The Levitical priesthood had problems:

1. They were weak.
2. They died. So their priesthood was not everlasting.
3. They were not able to do the full job because they themselves were sinners.

So the rest of Hebrews seven is dealing with the contrast between Melchisedec and the Levitical priesthood. The Levitical was temporary in contrast to Christ being permanent and changeless. The Levitical was incomplete because the priests died, in contrast to Christ as everlasting. The Levitical was weak but Christ is all powerful, He saves to the uttermost.

There are two items here that I need to bring to your attention, and which sometimes might come up in your witnessing. Look at verses four to ten of Hebrews seven. Paul is saying that the Levitical priesthood is inferior to the Melchisedec priesthood. And the argument he uses is something important. The Levites were descendants of Abraham. If Abraham was the father of the Levites, who is greater, Abraham or the Levites? Can the son be greater than the father? Maybe in our culture here he can, but in eastern culture, never. The father is always the head. Remember that Abraham is not just the father of the Levites. He was the father of the nation. He was the beginning of a new nation.

Now, if Levi was inferior to Abraham and Abraham paid tithe to Melchisedec, who was greater, Melchisedec or Abraham? Melchisedec was the greater. Therefore Levi was inferior to Melchisedec. That is a typical eastern argument.

The second argument in chapter seven verses four to ten is that Levi paid tithe to Melchisedec. In whom? In Abraham. Please look at verse nine:

Levi also, who receiveth tithes, payed tithes in Abraham. For he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchisedec met him.

Now we don't have this problem since we don't have a choice between Melchisedec as a priest and a Levitical priesthood. The Jews in Paul's day did have a choice. Who should we accept? Christ, who is symbolized by Melchisedec, or the Levitical priesthood? Who should we choose? Christ.

I had to make a choice between Christ as my

priest and the Roman Catholic priest where I went to confession. Every Roman Catholic, when you confront him with the gospel, has to make the same choice. You have to prove to him that Christ as our priest is superior to the human priest. A Catholic Christian does not go directly to Christ. He goes through a human priest. So for forgiveness of sins he has to go to a man and confess his sins. So when you are witnessing, elevate Christ as the Superior Priest. He is the only one who is able to save you to the uttermost. Human priests are still sinners. They need a Saviour themselves. The next argument is from verse eleven onward in chapter seven of Hebrews. This can be seen as a problem:

If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, [for under it the people received the law,] what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron?

What Paul is saying here is that Christ could not belong to the Levitical priesthood. Why?

Because He was a Jew of the tribe of Judah and according to the law Judah did not get the priesthood. Only the Levites could be priests. Continuing in verse twelve:

For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law.

This is the text that some may use to prove that the law has been changed. They will take this verse and apply it to the Sabbath. They'll say, "Look, the law has to be changed since grace came in." We must be faithful to the context. According to the law of Moses who could be priest? Levites. Did Christ belong to the Levites? No. Therefore according to the law could Christ be a priest? The answer is "No." Which law is Paul talking about here? He is not talking about the moral law which is changeless, and is everlasting. That is shown in Matt. 5:18 "Until heaven and earth pass a jot or tittle will not pass."

Was the ceremonial law changeable? Yes, and here he says that the law of the Levitical priesthood

was a temporary law. It was not a permanent law. Melchisedec was a priest before the law was given. And yet he was the priest of the Most High. So if Melchisedec could be a priest without coming under the Levitical priesthood law, so also could Christ be a priest. The Jewish Christian was saying, “How can you change God’s law?” And Paul was saying that this law was only temporary. And this is the argument of verse fourteen:

For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood. And it is yet far more evident: for that after the similitude of Melchisedec there ariseth another priest.

Does the Bible allow another priesthood? Yes. Which is the better priesthood? The Melchisedec because he is a priest forever. So the priesthood law was done away with as shown in verse eighteen:

For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before for the weakness and

unprofitableness thereof. For the law made nothing perfect.

Could the Levitical priesthood save Israel? What did they bring to God? The blood of bulls and goats which could never remove sins. They were only a symbol or a type but not the reality. Of course verse twenty-one says:

For those priests were made without an oath; [here comes the last argument] but this with an oath by him that said unto him, The Lord sware and will not repent.

As we covered in our last study, when you make a promise and do not give an oath it means that you can change the promise. When you make a promise and you sware that you will keep that promise you are not supposed to change. When the Levitical priesthood was inaugurated there was no oath. When Melchisedec was made a priest and when Christ was made a priest there was an oath. (Ps. 110:4.)

In the Coptic Church in Ethiopia there were two ways a couple could be married. If they were married without the Lord's supper they would be allowed to divorce. If they were married with the Lord's supper they were never allowed to divorce. I asked the priest one day, "How many do you marry with the Lord's supper?"

He said, "These days, almost none."

I think you have a similar idea in the Mormon Church, two types of marriages. Please remember that is not Biblical. The Bible says that when you are married you are married for life. The vow is an oath.

When God made Christ a priest according to the order of Melchisedec, He made an oath. What does that mean? It means that God will never change that priesthood. The only priesthood that is an everlasting priesthood is the priesthood that God promised by an oath. Therefore Paul is saying that the very fact that God did not make an oath when he inaugurated the Levitical priesthood is evidence

that God never intended the Levitical priesthood to be an everlasting priesthood. It was temporary. “So you Jews please stop reverting back to the Levitical priesthood. That was temporary. You must now go to Christ.” Paul completes his argument in Heb. 7:28:

For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; [they were weak, they were sinful, they were temporary] for the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore.

So will God change His mind? No. We have a guarantee that we have a priest. He is a priest who is able to save us to the uttermost as we come to Him.

So please remember that when the Devil comes to you and says, “You are not good enough to be saved. You are a failure,” and he comes with all kinds of things to knock you down, just remember that you have a priest who represents you before the throne of God and He is able to save you to the

uttermost.

As long as we are sinners we need a Saviour. As long as we are sinners we need a perfect Priest who represents us. Always keep this in mind. I would like to close with the time of the end. When you and I face the time of trouble, when God removes His protection, that's what happens in the time of trouble, God will say to Satan, "Here are my people who have the faith of Jesus and who are revealing this faith by keeping the commandments, not mechanically, but in the spirit."

Satan will say, "Yes, because you have built a hedge around them. Give them into my hands and I will show you that they will turn their backs to you."

God will say, "You can have them. They are yours, excepting one thing. You can't kill them."

The devil will come and hound us. Not only physically, not only in terms of material things, but the thing that he will do most to hurt us will be

psychologically, mentally. He will come to you and say, “You are not good enough to be saved.” He will come to Christians who believe in the secret rapture and will say to them, “Do you know why you have not been raptured? It is because you are lost.” He will say to you, “Do you know why you still feel that you are a sinner? Because God no longer loves you.”

What are you going to do? You may be agonizing as we are told in Great Controversy, but please remember that you have a High Priest who has not forsaken you. He is your priest who will save you to the uttermost even though the heavens fall. Please remember that this is the anchor of our souls. This is what Paul says in Heb. 6:19: “This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil...” until He comes to take us home. This is why we need to understand Christ as our Everlasting Priest. That’s why Paul emphasizes and repeats, “Christ is a priest forever after the order of Melchisedec.”

Chapter 18

Christ, Priest of a Better Covenant

Hebrews 8:1-13

In Hebrews chapter eight we come to some very important studies. I hope that we will be able to deal with some of the problems with which we are confronted as a people.

In the last two verses of chapter seven of Hebrews Paul moves from the person of Christ as, of course, our High Priest to His supreme sacrifice on the cross. This will be the central focus of the next three chapters — the blood of Jesus Christ. You see it is the sacrifice of Christ that makes His priestly ministry valid. Without the sacrifice of Christ we would have no priest.

In the first two verses of chapter eight he sums up all that he has been saying about Christ as our

High Priest. The first two verses of chapter eight are the conclusion of chapter five verse ten right up to the end of chapter seven. Here he has been dealing with Christ as our High Priest. Heb. 8:1,2 says:

Now of the things which we have spoken [i.e., since Heb.5:10] this is the sum [this is the conclusion]: We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens: A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.

Now these two verses clearly tell us that we have a sanctuary in heaven. You can't get around these two verses. There is a sanctuary in heaven and Christ is the priest in that sanctuary, and this sanctuary was not built by man but by God. Having summed up his argument he now moves to the sacrifice that the priest has to bring before God. Look at verse three:

For every high priest is ordained [appointed by

God] to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer.

Note that word “necessity.” What does it mean? “You have to!” The reason I am emphasizing this is because there are two ideas that have come into the Christian Church which unfortunately are creeping into ours. One is known as the moral influence theory and the other is known as the governmental theory of the atonement. These views teach that Christ really did not have to die to save us. They do away with what we call the legal framework of the atonement. The moral influence theory teaches that He died simply to show us that He loved us. And the governmental theory says that He died simply to show us that sin is terrible, but He could save us without dying. But this text says that it is a necessity that He have sacrifices.

These two theories both have some elements of truth. It is true that Christ died on the cross to reveal His love. It is true that His death on the

cross shows us that sin is terrible. But to make that the basis of the atonement is to deny the necessity of the cross. “Every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices.” Remember that a priest is a mediator between a Holy God and sinful man. To remove that barrier that has been produced by sin there needs to be a sacrifice. Turn to Lev.17:11:

For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement [this is the sacrifice, this is the gift that the priest brings] for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.

There are two things that this text says:

1. The life of the flesh is the blood.
2. This blood is what makes atonement.

Now turn to Heb.9:22 where we have the application. In the earthly sanctuary the priest offered the blood of animals. In this verse the idea of necessity [Heb.8:3] is brought out very clearly:

And almost all things are by the law purged...

Now the word “purged“ is the same word for “cleansed.” Sinners cannot come to God unless they are cleansed because the law demands that the soul that sins must die. We are sinners. We have no right to approach a Holy God.

...and without shedding of blood there is no remission of sins.

Please notice that there is a necessity. Blood makes the atonement. Blood is the basis of sacrifice. Not that God is angry. We must not have the pagan idea that God’s anger had to be appeased. But God is righteous; He is just. A just God cannot forgive us by simply excusing sin. He has to meet His justice.

I had an incident happen to me in Nairobi, Kenya. I had to find a parking place but there was none. There was this “no parking” area where an embassy car was parked. In the Third World, ambassadors and embassy people have what is

called diplomatic immunity. They can break the law and the policeman can't touch them. So I said to myself, "If he is an ambassador, so am I." So I parked my car next to his. I went to the meeting and when I came back there was a policeman waiting for me. When I finally came up to the car he said, "Is this your car?"

I said, "Yes."

He said, "You have broken the law."

I pointed at the embassy car and said, "So has he."

The policeman said, "Well, he's an embassy person."

I said, "So am I." I reminded him of a text in Corinthians that says we are ambassadors for Christ. He saw a Bible in my hand. He said, "I see that you are a priest."

I said, "No, I'm a minister of the gospel."

“I’ll tell you what,” he said, “I have a problem.” He didn’t tell me what the problem was but he was afraid to go to the priest because he was a Roman Catholic. “If you can forgive me, I will forgive you for parking.” He wanted me to be the mediator.

I said, “I don’t have that authority.” But I referred him to Jesus Christ as his Mediator.

He said, “I thank you for giving me hope. I tell you what, every time you come and want to park your car here when I’m in charge, you can do it because I will give you that permission.”

What he did was wonderful from a human point of view. He forgave me. But he didn’t do a right thing. Was he just in forgiving me? No. Man can’t do that, because man is a sinner. But God can’t forgive us by overlooking His justice. He is a righteous God. He is a Holy God. He makes it clear that the soul that sinneth it shall die. He cannot bypass the law. He is not above the law for

that would make Him an unjust God.

What Paul is saying here is that it was necessary that this Priest in heaven, which is Christ, had to also bring a gift. Now look at verse four:

For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law...

On earth He did not qualify to be a priest. He did not come to be a priest on earth. He came to be the sacrifice. He came to be the Saviour and also He came to be the prophet, a representative of God. But when He went to heaven, He went to heaven as Priest. Not according to the law, i.e., the Levitical priesthood, but according to the priesthood of Melchizedek. Continuing in verse five:

...Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to

the pattern shewed to thee in the mount.

In other words, the Levitical priesthood and the sacrifices that they offered were only a shadow, an example, a type. Christ is the reality. Christ is not of the Levitical priesthood. He is not a type but He is the reality. He does not offer sacrifices of bulls and goats and sheep which the Levites did but He offers His own blood. And we will cover this in chapters 8-10. So what Paul is saying here is that the Levitical priests with their sacrifices were simply an example, a shadow. Now look at Heb.8:6:

But now [the shadow is over, the reality has come] hath He obtained a more excellent ministry...

There are two priestly ministries, the Levitical and Christ's, modeled by Melchizedek. The Levitical priesthood was a type or shadow and had no authority, no power to save. It was only an example. It was a symbol. But Christ's ministry is real! Therefore it is a more excellent ministry.

Remember that Paul is trying to convince the Jewish Christians to raise their eyes from the earthly priests to the heavenly. That is where the hope of the human race is. Continuing in verse six:

...by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises.

There are two things here:

1. A better covenant.
2. Better promises.

What is he referring to when he says, “A better covenant?” That is the New Covenant. It is a better covenant than the Old Covenant. Why? Who gave the Old Covenant? God gave it. Did He give a bad covenant? Then where was the problem in the Old Covenant? The secret is found in the word “promise.” In the Old Covenant, who made the promise? God gave the law but the people made the promise. What was the promise? “All that you have said we will do.” In the New Covenant the

law is the same. The law in the Old and the New Covenant is not different. The difference is in the promise. What makes the New Covenant better? Not the law but the promise. God gave the law in the Old Covenant but the people made the promise. In the New Covenant God gave the law and God fulfils the promise.

Why was the Old Covenant faulty? Look at verse eight of Hebrews eight for it tells us where the fault was. Was the fault in the law? No.

For finding fault with them.

It is the promise of men that was faulty. Could men keep that promise? No. Did God know it? Yes. Did the people know it? No. How do we know that they didn't know it? You never make a promise of something of which you are not sure. They were sure that they could keep it.

Every time you make a promise to God you are entering into the Old Covenant. The Old Covenant has nothing to do with time. The Old Covenant is

when you promise God to be good. Have you ever promised God to be good? Then you are entering the Old Covenant. The issue is not whether you are sincere. Were the Jews sincere when they make the promise? Yes. Was Peter sincere when he said, "I will die for you?" Yes. The problem is that man is not able to fulfil his promises. Now that is not the real problem. The problem is when you fail to keep your promise what do you do? You get discouraged. Is there a way out of your failure? The way out is the New Covenant.

There are other ways out that are not helpful. Let me give you two. For example: the Jews. What did the Jews do when they failed to keep their promise? They took the law of God and they brought it down and reduced it to the level of man by rules and they kept those rules and they thought that they were keeping the promise. Here is an example of an individual who thought he was keeping the covenant as a promise. Turn to Phil.3:6 (last part):

...touching the righteousness which is in the

law, blameless.

Who is saying this? About whom? This is Paul himself before he was converted. This is the mistake of the Jews. The Jews did not admit that they had broken the covenant. This was their mistake. They covered up their failure by reducing the law of God to human rules. See Matt.15:1-5. Here Jesus sums up the issue very clearly.

Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying, [these were representatives of the Sanhedrin, in those days the General Conference] 'Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread.'

These are some of the rules that the Jews had made. They had misinterpreted the law that God had given. From a health law they made it into a law of salvation.

But He answered and said unto them, 'Why do you also transgress the commandment of God by

your tradition? For God commanded, saying, Honour your father and mother: and, He that curseth father and mother: let him die the death. But you say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; And honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free.'

In other words, here is a law that they could not keep but they reduced it into a rule which they could keep and Jesus says:

You have broken the law of God by the tradition of man. Thus you have made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition. [This is a problem that we can do ourselves.] You hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoreth me with their lips; [notice this is outward religion] but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.

We must be very careful that we do not make the same mistake. It is easy to take the law of God and reduce it to rules that you and I can keep and then bluff ourselves that we are keeping the law. We must remember that it is only by the grace of God, only Christ in me that can fulfil the law.

Go back to Hebrews chapter eight. One way of getting around the Old Covenant is to reduce the Old Covenant, the law of the Old Covenant into human rules. One way is to cover up. The other way is to get discouraged and say, "It is no use," and then give up your Christianity. Both ways are wrong. There is a solution. The solution is the New Covenant. Why? Because it is based on a better promise. Look at Heb.8:9:

Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord.

They failed in the Old Covenant but God gave

them a promise. The promise is found in Jeremiah and in Isaiah and now it is given to us.

This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days says the Lord.

When the Old Covenant failed did God give you up? No. He makes a New Covenant. By the way, the Old Covenant was essential. It was essential because for four hundred years the Jews were in Egypt and the Egyptian religion taught that man is able to save himself. And this self-dependent pagan religion had to be destroyed in their thinking. The Old Covenant was given to them for that purpose. It was to destroy confidence in themselves.

Peter promised Jesus at the Last Supper, “I will never forsake you. I will die for you.” Was he sincere? Yes. Did he mean what he said? Yes. He entered into and Old Covenant promise. Did he keep it? No. He chopped one man’s ear, that’s all. He had failed to see Christ’s mission but was he really willing to die? No. He denied Jesus three

times. Remember what Jesus said at the Lord's Supper. He said, "Before the cock crows twice, you will deny Me three times." In other words: "Peter, you will break your promise." "When you are converted, strengthen the brethren."

What did Jesus mean, "when you are converted"? When you have lost all confidence in self. That is why after the resurrection Jesus cornered Peter in John twenty-one and asked him three times, "Do you love Me?" Peter had to admit he did not love with agape. But he said, "Lord, you know it." That's why Christ could now say, "Feed My lambs and feed my sheep." The Jews, and you and I and every human being cannot enter into the New Covenant unless we have lost confidence in ourselves.

Now, lets go to see the New Covenant. Verses seven to nine tells us that the Old Covenant was faulty and our only hope is in the New Covenant. Look at Heb. 8:10-13. In these four verses you will discover four provisions in the New Covenant

The first provision is:

I will put my laws into your mind and I will write them in your heart.

That's the first provision. In the Old Covenant God gave the law on tables of stone. It was a necessary requirement then. Rules on tables of stone. What does it mean when the New Covenant says, "I will put my laws in your mind and in your heart."? It means that God will put in our hearts the desire to obey. Is the desire to sin natural in us? Yes. I don't have to teach people to desire to sin. I don't have to have promotional programs for sinning. It's a natural desire. We have to push people to be good. God said, "I will put in your heart a desire to love God and to love your neighbour." In other words, law-keeping will become a spontaneous and natural thing in the converted person. It won't become rules.

Last week I received a letter. You see, last August I took a week of prayer at Weimar and the head of the NEWSTART program, the doctor

there, wrote to me and said, “Can you please help us. How do we practice righteousness by faith in our institution?” So I wrote back to him and said, “You can’t practice righteousness by faith in an institution and I will tell you why. Righteousness by faith is something that comes from the heart. You cannot practice righteousness by faith by rules.”

I gave him an example. I was there for a week and I could observe some things. There are some students that have come to Weimar on their own. They don’t need the rules that you have made. They don’t need it because for them, they don’t want to break those rules. Their desire is to get a Christian education and they find your rules in harmony with what they have come there for. But there were three students there who were sent there by their parents to be reformed. One of them was from Idaho, a girl. The other two were boys.

The girl came up to me and said, “When you go back to Idaho don’t ever tell my mother that Weimar is a wonderful place.”

I said, “Why?”

She said, “I don’t want to go through hell for another three years.” To her, Weimar was “hell.”

But the other kids said, “Boy, this is heaven on earth.”

What was the difference? The difference is that there had been a transformation of the heart. What the New Covenant does is, it doesn’t give you rules, it creates in you a desire and longing to do what is right. It becomes spontaneous. We don’t have to push people. So one of the provisions is that God creates a people who will have the same motivation that God has for us. So you get the idea that Christ’s thoughts become our thoughts. His desires will become our desires. His goals will become our goals. And Christ’s goal was to live for the Father and the human race.

I came down not to do my will but the will of My Father.

Did Christ enjoy doing the will of the Father? Or was it a burden to Him? Did He enjoy doing it? That was His joy. And so the Ten Commandments no longer becomes rules to the New Covenant people. It becomes a delight. What did David say?

I delight to do Thy will, Oh my God.

David was talking about the New Covenant relationship. This is the difference between the people under the Old Covenant and those under the New. The Old Covenant people do good things because it is a necessity. They have to pay tithe, otherwise they would not have their ticket to heaven, maybe because their church has told them that. They have to do this and they have to do that and it's a drudgery. So please remember that the first provision of the New Covenant is the change of motivation towards God's ideals as revealed in the Ten Commandments.

The second provision is:

I will be their God and they shall be My people.

That's the second half of verse ten. What does that mean? Remember what Jesus said to His disciples. "I don't treat you like servants. I treat you like a friend. I tell you everything I know." What God is saying here is that, "I don't regard you as sinners. I don't regard you as enemies. I regard you as my children. I will be your God and you will be my people." Turn to 1 John 3:1-3. This is what God had in mind in this second provision.

Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God [Not the enemies of God. Not the curse of God]: therefore, the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.

When we talk to God, we don't talk to Him as a judge or a lawgiver but as a Father who loves us and who will do anything for our benefit. Look at verse two:

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. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure.

John is saying here that every man who has this wonderful hope of being one with God wants to live the life of God, a life of purity. Go to Rom. 8:16,17 saying the same thing:

The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together..

Do we have to suffer in this world. Yes. Why? Because we are on enemy territory. The world is under the evil one. But who are under the New Covenant? We are God's people and He is our God. And God is able to save us. When He comes we shall be delivered. So number two provision is

that God has identified Himself with us. He is our God. We are His people. He has brought us back into His fold. God created us in Adam as our God and Creator. Adam turned his back to God. Through that we ran away from God. Now God comes back and says, “I want to bring you back into my fold and I can do it in a legal way because of the sacrifice of Christ.” That’s the second provision.

Now let’s look at the third provision in verse eleven:

And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest.

What does Paul mean here? There will be a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. It is not a head knowledge like we study about Australia and about the people of Australia. It is a dynamic relationship between you and God. The New Covenant does not put a distance between you and

God. In the Old Covenant God was up there and we were down here and we had to obey Him or He would zap us. In the New Covenant God and we are one, united together, and we don't have to admonish, "Please know God," for every one from the least to the greatest will know Him. In other words, we will have a personal knowledge of Him. That is why our studies are not enough. You need to take these studies and become acquainted personally with Jesus Christ. He must personally become your God.

I remember a statement that Billy Graham made some years ago. There was an argument in those days that God is dead. Robinson, the British scholar, is the one that came up with this idea. At that time, somebody asked Billy Graham, "How do you know that God is still living?" He didn't give any texts. He said, "I know because I talked with Him this morning." There was that relationship and we need to know God by this personal relationship.

Now we come to the fourth provision in verse twelve:

For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.

What is it that is preventing us from coming to God? When God created Adam and Eve, they had a living relationship. God and Adam and Eve would meet together every evening and have a talk. What happened when Adam and Eve sinned and God came to visit them? Did they run to Him? No. Why? They were afraid. What was the problem? They had sinned. You know when children have done wrong and they see their dad or mom, they hide. You can tell that something has gone wrong. The barrier between us and God has been removed by the blood of Jesus Christ.

For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.

Please notice that Paul is using different words here. "Unrighteousness" is a deliberate

disobedience. “Our sins” is missing the mark or our failure to reach the goals that God desires. “Our iniquities” have to do with our sinfulness. The word “iniquity” simply means “bent” or our innate sinfulness. All these are barriers between a Holy God and sinful man. And God says, “I will remember them no more.” In other words, in Christ we stand perfect. We stand perfect in nature. We stand perfect in character. We stand perfect in performance—in Christ. We can come to Christ without any barrier and, of course, Paul will bring this out a little more clearly in chapters nine and ten. Let me remind you of chapter ten and the first few verses:

For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. [These sacrifices of the earthly sanctuary did not make the sinners perfect.] For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged or cleansed would have had no more consciousness of sins.

But the earthly sacrifices did not do that. When you come to God in the name of Christ, God looks at you as if you were perfect. And so that's number 4, "There is no more remembrance of sin." As we look at this fourth provision I want to remind you of chapter seven verse twenty-eight where Paul moves from the priesthood of Christ to His sacrifice:

For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity [they were weak, they were sinners]; but the word of the oath [which is the New Covenant], which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore.

The actual text says, "He is perfect forever." We have a perfect priest forever and we come to God through Him. The conclusion of chapter eight is verse thirteen:

In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.

There in Africa, where there is much poverty, they wear clothes and shoes until they are absolutely useless. I was born there and I have that habit too. My wife sees holes in my shoes and she says, “You need to get a new pair.”

I say, “No, these are good enough.” One day they just disappear. I tell you, shoes are very precious to the Africans. So what do they do when they go to church? They walk barefooted and carry their shoes in their hands, not because it’s hot like some kids do here but because the soles of your feet can be replaced by your body but the soles of your shoes cost money. So they take them off. The question is here in America, we don’t use shoes until they wear out. Next year there is a new fashion. So what do we do? We give them to Dorcas [the Dorcas Society] so we can buy new shoes.

What Paul is saying here is that, “In a culture where things were getting old, what do you do with clothes that are now full of holes and torn?” You

don’t give them to Dorcas. You throw them away. The Old Covenant is ready to be thrown away. It has had its use. It is worn out. It cannot save us. It is not permanent. We must put on the New Covenant.

Now the New Covenant never gets old. And in the New Earth you can pick those beautiful flowers and they will never fade. And you won’t need artificial flowers any more folks. And you will not need sham or pretend righteousness.

So please remember that chapter eight concludes that we must give up the Old Covenant for the New Covenant. The Old has passed away. The New has come. This applied to the Jews of Paul’s day and it must also apply to us. We must give up the Old for the New.

In concluding, I will say this much: you cannot say, “I want both covenants.” You have to give up one for the other. You cannot say, “I plus Christ.” That won’t work. It is, “Not I (which is the Old Covenant), but Christ.” May God help us that we

will become New Covenant people and, when we do, we will not need incentives because God will write the law in the heart. We will not have to tell people, “Know the Lord.” We will not have to push them because, from the least to the greatest, we will know the Lord. The greatest need of this church, for every believer, is to enter fully into the New Covenant experience and the full provision that God has given us. May God bless us.

Chapter 19

The Heavenly Sanctuary (Part 1)

Hebrews 9:1-28

We are dealing with a very important passage in chapter nine of Hebrews. It is a chapter that has caused a lot of problems and a lot of discussion in our church. So before we actually look at this chapter there are four things I would like you to notice:

1. The issue whether Christ went into the Holy Place or the Most Holy Place in the heavenly sanctuary did not exist in the apostolic days in the minds of the people of that period. You know the argument, in 31 A.D. did He go to the Most Holy Place, or the Holy Place? This is a problem today in our church, but please remember that this problem did not exist in the minds of the people of

the Apostolic period. Therefore we must not look in chapter nine for the problem or the solution, because it is not dealing with that. We must not project our problems and views into that chapter.

2. There are several words that I want take up right now. The word “holiest” in verse eight and the words “holy place” in verse twelve, and the word “holy places” plural, in verse twenty-four. There is one more, chapter ten and verse nineteen, the word “holiest.” These are different English words. They come from the same Greek root word and they all have the same meaning and refer to the heavenly sanctuary. Sometimes people bring up these words and say, “This word means Holy Place and the other word means Most Holy Place.” Well, the issue was not existing between holy and most holy place. I will come to that in a moment. But these words all refer to the heavenly sanctuary.

3. We must remember that things in and of themselves are not holy. What makes a place or a thing most holy is the presence of God. You remember when God appeared to Moses in the

burning bush. The bush wasn't holy. The ground wasn't holy. The presence of God made the place holy. Since God dwells in the heavenly sanctuary please remember that the heavenly sanctuary is Most Holy.

4. What is the issue in Hebrews nine? The issue is between the earthly sanctuary which the Jews were still looking upon and the heavenly sanctuary where Christ went. The argument of Hebrews nine is this: the heavenly sanctuary with Christ's priestly ministry there has superseded the earthly sanctuary. In other words the earthly sanctuary is no longer valid. The heavenly sanctuary is now what we must turn our eyes to. That's the whole message of Hebrews nine.

With that in mind let us now look step by step at this chapter. The first five verses of Hebrews nine is a description of the earthly sanctuary:

Then verily the first covenant had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary.

In other words, the earthly sanctuary was something that was established by God. The words "divine service" mean God is the One who instructed Moses to build the sanctuary. The word "worldly" is earthly. It is earthly in contrast to the heavenly. In verse two:

For there was a tabernacle made; the first, wherein was the candlestick, and the table, and the shewbread; which is called the sanctuary [we call it the holy place]. And after the second veil, the tabernacle, which is called the Holiest of all [which is the Most Holy Place]...

I want you to notice verse four, "Which had the golden censor." There is a problem here because normally we place the golden censor in the holy place. Now this is true but in 1 Kings 6:22, the KJV is not very clear, but in the original it puts the golden censor in the Most Holy Place and obviously Paul is quoting here from that passage. In the temple in Jerusalem the golden censor was also in the Most Holy Place. Sometimes it was in

the holy place during the exodus but in the temple in Jerusalem it was in the Most Holy Place. So should you see this discrepancy it's not a mistake, he's quoting from 1 Kings 22.

...Which had the golden censor and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant [The Ten Commandments]; And over it [i.e., the mercy seat] the cherubim of glory shadowing the mercy seat; of which we cannot now speak particularly.

Paul in these first five verses is giving a general description of the earthly sanctuary. And he says, "Look, the reason I'm doing this is not because I want to give you a study on this. I'm giving you a general description. I'm not going in detail and I'm not discussing the significance of all this." Then why is he describing it? Well, we will see shortly. Then in verses six and seven he describes the two services, the daily and the yearly. Verse six is the daily:

Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always [daily, morning and evening] into the first tabernacle, [the holy place] accomplishing the service of God. But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people.

So what Paul is doing here is giving a brief description of the earthly sanctuary and a brief description of the daily and the yearly service. Then he makes this statement:

The Holy Ghost [in other words, inspiration] this signifying that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing:

He is saying that the earthly sanctuary and its services were functioning as long as Christ had not yet come. But when He came and died and went back to heaven the earthly sanctuary came to an end. The earthly sanctuary and its services was not

a permanent thing. It was something temporary. It was to come to an end. In verse nine he explains:

Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience; which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal [worldly or earthly] ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation.

The reason we are reading verses nine and ten is that in verse eight there are those two words, “first tabernacle.” You have the same expression in verse six but in verse six it applies to the holy place and in verse eight it applies to the whole of the sanctuary service. How do I know? The context makes it clear. The context is telling us that what verse eight is describing is the earthly sanctuary with its services which was only a type, which was a “figure” says Paul in verse nine, and which did not have power to save. Notice a very important word in verse nine the last part:

...That could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience;

In other words, all that the earthly service could do was give people a hope. It did not remove guilt. The blood of bulls and goats cannot do that. Chapter ten will bring that out. Now let's turn to verse eleven, here we have the reality, but in contrast:

Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle,...

Please notice that the contrast is between the earthly tabernacle which was a figure, a type, of the heavenly sanctuary which is the reality.

...not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building.

We have now two buildings. One made by human hands on earth and one made by God in heaven. It is very clear from this passage that there

is a heavenly sanctuary. Verse eleven refers to the heavenly sanctuary:

And neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption.

If you have the KJV it will add “for us.” Please notice that is supplied. The original does not say that. The original really implies that He obtained eternal redemption for every human being. Whether you take advantage of it is a different matter. Christ obtained salvation and redemption for all man. This is through His blood with which He entered into the Holy Place meaning the heavenly sanctuary, having obtained eternal redemption. Go to verse thirteen:

For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh;

That is a contrast. The earthly could not cleanse the conscience. It only cleanses the flesh.

In other words, the act, the services gave the people a hope. It actually did not remove guilt. Verse fourteen continues:

How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge [or cleanse] your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

He refers to the services of the earthly sanctuary as “dead works.” Why dead works? What makes it dead? There is no salvation. That is one way of putting it. Did the Jews look at the earthly sanctuary as a symbol or were they practising the earthly sanctuary as a means of salvation? Had they perverted the sanctuary service? Yes. So the expression “dead works” also means legalism — doing something to attain to salvation. He calls it dead works because by the works of the law can no flesh be justified. The fact that they offered sacrifices could not remove sin. It was only a type.

So what Paul is doing is trying to turn the

minds of these Christian Jews, who were still looking at the temple and its services. He says "Look, folks, that service with all its ministry and sacrifices cannot remove sin. It cannot cleanse your conscience. It is only a type. If you rely on it, it's dead works. Let us turn from that to the true sanctuary which purges our conscience that we may serve the living God." This is very important because God is not concerned so much as to what you do but why you do it. In other words, unless your conscience has been cleansed from guilt you can never serve God out of love. You will serve Him out of fear. That's what he is saying. Turn to Romans chapter seven for another similar concept in different words. Rom. 7:6:

But now we are delivered from the law [the law here means the Torah, the five books of Moses and to be delivered from the law means to be delivered from it's authority], that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve [serve who?...God] in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.

In other words, legalism serves God not out of love for Him but because we want a reward or because we are scared of the judgment. What Paul is saying in Heb. 9:14 is that once we realize that Christ has cleansed our conscience by His blood we can now serve the living God with a right motive. That is why it is important that we understand justification. If we don't, the fruit which is holiness of living, will never be correct, at least motivation-wise. Continuing with verse fifteen:

And for this cause [that is, because He has cleansed us] He is the Mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.

So the first testament was the promise and the new testament is the reality. Verse sixteen continues:

For where a testament is, there must also of

necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth.

Paul is playing with two words here. What does the word “testament” mean here? A will. In the Greek there are two words for “testament.” One word is “soonthaykay” and the other is “deeathaykay.” ”Soonthaykay” means a contract and “deeathaykay” means a will. What is the difference between a contract and a will? In a contract there are always two parties. The Old Covenant was a contract. God gave the law and the people said, “We will do it.” That was the deal. God said, “This is my standard of righteousness.” And they said, “All that you say, we will do.” That was the contract. Did they break it? Yes. Therefore God could not take them to heaven under the old covenant. It could not save them.

Now a will is not a contract. A will is made up by one person for the benefit of the others. So the New Testament is not a contract but a will. Who made the will? God made the will. What was the

will? That He would offer salvation to all men. That's what we call, "the eternal inheritance." When does a will become effective? At death. When Christ died the will became effective. Nobody can change that will after the death of the testator. That's what Paul is saying.

So why are you doubting your salvation? God promised it and now He fulfils it. Nothing can change that. In Heb.9:18-20, Paul is going back to the old covenant and he says:

Even the contract was also sealed by blood. For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water and scarlet wool, and hyssop and sprinkled both the book, and all the people, saying, This is the blood of the testament which God has joined unto you.

This is the contract. And they promised, "We will do it." Now he goes back to the law in verse twenty-two:

And almost all things are by the law purged with blood...

Now why does he use the word “almost”? If you were very poor and couldn’t even get a dove in the old covenant you could bring just a little bit of flour and that would take care of it. It was because of poverty that God made this provision.

And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.

Now please remember, blood in the Bible meant “life.” Keep this in mind. Blood symbolized life. Let me give you a couple of texts, first of all turn to Leviticus 17:11:

For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood [that is, the shed blood] that maketh an atonement for the soul.

Deuteronomy 12:23 makes it very clear that the life of the flesh is in the blood. On the cross Jesus laid down His life for us. He met the promise, “I will die for your sins.” On the cross He died. So here we have in verse twenty-two the shed blood of Jesus Christ. Going back to Hebrews 9:23, a very important verse:

It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.

I want to pause and explain what Paul is saying here. Look back at the earthly sanctuary. The sinner would bring a lamb or the priest would do it on behalf of the sinner. The sinner or the priest would put his hands on the animal and confess all his sins or if it was the priest the sins of the people. Now what did this imply? It implied that the sins were transferred from the sinner to the animal. Then the priest killed the animal which paid the price for those sins. Then he took the blood into the sanctuary. Did the blood contain sin in it or

was the blood purified of sin when it was taken into the sanctuary? Symbolically, it contained sin.

Here is the problem and we must face the issue. Did not Christ do away with sin on the cross? Look at verse twenty-two. Does the shedding of the blood solve the sin problem? Yes or no? Did Christ take care of sin on the cross? Did He pay the penalty for sin of the past or even what's happening today and tomorrow until Christ comes? All of it. Then He took care of it even though it is happening. The reason I'm bringing this out is that we have come under fire on this issue. He paid the price. Let us say that I have stolen some money and I'm caught and sentenced to ten years imprisonment. I go to the penitentiary and spend ten years. When I come out of the penitentiary that sin has been taken care of. The police can't touch me.

I'm simply putting myself in the shoes of our evangelical brothers so that you are aware of the problem. When Christ took His blood to the sanctuary in heaven, does the sanctuary in heaven

become defiled? That's the issue. Did the earthly sanctuary become defiled by the blood? Look at verse twenty-three.

It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these.

So did the earthly sanctuary need purification? Does the text say so? Yes. Then he says that if the earthly was the pattern of the things of heaven, and the earthly was purified.

But the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.

What is Paul saying in this second half of verse twenty-three? He is saying that the blood of bulls and goats cannot cleanse the heavenly sanctuary. He is saying the heavenly sanctuary does need cleaning, but it cannot be done by goat blood. It has to have a better sacrifice. So verse twenty-three makes it very clear that the sanctuary on earth and the sanctuary in heaven have to be cleansed. When was the earthly sanctuary cleansed? On the

day of atonement. In case we have forgotten what we were taught, please turn your Bibles to Lev.16. You can read verses 29-34 on your own but I want to point you to one verse here, verse thirty-three. This is talking about the Day of Atonement:

And he [that is, the high priest] shall make an atonement for the holy sanctuary, and he shall make an atonement for the tabernacle of the congregation, and for the altar, and he shall make an atonement for the priests, and for all the people of the congregation.

Notice that the earlier verses used the word “cleansed” there. So the earthly sanctuary was cleansed on the day of atonement. In Heb. 9:23 it says clearly that the heavenly and the earthly sanctuary both need to be cleansed. Let’s see what the New International Version says (verse 23):

It was necessary, then, for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these sacrifices, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.

Okay, in other words, the heavenly sanctuary has to be purified, that's the word the Bible uses, with "better sacrifices." So what do we do? How do we defend our teaching? Number one, this verse already deals with the fact that both the earthly and the heavenly sanctuaries need cleansing. What defiled it? Sin. But the sins were taken care of. When the price of sin is paid is it not taken care of? The blood of Christ cleanses us from all sin. What is the blood of Christ? The cross! Why should the heavenly sanctuary be cleansed if the blood of Christ has already done it? Now please don't expect an answer today. I want you to wrestle with this. When you witness to others you will face this problem. The problem is not only with non-Adventists but it has come inside the church now.

You see the issue is that some say the Day of Atonement took place in 31 A.D. If it did take place in 31 A.D. then we have to throw 1844 out of the window. We have been taught that the Day of Atonement began in 1844 A.D. The Christian Church says, "No, the Day of Atonement was

fulfilled in 31 A.D." And now that teaching has crept into our church. Ford teaches it, and there are many who are within our church who will not preach it but in their hearts they believe that 31 A.D. took care of everything; that the heavenly, the earthly, that the people were all cleansed in 31 A.D. What do we do?

Look at Rom. 5:11 and look at the grammar, the verb. This is not talking about 1844 A.D., it is talking about the cross. The context is clear:

We rejoice because we have now received the atonement.

I'm not saying that. The Bible is saying that. We have an answer but I want you to wrestle with this problem.

Please turn to Romans 8 and verse 34. I am giving you answers that you will get back from our fellow Christians. I will not answer the question here. I just want to expose you. We have a problem that we have to deal honestly with.

Romans 8:34 says that He died for us and is at the right hand of God making intercession. That is applying His blood — before the Day of Atonement.

By the way, the goat which was sacrificed on the Day of Atonement which cleansed the Sanctuary also points to the cross. Because Christ did not die again in 1844.

The first time we came under fire was from the Danish theologian by the name of Kirkegaard. He came up with one of our Danish ministers. Because, you see, the Christian Church takes the position that both the goats on the Day of Atonement represent Christ. We take the position that only the Lord's goat represents Christ. On the Day of Atonement, what is placed on Azazel? The sins of the believers or the unbelievers. The believers. This is what Kirkegaard says, "If ultimately Satan bears the sins of the believers then ultimately we are making Satan our sin bearer, therefore we are making him our saviour."

What do we do with that? I want you folks to read and study. I have no problem. I have wrestled with this for a long time but we have to face this issue.

They say to us, “Can’t you understand that Satan is not our sin-bearer?” Whichever way you look at it there are problems. Because if you say that the scapegoat is Satan, then you have to face their charge, “Can’t you see that you are making Satan the saviour of the believers?” And if you say, “No,” they will say, “Boy, you need your head examined.” We have to be honest. The only thing that I want to make clear to you is verse twenty-three of Hebrews nine. When you read Heb.9:23 does it seem clear to you that both the earthly and the heavenly sanctuaries need cleansing? Is it clear to you? At least we have one text that backs us up.

But Paul doesn’t explain why it needs cleansing because Hebrews doesn’t deal with that. The Jews did not have a problem. The Jews believed that the sanctuary had to be cleansed. In fact the cleansing of the sanctuary was the most important feast day

for the Jews, even today, Yom Kippur. So it is not a Jewish problem. It is our problem. Is that clear? So we don't find the answer in Hebrews. All we find in Hebrews is that it does say that both the earthly and the heavenly sanctuary need cleansing.

The only difference is that you cannot use the blood of bulls and goats to cleanse the heavenly sanctuary because the blood of bulls and goats doesn't have the power to cleanse. That blood is only a type or a shadow.

We must use verse 23 as a statement of fact. Even though it doesn't explain why and how, it does make it clear that, just like the earthly sanctuary was cleansed, the heavenly sanctuary had to be cleansed. Did the sacrifices of the earthly sanctuary cleanse the earthly sanctuary? Did they really cleanse the sanctuary? Symbolically, yes, but really, no. That is why Paul says it had to be done again and again. If they had cleansed it you would not have to repeat it. Now going to verse 24 we read:

For Christ is not entered into the holy places [that is the earthly sanctuary] made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; [that is of animals] For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

The word “world” here means the “age.” Please remember that here the word “world” is not the best translation. Because to Adventists the end of the world is the end of the physical world when it will be destroyed. Whereas when Paul uses the word “age,” it means “the period.”

When did God give the promise of salvation? When did He give it to the human race the first time? It was to Adam and Eve. Then He repeated it to Noah. He repeated it to Abraham and so on. When was that promise fulfilled? At the cross.

That is the end of the age. The promise came to an end.

But now once [the word “once” means only one sacrifice] in the end of the age hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

Did the cross put away sin? The text says so. If there is any doubt the last part makes it clear.

And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many;

When did He bear our sins? On the cross.

And unto them that look for Him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.

What did he mean by the phrase, “without sin”? He will not deal with the sin problem any more when he comes the second time. He will come the second time to bring salvation.

If you omit verse twenty-three it is very hard to prove from the book of Hebrews the cleansing of the sanctuary. But verse twenty-three makes it clear that there is a cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary that has to take place. The basis of atonement is always the cross. The Lord's goat, which was sacrificed on the Day of Atonement, points to the cross.

"The sacrifice of Christ as an atonement for sin is the great truth around which all other truths cluster. In order to be rightly understood and appreciated, every truth in the Word of God, [including the Day of Atonement] from Genesis to Revelation, must be studied in the light that streams from the cross of Calvary." Gospel Workers, p. 315.

Then what is taking place after 1844? What has to be cleansed if sin has already been taken care of? You wrestle with that folks, because this is an area where we have to try and find a solution. One of the reasons that many Adventists are scared to

witness is because they will be bombarded with questions that they cannot answer. And I want to give you an answer. But first I want you to wrestle with the issue. I want you to put yourself in the shoes of our Evangelical Christians and see how they look at this.

Chapter 20

The Heavenly Sanctuary (Part 2)

Hebrews 9:1-28

As you know, we have come under fire on this question of the cleansing of the sanctuary. In this chapter, we will go back to the text of Hebrews 9:23 which we touched in the last chapter. We will start at verse twenty-two to get the context:

And almost all things are by the law purged [taken away] with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission. It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified [cleansed] with these;

The earthly sanctuary had to be cleansed. “The patterns” referred to the earthly sanctuary.

But the heavenly things themselves with better

sacrifices than these.

In other words, you cannot cleanse the heavenly sanctuary with the blood of bulls and goats. You need something better. Verse twenty-four continues:

For Christ is not entered into the holy places [as I've already explained this refers to the heavenly sanctuary] made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us;

All that Heb. 9:23 is saying is that the heavenly sanctuary needs to be cleansed, just like the earthly sanctuary was cleansed. The only difference is that the sanctuary in heaven cannot be cleansed with the blood of bulls and goats. Paul doesn't explain to us here how and why the heavenly sanctuary is to be cleansed. I'll tell you why. Please look at verse five. He has explained the earthly sanctuary in the first four verses and then he goes on to say in the second part of verse five:

Of which we cannot now speak particularly.

In other words, “I have explained the earthly sanctuary but I have not given you this outline of the earthly sanctuary so that I may give you its significance.” The purpose of Hebrews nine is simply to show that the reality, the heavenly sanctuary, is better than the earthly. The earthly was a shadow; the heavenly is the reality. The purpose of Hebrews nine is not to explain the details. All we get from verse twenty-three is that the heavenly sanctuary had to be cleansed, just like the earthly.

But why, how? Wasn’t it cleansed on the cross? Haven’t we received the atonement on the cross? Well, first of all, we must never use Heb. 9:23 to explain Dan. 8:14. The contexts don’t agree. Dan. 8:14 is in the context of the Little Horn which has polluted the sanctuary, whereas Heb. 9:23 is dealing with the heavenly sanctuary as the reality of the type or the shadow which is the cleansing of the earthly sanctuary. So, really speaking, we need to go to Leviticus sixteen to understand the

cleansing of the sanctuary of Hebrews nine. Leviticus sixteen explains the details of the cleansing of the sanctuary.

Turn to Leviticus sixteen. We will not deal with the whole chapter. We will only deal with the issue of the cleansing of the sanctuary which is described in the ritual of the two goats in verses seven to ten and verse twenty to twenty-two. The question is, “Does the heavenly sanctuary need cleansing?” We have come under fire; the reason for this is that the blood of Christ, which He took with Him after the cross, doesn’t defile the sanctuary. We say that, in the earthly sanctuary, the priest or the sinner confessed his sin on the lamb. The lamb was slain and the blood was taken into the sanctuary. The record of the sins was kept in heaven. The problem is that, once a year, the curtain and the sanctuary had to be cleansed. What is it that transfers our sins from the earth to heaven? It is the blood. If the blood of Christ defiles the sanctuary that sounds blasphemous. So we need to deal with the issue. Look at verse seven. This is dealing with what the priest does on the day of atonement:

And he shall take the two goats, and present them before the Lord at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.

We as a church take the position that the one goat which was chosen for the Lord represents Christ. The other goat represents Satan. We are unique in this position as a denomination. There are non-Adventist scholars who agree with us, but [as a whole] the other Christians take the position that both the goats represent Christ. So here is where the problem is. Look at verses twenty and twenty-two:

And when he had made an end of reconciling the holy place, and the tabernacle of the congregation, and the altar, he shall bring the live goat [that's the second goat]: And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel.

Keep in mind, the priest comes out of the

sanctuary, he places his hands on the live goat, and he confesses all the iniquities of the children of Israel:

And all their transgressions and all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness: And the goat shall bear upon him all their [i.e., children of Israel] iniquities unto a land not inhabited: and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness:

If the live goat, which we say is Satan, bears the iniquities of the children of Israel, then aren't we making Satan our sin bearer? That's the accusation of the Evangelicals, and it's also coming from within our church. So we need to settle what the issue is. Does the heavenly sanctuary need cleansing almost two thousand years after the cross? Let's look at it step by step. Look at verse seven:

And he shall take the two goats, and present them before the Lord at the door of the tabernacle

of the congregation.

What was the condition of those two goats? What were the qualifications of the two goats? Did the goats have to meet certain specifications? They had to be without blemish. One of them or both of them? Both of them had to be without blemish, so that you could interchange the goats. You cast lots and the lot falls on either this goat or the other. So we must be clear that the second goat doesn't represent Satan as we know him but Lucifer as God created him, because both Christ and Lucifer were spotless.

Look now at the second goat for a moment. What is the name of the second goat in your Bible? In the KJV it is "Scapegoat." In the original it is "Azazel," and some of the modern translations will have that word. What does the word "Azazel" mean? In the Hebrew, words have meanings. What does the word mean? We do not know today because the Hebrew language changed in the ninth century and we do not know exactly what it means.

But here is what we have from the best of the scholars. According to the Hebrew scholars (these are not Christian scholars, but Jewish scholars), “Azazel” is the name of the devil. So the Hebrew scholars back us up. We do have not the Hebrew manuscript but we do have the Syriac manuscript, which is one of the oldest manuscripts. The Syriac manuscript for “Azazel” has this phrase “the angel that revolted.” Very interesting and a very reliable manuscript. Most Christian scholars interpret Azazel as the Scapegoat. What does scapegoat mean? If you looked it up in a dictionary, what does it mean? We use it in our English language.

Someone has to take the blame. That is the issue! When you deal with sin in a legal sense, as a transgression of the law, there are three things involved. First there is guilt. Then there is punishment. Then there is responsibility.

We were driving once with the president of our union who is a Swede. We were driving in a Volkswagen in Ethiopia. There was a man walking on the side of the road. We were keeping the speed

limit and he turned around and saw his friend. Without looking he just turned on the road. There was no way we could stop him. He turned right into our car and his head hit the windscreen. He died instantly. Of course, the parents of this man took us to court. We had to admit that it was our car that killed him. We couldn’t deny that. The witnesses that saw the whole thing all agreed that this man crossed the road without looking. We killed the man, but who was responsible for his death? He was responsible. Therefore we were set free, even though we were involved in the man’s death.

The thing is this: who is responsible for sin? One of the clear teachings of the Bible is the sovereignty of God. That means that nothing happens in the universe without the permission of God. That’s what it means. God is sovereign. Did God know that Lucifer would sin? Yes. Then why did He create him? That’s one of the big questions.

If God is sovereign, then He has allowed Satan to come in. He has allowed Satan to tempt Adam

and Eve. This has created a problem and this was not solved on the cross. Let me give you an illustration. When Adam sinned and God came to visit him, what did he say to God when God asked why did you sin? He said, “This woman, whom You gave....” So upon whom was he putting the blame? On God. Today you will hear it all the time: “If God is love why is He allowing all the sicknesses and problems? If God is love, why is He allowing a drought in America?” These are the kind of questions that have to be solved if the great controversy is to come to an end.

So what does God do? God actually assumes the blame! He assumes the blame until the Day of Atonement. There is a text which I want you to look for, it’s in the Old Testament, where God is speaking. He says, “I have created evil.” You will find many texts in the Bible where God assumes the blame for many things. For instance God said, “I have hardened Pharaoh’s heart.” These texts cause a lot of problems to many Christians. You wonder why those texts are there. Well, it’s because God assumes the blame until the Day of

Atonement. Because He's sovereign and He allows things to happen, He has to assume the blame. Does He assume the blame for a good reason? Yes. But we will not know it until the judgment.

There is another text and I want you to look for this one too. I'll give you a little more help, this in the Psalms. David says:

I will praise your name with uprightness of heart when I know of your righteous judgment.

Even in the minds of Christians, there are questions. Now we see through a glass darkly but then, face to face. When the Day of Atonement is over every knee will bow down, including Satan, and admit, "God you are right." Every knee will confess. The purpose of the Day of Atonement is to put the blame where it belongs. And that is on Satan. Turn to Ezek. 28:15:

Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created [That's Azazel. He was blameless. He was perfect.], till iniquity was found

in thee.

How can sin come out of something that is perfect? That's a mystery. It is called the mystery of iniquity. The word "mystery" means something that can be seen and can be known but cannot be explained. How can a sinless being produce sin? I can't explain that. We cannot explain the fall. But it is a fact. Neither can we explain how God can produce righteousness out of sinful flesh. That's also a mystery. Can God do it? Yes.

Lets go back to Leviticus sixteen. The next question I want to bring before you is, "Why did God instruct Moses and the Jews that they had to use goats instead of sheep?" If you look at your Bibles you will discover that goats represent or symbolize sin. Look at Matt.25:33:

And He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left.

He divides the human race. The sheep are on one side and the goats on the other. Who are the

sheep? The righteous or the sinners? The righteous. Please notice the goats represent sin. Look also at verse forty-one:

Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:

Notice that is referring to the goats. Goats always symbolize sin in the Bible .

Back to Leviticus sixteen. Who created this world? Who actually did the speaking? Christ. We have Christ the Creator and Lucifer the originator of sin. The issue is, “Which of these two are to blame for sin?” That’s the issue in the Day of Atonement. Who is to blame for sin?

What does the priest do with the goat upon whom the lot fell for the Lord? Look at verse nine:

And Aaron shall bring the goat upon which the Lord’s lot fell, and offer him for a sin offering.

The Lord's goat is Christ who takes the guilt and the punishment of our sin. Did the cross deal with the issue of blame? The answer is No. The cross did not deal with the blame. Who was to blame for sin? The cross only took our guilt and our punishment. As far as we are concerned, there is an atonement between us and God through the blood of Christ. But the issue now is, "Who is to blame for sin?" Let me give you another text, Rom.7:19,20. Who is Paul talking about? Is he talking about believers or unbelievers? That is not the issue here. But listen to what He says in Romans 7 in two places, Romans 7:19,20:

For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.

What is he saying here? "I want to do good but instead I'm doing evil." As far as the choice is concerned, what choice is Paul making in verse nineteen? Good or evil? I'm not dealing with performance now but with choice. He chooses to do good. But in performance he does evil. Look at verse twenty:

Now if I do that I would not [if I’m doing what I did not choose to do], it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

Who is Paul putting the blame on? Sin that dwells in me. We call that indwelling sin. Look at the next verse:

I find then a law [principle] when I would do good, evil is present with me. [I want to keep the law, but instead I’m not keeping it, I’m breaking it. And you will find this in the next verses.] For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

Who put that law of sin in you? When God came to Adam whom did Adam blame? He blamed Eve and then God. Then God went to Eve. Who did Eve blame? The serpent. Please notice that God did not go to the serpent in the Garden of Eden. Why? Because the Day of Atonement is going to

settle this. In the Day of Atonement, God will say to Satan, “You are to blame.” And he will admit it because all the evidence is there.

So what is happening on the day of atonement is that the priest will go into the sanctuary and cleanse the sanctuary. He will cleanse the people, the congregation from the guilt and punishment. Then He will take the blame for sin and He will lay it on Satan.

Here is a question: When you accepted Christ did you make a decision not to sin? Did you promise God to be good? I’m not asking about your performance. Supposing you could carry out your choices, would you sin tomorrow? So as far as your choice is concerned, would you chose to sin? No. But we are sinning. I’m doing it. Why are we sinning? Because we have what we call the law of sin in our members.

Who put that law of sin there? Do you blame God or do you blame Lucifer? Who is the one that originated it? Lucifer took that sin and injected that

sin into mankind through Adam and Eve. The result is this that the world today is blaming God for the mess that we are in on this earth.

No one is talking about deliberate sin. That's why I said that we cannot explain the fall. Why did Adam sin? Why did he think he sinned? What did Adam say? He said, "This woman that You gave me.... Don't put the blame on me, I had no intention of eating that forbidden fruit, but this woman...." He actually put the blame on God. Eve put the blame on the serpent. But who is to blame? God or the serpent? That is what the Day of Atonement will settle. The great controversy cannot come to an end unless the heavenly sanctuary is cleansed from the blame of sin. That's why the word "Azazel" means, "The angel that takes the blame."

So what happens is that the Lord's goat takes the guilt and punishment; Azazel takes the blame. Please notice that the Azazel goat is not killed. What do you do with it? He is taken into the wilderness. Why? For one thousand years, Satan

will have the opportunity to investigate his own case. For that thousand years, he has no one to tempt because no one is there. He has a thousand years when he will be able to contemplate what he has done to this world.

The Lord's goat shed blood but the scapegoat shed no blood because he has to contemplate what a mess he's made. Let us approach this from another angle. When Lucifer sinned, did he think he was doing a good thing? Or did he think he was doing a bad thing?

He said that he was trying to improve the lot of the angels. There's something here that is very important and we need to understand it. The love of God, which is the basis of His government, has no self in it. "Love seeketh not her own." When you look at it philosophically, the love of self sounds very convincing. "You cannot be happy unless you love self." So the idea of self-love sounds right. There is that text is Proverbs that says, "There's a way that seems right."

So Lucifer felt that his way of self-love was better than God's way where there is no self. So God said, "Go ahead, I will allow you to develop sin," because that's what the meaning of sin is. Sin is turning toward self. God said, "I will allow you to develop this world on the principle of self." This world has been developed on the principle of self for the last six thousand years. Has the world improved? No. If you look at the history of this world, the moment you lift up the principle of self, what happens to society? Does it become better or does it become worse? It becomes worse. After two thousand years, the world had become so terrible that the knowledge of God was almost wiped out. God said, "I will destroy the world and give it a new start."

And you have the same trend for the next two thousand years when God gave the gospel to the Jews. Did the Jews improve the situation even though He gave them the oracles of God? The Jews had the explicit knowledge of God. Did it help them? What happened to them? It became worse

and worse and worse.

Then Christ came and redeemed us and established the Christian Church. Has the church been getting better and better? What's the history of the Christian Church? Take the nineteenth and twentieth centuries when God allowed the world to increase in knowledge — scientific knowledge, technology. Has science solved our problem? It has solved our problem in terms of amenities of life. Now I can press a button and my dishes are all washed. In that sense, it has improved. But as far as the situation of the world is concerned, is it a better place in which to live? Has crime decreased? No. So has science solved the problem? No. Everything that has been tried has failed because self, sin doesn't improve things. It makes it worse.

But the thing is this, that the Day of Atonement will put the blame of sin where it belongs. Christ accepted the guilt and punishment and paid for it on the cross but the responsibility, the blame for sin will be placed upon Satan. He will not be killed. He will be sent into the wilderness for one

thousand years. Does Lucifer repent after the one thousand years? He acknowledges that God has been right in the controversy but he still operates on the self-sin principle when he leads his army of angels and men against the city of God.

Satan and his angels are a solidarity so they operate as one and reap the same results of rebellion. No human being is present during the thousand years. And he has no permission to go beyond this earth during that time. He can only remain here on this earth. He cannot go beyond it. In that sense, he is bound. Remember that he will have a thousand years to contemplate what he has done to this world, but does he repent? No, he does not repent. Therefore, he himself admits that sin must be destroyed. At the end of the thousand years, Satan and his angels will be destroyed.

The word “law” in Romans seven [“the law of sin”] is used in the same way that we use the law of gravity. It’s a force. The human will is not a law because the human will is changeable. A law means a constant unending force, just like the law

of gravity. It's a constant force that is existing day and night, seven days a week, all the year round. In our human body, there is a force towards sin. Paul calls it "the law of sin." And this force is constant. You can defy that force by your willpower but you can never conquer it. For example, at the end of a camp meeting, you may make a resolution. You may say, "From now on I am not going to do this." What are you doing? You are defying the law of sin. Five days later you become tired. You are back to normal, the environment has changed back to a normal environment, and the will becomes weak and the law of sin remains constant, and when the will is weaker than the law of sin the law of sin takes over.

Rom. 7:22 mentions the law of God, which refers to a principle. Please remember, God's law is a principle and the principle is love. That's why God's love is constant. Human love is not a principle. God's love is constant. He loves you whether you are good or bad.

In Rom.7:22 Paul is saying:

I delight in the law of God.

In other words, “I delight in love.” And, of course, love is manifested in the Ten Commandments. “I want to love God, I want to love my fellow men. I delight in that principle. But there is another principle in my members.” Where does he delight in the law of God? In the mind. Where does the law of sin dwell? In our nature. So look at the last verse of chapter seven:

...So then [he says, “This is my condition”] with my mind I serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.

Of these two forces, which is greater: the law of the mind or the law of sin? Since the fall, which is stronger?

This is the struggle of Romans seven. I chose to do right but I find that I am doing wrong. Please remember that Romans seven is not dealing with Christ or the Holy Spirit. It is dealing with sinful

flesh which has the law of sin, and the mind which wants to do good. These two forces, the law of sin and the law of the Spirit, met in Christ. Now there are three laws: the law of your mind, the law of sin, and the law of the Spirit. The law of the Spirit is found in chapter eight, verse two. In chapter seven what Paul is saying is that the law of sin is greater, stronger, than the law of the mind. The mind cannot conquer the law of sin.

Did God create man with the law of sin? No. Who injected the law of sin in our members? Satan. Satan put the virus into Adam through Eve. First Satan deceived Eve, then he used her as a tool to get Adam. Then, through Adam, we all were born with the law of sin. Please remember that when the law of the Spirit and the law of sin meet — both are constant forces — which is stronger? The law of sin or the law of the Spirit? The law of the Spirit is stronger. That is in chapter eight of Romans. This chapter is dealing with the law of the Spirit against the law of sin. Paul says the law of the Spirit has set us free from the law of sin in Christ. But chapter seven is not dealing with

Christ. It is dealing with the law of sin versus the law. Who is to blame for the law of sin? That blame is what Lucifer has to take. If God takes the blame for our law of sin then the great controversy can never come to an end. So sin will eventually be wiped out, but God will do it in a righteous and a just way so that even Satan will admit that sin is not good. But he will not repent. Because he will not repent, he has to be destroyed.

Chapter 21

Christ’s Perfect Sacrifice

Hebrews 10:1-22

The basis for this study is found in Heb. 10:1-22. This is covering Christ’s perfect sacrifice. What Paul is doing in this passage is contrasting the sacrificial system given through the ceremonial laws to the Jews through Moses, with the sacrifice of Christ. His main purpose is to show the Jewish Christians that the sacrifices that they were offering — the blood of bulls and goats and lambs etc. — had no salvic value [i.e., no salvation in them]. They were only a shadow. They were only a type. The emphasis should be on the reality which is Christ and Him crucified.

I don’t need to remind you that at the heart of human redemption is the cross of Christ. This truth is often referred to in the New Testament by the expression “the blood of Christ.” This is the theme of Heb. 10:1-22. Needless to say, this is a very

important subject because the cross of Christ was the central message of the New Testament. When you read the words, “blood of Christ,” it is not referring to His literal blood. You see, blood in the Old Testament symbolized life. We are told in the Old Testament that the life of the flesh is in the blood. The blood, therefore, refers to the life of Christ and shed blood refers to His life that was laid down in death.

We human beings cannot live without blood. We can give maybe a pint of blood in terms of donation, but if we lose our blood, we lose life. When I was in Uganda, I had two translators. One of them was Dr. Kusaka, who is now the prime minister of the country. The other one was also a highly educated man, Mr. Kalabu. One day some of the soldiers of Amin’s army came along and pointed a gun at him and said, “Give me the keys of your car” and, out of fear, he gave them the keys and, after they had taken them, they shot him through the arm. His wife panicked. The soldiers took off, but she panicked. All she had to do was tie some cord around his arm to stop the bleeding.

But she panicked and she was screaming and, unfortunately, he bled to death.

So blood symbolizes life. When the New Testament talks of the blood of Christ, it refers to the life that He laid down in death on the cross for our sins. With this introduction, let us go to chapter ten of Hebrews. In the first four verses what Paul is doing is pointing out that the sacrificial system which was required by the ceremonial law was a shadow of the reality, and that, in and of itself, these sacrifices could not save. Why? He tells us in verse four that the blood of bulls and goats could not take away sin. Why was it that the blood of bulls and goats was unable to save the Jews? He gives us the answer to that question in the first four verses:

For the law, having a shadow of good things to come, [Remember, the ceremonial law was only a shadow of the good things to come. And what are these good things? That is Jesus Christ and Him crucified.] and not the very image of the things, [they were only a type but not the reality] can

never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect.

So legally, those sacrifices did not remove sin. They had no power to save. And because of this, these sacrifices were offered repeatedly every morning and evening every day of the week. Verse two continues:

For then would they not have ceased to be offered...

If they actually had removed sin there would be no need to repeat these sacrifices.

...because that the worshippers once purged [cleansed] should have had no more conscience of sins.

In other words, they would not be reminded that they were sinners. If they were actually cleansed, then they were free from condemnation. But that was not true. Verse three:

But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year.

In other words, even on the Day of Atonement the sacrifices of bulls did not remove sin because every year they had to repeat the service symbolizing that the blood of bulls and goats did not remove sin. So verse four says:

For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.

Now the question that we must ask is, “Why is it not possible for the blood of bulls and goats to remove sin?” Did the Jews transfer their sins to the goat by confession and the laying on of their hands on the animal (through the priest, of course)? Wasn’t that animal sacrificed, killed? Wasn’t the blood taken into the sanctuary? All this is true but the question is why was it impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to remove sin? The answer is very simple: because the law will not allow sins and guilt to be transferred. In other words, you

can’t transfer guilt and punishment from one person to another or from man to animals.

Turn to Ezekiel eighteen where the prophet is trying to make it very clear to the Jews that, legally, they have absolutely no right to cancel sin. This is something that God had already spelled out to the Jews in the laws that He gave to Moses. Look at Ezek. 18:20, which is really a conclusion of an argument that began right there in verse one of Ezekiel eighteen. God is making it very clear to the Jews that they were wrong in using a proverb which says, “The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge.” God is saying, “You cannot use that proverb in a legal matter. You cannot transfer sin from father to son or visa versa.” And the conclusion is in verse twenty:

The soul [or the life] that sinneth, it shall die.

In other words, the life that has committed the sinful act must meet justice.

The son shall not bear the iniquity [guilt] of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity [guilt] of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.

In other words, you cannot transfer guilt and punishment. This has been a major problem with the doctrine of substitution. Because many have failed to solve this problem, some theologians are turning to theories like the “moral influence theory” or the “governmental theory of the atonement” which in themselves are not wrong but err because they deny the legal phase of the atonement. That we cannot do. The moment you remove the legal framework of the atonement of the cross you cannot preach true justification by faith. So the question is that the blood of bulls and goats could not remove sin, even though the sins were transferred symbolically onto the animal and the animals were sacrificed; because no law of man or God will allow guilt and punishment to be transferred. The question is, “How did God solve this ethical problem of salvation?”

Hebrews 10:5 gives us the answer to that question. Verses one to four make it very clear that it is impossible for the sacrifices of animals to remove sin. But now look at verse five, where God solves the legal problem by linking Christ's divinity with our corporate humanity:

Wherefore when he cometh [The "he" refers to Christ Who is the reality; He is the One Who truly saves. He is the One Who truly purges us from our sins.] when he cometh into the world [i.e., into our world], he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me.

In other words, in order for God to save us through Christ He had to first qualify Christ to be our Saviour. How did He do that? He did it by taking the divine life of His Son and taking the Adamic life (the human life of the human race) and uniting the two. He did this in the womb of Mary. It was in the womb of Mary where divinity was united with our corporate humanity.

You see, even though we are many, we all share the same life. Acts 17:26 says that God created out of one — i.e. one man, one life — the whole human race. The human race is simply the multiplication of the Adamic life. It was this Adamic life that was linked to Christ in the womb of Mary. Mary's womb was the vehicle that produced the humanity of Christ where God prepared a body for Christ. Mary passed on to Jesus all of the privileges and the rights. For example, Jesus as a human being was of the tribe of Judah. That's because Mary was of the tribe of Judah. Mary was a descendant of David, so was Jesus. Joseph also was a descendant of David.

If you look at the genealogies of Christ in Matthew and in Luke you will notice that they don't agree. One is giving the blood line. Jesus received the blood of David through Mary. Mary could not inherit the throne of David because she was a woman. It was through Joseph, even though he was not the real father, he was the foster father, and therefore Jesus did qualify to receive the throne of David through Joseph. Joseph was a

descendant of David through Solomon, the royal line, and Jesus was a descendant physically of the flesh of David through Mary. Paul brings this out in Romans one. The point is that we need to keep in mind that the humanity of Christ was the corporate humanity of the human race which He came to redeem.

So God did not transfer our guilt and punishment to Christ. He united us to Christ so that we and He became one. This was clearly taught in Hebrews chapter two. We covered this but just to remind us let us turn to

But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels...

You see, as God He was above the angels but then He became a man when He was made flesh. He became a man when He was linked to us. He was made a little lower than the angels because that’s how man is when created. Why was He made man?

...for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man.

You see, because the humanity of Christ was our corporate humanity when He died on the cross He was experiencing the death that all men as sinners deserved. His death was not the death of one man instead of all men, His death was all men dying in one man. He experienced, He tasted the awful second death that belongs to us. Because His humanity was our humanity we died in Him on the cross. 2 Cor. 5:14 brings that out, “When one died, all died.” Christ tasted death for all men. Let’s go on to verse ten of Hebrews two:

For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.

Christ is the source of our salvation. He is the source of our redemption. Going on to verse eleven:

For both he that sanctifieth [that is Christ] and they who are sanctified [that is us] are all of one.

We share the same life. That is why we can legally claim the righteousness of Christ. We can legally claim the justice of God that took place on the cross when Jesus died for sin. Why? Because we who are sanctified and He who sanctifies us have the same origin and share the same life. It is His humanity which is our corporate humanity that died on the cross

Who are they that are sanctified? In Exodus 31:13, God made a statement to Moses. He said, “This is going to be a perpetual covenant that Israel must keep the Sabbath because the Sabbath is a sign. It is a sign between Me, that is God, and you for I am the Lord that sanctifies you.”

You see, our part in the gospel is to enter into God’s rest. Hebrews four brought that out. We who believe the gospel have entered into God’s rest. God is the one who does the sanctifying. Our part

is faith from beginning to end. In verse eleven of Hebrews two we are told that the source of our sanctification and we who are affected by it have the same origin because we share the same life. That's why he says in the last part of the verse:

...for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren.

Why? Because He shares our life. We have become one. In verse twelve:

Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee. And again, I will put my trust in Him [that is what means to rest in Him]. And again, I and the children which God hath given me.

So Jesus connects Himself with us. He identifies Himself with us in order to be our Saviour. Of course, for that salvation to be effective, we, in turn, need to identify ourselves with Him and His holy history.

Faith is our surrender of the will to the truth as it is in Christ. That's why Paul often defines faith as obedience. It is not doing something but it is the obedience of the heart. It is the surrender of our will to the truth of Jesus Christ and Him crucified. His life becomes our life and His death becomes our death. In that way we can legally claim the righteousness of Christ because that life and death of Christ was the life and death of all men in one man Jesus Christ. Now look at verses fourteen and fifteen of Hebrews two:

Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself took part of the same.

The same humanity which belongs to the children, He took part of the same. His humanity was the humanity of the human race that needs redeeming. That is why Ellen G. White says, "The humanity of Christ is everything to us." And that is why we need to come to grips with the issue in terms of the humanity of Christ. We need to approach this on the basis of our redemption.

Christ as a man is only an example to the believers but to the world He is a Saviour. He took our humanity. God prepared Him a body primarily to be our Saviour. Only to those who have accepted His salvation He says, “Follow me.”

So we must remember that the primary purpose of Christ taking our humanity exactly as it is, our humanity that needs redeeming, humanity that stands condemned, humanity that you and I have... Jesus took part of the same. Why did He take part of the same? Well look at the last part of verse fourteen:

...that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

In other words, going back to Heb. 10:5, Paul tells us that, in order to qualify Jesus Christ to be our Saviour, God prepared for Jesus Christ a body, a human body that represented the human race. That is the basis of the doctrine of substitution. It

was the humanity, the corporate humanity of the human race that needed redeeming that Jesus assumed. Going back to Heb. 10:6:

In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure.

There was no salvic value in the sacrificial system. Did God give the sacrificial system? Yes, but He never gave it as a means of salvation. That was the mistake of the Jews. He gave the sacrificial system only as a shadow, only as a reminder, only as a symbol to point them to the hope of the reality which is Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

When Christ came to this world, He did not come to perpetuate the sacrificial system because God has no pleasure in seeing His creatures, animals die. Then why did Jesus receive a body? Verse seven says:

Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me)....

Of course, the volume of the book here refers to the Old Testament. That's all that existed in the days of the Apostles. In other words, the primary purpose of the Old Testament was to point to Jesus Christ. Christ should always be the center of every doctrine and of every belief that we practice in the Christian Church. I thank God that this is the direction that the new book on the Twenty-Seven doctrines of the Adventist Church is taking. Now let's look at verse seven:

Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God.

What did Paul mean? What was the will of God? The will of God was our salvation. The question is, how could God save us in Christ? We covered point number one. Before He could save us He had to qualify to be our Saviour. To qualify Himself to be our Saviour, He linked Himself to our humanity. God prepared Him a body.

Having prepared that body for Christ, now comes the second and third qualifications. He had

to meet the positive demands of the law and He had to meet the justice of the law to save us in that humanity, so that we could be before God and His law righteous in Christ. Let us read verse eight:

Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offering for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law; [that which the ceremonial law required] Then said He, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second.

He had taken away the ceremonial system, the type, the shadows, in order to establish the second, which is Christ, the reality. You will notice that verse nine and verse seven is a quotation:

In the volume of the book it is written, to do thy will O God.

Now this quotation was only partial. Remember, this book was written to the Jews who were very familiar with the Old Testament; so all

he has to do is simply quote a partial statement. I would like for us who are not as familiar with the Old Testament as the Jews were to look at that quotation because there we will see something that will help us. The quotation is found in Psalms 40 and you will notice here what the will of God is concerning our salvation. Reading verses six to eight:

Sacrifices and offering thou didst not desire...

So the Jews were aware of the fact even before Christ came that the sacrificial system was not the real purpose of saving mankind.

...mine ears hast thou opened:

This is David saying “You have opened my ears. I have now heard the true meaning of the sacrificial system, that in and of themselves they do not save. Burnt offerings and sin offerings thou hast not required.” The sacrifice of animals in and of themselves had no salvic value. So God did not require the sacrificial system in order for us to be

saved. He required it of them as a confession of faith and a reminder to point to the coming of Christ who is the reality. Now verse seven:

Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: Yea, thy law is within my heart.

In order for Christ to redeem us, He had to fulfil all the requirements of the law. It was the will of Christ when He came to the world, He cherished in His heart one desire and that is to obey the law of God in its fullest sense, both in its positive demands, which He did in the first thirty-three years and also in terms of its justice when He satisfied the law at the cross. In other words, in the doing and the dying of Jesus Christ, by His perfect obedience of God's will as expressed in His law, Christ met both the positive and legal demands of the law as our substitute, as our surety, as our representative and, thus, He replaced the shadow which could not save us with the reality which does save us. So we go back to Heb. 10:10-14:

By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

In that humanity and what this humanity accomplished by the doing and dying of Christ we are being saved. The reality of our salvation is in Jesus Christ. The body of Christ was, as I mentioned earlier, the corporate humanity of mankind. Therefore, when that body died on the cross, the sins of all humanity met their legal justice. All our sins — and I repeat: ALL our sins, past, present, and future — were met on the cross in terms of justice. That is why when you read this passage you will find that Paul emphasizes the sacrifice as being once and for all. Now verses eleven through fourteen:

And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering often times the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: But [in contrast] this man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever...,

Every human being from Adam to the last

person was dealt with on the cross of Christ in terms of redeeming our sins and, please notice, that this is what the sacrifice of Christ means to us. After He had offered Himself once and for all:

...He sat down on the right hand of God; From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool.

In other words, Christ has redeemed the human race and He has ascended into heaven to finish His mission and sat on the right hand of God. He will reign until He brings the great controversy to an end. The great controversy has not yet come to an end. We still live in a sinful world. We still possess sinful bodies. We still are under the accusation of Satan. He is still ruling this world but not legally. 1 John 5:19 says that the whole world lies under the evil one. That doesn't apply to us Christians. We belong to God. But remember, we are living in enemy territory. The plan of redemption is not yet finished. Christ has a heavenly ministry to do. He is doing that. He began it in 31 A.D. How long will He continue His ministry? Until He brings sin to an

end and ushers in everlasting righteousness. So my dear people, Paul goes on to say in verse fourteen:

For by one offering He has perfected for ever...

Please never, ever look at yourself in terms of your performance. It is by His sacrifice, by His doing and dying He has perfected, not for the time being but forever, now and in the judgment, He has perfected those that are sanctified. Please remember those that are sanctified are those who have put their trust in Christ. Those who are resting in Him. Those who have no confidence in their flesh and their performance but are resting in the righteousness of Christ. He goes on in verse fifteen:

...Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us.

The Holy Ghost confirms this truth. He confirmed it to the apostles who wrote the New Testament and He also confirms it in our own hearts. He confirms it in the heart of every believer.

How does He do that? He gives us peace; He puts into our hearts the love of God. Look at verse sixteen:

This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them.

What is the sacrifice of Christ to do with the Lord writing in our hearts? You see when you accept Christ and the Holy Spirit comes and dwells in you He does two things:

1. He gives you peace. Rom. 5:1 says “Being justified by faith, we have peace with God.” Rom. 8:16,17 tells us that the Holy Spirit convinces our spirits that we are the children of God. The first thing that the Holy Spirit gives us is peace, because of the cross of Christ. Jesus made it clear to the disciples, “I give you peace, peace that the world cannot give you.”

2. But He also does something else. **He puts**

the agape love into our hearts. It comes into our hearts vertically from God and Paul makes it clear in Gal. 5:14 and in Rom. 13:8-10 that love is the fulfilment of the law. In other words, He puts the ingredient of love which the Bible calls agape into our hearts. And it is this ingredient that makes the law meaningful and a delight.

The difference between a legalist and a true Christian is that the legalist looks at the law as a set of rules, something that he has to perform in order to qualify for heaven. To him it is not something he enjoys doing but something that is necessary for salvation. To the truly converted Christian who is resting in the righteousness of Christ the law becomes a delight because the law is identified with the righteousness of Christ. The love of God creates in us a direction that is in harmony with the law so David could say, “I delight in the law of God,” and Christ could say, “I delight in the law of God,” because love is what controlled their hearts and their minds.

This is what the New Covenant does. The law

is not tattooed into the heart of the human being. A Christian who has died and has an autopsy, the doctor will not find the law of God tattooed in the heart of the believer. What the text is saying is that when we have understood the gospel and we turn from the sacrificial system which cannot save, to Jesus Christ and Him crucified as the reality, then only are our sins truly purged. We are truly cleansed and we can come to God without fear and without doubt. This is how he ends this passage. Look at verse seventeen:

And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.

God is saying that. Do you believe God. Do you believe that God doesn't remember your sins any more? Do you believe what God says through Ellen G. White in Steps to Christ that when you accept Christ, "God looks at you as though you had never sinned"? Now Paul is saying in Heb. 10:18:

Where remission [or forgiveness, or purging] of these is, there is no more offering for sin.

Christ will never die the second time because His one sacrifice took care legally and correctly and completely of all our sins. In view of this Paul says in verse nineteen:

Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus.

We can come to Christ boldly every time; and please do not come to Christ on the basis of your performance. And when the devil comes to you and says to you, “You are not good enough today to pray. God will not listen to your prayers,” please remind him that he is the father of lies. We have the privilege of coming to the throne of grace day in and day out seven days a week all the year round, boldly, as long as you enter into the presence of God, into the holiest, by the blood of Jesus. Folks, in Christ, you do stand perfect. Verse nineteen says:

By a new and living way,

Why is it new? In the earthly sanctuary the people could not come into the sanctuary itself. Not even in the Holy Place. The priest came there and even he could not come directly to God because there was a veil between him and God in the sanctuary. And when he came into the Most Holy Place at the end of each year on the Day of Atonement, he had to offer a special sacrifice for himself. We do not any more have to come to God through a human priest.

This is what [Martin] Luther meant when he said, “The priesthood of all believers.” What did he mean? He meant every Christian, every believer has free access to God through Jesus Christ. We do not have to go through another human being. We can come boldly to the throne of grace by a new and living way not through another human being, but through Jesus Christ.

By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh;

You see, in the earthly sanctuary the blood of animals was sprinkled on that veil. That veil represents the humanity of Christ which we have seen is our corporate humanity. Rom.8:3 says:

What the law could not do God did by sending His Son in the likeness of our sinful flesh and for sin He condemned sin in the flesh of Christ.

That's why the veil in the earthly sanctuary was torn apart by God's hand. It was a barrier between a Holy God and a sinful race and was removed on the cross. We who believe can come to God by the new and living way which Christ has prepared for us in His humanity. Verse twenty-one:

And having a High Priest over the house of God; Let us draw near {to God] with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

Don't you ever allow the devil to discourage you and to put you into a guilt trip and say, "Look,

God will not accept you because you are a sinner." Please remember, that in Christ, and through His life and death, God looks at you as if you had not sinned, as if you had no sin in you at all. We can come to God, near to Him, without any barrier, through Jesus Christ with a heart full of assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Our humanity, both flesh and mind, in Christ stands perfect. That is what makes Christianity the most wonderful religion.

All other religions teach that God is way up there demanding you down here to be good enough to come up to Him. Jesus Christ came down where we are. He took upon Himself our humanity. By His life and death He redeemed us. Now we can come boldly to God every day, every hour. We can cast our burdens on Him. We can come to Him with assurance, without guilt. Not because we are not sinners but because in Christ we do stand perfect.

It is this truth, folks that we need to be settled

into because when we face the time of trouble, when the church organization is disintegrated because of the time of trouble and you and I are scared and up in the mountains the devil will come and play with our feelings. We will agonize with our feelings. Then, folks, please remember that we can come boldly unto God through Jesus Christ with full assurance because our hearts have been sprinkled with the blood of Christ and our bodies have been washed. May God bless us, that we may understand this truth.

Chapter 22

The Peril of Unbelief

Hebrews 10:23-29

In this study we will cover the last half of Hebrews chapter ten. The first half which we covered in our last study dealt with the sacrifice of Christ being a perfect, complete, full payment for all our sins. The second half deals with the danger of the peril of rejecting Christ after we have known the truth.

In the first half of Hebrews ten Paul is saying:

1. In Christ's humanity, which was our corporate humanity, which God prepared for Him by preparing a body for Christ, God has fully and completely redeemed mankind by Christ's doing and dying. By performing the will of God He redeemed us.

2. This redemption was realized and completed

at the cross by one sacrifice. Verse fourteen says:

He perfected forever those who are being sanctified.

So everything essential for our salvation was fulfilled on the cross.

3. This perfect redemption qualified Christ to be our High Priest. Not only a High Priest but to be a faithful High Priest. It qualified Him.

4. The Holy Spirit confirms this truth in our hearts and in the heart of every believer.

5. Because of all this wonderful truth we can come boldly, we can approach God boldly, with full assurance through Jesus Christ. That's what we covered last time.

I want you to keep one verse in mind because it is a verse that has caused much problem in the minds of many Christians. That is verse twenty-six. As I said before, I say again, do not take a text out

of context. Before we look at verse twenty-six we want to look at verse twenty-three up to verse twenty-five. Please remember the background. The Jewish Christians to whom Paul was writing were in danger of giving up their faith in Christ. This is the context of the book of Hebrews. It is not a theological book. It is a pastoral book from a person who is concerned about his members who are giving up their faith.

So after explaining the wonderful sacrifice of Christ which makes it possible for us to come boldly unto the throne of grace Paul says in verse twenty-three:

Let us hold fast. [Don’t give up your hold in Christ.] Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering.

In other words, let us never doubt the love of God and let us never doubt our salvation in Christ. This is the battle that you will have all your life. Satan is always trying to produce doubt and guilt in our lives. Never doubt your salvation in Christ for

if you give up your faith as we shall see at the end of this chapter, and I'm going to use a good German word, you are "kaput," finished.

Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering.

And then he puts in brackets, "Not our faithfulness but God's." God is faithful regarding His promise. God has promised that He will never let go of us. God has promised our salvation in Christ. Now of course God's promise cannot be understood outside the context of His love. Where there is love there can be no compulsion so He will never force His promise upon you. Keep that in mind. He will never force. As long as you keep your confidence in God your salvation is guaranteed. Paul will repeat this in verse thirty-five onward. In view of this, because some of the members of the Jewish Christian Church were giving up their faith,

Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works.

In other words, not only should we hold firm to this truth which we have heard but we must also encourage our fellow-believers not to give up their faith.

One day I was visiting a lady and she had just lost her son in a terrible car accident. She said to me, “I have been faithful to God. I’ve paid my tithe, I have supported the church, I have done everything and now He takes away my son.” She was about ready to stop coming to church.

Then I said, “Sister, you are depending on your faithfulness. Supposing God allowed your son to live to survive this accident and He, knowing the beginning from the end, knew that ten years down the road your son would give up his faith in Christ and be lost forever. Which would you prefer, for him to die now and be saved in Christ’s kingdom and be part of the resurrection or to allow him to live and let him be lost eternally? Which one would you prefer if you knew the end from the beginning?”

She said “I see your point.”

Thank God she did not stop coming to church. She was almost ready to give up her faith because she felt that God did not love her, He did not appreciate her faithfulness. Please remember that our salvation is based on God’s faithfulness. If He allows anything to happen in your life that is negative remember that He knows the end from the beginning. Paul tells us in Rom. 8:28:

All things work together for good for those who love God.

We may not see it at the time. We may not understand and we may ask the question, “Why?” One day He will explain it to us. “Now we see through a glass darkly” but then we shall see, everything will be exposed and we will say, “God, if I knew what you knew I would agree with everything you allowed.”

Look at Ephesians chapter one and this is to

support what Paul is saying here, “Never give up your confidence in Christ.” See verse six:

To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

Not “we will be accepted” but “we are already accepted” in Christ. What did God say about Jesus? “This is My Beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased.” Why was He pleased with Christ? Because Jesus fulfilled what God sent Him to do. God prepared a body for Him and Jesus said, “I have come to do Thy will, O God.” And He did His will and God was pleased. In that will which Christ performed you have been accepted.

Here is a text I often use for autographs for it is a promise: 1 Thess.5:24. This is dealing with what Paul puts in brackets in Heb.10:23: “for He is faithful that promised.” 1 Thess.5:24:

Faithful is He that called you, who also will do it.

God has promised to do something for you and He is faithful. Back to Hebrews ten. Let us help those who are weak, folks. If you see any member that is wavering, please come and tell your pastor. Many members are scared if their pastor visits them. You go to them yourself and tell them, “Look, don’t give up your faith. Even if your pastor is terrible, never mind him.” Hold on to your faith for that is all that counts. Heb. 10:24,25:

And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works.

One way to keep up your faith is to be busily occupied serving Him in good works. We must do it out of good judgment. Verse twenty-five:

Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together.

This is something we need. How many people in this town are no longer attending church on Sabbath? If we could only bring them back, we would be doing much more than all the evangelism

that we can do. They have forsaken the assembling of ourselves. And the excuses are very flimsy sometimes: “I don’t like the preaching”; “Nobody talks to me.” So what if nobody talks to you? It’s not right; we should be talking to each other. But is that a valid reason to stay away from the house of God?

There are certain steps that the devil will take to get you out of Christ. One of the first steps is to stop you coming to church. The second step is decreasing your prayer life. The third step is decreasing your Bible reading. It is gradual and you may not notice it. When we were in the mission field and would come back every three to five years we noticed that things were getting worse and worse in the church.

We must not forsake the assembling of the brethren, “as the manner of some is.” Some may say, “I don’t need to go to church to receive a blessing, I can get it at home. I can turn my TV on and listen to Fagle or to Joe Crews on the radio or to It Is Written. Please remember that good as these

are, we need the fellowship with the believers. Why? Because in this fellowship,

...We need to exhort, help one another: and so much the more, as you see the day approaching.

What day is he talking of? The coming of Christ. Remember that if we are to be fitted for the time of trouble, we need to help each other. Now comes the text in this context. Paul says in verse twenty-six:

For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth,

What is the knowledge of the truth? Is he discussing the law here at all? No. Is he discussing the Sabbath here? No. What is he discussing? Jesus Christ our Saviour and High Priest. After you have received the knowledge of Christ and you deliberately reject Him, willfully, what happens? If you give up your faith,

...after you have known the truth there

remaineth no more sacrifice for sins.

There is no other sacrifice that can remove your sins. There is only one sacrifice and that is the blood of Jesus Christ. If you go back to Judaism — give up Christ and go back to Judaism and offer up animals once again — can the blood of bulls remove the sins? No. If you go from the church and go to Marxism as some of our young people did in Ethiopia, can Marxism save you?

When I was discussing this with one of the Russian communists, I said to him, “You people have made wonderful promises.” The promise they make is this, “We will liberate you from economic and social injustices.” I said, “Fine, you may succeed there but can you liberate me from death?”

And he said, “Give us time. Science will one day find an answer to that problem.”

I said, “I don’t need the time.”

And he said “Why not?”

“Because,” I said, “I have already been delivered from death by Jesus Christ.” Well, I will not tell you what he said; it wasn’t very good, but one day, if he does not accept Christ, he will have to weep at the feet of Jesus.

The first thing I want you to look at in verse twenty-six is the verb, “If we sin willfully.” The verb is in the present continuous tense. So Paul is not saying, “If you reject Christ after hearing the gospel once,” but if we keep on deliberately saying no to Christ. This is not a one-time thing: if we deliberately, willfully, persistently, continually say “No” to the gospel after we have known the truth.

So remember that God is very patient. When you have preached the gospel and they refuse don’t say, “I told you now, hell fire for you.” No, folks, you may have told them but God hasn’t given them up. He will come again and He will come again, again, and again. He will come through every avenue. When He comes after the judgment, He will say “I did everything to save you. Everything!

Not only did I give you my Son, but I brought this message to you through books, through radio, through singing, through witnessing of certain members, through the preaching of the Word, and every time the Holy Spirit convinced you of the gospel, you said 'No.' I cannot save you because you have deliberately, willfully resisted." So please remember that this is in the present continuous tense.

The "sin" spoken of in Heb.10:26 is not transgression of the law as we know it in first John, but as Christ explained it in John sixteen. Please turn to John sixteen. You see the Bible puts sin into two categories: One is that sin is the transgression of the law. If you break one of the ten commandments you come under condemnation. I tell you that in Christ you have forgiveness for all ten. But there is one sin that God cannot forgive. Jesus describes that in John 16:8:

And when He [the Holy Spirit] is come, He will convince the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.

Look at verse nine:

Of sin, because they believe not on me.

Just like faith is a willful accepting of Jesus Christ in heart obedience to the gospel, unbelief is a willful rejection of Christ. So there cannot be a sin of unbelief in the true sense of the word unless you first receive the knowledge of the truth. A person who has never heard the gospel cannot truly commit the sin of unbelief. Unbelief is a deliberate act of the will. Jesus is saying that, if you persistently refuse the gospel, the gift of God, the sacrifice of Christ which has perfected the human race forever, then there is no way I can save you. Back to Heb. 10:26:

After you have received the knowledge of the truth.

The word “truth” here is Jesus Christ. Jesus said, “I am the truth, the way, and the life.” After you have received the knowledge of Him and you

are convinced by the Holy Spirit and you refuse, after you know this and you refuse you cannot be saved because Jesus did not die on the cross for unbelief. If He did then you would have to say that the heresy of universalism is true. It is not a heresy. Universalism says that because Christ died for all men all men will be saved. But there is one sin that Christ did not die for: the sin of unbelief. For every other sin, breaking the commandments, there is forgiveness but against the sin of unbelief there is no forgiveness. I repeat: unbelief is a willful rejection of Jesus Christ that is done persistently. Not once or twice but continually. You remember the words of Jesus:

How often I brought you Jews under my wings like a hen does her chickens, but you would not.

I have not seen it here but in Africa we have a bird called a Kyte. If you keep those chickens out for one day you will lose all of them. They swoop down, grab a chicken and go off. I had a crow I was teaching to fly and one day he landed on a branch and one of those Kytes came swooping

down and took him by the head. The crow would not give up his grasp of the branch so the neck broke and he took the head off. So every time a mother hen would see one of those Kytes she would make a clucking noise and all the chickens would run under her wings. Christ is saying, “How many times when you were in danger I put you under my wings and protected you and now even after I have given my Son you refuse. You refuse my protection. You refuse my salvation. I leave you alone.” That is what verse twenty-seven is saying: “If you willfully reject Christ, there is nothing left but a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries.”

What does the word “adversary” mean? An enemy of the gospel. You see, there are only two things you can do with Christ crucified. You can either be crucified with Him, which happens when you accept the gospel, or you can crucify Him. If you willfully reject the gospel, which is the sacrifice for your sins, there is no way God can save you. Then the wages of sin will be placed

upon you because you have rejected the wages of sin that Christ took for you.

Remember that he is talking to the Jews, so he gives them an illustration from the Old Testament system when Israel was a theocracy. The word theocracy means that God not only was the spiritual leader but also the political leader of the nation. As a political identity, God gave certain rules and one of the rules is this: if a person deliberately, willfully breaks the law of Moses and is found guilty by two or three witnesses, God said he must be put to death.

When I was in the prison ministry, one of the prisoners came up to me and asked me, “Do you believe in capital punishment?” He did not believe in it. He was in the penitentiary. I don’t know what he had done.

I said, “I believe what the Bible teaches.” I gave him a few texts. I did not give him this one but I gave him some from the Old Testament. God gave clear instructions that if a person willfully,

deliberately despises the moral law of Moses that the wages of sin is death.

Also, in a civil court case, if man breaks the law of Moses and has to die, if the shadow requires death, how much more do you deserve punishment, verse twenty-nine:

...Suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God....

In other words, if you suffered death because you rejected the shadow, how much worse is it is if you reject the reality? He is contrasting the type with the antitype. If you are punished by death for rejecting the shadow, how much more you deserve punishment for rejecting the reality.

How much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden underfoot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?

Now what Paul is saying here is not dealing with your failures in your Christian living. There are some Adventists who read verse twenty-six and they say if you sin willfully after you have received a knowledge of the truth, [you're lost]. To them the truth is the Ten Commandments. Then, when they have fallen, they say, "Boy, there is no hope for me." Paul is not dealing here with the struggles of the Christian life. He is dealing here with your relationship with Jesus Christ. If you deliberately reject Him, willfully, there is no escape. In the judgment you will have to face the wages of sin. Not from men but from God, verse thirty:

For we know Him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me.

Men won't punish you for rejecting the gospel. In fact, man may give you a pat on the back sometimes, but God...

I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people.

In other words, Paul is saying here, “Please don’t treat the gift of God lightly.” The gift of God was given to us at tremendous expense to God. “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.” God gave up everything to save us. If we deliberately reject that gift and say, “I don’t want Christ,” then you have no one to blame but yourself in the judgment. Look at verse thirty-one:

It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Yes, God is love but God is also a just God. God can’t excuse your rejection of Christ. He can’t say, “Well, I know that you rejected my Son, but I love you in any case.” You see, men can forgive by excusing sin. God cannot forgive by excusing. God is a Holy God. He is a just God and if you reject the free gift of salvation then the justice of God cannot save you. That is what Paul is saying here. Verse thirty-two says:

But call to remembrance the former days [he

reminds them of their conversion], in which, after you were illuminated, you endured a great fight of afflictions; Partly while you were made a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, while you became companions of them that were so used.

In other words, it was not easy to become a Christian in Paul's day. Especially for the Jews. You see, if you became a Christian, as a Gentile you were persecuted by the world, but if you became a Christian, as a Jew you were persecuted by both sides. Both the Gentiles and the Jews persecuted you.

Let me give you a contemporary example. For a Jew to become a Christian in Israel today, he loses his citizenship. He no longer has citizenship rights. He becomes an outcast. So it is not easy even today for a Jew to become a Christian. Paul is saying, "When you became a Christian you endured hardship and you joined the group that was under persecution. You endured." Verse thirty-four:

You had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that you have in heaven a better and an enduring substance.

In other words, when you became a Christian, you lost your property. You lost your belongings. You lost everything. You had compassion on me as a prisoner of Christ and you held on. Now, please don't become discouraged.

When they first became Christians, they were told, "Hold on. Christ is coming soon." But you know, as the years passed by, they began asking the question that many Adventists are asking today: "How soon is soon?" You know what Jesus said in Matthew twenty-four?

Because iniquity abounds the love of many will wax cold.

The trouble is that human beings do not know how to endure for a long time. It is one thing to be

willing to die as a martyr now, but to constantly come under pressure for year after year, you will say, “How long will I wait?”

We have the same problem. Adventists are getting impatient. Our young people are saying, “We have heard this before: ‘Christ is coming soon.’ You were taught it when you were a kid and you are now ninety years old and He hasn’t come. How soon is soon?” That’s the question. We have preached the Second Coming of Christ — that He is coming soon — since 1844. That is a long time for our young people. That to them is ancient history. So please listen to what Paul is saying in verse thirty-five:

Cast not away, therefore, your confidence.

I want you to remember the words that are found in Peter:

Please do not count God to be slack in keeping His promise, like human beings.

I thought this was an African problem but I have discovered that even here it is a problem. You take something to be fixed and they tell you it will be fixed on a certain date and you go to pick it up at that time and they say, “I’m sorry, I didn’t have time. Can you come tomorrow?” So we, too, have this “mañana” problem. We can wait and wait and wait. This is common in the Middle East. This is common in the Third World. They do not like to tell you “No.” So when you ask, “Can you fix it soon?” They will say “Yes.” But your idea of soon and their idea of soon is not the same thing. Please remember not to judge God by human standards.

Cast not away therefore your confidence, which has great recompense of reward.

In other words, if you give up your faith, you are giving up your reward.

The just shall live by faith.

That is in verse thirty-eight. But look at verse thirty-six:

For you have need of patience, that, after you have done the will of God, you might receive the promise. For yet a little while and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry.

Paul is saying the same thing. He was an Adventist. “In a little while, He will come.” When was that written? Nineteen hundred years ago. And He still hasn’t come. Paul is writing this from God’s point of view, not men’s point of view. And to God a thousand years is like a day. We must put ourselves in God’s shoes.

Peter tells us why He has delayed His coming is because He wants none to perish. He wants everybody to be given the gospel. That is why there can be no judgment unless this gospel has been preached for a witness to all the world. When the gospel is preached, there is no excuse for men to be lost.

At camp meeting, Wallenkampf made a statement. I intended to see him afterwards. He

objected to the truth which says, “It is easy to be saved and it is hard to be lost.” Well, he is right in the way he approached it. If you don’t know the gospel, it is hard to be saved and easy to be lost. When you know the gospel, it is easy to be saved and hard to be lost. I’ll tell you why. When you hear the gospel, the choice is between life and death. Which is harder to choose, life or death? Death is harder to choose than life. When you hear the gospel, life is offered you as a gift and to reject that you would have to have your head examined. It is easy to be saved and hard to be lost when you have heard the true gospel.

The way he approached it, he was right in what he said, “We are born sinners. It is impossible for us to save ourselves by our own good works.” It is not hard, but impossible! In that sense, he is right. It is easy to be saved in the context of the gospel. When the gospel comes to you, it is easy to be saved. That is why we need to preach the gospel because, without the gospel, you ask anybody who has not understood the gospel, they will say it is hard to be saved. Why? Because they think you

have to be good to be saved and it is hard to be good, even for us old people. I still have difficulty being good. It's a struggle. Salvation is easy. Christian living is the struggle. We should not confuse Christian living with salvation.

Paul is saying: "Don't give up your confidence. We need patience so that after we have done the will of God we might receive the reward. Just a little while and He will come." Verse thirty-eight:

Now the just shall live by faith. [The only way you can receive this reward is by faith.] If any may draw back [if any man says "goodbye" to faith]..., my soul [I] will have no pleasure in him. [I cannot save you if you say "goodbye" to faith.] But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition....

This text is a wonderful text for those who teach "Once saved always saved." Is it possible for a believer to lose his salvation? Yes. How? By turning his back to Christ, God's gift.

We are not of them who draw back unto

perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.

Jesus said in Matthew ten:

He that endures unto the end shall be saved.

The most valuable thing that you possess today is not your bank account, not your plastic card that buys anything in America, it is not your property, it is not your houses, it is not social security for that can collapse, it is not welfare, it is your faith. Nobody can see it because it is not tangible. Only two people know about it — you and God. When you give up your faith, God knows that. So the most valuable thing you possess is your faith. Don't you ever give it up. That faith gives you the guarantee of salvation. If you say "goodbye" to faith you are saying "goodbye" to the righteousness of Christ which qualifies you for heaven. You say "goodbye" to that sacrifice which cancels all your sins. Therefore, hold unto your faith. It is the most valuable thing you possess.

Okay that's what Hebrews 10 is all about. With this as your background, I want you to read Hebrews 11. In this chapter, which we will cover next time, Paul gives examples of individuals in the past who held on to Christ even though the heavens fell. They endured persecution, they endured fire, they endured every kind of thing, but they never gave up their faith. So Paul is giving us an historical account of men and woman, young and old, who never gave up their faith, who died for Christ, but who will one day receive the promise. He's giving us these examples that we may follow the same. Hold on to your faith!

Chapter 23

Faith Defined

Hebrews 11:1-6

It is accepted by all Christians that Hebrews eleven is the greatest chapter in all of the Bible on the subject of faith. The first six verses define for us what faith is. That is what we will cover in this study, the definition of faith. Our title for today is, “Faith Defined.” In verses seven to the end of the eleventh chapter we are told how faith works and how it was demonstrated in the lives of the men and women of God in the Old Testament. Paul uses these heroes of God as an encouragement to us that we should not give up as they did not give up.

Today we will look at the first six verses. Since there is so much confusion today in the Christian world on this one word, “faith,” I would like to begin by telling you what faith is not.

1. Faith is not positive thinking, which is the

teaching of Shuler. The Bible doesn't teach faith as positive thinking. That's modern psychology. The Bible doesn't teach it.

2. Faith is not a hunch that we follow after. Let me give you an illustration. A group of Adventists about four years ago had a hunch. The hunch was that the ark of the covenant was in a certain cave in Jordan. They went out there even under false pretence to try to find the ark under this hunch. Of course, it ended up in catastrophe because the Arab guide whom they employed reported them to the Jordanian government and we as a church got into trouble, real trouble. Maybe you did not know about it because they would not publish it in the Review [and Herald] but we nearly lost our credentials as a church in the country of Jordan. So faith is not a hunch. We must be careful what we do with our impressions or hunches. Let me give you another example.

We had a single worker in Ethiopia. When she first came to Ethiopia, I warned her, as I usually did new workers, that there are certain individuals

who are experts at squeezing out of missionaries every dollar that they can get. One of them was an excellent actor. He could produce tears on the spur of the moment. He just had the knack. So he came to her and he said, “I lost my father and my mother (as the tears rolled down his face) and I have no one to look after me. Will you please take me under your wing?” The dear sister fell for it. At the end of two years, he had squeezed US$3,000 out of her. That is a lot of money when you think that the average Ethiopian earns about US$25-US$40 a year. I warned her. I said, “He is bluffing you. I know him. He goes to all missionaries. You are not the only one.”

She said, “I have a hunch. I have an impression that the Holy Spirit has led me to give him all this money.”

The devil has all kinds of ideas and it will feel like the Holy Spirit talking to you. Be careful. You have to ground your faith on something that is much more concrete than ideas that creep into your head. They may be very holy ideas. That is why

verse six shows that faith always has an object. The object is the Word of God. I asked her, “Is this young man converted?”

She said “No.”

“What evidence do you have that he is not lying to you?”

She said, “How can he lie to an old woman like me? He seems so sincere.”

So please be careful.

3. Faith is not a feeling. That’s number three. I am not sure of my salvation because I feel. There are many times that I feel like a miserable, wretched sinner. I don’t know about you, but I feel sometimes that I am the worst of all. Thank God that our feelings are not faith. I want to emphasize this because I tell you that the real issue in the time of trouble will be between your feelings and your faith. When things are well with you, your feelings and faith can be in harmony but when you face a

crisis your feelings will say one thing and your faith will say another. You have to choose. Many people have left this church because they have let their feelings rule them. We are not saved by feelings.

Let me give you an example of a battle which I fight which I know that all of you have to fight because we are human beings. Human love is based on need, on the beauty of certain personalities. When a pastor comes into a church — and it doesn't matter which church — or when a teacher comes into a classroom, there are some members or students they will take a liking to. There are others that you immediately dislike. There is something about their personality that rubs you the wrong way.

I have always had to take my feelings and leave them on the cross and say, "That's where you belong." Irrespective of what I feel about you, you are a child of God. I love you not because my feelings say so, but because the love of God does not discriminate. He loves the good and the bad.

And we must allow the love of God to control us. The love of God controls us by faith. We must have faith which worketh by love. Gal.5:6:

For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.

The love of God must constrain us. One of the first fruits of faith is love. What happens when you have faith? God pours His love into you. It comes vertically from God. And it goes out horizontally to your neighbours. That is the greatest evidence that you are walking by faith. But anyway, right now we're dealing with what faith is not. Faith is not feelings. Sometimes your feelings and faith harmonize but sometimes they don't.

4. The next thing is that **faith is not hoping for the best.** Faith is not saying, "Well, I think all things will work out." Faith is sure, and that's how Paul defines faith. Faith is sure of something. He does use the word hope but not in the English sense in saying, "I hope it will work." Not in that sense.

And, by the way, faith is not make-believe. We don't pretend. I don't have to pretend that I am righteous in Christ. I know for a fact that in Christ I am righteous. Faith is based on fact and the fact is based on the Word of God. This is what faith is not. Let's go now to what faith is. Look at Heb.1:1:

Now faith is the substance [the Greek is "reality"] of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

What is the reality of faith? I would like to give you three things:

1. Righteousness
2. Eternal life
3. Heaven.

All these three are realities in Christ. In Christ we have righteousness, we have eternal life, and we have heaven. All these three are clearly taught in the Bible, but none of these three things do we have as a tangible reality in our hands today. What do we have today?

1. We have sin.
2. We have death.
3. And we have this earthly existence which is miserable.

So faith is something, a reality we hope for, but we don't have it at the moment. The word, "hope," brings something into our minds. It means that what we hope for is what we want and if we want what we hope for then we are dissatisfied with what we have today. Are you happy with sin? No. Are you happy with death? No. Are you happy with life at this time? In spite of our plastic cards which will buy us most anything in this country, are you happy? You can't have faith if you are satisfied with this world, folks.

Turn to Romans eight. A person who has faith is dissatisfied with his present situation. Here Paul discusses Christians as a whole, the believers. Do you know what he says about Christians? He says, "They are groaning." Look at Rom.8:22:

“For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also.”

Who does he mean by the word, “ourselves”? The ones who have been born again who have the first fruits of the Spirit.

Even we ourselves groan within ourselves...

He is not saying that we are complaining to each other. That Christians should not really do. But we are groaning within ourselves.

...waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.

Why? Because in chapter six he has told us that we have a body of sin. “Oh wretched man, who will deliver me from this body of sin,” he says in chapter seven. “Oh wretched man that I am.” He calls it “the body of death” in chapter seven and in chapter six he calls it “the body of sin.”

Remember that we are groaning because we do not have the body of righteousness. We have a humanity that is still leaning towards sin. So we are dissatisfied. And that is evidence of faith.

Go back to Heb.11:8-10 but, before we read the text, here is a question. Was Abraham rich by the standards of his culture? Yes. Did he have cows? Cattle? To the Middle Eastern mind, that was just like a stack of gold. Just like the Masai. They value their cows like you value your bank account. I remember travelling one day as a group of Masai cows were crossing the road. We were out in the sticks in Tanzania. I was riding my motorcycle and I couldn't stop. It was a gravel road and I braked and I skidded and I hit this cow. The cow fell on one side and I fell on the other side and when I looked up I saw a Masai coming with a spear. He was coming at me with full speed. I did not wait to see whether the cow was hurt or not. I got my bike up and I took off. He flung the spear but he missed me. To him I had touched his money.

In fact, we had an English veterinary surgeon

who came to Kenya by the request of the Kenyan government because the animals had foot and mouth disease and it was passing on to the wild game. So this expert came there to help with the problem. The problem with him was that he did not understand the Masai. He found this sick Masai cow and he knew that the cow had reached the point of no return. So he put her to death out of kindness and the Masai speared him to death for doing that. When the Masai was brought to the court he said, “He killed my cow; I killed him.” It was as simple as that.

So, to Abraham, cattle was wealth. He was rich. Read Genesis. But now look at verses eight to ten of Hebrews eleven. In spite of his materialism, in spite of his wealth:

By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.

Can you imagine that? Put yourself in

Abraham's shoes. God said, "I want you to leave your country." Let us say he was living in America. "I want you to leave America, and I want you to take off to Saudi Arabia." And he looks up his atlas and he sees in his geography book that Saudi Arabia is a desert.

The people say, "What are you packing for?"

"We are going to Saudi Arabia."

"Have you been there?"

"No."

"Do you know anybody there?"

"No. God says so." He went there by faith. Verse nine:

By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles.

The word [tabernacles] is "tents." A rich man!

With Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise. Verse ten:

For he looked for a city [Which city? Jerusalem? No. The New Jerusalem.] which had foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

So where was his heart? Not on his cattle. Not on literal Israel, but on heaven. Paul says the same thing in Phil. 3:20,21; our citizenship is where we look forward to the second coming of Christ. So faith is the reality of heaven, of eternal life, of righteousness which we don't have but which we hope for. I would like to emphasize this, "Are you hungering and thirsting after righteousness?" Let's go now to Heb. 11:2:

For by it the elders obtained a good report.

By this the saints of God received a good report. Look at Matt. 6:21:

For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

So faith is putting your heart not in earthly things but in heavenly things — in Christ and the wealth of heaven. In verse three he explains how the elders got a good report.

Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.

Faith always has an object. The object of faith here in this passage is the word of God. By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God. Now who is the Word of God? John 1:1-3:

In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. By Him all things were made.

Now the Word of God tells us that God, Jesus Christ, created this world without the use of any pre-existing matter. His word created matter. When

you tell that to the scientists they laugh at you. Am I correct? How can words create? They may create ideas, but how can breath create matter? But that's what the Bible says. Do you believe what the Bible says: that the Word of God has creative power? Please keep this in mind because every promise you read in your Bible is the Word of God. Therefore God is able to do the impossible in your life.

The scientists say that it is impossible to create matter out of non-existing matter. Are they right or are they wrong? They are right when you look at things from the natural point of view. Humanly speaking it is impossible to create something out of nothing. But with God all things are possible. So faith is in the Word of God even when to all appearance it is impossible. The object of faith is the Word of God. The thing that I want to emphasize here in verse three is the Word of God is creative.

Can the Word of God produce righteousness out of sin? Can man produce righteousness out of

sin? No. Can God do it? Yes. Do you believe that? That is what faith is. Faith is believing in the reality even though you don't have the evidence.

There are some Christians within our church who say it is impossible for us to live above sin. The argument is, "Show me one person." They want evidence. My evidence is the Word of God. So I give them a text. "Put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh." That's what the word says. You put on Jesus Christ and you make no provision. Do you believe that even though you have no evidence?

Good things are not proof of goodness because, in God's eyes, goodness includes motives. Their argument is that even our good acts are polluted with self. They are looking at it from the human point of view. Jesus said:

Abide in Me and I in Thee for without Me you can do nothing. But if you abide in Me you will bear much fruit.

So the issue is not evidence. The Bible is not using the scientific method. Science will not accept anything without a demonstration. Science needs a demonstration. Faith doesn’t need a demonstration. It takes the Word of God as if it is reality. And that is why faith always has an object. That is why in the New Testament and in the Bible we are never taught that we are saved because of our faith. We are saved by faith or through faith because faith always is a channel or an instrument. Faith itself doesn’t save you. What saves you is the object of faith. Faith is simply the channel by which you approach the object. The object is the Word of God which is Jesus Christ. Now lets look at verses four and five:

By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain,...

Here are two brothers. Both offered sacrifices. What is it that made Abel’s sacrifice qualify him for righteousness? The rest of the text says:

...by which he obtained witness that he was

righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.

In other words, was Abel justified by works by offering up a sacrifice or was he justified by faith? Faith plus works or faith that works? The works were the evidence of what? Faith. Were works the evidence of his faith or were the works the evidence of his righteousness? Which one? Faith, yes. Cain also had works but Cain's works were depending on whose righteousness? His. He was offering up the fruits of his labour. Abel was offering up what God required of him regarding his confession of his faith in the Word of God — the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Notice that verse four is really discussing justification by faith. This is imputed righteousness. Now look at verse five, it goes to the other camp — imparted righteousness:

By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.

How did he please God? By what? By works of the law or by works of faith? Is there a difference between those two? I will touch on that when we do our series on the Laodicean message. In other words, Abel represents those who will be justified by faith. Enoch represents those who are walking by faith and producing fruits. They are abiding in Christ. They are producing fruits and God is pleased. For Jesus said, “If you abide in Me and I in you, you will bear much fruit and [who will be pleased?] My Father will be pleased.”

What I want to emphasize is that both justification and sanctification are by faith. That is what this passage is telling me. Faith is not only the means of my standing before God but faith is also the means of Christian living. Imputed righteousness is what God considers you in Christ. You are a sinner in yourself, therefore you will feel a sinner, but in Christ you are righteous. So using the words of Steps to Christ, “God looks on you as if you had never sinned.” Is God lying by the way? Is He make-believing? Is it true that you have

never sinned? Yes. In Christ you have never sinned. God looks at you as in Christ. That is imputed righteousness.

Imparted righteousness is producing that righteousness which you already have in Christ, in you, as evidence of what you already have in Christ. He is not imparting it to you so that you may feel good. He is imparting it to you so that the world may see what you are already in Christ. This is the evidence of justification. That's why it is called fruits.

When we moved to the house there on Brooklane [in Washington State], we had a tree in the backyard and I insisted that it was an apple tree. My wife said, "No, it's a pear tree." The reason she gave was that pear trees produce branches straight up while apple trees tend to go sideways. This was before the leaves came out. All we could see were the branches.

I said, "I think it is an apple tree. It smells like one."

She said, “A tree doesn’t smell like an apple tree.”

So we waited until the fruits came. Then when they came I said, “O.K. that’s the evidence.”

She said, “You are right.”

“By their fruits ye shall know them.” In the Laodicean message, Jesus judges the church by their works. “I know your works.” That is for another study. Now I want to look at verse six:

But without faith it is impossible to please Him...

Without faith there is no justification and there is no sanctification. The only way you can be justified and the only way you can be sanctified is by faith. That is all that God is demanding.

Without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is.

And that is a hard statement for you to understand because we are westerners in this world. The words “he is” is what we call the copulative verb in the Greek. It’s the verb “to be.” You remember what God said to Moses when Moses asked: “Who shall I say you are?” “I AM,” which means that He has no beginning and no ending. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

So when you read your Bible and see the wonderful works He did in the Old Testament, the miracles in the New Testament, can He do that today? Yes, He can, because He Is. That’s what it means. When you come to God, you come to One who is everlasting, that is unchangeable and is able to do. Can God make something today out of nothing? Yes, He can.

How did Jesus produce all those fish in that net? Did He stampede them? No. How did He produce the coin in the fish’s mouth? Because fish don’t eat money. Let’s look at God and say “Boy,

we have a God that can do anything."

The question is, "Do you have faith? Do you believe?" Faith is believing the impossible. Faith is believing God. So you must come to Him and believe that He is:

That He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.

So when somebody tells me, "I don't think God loves me." What do they lack? Is it true that God doesn't love them? Is the problem with God? No the problem is with them. "Oh you of little faith."

When things go wrong in your life, when you lose your job and then you get sick and have to go to the hospital and you have no insurance, and the whole world around you collapses; then your friends reject you to make it worse. Does God still love you? Why? Because He is. He has not changed. His love to you never changes. Faith is something concrete. Faith itself has no power.

Faith is in an object. The object is the Word of God. That is what faith is. Faith is taking God seriously. Faith is saying, “God, I believe even though I don’t have the evidence,” in the sense, “I don’t have the tangible evidence, but I believe.” People may laugh at your faith, they may mock you for your faith, but it is the most valuable thing you have. Don’t you ever give it up. Without faith it is impossible to please Him. Without faith it is impossible to be righteous. Without faith you are a sinner condemned. So faith is not simply a make-believe. Faith is based on something that is real. Jesus Christ and Him crucified. The Word of God who became flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld His glory.

Member of Congregation: “Einstein said that matter is energy and energy is power.”

I wish Karl Marx had lived after Einstein. Because, you see, Karl Marx did not go to that extreme. What he did is divide matter up into elements, and elements into molecules. And he said, “This is it. Matter existed in forms of gaseous

substance, molecules, and then it came together and became matter, and then spontaneously life came because the environment was correct.”

But today we know that the atom can be split. The source of matter is energy. But who is the source of energy? The word of God. The word of God is energy; it can create.

But the thing is this: if we admit that, then man becomes nothing, and that is the hard part. And I am willing to become nothing that God may become the energy in my life.

Do we think by faith, or do we think according as to what is going on around us? We must allow our minds to be controlled by the word of God. Then our feelings will come into subjection. But if we allow our environment, our body, our natural feelings to control us then in a time of crisis it will contradict our faith. I’m talking from experience.

When we were in Uganda, we were facing Idi Amin’s soldiers. The way we felt was that God had

forsaken us. We had no protection. But we knew by the word of God that He had not forsaken us. But our feelings did not tell us that. So we dumped our feelings to one side and said, “We are going to trust God.” Otherwise we would have left like some missionaries did. They couldn’t handle it, it was too much for them. So they took the first ticket out. We had a couple, when we were in Beirut, they were sent as missionaries. They arrived on a Sunday. That evening there was some shelling, typical for Beirut. The lady said, “We never knew that there was fighting going on here.” I don’t know what they were reading in America. Monday they came here on the plane. It was too much for them. At night, when most of the fighting took place, you would see the tracer bullets, red hot bullets, shells, and they would hit the ground and cause everything to shake. And you don’t know where the next one will hit. One hit our cafeteria in the college. But you know, you feel scared. We are human beings. But there was something that held us there, Jesus was in control.

And folks, that’s what we need. We need faith

in the word of God. And God says to you, “I will never leave you or forsake you.” And Jesus said to the disciples, “Go ye into all the world, and I am with you until the end.” Do you believe that? Then let us behave like people who believe.

May God bless us. Please read the other verses and look at the examples he gives from verse 7 and onwards. Men and women who were like you and me but who held on to their faith even though the heavens fell.

Chapter 24

Heroes of Faith

Hebrews 11:7-40

In our last study we looked at the first six verses of Hebrews eleven where Paul defines for us the true meaning of faith. We discovered that faith is the reality God has promised us in Christ. That reality is three things: righteousness, eternal life, and heaven. That's what God has promised us which is reality, none of which we have fully received as of now. We have the beginning of it but not its fullness; but we are sure of it. Faith is to be sure of the reality which we don't have in fullness right now. Therefore, faith looks at this present existence only as a passing phase. We are just passing by. Therefore, this life is insignificant. This is what the saints of the Old Testament demonstrated in their faith.

Now what we are going to do is study verses seven to forty. Here we are given a whole list of

men and women who demonstrated in their lives what faith is. Now these verses don't need explanation. They are very clear. In fact, this passage is often referred to as the Westminster Abbey of the Bible. The Westminster Abbey is a huge building like a church in England where all the famous people are buried. You see, they are dead people. These men, even though they are dead, have a different kind of greatness. They all died in faith and that is the common thread that we all have.

Now, what I would like to do is to point out the outstanding characteristics of faith that these men and women displayed in their lives. I see six characteristics of faith as it was revealed in the lives of these men and women of old.

1. Faith believes in the impossible.

Or, if you want to use another phrase: faith believes in the supernatural. Now we are living in an age, the scientific age where many people no longer believe in the supernatural. But faith

believes in the impossible. Look at verse seven:

By faith, Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet...

What did Paul mean by “things not seen as yet?” Had it ever rained before? No. There was no evidence scientifically that it could ever rain. And yet God warned Noah that the world would be destroyed by a flood. Did Noah believe it? Yes. He was...

...moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.

Faith believes in the impossible. And there are many impossible things that God says in the Bible. Things that are supernatural. These things may not agree with the experience of the human race of which we are a part. Look at verses eleven and twelve:

Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised.

When did Sara have a child? After she had past the age of child bearing. So, scientifically, it was impossible for her to have a child. Did she believe? Yes. Well, she laughed at the beginning but finally she accepted the possibility. At first she was caught by the scientific facts: she had passed the age of child bearing. But the text says she believed. Verse twelve says:

Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable.

The result was that she did conceive and have a child and the child became the father of many. Now look at verses seventeen to nineteen. Here Paul tells us how Abraham was tested by God. What did God say to Abraham? “Take your only

son and offer him as a sacrifice.”

By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called.

In other words, “The promise that I have given you, Abraham, will come through your son.” And now God says to take his life. Did Abraham go out to sacrifice him? Yes. Look at verse nineteen:

Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead...

Would you have such faith if God said to kill your child? Did he believe that God could raise him up? Yes. He believed the impossible. So number one, faith believes the impossible. So whenever you read something in the Bible that is to come, please don’t look around you for evidence. Take God at His word. These men and women of the Old Testament took God at His word. So #1, Faith believes the impossible.

2. Faith knows or is sure of the future end.

Today people are wondering what will happen in the future. There is a lot of speculation. There is a lot of fortune telling and star reading and all kinds of things. But these men knew what the future would be. They knew that ultimately God was going to restore this earth to its original perfection. They knew that the end of the world is not going to be becoming better and better. They knew that the future was in the city that God built. Look at verses eight to ten:

By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

The word tabernacles or tents means that they were living in temporary dwellings. They knew that this world was not permanent so they lived in tents. Did they have money to build houses? Yes. They were rich. Look at Lot. What did he do? He went to Sodom and began living in houses. Remember that these men looked to the future and they knew there was a future. This is what makes a Christian funeral a lot easier than a non-Christian one. Paul says in Thessalonians we should not mourn as those who have no hope. They knew the future. They had a hope. It was not maybe. It was sure. No speculations. No groping in darkness. They were sure.

3. Faith acts.

How did the people know that Noah believed God that there would be a flood? What was the evidence he gave? He built an ark. Do you know how far the ark was from the ocean? Approximately five hundred miles to the nearest span of water. It was not near the sea. It was inland. It was an ark that could not be transported.

The greatest evidence that Noah gave that he believed in the flood was not his preaching but his building of the ark. What is the greatest evidence that you believe that the coming of Christ is sure? Do people say of Adventists, “They surely live as if the end of the world is coming?” We need to realize that faith acts.

Look for example at Abraham. God said, “I’m going to give you a country, just for you and your people.” Did he believe? What was the evidence? He left the security of his home, his people, his environment even though he did not know where he was going. Faith always acts.

Look at Moses. What did he do? He refused to be the Pharaoh of Egypt. Why? Because he believed that God had called him for a purpose and he refused to be a Pharaoh but chose to suffer with God’s people for a season. So all through the eleventh chapter of Hebrews you will notice that these men and women acted. All through this chapter you will see they did not sit down and say, "Yes, I believe.” They were not passive, in other

words. Faith always produces action. And those actions are described in the Bible as “works of faith.” Faith without works is dead. Their works did not prove that they were righteous, they simply gave evidence. That’s why if you look at the last part of verse seven:

...by the which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.

If you look at James 2, what was the greatest evidence that Abraham gave that he believed that God could raise Isaac back to life? He took the knife and raised it to plunge it into his son. He believed. Faith always produces action.

4. Faith lives in the future.

This is somewhat related to number two but it is important also. Look at verses twenty-three to twenty-six:

By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he

was a proper child... [i.e., special child. The parents believed that he was special; they felt that he was to be the promised deliverer.] ...By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.

Please notice he was not swept away by the things that were around him. We live in a world where we want everything now. In fact, I have discovered in this part of the world that the philosophy is, "Enjoy it now and pay later." The other day someone made a statement on the radio that most Americans live twenty-three percent above their resources, because they get things on credit. These men and women of Hebrews eleven did not allow the things around them to be the motivation of their lives. They lived in the sense that the future was more important to them than the present.

This is one of the hardest things that our young people are experiencing. One of the illustrations

that Morris Vendon likes very much is if you are promised a million dollars ten years from now or one hundred dollars tomorrow which one would you take? To most kids ten years is a long time from now. “I’d rather have the one hundred dollars now.” We human beings want everything now. And that’s why you will notice that one of the characteristics of faith which we will later discuss as number six is that if you live in the future you can endure unto the end.

If you don’t live in the future, if you get impatient, then you are in trouble. The coming of Christ from the human point of view has been delayed. Because His coming is not as soon as we expected, the love of many waxes cold. We are not accustomed to wait because we want everything now. Number four is these men and women lived in the future. The future was their dream, their hope. Why was their dream in the future? Because they were sure, it was not “maybe.” They were sure of it. They never questioned. That’s why they were willing to die for their faith. They were willing to be cut in half. They were willing to be killed. They

were willing to suffer because, to them, they were sure of the future. And they lived for the future. We need to do that.

5. Faith ignores the contrary evidence around you.

Can you imagine how many people must have come to Noah and said, “Boy, something must be wrong with you because it has never rained.” Or can you imagine how Abraham must have felt when people asked, “Where are you going? Why are you leaving here when you don’t know where you are going?”

I am bringing this up because one of the biggest problems we face in this present world is what we call peer pressure. It is not something that affects only our young people. It affects even the adults. We don’t like to be different. Faith ignores the contrary evidence. It ignores what people think and what people think of you. That is not easy! That’s what faith is. If people say to you, “You are old fashioned.” How does that affect you? If people

say to you Adventists, “You are peculiar,” or “you are weird,” what do you do? Who is really weird? You or they who say you are? Faith ignores what people say about you or what they think about you. These people ignored what people said. They were willing to be different. That is not easy. It is very hard to be different. This is one of the problems.

One day I was visiting one of our sisters in Idaho. She was very embarrassed because I visited her at work. She was one of the officers of the church. She had some gold earrings on and she was very embarrassed. She called me outside and said, “It’s very hard for me to be different in front of my colleagues.” She was afraid to be different. It’s hard for us to be different. It is against our human nature to be different. This lady wanted to wear jewelry like her Nazarene friends. In the beginning, she didn’t wear it. She told them, “If I had my own choice I would be wearing them, but my church won’t allow me.” That’s how she put it. In her heart she was already doing it.

What I am showing you here is how faith

manifests itself. What is one of the evidences that you have faith? It ignores those who contradict you. That's one of the evidences of faith. The evidence of faith is that we live for the future. The evidence is that you act what you believe. It's not simply a mental assent.

6. Faith endures unto the end. Faith perseveres.

In the Time of Trouble the issues will be pretty strong. We have no idea what the Time of Trouble will be like. We are told by the pen of inspiration that normally we anticipate problems to be far worse than the reality; except in the Time of Trouble. That will be worse than anything we can anticipate. So number six is faith perseveres unto the end.

Look at Matthew ten. This is a statement that we need to take to heart. Jesus is warning His disciples that when you become a disciple your life will not become easy but it will become hard. Verses seventeen and onward:

But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; And you shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what you shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what you shall speak. For it is not you that speak, but the Spirit of your Father.

Verse twenty-one:

And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death. [Can you imagine this? And this is all a part of what will be.]

Verse twenty-two:

And you shall be hated of all men for my name’s sake... [This is the Time of Trouble. You shall be hated of all men who are not on the side of

Christ.] ...but he that endureth to the end shall be saved.

That is why Jesus said in Luke:

When the Son of Man comes will He find faith on the earth? [Can we endure unto the end?]

Go back to chapter eleven of Hebrews. Look at verse thirteen. And this is what I meant that they live in the future and they persevere to the end:

These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, [They saw it in the future; but they died before they reached that state but they were sure of it.] and were persuaded [they were convinced, they were sure] of them, and embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

They lived in the future. They were sure. Because they were sure, they were able to endure unto the end. They persevered unto the end. Now go to verses thirty-seven to thirty-nine. This is kind

of summing up the whole thing:

They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins [they didn't have the latest fashions]; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; [Of whom the world was not worthy; they ignored the fact that the world made a laughing stock of them. They ignored it.] they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise.

Every one of them died, but how did they die? In faith or out of faith? In faith. This is the key purpose of Hebrews eleven:

God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.

Why did God not give them the promise? Because there were other human beings, we, that God said I must still save. They were willing to die

and wait for the martyrs. I want you to keep this in mind for when we go to chapter twelve I want you to notice what Paul says here:

Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us.

Please notice that there are many things that the devil would use to destroy your faith. For example, when this lady said to me, “I don’t like to be different,” that was to her a besetting sin. She was weak in that area. The devil will use that to get you out of Christ sooner or later.

One day the head deacon in one of my churches stopped coming to church, two, three, four, five weeks and I said, “What’s happening here? Is he sick?” I called him and he said, “No, I’m not sick.” He wouldn’t tell me. So finally I said, “I’m going to go and get it out of him.”

I said, “Why have you stopped coming?”

He brought a little booklet that one of his office mates had given him. It was a booklet on Seventh-day Adventists which called the church a cult and all kinds of terrible things. He said, “I am ashamed to belong to a cult.” So he stopped coming to church. He was not willing to ignore what people said about us. And we face that problem today. We will even compromise to get rid of the word “cult.”

Folks, are you willing to be made a laughing stock? Are you willing to live for the future even though you may be deprived of everything? We complain sometimes because we have to give 10% of our income. What will you do if you have to give one hundred percent?

When our family was deported from Uganda we were not allowed to take anything with us except one suitcase for the family with our necessary clothes. We couldn’t touch our furniture. We could not even touch our bank account. Everything was frozen. We couldn’t touch it. There were two of us who were Adventists, a doctor and

myself. He couldn’t bear the thought.

He said, “I have spent my life earning. These things are mine. Why should they deprive me of it?”

I said, “No, they are not yours, they belong to God. Everything we have belongs to God. And if he says leave it behind, why do you worry about it?”

He put his goods into seventeen boxes or huge crates. He bribed the soldiers. He said, “If I give you so much money will you put these on the plane, the air freight plane?”

They said “Yes.”

I refused. I told my wife, “No, we are not going to try bribery and corruption.”

The denomination sent both of us to Ethiopia. He was sent to the hospital and I was sent to be Ministerial Secretary of the Union. Three months

after we arrived only three of his boxes arrived. The soldiers had opened the 17 boxes, took all of the valuables, and they took the newspaper wrappings that they had used for their breakables, and squeezed them into three boxes and sent them the wrappings. So the doctor lost his money that he had bribed them with and also lost his goods.

I told the man who took charge of our house, “When we leave, you take our stuff. Don’t give it to Idi Amin’s soldiers. Give it to the poor members of our church.” We were allowed to give it to anyone we liked as long as they were Ugandans.

But he said, “I don’t have the heart.” So he packed everything in a huge crate twelve feet by eight feet by ten feet. He went to the government and said, “I want to ship this to Ethiopia.”

The officer said, “Whose stuff is this?”

They said, “It is our pastor’s.”

"Was he deported?”

They said, “Yes.”

He said, “Do you know that the law is that you can’t take anything out?”

They said, “Yes, we know that.”

But, you know, the Muslims are salvation by works people. He was scared to touch it because he thought God would punish him, because I was a Pastor. So he signed the documents and gave him permission to ship them. So they arrived. There was no communication between Ethiopia and Uganda. So we did not know what had happened. All I received was a phone call from the railway station saying, “Please come and collect your box.”

I said, “What box?”

They said, “I don’t know, your name is there and your address, and we called your telephone number.”

So I said, “Somebody must have sent us a box.” So I went and I saw this huge crate. I said, “Where did this come from?” On the bottom was the sending address in Uganda and I realized what it was. It had to be our things. I asked, “How did this come?”

Well, I did not know at that time but later on the man told me. In fact, he is now the science teacher of Gem State Academy, and will be here next weekend for a family reunion. He is a Canadian and he took my place. They did not deport any Canadians.

I called the doctor up and told him the good news. He said, “You are very lucky.”

I said, “No, it had nothing to do with luck. You of little faith.”

Are we willing to leave and give up everything? I tell you, the time will come when we will have to flee. That is why in the New Testament Christ said, “Remember Lot’s wife.”

Why did Lot's wife look back? Was God being so drastic? Her heart was in Sodom.

Look at the Jews of the Exodus. Where was their heart? In spite of the fact that they were slaves in Egypt, they longed to go back to Egypt.

We need to learn from Hebrews eleven. This is the witness that these men and women are to us. They never received the promise, but they were willing to die. They were willing to be mocked. They were willing to live in tents. They were willing to be hounded, live in caves, because they knew the future. All of them persevered until the end. Remember, Hebrews was written to Jewish Christians who were not persevering, they were giving up their faith. Many were going back to Judaism. Many were giving up their faith because they could not withstand that pressure.

Paul is saying in Hebrews eleven, "Look at these men and women. They stood the pressure and, if you have such a witness, why are you doubting your God and His promise?"

My dear people, as you see the end approaching and you see things getting hard, remember that the future is guaranteed. We have a city whose Builder and Maker is God. Don’t you ever give up your faith because that is what will be tested in the time of trouble. Only those who endure unto the end will be saved.

Have you ever wondered why these three fathers of Israel, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, are mentioned all through the Bible? In fact, when the Jews asked Jesus about the future, if there is a resurrection, what did Jesus say?

God is not the God of the dead. He is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Have you ever wondered why God has given Israel three fathers? Paul tells us it is not the descendants of these three men who are true Israel but the qualities of these three men that is Israel. Abraham stands for faith. He is the father of the faithful. Isaac stands for those who are born from

above. Jesus said to Nicodemus:

Unless you are born from above you can never enter the kingdom of God.

What does Jacob stand for? Why was his name changed from Jacob to Israel? Because he persevered through suffering. He endured unto the end. He never gave up his hold on God.

I will not let you go until you keep your promise and bless me.

And that is the gospel in the Old Testament. If you want to be an Israelite, you don't have to have Jewish blood in you. You do have to have the faith of Abraham, you have to be born from above, and you have to persevere unto the end. And this last part is the most important because the devil has deceived many Christians into thinking that once you accept Christ you are saved even if you give up Christ. Do you know that? They teach that once saved, always saved, even if you give up the church and go back to your former life you will be

saved because God always keeps His promise.

Please remember that God's promises are conditional. Yes, He will keep His promise but without faith it is impossible to please Him. God cannot give you the promise if you say, "I don't believe in You any more." Remember? We covered Hebrews six and we covered Hebrews ten: the just shall live by faith. If you draw back, God will have no pleasure. He cannot save you. But we are not of them that draw back. Look at the last verse in chapter ten, before chapter eleven:

But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.

It is my prayer that everyone here will persevere unto the end. Let's look at these men and women as our examples. These are true Biblical heroes, somebody you can look at and say, "Boy, if they can do it, God give me the grace to do it too." And we have better advantages than they had. For these people Christ had not even come the first

time. Everything to them was a promise. But we know that His coming is a historical fact. He actually came; so we should have more reason for having faith than the men of the Old Testament. May God bless us that we may understand what it means to have faith, how faith works in our lives. It acts, it perseveres unto the end, it believes the impossible, it ignores what people say about you, and it lives in the future.

Chapter 25

Christ, The Supreme Example

Hebrews 12:1-4

Hebrews eleven gives us a list of names of Bible characters whose faith endured unto the end. In our last study we brought out six facts as to how faith reveals itself in the life of the believer. Let us quickly review them:

1. We discovered that faith believes the impossible. Faith believes in the supernatural. We are living in a time when men will not accept anything that is supernatural. They say that it is outside of the realm of science. But these men and women who are mentioned in chapter eleven believed in the impossible. For example Noah believed that there would be a flood even though it had never rained before. Abraham and Sara believed that God could give them a child even after Sara had passed the age of child bearing. Science would say, “Impossible.”

2. Faith is sure of the future. That is why these men — Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob — were willing to live in tents, because they were looking forward to a city whose foundations and builder is God. They were sure of it. Was Abraham rich? Yes. Could he live in a beautiful ranch home? But he did not. He lived in tents because he looked forward to that city. They were sure of the future.

3. Faith acts accordingly. When God said to Noah, “There is going to be a flood. I want you to build me an ark.” What did the building of the ark prove? It proved his faith. Faith without works is dead. When Abraham was told to leave his country he went. When we leave this country as missionaries the General Conference gives us all kinds of wonderful provisions. They give us a furlough. They promise to bring us back to visit our loved ones. God gave Abraham nothing like that. Leave your family, your country, and go to the country I will show you. Abraham went. He acted. When God required Abraham to offer up his son in whom he had promised salvation Abraham

carried out the instructions. Faith always acts. If you believe that Christ is coming soon and you live as if He's never coming your actions are contradicting your teaching. Our faith is always revealed by action.

4. Faith lives in the future. Everything these men and women did was temporary. To them this was a passing phase of their lives. They were looking forward to the future. They all died without receiving the promise. They lived for the future.

5. Faith ignores the environment, the public opinion. It is not easy to be a Christian in our world. I was chaplain of Nairobi University before I came here. Our kids there endure a tremendous amount of persecution — not physically but verbally. The students laughed at them. They said, "You still believe in that old stuff that our parents who are ignorant believed?" These people in chapter eleven of Hebrews were willing to be called all kinds of names. They ignored that which was said about them. They were a peculiar people. They didn't care about peer pressure. We need to

know that faith means that we stand for what is right even though the opinions of people around us is the opposite.

6. Faith perseveres. Every one of these men and women endured until the end. Not one of them gave up their faith. That was the main emphasis of Hebrews eleven. The purpose of giving this list of heroes of faith in Hebrews eleven is to help us to never give up. Matt. 10:22:

He who endures unto the end shall be saved.

With this in mind let us turn to chapter twelve. Listen to how he applies Hebrews eleven, the heroes of faith in verse one:

Wherefore seeing we also are encompassed about with a great cloud of witnesses...

That phrase doesn’t have meaning in America today because our roads here are paved. In Bible days when a messenger was coming with some message on horseback, he was riding his horse on a

dirt road. What did you see? A cloud of dust. We had to put up with this in Africa. Of course it is worse when you are driving a car. It is a terrible thing to drive behind another car. Remember that all these heroes of faith were witnessing one thing — never give up.

Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us,”

Now he is using a metaphor here. When a person runs in a race he makes sure that his shoes are light, that he doesn’t wear anything heavy. Why? What does that do? It hinders his progress in running. Well, today we don’t do much running but what we do today is race cars and motorcycles. I know what I did. We tried to make those things as light as possible. If you look at a racing car they do everything to reduce weight. They remove the headlights, for that is weight. They remove everything that hinders the speed.

So what Paul is saying here is, “Let us lay anything aside that is hindering our faith.” Please remember the devil will give as many attractions as possible. Be very careful that the devil doesn’t use things — anything — to destroy your faith. That’s the greatest desire of Satan. He knows he cannot touch the righteousness of our Saviour because that’s in Christ. He cannot touch Christ, but he can touch your faith. And Paul is saying, “It is better for you to go to heaven light than to cruise all the way.”

We have an excellent illustration of this in the book Early Writings where Sister [Ellen G.] White was showing the saints travelling toward heaven. The road becomes narrower and steeper and the people had to throw away every burden. Folks, that’s the direction we will be going. The closer we come to the kingdom of God the more we will have to throw away. I don’t mean throw away by having a garage sale because we have a garage sale of things we no longer want, things that we thought we wanted but we never used (and we discover afterwards that we wanted them even though we

had not used them). So we sell them for almost nothing even though they are brand new. They tell us that one of the highest business' in this country is garage sales. That is not what Paul is talking about here.

We will have to give up things we cherish too. Lot had to give up his house. Lot's wife couldn't take it. She turned around and said, "Boy, am I giving up this?" And she turned to a pillar of salt. We must lay aside anything that weakens our faith. That's negative. The first "let us" is negative. The second is positive.

Let us run with patience the race that is set before us.

I don't know if you remember. I faintly remember the Olympics in 1984. There was a lady. The race was over but she would not give up. She came very close to the line and I think she fell and the people cried, "Get up!" and she did and she finally reached the tape. Everybody was excited. It won't be like that in the Christian race. You don't

have people encouraging you. You have just the opposite. We will have to gain strength from the discouragement of others. So Paul is saying here "Let us run to finish the race." If you give up your faith, remember Hebrews ten:

The just shall live by faith. Anyone who draws back I will have no longer pleasure in him."

Your faith must endure to the end. The most valuable thing we possess is our faith. Now there are two things I would like to mention as we go to verses two to four. These verses present the greatest example for the Christian. The supreme example is Jesus Christ. Verses 2 and 3:

Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; [Look at verse three]....consider Him.

Whenever Paul uses the metaphor of running, and he uses it often, he will never use it for salvation. He will only use it for Christian living. Salvation is a gift but Christian living is a struggle. It is also a battle. It is also a fight. It is also

persevering. Christian living must not be equated with salvation. Salvation is a gift that you receive without any merits of your own. But Christian living is a struggle. I'll tell you why.

When you become a Christian you become a citizen of God's kingdom which is heaven. Who is the Lord of that Kingdom? Jesus Christ. Who is the god of this world? Satan. So when you become a Christian, a member of God's kingdom, you become an enemy of Satan. You can be sure that he will make your life miserable as long as you are living in his territory. It is not really his territory legally but he is still trying to control what goes on in this world. 1 John 5:19 says so:

The whole world still lieth in wickedness under the evil one.

To use a good expression, "being a Christian is no picnic." We must never give the idea that when you become a Christian everything will be O.K. Your bills will be paid and you will never have any financial or material problems. Folks, that is not

true. What will you do if you live in a communist country where they give you no peace? I tell you it was hard for our young people in Ethiopia. They were not allowed to pray and they couldn’t go to church. There was no argument. If they were found simply reading the Bible they would be stoned to death. It was as simple as that.

The first two years of the Marxist revolution in Ethiopia the hyenas got fed. We used to hear them every night. The hyenas make a horrible noise when they are eating. And they are right there on your doorstep. The Marxists were just disposing of their bodies for the hyenas to eat. Many of these were Christians who were willing to die. I will be honest with you, the ones that were the bravest in Ethiopia were the Pentecostals. And I asked myself why. There was one thing the Pentecostals were sure of and that was their salvation. Therefore, they were willing to die.

Our kids are not sure of their salvation because they have equated Christian living with salvation. Christian living is a struggle. Sister White says in

Steps to Christ:

You will have to come to the cross of Christ many times because of your shortcomings. But you are never forsaken.

Please remember that. So we need to realize that it is not your faith that saves you. It is the object of faith that saves you which is Jesus Christ. Your faith simply links you with Jesus Christ. So we are saved through faith or by faith. That faith becomes the most important thing in your life.

That opened my eyes. We think we have the truth and those Pentecostals, they are Philistines. But they were willing to stand up in prison and before the court and willing to die for Christ because they had the assurance of salvation. They may have been wrong on the Sabbath and a lot of other things, but they were sure of their salvation. So they were willing to die. These men of Hebrews eleven were sure of their salvation and they were willing to die. They were willing to be deprived of their material possessions. They were willing to go

through anything.

The second thing I have to say is never use Christ as an example to the unbeliever. There are two things Christ is. First, He is a Saviour. He is a Saviour of whom? Turn to Timothy please. Let's read the Bible. 1 Tim.4:10:

For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, [notice the same idea of reproach] because we trust in the living God [if you trust in the living God you will have reproach], Who is the Saviour of all men, especially of those that believe.

Why? Will all men be saved? No. He is the Saviour of all men but that salvation has to be effective and when we accept Christ, it applies to us. Now to the world Christ is only one thing and that is a Saviour. To the believer He is two things. He's a Saviour and He's an example. Never use Christ as an example to the world but to the believer. The New Testament only uses Christ as an example to the believer. So Jesus says to those who believe:

If any man follow me let him take up his cross and follow me.

Keep this in mind because here in verses two to four Paul is using Christ as an example and by the way there is a text that I would like you to see now in terms of having the patience of the saints and that is James 1:1-4. Please read it at home. You will discover that one of the things that the Three Angel's Message produces in Rev.14:12 is patience [endurance]. Now let me go to Hebrews twelve:

Looking unto Jesus the author and the finisher of our faith....

In other words, faith always has an object. That's why we are saved through faith and by faith, not because of our faith. The object of our faith is Jesus Christ, Who is the author and the finisher of our salvation, our hope of faith. Our salvation from beginning to end depends on Christ. So we must look unto Christ. This is very important, because we must not look at our performance for assurance

of salvation. The devil will try everything to get you to look at your performance.

I was giving Bible studies to a lady in Nampa. She was a nonchurch goer. She took a class in Revelation and did not agree with certain things. She said, “You people do not preach the gospel.”

I said “Will you study? I’ll give you the gospel.”

She said “Fine.”

About three weeks after the study there was a TV program in which they were answering calls. She called this program to pray for her husband who wanted nothing to do with religion. So the lady who answered the phone said to her, “I’ll pray with you on the phone but before we pray let me ask you if you have spoken in tongues.”

This lady said, “No. What has that to do with prayer?”

Then the one answering the phones said, “If you haven’t spoken in tongues how do you know that you are saved?”

This is not true of all Pentecostals, but many of them look at tongues as the evidence that they are saved. If they have had that experience that is their assurance. So they are looking at themselves. That is a form of legalism.

I told that once to a Pentecostal and he was shocked. He said, “We see you Adventists as legalists and now you are accusing me of being one.”

I said, “You read Philippians chapter three. The Jews were looking at their genealogy for salvation: ‘We are the children of Abraham.’” And Paul says if you have the blood of Abraham it does not make you a child of God. Some Adventists say that because you’re Seventh-day Adventist you will be saved. Folks, the denomination cannot save you. Some of them are looking at the speaking of tongues and this lady on the phone said, “If you

have not spoken in tongues, then you have not received the Spirit, and if you have not received the Spirit, you don't belong to Christ."

So this lady asked me, "What do I do?" I had an answer for her. I said, "It is very simple. I'd ask her to defend those statements that she gave you from the Word of God. Ask her: Where in the Bible does it say that everybody has to speak in tongues as evidence of their salvation? One text?" I gave her some texts that say not all speak in tongues. "What are you going to do with that?" I don't know what she did with it because her husband stopped her from studying. He was an atheist. So I gave her some material and advised her to study it secretly.

What I am trying to say is this, "Christ is always your anchor." Yes, if you look at your performance and get discouraged because of it don't let that affect your salvation. Let it affect your repentance. "God forgive me for letting you down. Please, God forgive me for being a poor witness." But don't let the devil tell you that you

are lost. You are lost when you turn your eyes from Christ. Look at Christ who is the author and the finisher of your faith. Continuing in verse two:

Who for the joy that was set before Him....

What was the joy? In other words, Paul is saying here that there was a joy in the life of Christ as the author and finisher of our salvation. Was it easy for Christ to save us? No. Then what was the joy? Look at Luke 15:5,7,9,10,24,22. It would be good to read the whole chapter, but these verses are dealing with three parables that Jesus told: the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son.

In each case, the one who was looking was happy. Was it hard work looking for that sheep? After a hard day's work he comes home. By the way, sheep watching his hard work. It's boring. After a whole day's work he comes home and puts his sheep in the pen, counts them, and finds that there is one missing. If he leaves that sheep out in the wilderness the wolves and the lions will get him so he goes in search for it. When he finds it he

rejoices. The coin: was it hard to find it? Yes. Look at the prodigal son. Was the elder brother happy? No. The elder brother represents the Pharisees and scribes who were murmuring at Jesus Who was eating and drinking with publicans and sinners. Why was He eating with them? In the Middle East, when you eat with someone, it is a symbol of acceptance. That's why in the Laodicean message it says:

If you will open the door I will come in to you and I will sup with you and you with me.

Which means, "I will accept you." To the Jews, when Jesus ate with the publicans and sinners, it was a symbol of acceptance. There was joy in each case. There was joy not only in the heart of the people who found the lost thing, but joy in heaven for one soul that is saved. What was this joy that was set before Christ? "The Son of Man came to seek and save that which was lost." That was His joy. His joy was to save us. Was it hard work? Yes, extremely hard work. How hard? Well, let's continue in verse two. "Who, for the joy that was

set before him,...” did two things:

1. He endured the cross. (That statement can be taken in two ways.)
2. He despised the shame.

Now let me look at those two statements from the Roman’s point of view. To the Romans the cross was a very painful, cruel method of execution. It was a slow, lingering death. There is a book that describes the cross in terms of its physical torture, Watch With Me, by a famous BBC commentator who happened to be an Adventist. He had a degree from Cambridge University. He wrote a book based on a statement by Ellen G. White, that we should spend a thoughtful hour each day contemplating the life of Jesus. He missed the point, in a sense, by pointing to the cross in terms of the physical torture. He looked at the cross through Roman spectacles. The whole book is documented with Roman historians.

It is a very slow, lingering death. They say that gangrene forms in your hands and your feet. You

have pains everywhere. You are exposed to the cold at night and the heat in the day time. It is terrible. Your joints ache. You have headaches that are unbearable. It's agony. And it goes on for three, four, five, six days. Then number two, crucifixion was always in public, naked. They crucified them in the open publicly. Hebrews six says that if you reject Christ and go back to the world you are crucifying Him afresh and putting Him to an open (public) shame. There are only two things you can do with Christ. You can either crucify Christ or be crucified with Him. A believer is crucified with Christ. A nonbeliever crucifies Him. So this was the situation that Christ endured, both the shame and the physical pain.

But if you look at the cross through Jewish spectacles — remember, the Hebrews were Jews — they looked at the cross with an added dimension: not only physical and not only shameful but with the curse of God. Turn to Gal.3:10, which says:

Cursed is every one that continueth not in all

things which are written in the book of the law to do them.

Now look at verse thirteen:

Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us...

Who made Christ a curse for us: the Romans, the Jews, or somebody else? Who made Christ a curse for us? Yes, it was God who made Him a curse for us. You see, the Jews could not make Him a curse for us because they themselves were cursed and needed a Saviour. It is God. Look at the rest of the verse:

...for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.

Paul is quoting here, when he says, “it is written.” It is written where, in the Encyclopedia Britannica? No. In Scripture. In Deut. 21:23, the statement in the black brackets:

For he that is hanged is accursed of God.

If you read Isa. 53:4,10 you will notice that is God who put Him to grief. Now what is the curse of God? What did Paul mean in Gal. 3:10? What is the curse? The unpardonable sin. What happens to a person who commits the unpardonable sin? The second death. A death without a hope. Read Desire of Ages, p. 753, where we are told that He could not see through the portals of the tomb. Hope did not present to Him a resurrection. He feared that sin was so offensive to the Father that the separation was eternal. He experienced agony not only because of the physical torture and the mental torture but, above all, He experienced the agony of the curse of God. That was so much worse than the other two that they could be hardly felt, we are told. He endured the cross, He was obedient even unto death. Why was He obedient to all this? Why was He willing to endure the cross? It was so that He may have the joy of seeing us in heaven. That's what Christ was willing to go through.

After He had finished our salvation He didn't

go into sustentation. No. He went to heaven and He is sitting at the right hand of God, doing what for us? So the joy of Christ is to see you in heaven. He will not rest, folks, until He makes sure that every soul that can be saved will be saved.

I know what He will say in the judgment to the lost people. He'll say, "How many times I pleaded with you. How many times I brought you under my wings. How many times I led you to the gospel but you would not. So I had to leave you desolate." That is the abomination that makes desolate. The deliberate, willful, persistent rejection of Christ. But, as far as He is concerned, He will not rest until He can take every soul. With this in mind, go to verse three of Hebrews twelve:

Consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself...

Was life easy for Christ during His stay here? No. Did He have to face opposition? Yes, from all kinds of things and people. Was He falsely accused? Yes. Was He mistreated? Yes. Was He

not appreciated? You name it. He went through it. It ends up:

...lest you be wearied and faint in your minds.

“If Christ was willing to go through all this for our salvation, aren’t we fools if we give up faith?” That’s what he is saying. Don’t give up hope. Hold on. Look at Christ. Let Him be your example. There is one difference. He went through all this for whose benefit? Ours. We go through all this for whose benefit? Ours. So please remember, Christ did it for our sakes. Let it be an example. Look at 1 Peter 2:19-23, this is something that you need to keep in mind:

For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when you be buffeted for your faults [If you are punished for your mistakes, even the unbeliever goes through that. There is no glory for anyone suffering for his mistakes], you shall take it patiently? But if you do well, and suffer for it, you take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.

It may not be acceptable with you and it may not be acceptable with your friends. They will say to you, “Why are you taking it sitting down? Take them to court.” Have you heard that advice? “Don’t take it sitting down.” But what does God say to you? “Endure it patiently.” Let’s go on in verse twenty-one:

For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example...

Who is the “us” here? The believers. He is not talking to unbelievers.

...that we should follow in His steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth: Who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; [He did not take revenge.] when He suffered, he threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously:

You can mistreat me but, some day, you will have to answer God.

One day I was deprived of some money on the part of the treasurer of our union. He kept some money from me that, according to policy, I should have had. My fellow missionaries said, “I would not keep quiet.” Now he knew it, because I told him about it, but he still wouldn’t send the money.

Two years later, the treasurer said, “Jack, I did it deliberately to test you to find out what kind of missionary you are.”

I tell you, I got lots of advice to fight. I said, “No.” I said, “One day, he will have to answer in the judgment.” It was no longer my problem. It was his problem. When he told me two years later, I said, “Thank God I did not listen to my fellow missionaries, because I would have failed the test.

He was a South African. He said, “I was testing you.” He was that kind of person. He had the check already in his drawer, dated two years ago. He pulled out his deposits from the safe and took out the check and said, “Here it is.” I needed the

money at that time. I thank God for the savings.

Let's go back to Hebrews and consider Jesus Christ, as your example. As your example of what? Suffering wrongfully, folks.

...Lest you be wearied and faint in your minds.

Please notice that discouragement begins in the mind. Don't let your mind dwell on the sad things in your life, on the mistreatment and the people who mistreat you in the church. Don't let it affect you because it is the devil that is using it for your downfall. Now look at verse four:

You have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.

Don't look at sin only in terms of doing wrong. In the context of Hebrews, sin, here, is unbelief. When you turn your back to God, you have committed the unpardonable sin. The unpardonable sin is a sin against grace and not a sin against the law. The unpardonable sin is rejecting the spirit of

grace and that's how the Bible defines it. Don't let anything cause you to give up your faith. The church can mistreat you. The people may not visit you, but please don't say, "I'm not coming to church because nobody loves me." Who is going to suffer for that? You yourself. Don't be a fool. So I tell my brethren, "You can mistreat me. You can deprive me of my salary, but I will never give up my faith. If I give up, I'm the greatest fool in the world."

Should you give up your faith, the person who suffers for that is you. And folks, this is what Paul is saying here, to the Jews of his day, "Please never give up because, if you give up, you're giving up everything else that goes with righteousness by faith."

So Jesus said you will be hated, you will be mistreated, both in the church and out of the church. By the way, the ones who mistreated Christ were not so much the Romans. Who were the ones that mistreated Christ? The people who called themselves the "Covenant People of God." They

were the ones who mistreated Him. And you know, we somehow expect to be mistreated by the world, but when we are mistreated in the church we think that is terrible and we give up going to church. Don't you ever give up folks, that's the devil using people. The devil even used Peter to try and keep Christ away from the cross. "This will never happen to You!"

And what did Christ say to Peter, "Get thee behind me, Satan." He saw behind Peter. He saw Peter only as a tool of Satan. And when you are mistreated and the devil comes to you and says, "Look man, stop going to church. These people are terrible," you must do what Christ did, "Get thee behind me, Satan!" The devil will use members, he will use the pastor, he will use the brethren as tools because they are human beings. But never give up.

So Christ is our Example, not any human being. Yes, the heroes of faith are good examples but the supreme example to the believer is Jesus Christ.

k at and say, “Boy, if they can do it, God give me the grace to do it too.” And we have better advantages than they had. For these people Christ had not even come the first time. Everything to them was a promise. But we know that His coming is a historical fact. He actually came; so we should have more reason for having faith than the men of the Old Testament. May God bless us that we may understand what it means to have faith, how faith works in our lives. It acts, it perseveres unto the end, it believes the impossible, it ignores what people say about you, and it lives in the future.

Chapter 26

God’s Refining Process

Hebrews 12:5-11

In this study we are going to look at Heb. 12:5-11. Here the writer of Hebrews is dealing with a very important phase of our Christian experience. I have entitled this study, “God’s Refining Process.” While our salvation in Christ is secure, it is guaranteed only as long as we maintain our faith in Christ.

Christian living itself is always a struggle. I am sure that all of you are aware of this by now. This is because our human nature has not changed in the experience of conversion. When a person accepts Christ, there is a change in his mind. He has experienced repentance. Repentance is a turning around of the human mind. But our nature is still one hundred percent sinful. So the moment you become a Christian you have a war within you which is between your converted mind, which now

wants to do the will of God, and your unconverted flesh which is at enmity with God and is never able to be subject to the law of God. Turn to Gal. 5:17. Paul makes this statement:

For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other.

Here the word “flesh” refers to our sinful nature with which we are born. Our sinful nature and the Holy Spirit which dwells in us can never be partners. They will never cooperate with each other. They are always at enmity and, because of this, it is impossible for man in and of himself to live a holy Christian life. As Paul brings it out in Romans seven, which is the second passage I would like you to turn to, Paul is saying that our sinful nature and the holy law are incompatible, and that our mind, even if our mind was to chose to obey the law of God ... how to carry out that choice is impossible. Look at Rom. 7:14:

We know that the law is spiritual; but I am

carnal [fleshly]: sold under sin.

In other words, I am sold as a slave to sin. Then he proves that statement in verses 15-25. The issue is not believer and unbeliever, but the issue here is that sinful nature and a holy law are incompatible, even though the mind may choose, may want to, may desire to be good. For example, in verse fifteen:

That which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I.

Then in verse seventeen and twenty, twice Paul pinpoints the heart of the problem:

Now then, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me... [He repeats that in verse twenty]. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

The “I” here of course is the will that’s chosen to do good. In verse twenty-two he says:

I delight in the law of God after the inward man.

I suppose Paul had in mind the converted mind, but that's not the issue here. I will deal with Romans 7 in detail when we come to our studies in Romans. Paul is saying here that in my innermost being, in my will, I have chosen to keep the law of God. But, he says in verse twenty-three:

There is another law, another force, another principle, warring against the law of my mind [i.e., the choice of my mind] bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. [Then he cries] O wretched man that I am!

This is the struggle that every Christian has and one of the works, one of the jobs the Holy Spirit has in the believer is to subdue, to repress the sinful nature so that, in exchange, the life of Christ may be manifest. In other words, Christian growth, Christian living is a dual process. On the one hand, the flesh must be surrendered to the cross more and more so that, on the other hand, Christ may live in

us more and more.

Unless we Christians are aware of this, it can be very discouraging. Because, you see, in our Christian struggle we will fall many times. We will make mistakes; we will fail. And the devil will come to us and say, “You are not good enough to be saved.” Please remember that, in your Christian struggle, life may be up and down but that doesn’t mean that you are lost. Our salvation is a gift in Christ. Our salvation is secure in Christ. Our salvation is perfect in Christ. In other words, in Christ you stand before God and before His law perfect — both in performance, legally, and in nature because Christ redeemed us totally from sin when He came to this world and by His life and by His death and His resurrection He became the Saviour of all men.

But now Christian living or sanctification is a dual process that takes place simultaneously, or at the same time. We need to understand what Paul is trying to get across to us in Heb. 12:5-11. We need to realize that one of the works of the Holy Spirit in

the believer is to crucify the flesh in experience. You have already surrendered the flesh to the cross but this has to be made real in your experience. To understand this, we need to realize the dual process of sanctification. Turn to 2 Cor. 4:10,11. Paul makes a statement twice in these verses where he brings out this dual process of sanctification. Look at verse ten:

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.

Please notice, on the one hand, we are experiencing the death of Christ (which, by the way, is a death to sin, because Rom. 6:10 tells us that in that He died to sin). So, on the one hand, we are experiencing the death to sin, which is a painful process so that, on the other hand, the righteous life of Christ may be revealed in that same body. In other words, the body itself is not sinful; it's the driver. Before our conversion, we had only one driver that controls this body, that's the flesh. The mind may want to control it, but the flesh is the

boss.

After conversion we have two drivers. The same body, but two drivers. The flesh, even though surrendered to the cross by faith and repentance, is not literally dead. It is still alive. It is still there in the body and, given the chance, it will control you; it will dominate you every time. But we also have experienced the new birth and have become partakers of the divine nature. The Holy Spirit dwells in us. For Him to manifest the life of Christ in us and through us, the flesh must be surrendered to the cross more and more. In verse eleven he repeats this:

For we which live [the Christians who are living] are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake.

In other words, because we are Christians, we have accepted Christ, the cross of Christ becomes our cross. God doesn't give different believers different crosses — some heavy and some light, some big and some small. There is only one cross

that is the power of God unto salvation. It is the cross of Christ. The cross of Christ was a corporate cross. It wasn't one Man dying instead of all men; it was all men dying in one Man. 2 Cor. 5:14 brings that out. A Christian has accepted the cross of Christ as his cross. He says with Paul, "I am crucified with Christ." And, as he lives, he applies that.

For we are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake that the life of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.

Turn to Phil. 3:9 and there you have the same idea brought out by the Apostle Paul. Here he is saying that he wants to be found in Christ. He has just told us in verses seven and eight that no longer does he cling to his self-righteousness. All that he had attained as a Pharisee and a Jew in terms of self-righteousness, now Paul is willing to count it but loss. He is willing to call it but dung:

...That I may be in Christ and be found in Him [that is the "in Christ" motif that we have covered

before; he wants to be found in Him], not having my own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.

Christianity is not “I plus Christ,” whether we are talking of justification or if we are talking of sanctification. Christianity has only one formula, “Not I, but Christ.” That is clearly brought out in the writings of Paul in various ways. It is not I, but Christ. Here Paul is saying, “I want to be found in Him, not having my righteousness, but the righteousness of Christ, which is by faith.” And then, having accepted Christ as his righteousness, in verse ten he is talking now about his experience:

That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection....

You see, to Paul, Christ is not somebody who simply declared him righteous. For him, justification is a truth that applies to all men. When Jesus died on the cross, legally all men were justified. Rom. 5:18 brings that out. But

justification by faith is more than a legal declaration. Justification by faith means that I want to experience the righteousness by faith. Yes, I stand perfect in Christ, but I also want to have Christ manifested in me.

Paul is saying, “I want to know Him,” to experience, not just in theory and I want to experience the power of His resurrection. Now what does he mean, by “the power of His resurrection”? Well, remember that sin kills. The ultimate power of sin is death. Sin takes you to the grave. The very fact that Jesus Christ conquered the grave is the greatest evidence that He conquered sin. Because, you see, if you can conquer the grave you can conquer sin, for as I mentioned, death is the ultimate power of sin.

And the fact that no man has conquered the grave apart from Christ. (Moses and Elijah did go to heaven. Especially Moses conquered the grave, but he did not conquer in and of himself; it was through Christ that he conquered the grave.) No man apart from Christ is able to conquer the grave.

I don’t care how strong you are, young people. I don’t care how powerful your muscles are, once death has got you, once sin has put you in the grave, apart from grace you are not able to conquer death. But here Paul is saying, “I want to experience Jesus Christ, I want to experience His power of the resurrection which means the power over sin.” But for that to happen, we have to be made conformable to His suffering. We have to have fellowship with His suffering. We have to become conformable unto His death.

You see, the life of Christ was a life of righteousness. Sin never, ever manifested itself in the life of Christ. Why? Because He constantly surrendered the flesh to the cross. The cross of Christ was not something He bore just three days or three hours or six hours on the famous or infamous Friday when He bore our sins on the cross. Christ bore the cross daily so that when He says in Luke 9:23:

If any man follow me let him take up his cross daily and follow me....

He is asking us to apply the cross as He applied the cross, daily. And the cross is simply: “Not I, but Christ.”

All through His life Jesus never, ever lived independent from His Father. All through the New Testament, all through the gospels, where we have the story of the historical Christ, Jesus made it very plain. For example in John 5:19,20:

I can do nothing of myself.

In John 6:57, He says,

I live by the Father.

And then He goes on to say that we need to live by Him. In John fourteen, when He answered Philip’s question, “Show us the Father,” Jesus said:

The works I do, it is not I that do it but the Father who dwells in me.

The Father dwelt in Him through the Spirit. In other words, Jesus constantly surrendered His humanity, which was our corporate humanity, to the cross so that the Spirit may manifest God's righteousness in Him. Now Paul is saying, "I want to experience that." For that to happen, the flesh had to suffer. For example, in Heb. 2:18, where he talks about the temptation of Jesus Christ:

For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted.

Victory over temptation always involves suffering in the flesh. Why? Because the flesh will never agree to righteousness. The flesh wants sin all the time. Self-righteousness is also sin in God's eyes. Let me give you a clear text where it tells us, it shows us, where Christ suffered when He conquered temptation. 1 Peter 4:1 says:

Forasmuch then, as Christ has suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind [a mind that was surrendered to the Spirit]:

for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin.

Suffering in the flesh involves pain. There is no other way that Christ's love can be manifested in you and me unless we are willing to suffer in the flesh. When God gives you victory over temptation, He is giving you victory over something the flesh wants. The flesh wants sin. Only the Spirit can say "No." Only the Spirit can surrender the flesh to the cross. Our job is to surrender our wills, our minds to Jesus Christ. In other words, we must apply the formula of the gospel, every moment and every minute of our lives, which is: "Not I, but Christ."

Let us go back to Heb. 12:5-11. Having laid the foundation, I think you will discover that verses five to eleven are very clear in the light of what we just said:

And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor

faint when thou art rebuked of him....

Keep in mind that this letter was being written to Jewish Christians who were discouraged and whose faith was wavering, who were facing the danger of returning back to Judaism and giving up Christ. They were under pressure. They were facing persecution. They were facing hardships. Paul is saying that these hardships didn't come from God but they were allowed of God. God uses these hardships, these difficulties, these problems whatever they may be, He uses them as part of His refining process of sanctification. Look at verse six and onward:

For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.

We need to be aware of this, especially we who are living in the last days. That's the very same thing that you will find in the Laodicean message in Rev. 3:19:

Whom I love, I rebuke and chasten. Repent ye

therefore.

Paul is saying the very same thing here. God is not chastening us; He is not allowing us to go through these difficulties because He enjoys seeing us go through them, but it is part of His refining process. Verse seven:

If you endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?

When our kids were growing up, we had to sometimes rebuke them and sometimes we had to give them the paddie wack. Not because we enjoyed that but because it was for their good. Now verse eight:

But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.

In other words, what Paul is saying here is that, if you are not experiencing the refining process of God, there is something wrong with your Christian

experience. You are not truly a child of God. Christian living is always full of hardships. It is not a bed of roses but is more of a bed of thorns. But remember that, while going through this, our security in Christ is guaranteed. That's why we must never get discouraged. We must allow these things to do what God intends them to do for us. Verse nine:

Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.

Our parents sometimes flogged us, rebuked us in anger. They were giving vent to their feelings. God never does that. God never chastises us or puts us through the grill, as it were, because He enjoys it or because He wants to give vent to His feelings of frustration and anger. He always puts us through the chastisement because of His love for us and

what it does for us in our Christian experience. “But he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.”

I thank God that once we go to heaven that struggle will come to an end because this flesh cannot go to heaven. This corruption cannot inherit incorruption. So when Christ comes, this nature will be changed and in heaven we will have a nature that is in harmony with God. But as long as we are living on this earth, we have a nature that is out of harmony with God. It is at enmity with God and is not subject to the law of God and can never be [Rom. 8:7].

It has to be suppressed. It has to be subdued and that is what the refining work of God does. The chastisement of God is to deprive the flesh of its lust and its desires, so that the Holiness of God may be revealed in our lives. And that is a painful process. Verse eleven brings that out:

Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous [No kid loves to be flogged. No kid loves

to be rebuked], but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness [notice to whom] unto them which are exercised thereby.

If you refuse to learn from the lessons God wants you to learn, if you refuse to submit your flesh to the cross as God puts you through the grill, do you know what He will do? He will bring you back over the same ground. So why don't you give in the first time? Why must God repeat and repeat? Why are we so stubborn and so stiffnecked? God doesn't allow you to go through anything that is not good for you. "All things work together for good."

Now this, as I have mentioned, is the refining process of God. It is not something that is unique to Hebrews 12:5-11. All through the Bible, Old and New Testaments, you will find that this is being taught. Here are several texts, we will not be able to read all of them now. They are for you to read in your own study time. You will notice that they are all saying the same thing. We will look at a few

and see how they totally agree with what we have just covered in Heb.12:5-11.

The first one is Deut.8:5. The next one is Job 5:17. Then Ps. 94:11-15; Prov. 3:11,12; Isa. 48:10,11; Mal. 3:1-3. Now to the New Testament: John 15:2. Remember what Jesus said in John 15?

I am the vine. You are the branches. He who abides in me and I in Him will bear much fruit. Without Me you can do nothing.

Then in verse two it says that, in order to bear fruit, the branches have to be pruned. Pruning is a painful process in the Christian life because we have nerves, we have feelings, unlike the literal vine.

Then to Rom. 5:3-5, where Paul talks about the fruits of justification by faith. They are threefold. The immediate fruit of justification by faith, of course, is peace with God. Never forget that. That is the immediate fruit. The continuing fruit is that we are standing in grace, that grace of God is now

made available and through that grace we can experience the righteousness of Christ. But it is through a painful process. Then 2 Cor. 4:15-18. Then 1 Peter 1:3-7 and also chapter 4:12-14. Then one more text, which is the message of the True Witness to Laodicea, Rev. 3:17-19. Let's take a couple of texts from the Old and a couple from the New Testaments. Ps.94:11-15:

The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity.

The word "vanity" here means self-centered. Because of our sinful nature, human thoughts are self-centered. The biggest problem that you and I face is the problem of self.

Blessed is the man [David goes on to say in verse twelve] whom thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him out of thy law....

See the law points to love. Remember what Jesus said in Matthew twenty-two, "Love is the fulfilment of the law," love for God and love for

our fellowmen. This is the basis of all law-keeping and please remember the word “love” here is agape, which seeketh not her own. David says here:

Blessed is the man whom thou chasteneth, O Lord, and teachest him out of the law. That thou mayest give him rest from the days of adversity, until the pit be digged for the wicked. [In other words, we will have to suffer the flesh until the second coming of Christ] But the Lord will not cast off His people neither will He forsake His inheritance.

Please remember that God hasn’t cast you off when you go through the ordeal. In Isa. 48:10,11, the prophet Isaiah says the same thing:

Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction.

Precious metal has to be refined. “I have refined thee.” Remember what Jesus said in the Laodicean message? “Buy from me gold tried by

fire.” We will see what that means when we look at 1 Peter. Continuing in Isa. 48:11:

For mine own sake, even mine own sake, will I do it: for how should my name be polluted? and I will not give my glory unto another.

The flesh has to be crucified that Christ may be revealed. There is no such thing as, “I plus Christ.” No glory is given to man even in sanctification. We must not think that only justification is by faith alone. Folks, even sanctification is by faith alone. But please remember, faith is always a struggle. Whether you talk in terms of justification or talk in terms of sanctification it is always saying, “Not I, but Christ.” That is painful to our ego.

Now to the New Testament, both passages are from Peter. 1 Peter 1:3-7, keeping in mind what Jesus said to the Laodiceans:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten [or having regenerated us is

how the Greek puts it. The NIV puts it as having given us the New Birth.] hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you....

That's justification by faith. Now verse five onwards:

...Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time.

Please notice, we are justified by faith and we are kept by faith until the second coming of Christ when the salvation of Christ will become a reality. That's what he means when he says, "Salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." Verse six:

Wherein you greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, you are in heaviness through manifold temptations [or trials]; That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold

that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.

Every time you are facing difficulties and trials your feelings will tell you to give up Christ. Your faith will tell you, “No.” And that’s what he means by the trial of your faith. In Hebrews eleven we read how Abraham’s faith was tried when God asked him to offer up Isaac. When you go through the grill, your faith is tried because your feelings will say “give up,” but your feelings must be crucified because your feelings belong to the flesh. Sometimes your feelings may agree with your faith, but please remember they belong to your flesh and they must be crucified. Let’s look now at 1 Peter 4:12-14. We read verse one. Now look at verses twelve to fourteen:

Beloved, think it not strange [don’t be surprised, don’t question] concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you...

When you are facing difficulties and problems, persecution, famine, hunger, whatever it is, please don't say to God, "Why did you allow this to happen to me?" Don't complain. Don't turn your back to God and say, "God doesn't love me. Why does this happen?" How should we react to the trial of life as Christians? Look at verse thirteen:

...But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.

You will never, ever have to suffer like Christ. Christ suffered on the cross something that you and I will never suffer because there He had to face the agony of the second death, good-bye to life forever. He went through that difficult time but He would not give in. By faith He was victorious. But if we do partake of Christ's sufferings in a small manner, we should count it all joy. He suffered so much that we might be saved; can't we suffer a little bit that He might be glorified through us? "And that when His glory shall be revealed you may be glad also with exceeding joy." Verse

fourteen:

If you be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are you; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.

The world may mock you. They may ridicule you for putting up with the trials and difficulties. But folks, it is by suffering in the flesh that Jesus Christ through the Spirit is revealed.

I want to go through this refining process. I want God to reveal Himself through me. Great is the mystery of godliness. God must be manifested in the flesh. He was manifested in Christ two thousand years ago but now through the Spirit Christ wants to live through you. Christ in you the hope of glory. The world desperately needs to see the gospel in action. The world desperately needs to see Christ manifested in the church.

We are living in the scientific age. Science always demands a demonstration, otherwise it’s

only a theory. To the world, the gospel is a theory. God wants to prove to them that it is more than a theory. It is a scientific fact that in Jesus Christ we do have salvation and redemption not only from the guilt and punishment of sin but from sin itself. So folks, when you and I go through this refining process, these trials and temptations, these difficulties, this refining process of God, let us accept it with joy; let us realize that it works the peaceable fruits of righteousness. With Paul, let us say, “For me to live is Christ.”

May God bless us that we may understand these things so that when we go through them we know why we are going through them. Then we will not moan and complain but will rejoice because we have become partakers of Christ’s suffering so that the life of Christ may be manifested in us. God bless you as you live the Christian life. Don’t give up, hold on because, when Christ comes, it will all be over. Amen.

Chapter 27

Living Under the New Covenant

Hebrews 12:12-29

In our last study we covered Heb. 12:5-ll. It dealt with a very important part of our Christian experience. I entitled that passage, “The Refining Work of God.” Let me remind you that when you accept Christ you are saved, but our nature still belongs to sin and the devil and that has to be kept in subjection. That is painful, folks, because we are human beings who have nerves and feelings. We hate to be deprived of the desires of the flesh. I gave you several texts which point out the refining process of God. Now in verses twelve to twenty-nine Paul tells us two things:

1. The practical results of God’s refining work on those who yield or submit to God’s discipline. This is dealt with in verses twelve to seventeen.

2. In verses 18-29 he talks about what it means to be Christians who live under the new covenant. We need to know this. A Christian who does not know that he is delivered from the old covenant can never have peace and joy. The refining process to him becomes not good news but bad news.

Let's look now at verses twelve to seventeen, which deal with the practical results of God's refining process. Look at verse twelve. Should a Christian become discouraged when God disciplines him? No. What does it say here?

Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.

In other words, Paul is saying here, "Stop being down-hearted. God is not treating you like a sinner. He is treating you like a son." Please remember, when He treats you like a son and puts you through the grill, it may be painful. Look at verse eleven

which we covered in last chapter:

Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness.

“So stop becoming discouraged. Stop being down-hearted in regard to your Christian experience. Don’t let the refining process of God discourage you.” This is what Paul is saying here. This folks is the difference between a Christian and an unbeliever. A Christian is still happy even though life is difficult.

When we were at Uganda, we were deported. But we were not the only ones. There were eighty thousand families who were deported by Idi Amin. During that time it was very tense. When we were deported, they did several things. One of the them was they froze our bank account. Can you imagine what it would be like to go to the bank and they won’t give you your own money? Nothing doing. You are not entitled to your own money. You would say this is unfair. “Well, too bad,” they’d

say. They also refused for us to take any of our furniture or belongings, except one suitcase that could not weigh more than forty-four pounds. That included our hand luggage. They weighed everything.

My wife said, “There are some things that can never be replaced, like photographs.”

And I said, “There are some books that can never be replaced because they are out of print.”

I had books and she had photographs, and folks that’s heavy so most of our luggage was filled with things that we felt were very important. But I’ll tell you what they did allow. They allowed the ladies to take one pair of earrings, and three bangles or bracelets. They allowed that as part of your belongings. So what did some of the people do? They took their gold or they bought gold and turned it into huge earrings, because gold is money. Right in front of us was a man with two daughters, one seven and the other about eleven. They had these huge earrings. They looked so uncomfortable

for kids. Huge heavy stuff. So the seven-year old took hers off once she got on the plane. It fell from her hand and it rolled. Somebody must have grabbed it. I do not know who did it. At first she was dead scared to tell the father but he saw that she was looking for it. The father said “What are you looking for?” And she had to confess.

I looked around the plane and everybody was moaning and grumbling. One lady stood up in the plane (it was one of those big jets). She stood up and shouted, “I wish somebody put fifty bullets into Idi Amin.” She was angry, for she had lost three million shillings, which is half a million dollars, in her bank account. She could not touch it. She was angry and so was everyone else.

This poor father, when he discovered that his daughter had dropped that one earring, he was on his knees and searching for it. He was frantic. He was pleading for anyone who had it to please give it back. It was all he had. Nobody listened to him, because everybody was in a crisis.

My wife and I had lost everything too. We were smiling and one lady said, “What are you happy about?”

I said, “Because the difference between you and me is that I lost nothing. You lost everything.

She said, “What do you mean? Do you mean that you had no property, no furniture?”

I said, “Yes, but you know everything belongs to God and is in His hands. Idi Amin has not taken any of my things. God can give me back all that I lost in one jiffy.”

They could not understand. One man said to me, “I wish I had such a belief. The trouble is I don’t. I know that I have lost everything. I have no future.”

Eight months later we got everything back. Somebody sent it to us and the government allowed it to be sent. Prophetically I was right but at that time I did not know. What was it that made

it possible for me? It wasn't just ten percent we lost, like some people mourn when they give 10% tithe. I'll tell you, we lost everything. We had no assurance of getting anything back. But all the gold and all the silver belongs to God and we knew that we were in His hands. And what made it possible for us to keep our heads high instead of groping around was because the truth had set us free.

That is what Paul is saying here. He is saying, "Stop being downcast and down-hearted. Let the world see the joy in Christianity." I'll tell you the worst witness you can ever be is to live a life without hope and without peace. When Christians reveal no peace in their heart, they are being the worst witness no matter what truth they may have, how true they may be theologically. We need to reveal to the world the peace we have. Now look at verse fourteen:

Follow peace with all men,...

Stop fighting with your neighbours. Let them see that you are a Christian who wants to live in

peace with all men.

And holiness [in the Greek, “sanctification”].

Let the people see your sanctified life. The greatest evidence that we are Christians is not our theology even though we may be correct. It is what people see in us. Jesus said in John 13:35:

By this shall men know that you are my disciples, when you have love one for another.

We need to know that the gospel is more than words. So Paul is saying: Live peaceably with all men. Let them see your holiness without which no man shall see the Lord.

If you don’t submit to the refining process of God, eventually you’ll give up your faith, the devil will get you. Now look at verse fifteen:

...Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled...

Defiled with unbelief. In other words, when you see a member becoming bitter because of something that went wrong in the church, what do you do? Do you try to help that person? You know we need to help each other. Verse seventeen:

For you know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected...

That's why I keep repeating that the most valuable thing you have is your faith in Jesus Christ. Don't you ever give it up.

For he found no place of repentance.

He is talking about Esau here. Esau despised his birthright. What was his birthright? It was that through the descendent of Abraham the Messiah would come. This hope was passed on from Abraham to Isaac to Jacob. Did Esau get it? No. Why did he not get it? In His foreknowledge, did God know that Esau would despise the birthright?

Yes. We must never despise our inheritance in Christ. It is future, but we must never despise it. If we do, we will give up that hope and will end up lost. So even here Paul is saying, “You are not once saved, always saved.” You have to hold on to the end. Now look at verse eighteen for this verse is dealing with the old covenant:

For you are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest...

What is Paul talking about here? What is this Mount Sinai? What happened there on Mount Sinai? What did God give? The Ten Commandments. What did the law do with the sinner? Does it save the sinner or does it kill the sinner? Turn to Romans, chapter seven. The Jews misunderstood the function of the law. Did God give the law to save the Jews? No. What did God give the Jews that they might be saved? The Promise. (That, of course, is Christ.) God gave them the promise. Look at Rom.7:9:

For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and [what happened to Paul?] I died.

What does the law do? It kills. Look at verse eleven:

For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me...was then that which is good made death unto me? [Is the law responsible for your death? That's what the question is in verse 13.] God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me.

Who is responsible for death? Sin is responsible for death. Here is another text that may help, 1 Cor.15:56, for here you have the connections. What is the sting of death in verse fifty- six?

The sting of death is sin.

What gives sin the power to kill? The law. So the law is not responsible for death but the law

demands that the sinner should die. If there is no law, can sin kill you? No. But the law kills. Not that the law is responsible for your death, but the law demands that the sinner must die. So when God gave the law, what did it do to the people? Why was it given in thunder and quaking? Go back to Heb.12:18-21 because that's the old covenant. Verse nineteen:

And the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more: (For they could not endure that which was commanded, And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart: And so terrible was the sight, that Moses, said, I exceedingly fear and quake).

Why did God do that when He gave the law? Did He want to put fear into the people? Not really. He wanted them to turn to Him. By the way, Galatians three brings this out. The law is our schoolmaster which keeps us in prison until we come to Christ. Did God give the promise at the

same time at Mount Sinai? Yes. He gave the sanctuary service to point them to Christ as their Saviour. Where did they put the law, by the way? Where did they keep those tables of stone? In the ark. What covered the ark? The Mercy Seat. That was the promise. In the New Testament, the Mercy Seat is Jesus Christ. Paul is saying to the Jews, “Stop living like Judaizers with fear and trembling without hope and without peace.” How should we live? Look at verse twenty-two:

But we are come unto Mount Zion,...

So there are two mountains. One is Mount Sinai, which condemns you, and the other one is Zion. What does Mount Zion represent? What happened on Mount Zion? Jesus died on the cross there. Turn to Galatians. You will find the two mountains mentioned here in chapter four of Galatians. By the way Galatians 4 is also dealing with the two covenants. In Gal.4:21 Paul says:

Tell me, you that desire to be under the law [i.e., the Old Covenant], do you not hear the law?

Then he goes into verse twenty-two about Abraham's two sons. Then in verse twenty-four he says that these two sons represent the two covenants. Notice the new covenant is called here a promise. The free woman was a promise.

Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the Mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, [bondage of what? Fear and hopelessness.] which is Hagar.

Continuing in verses twenty-five and twenty-six:

For this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage. [Remember, Jerusalem represents the Jews who are still unconverted.] But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all. [Mount Zion is implied here.]

Going back to Heb.12:22:

But you are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem [which Galatians is talking about], and to an innumerable company of angels.

Here we have two mountains, Sinai represents the law that kills. Mount Zion represents the cross which saves. So stop being droopy folks, you have not come to Mount Sinai. You have come to Mount Zion.

I climbed Mount Sinai in 1980. I gave a series of workers meetings to the Egyptian pastors. They said, “In exchange, we will give you a trip to Mount Sinai. So I said “Thank you.” It took us eight hours, not forty years, by car. Thanks to the Jews, they have built a road now from the Suez Canal right up to Mount Sinai. Tarmac, black-top road. Except that, half the time, it is covered by sand because of the sand storms. It took us eight hours from Goshen, the place where the Jews were, to Mount Sinai. I tell you, I did not see a blade of grass. It was barren. I thank a Catholic monk who for thirty years (Imagine!), he spent thirty years

carving steps in the solid rock from the bottom to the top of the mountain. So we actually walked up on steps. Otherwise it is very difficult. I said, “Thank you.” But he did it for salvation. For thirty years he had no peace. Sweat, blood, and tears for thirty years. I looked and all I saw was barrenness. I said, “God, maybe you are teaching a lesson here.”

The law without Christ is meaningless. That’s why I love the expression Sister Ellen G. White used about the 1888 message, “They preached Christ in the law.” When you preach Christ in the law you have life. But the law by itself cannot save you. All the law can do by itself is to kill you, but the moment you put Christ into the law, then you have life. This, of course, was where the big issue was in the 1888 conference. They did not put Christ in the law. They wanted the law without Christ. They did not know what they were talking about. Heb.12:22 says:

But you are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem.

Look at verse twenty-four. When you come to Mount Zion you come to Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant. Remember what we covered in Hebrews chapter seven and eight and on. The new covenant was based on a better promise. Was the old covenant based on a promise? Yes. Was the new covenant based on a promise? Yes. What is the difference? Who made the promise in the old covenant? The people. Did they keep their promise? No. Therefore, what was the agreement if they did not keep their promise? The law says: if you obey me, you will live. Did they promise to obey the law? They failed. So what does the law say? “Cursed is the one who does not keep the law.”

In the new covenant, who makes the promise? God. What was the promise? That, in Jesus Christ, He will give you all that you need before the law to be saved. Christ is the end of the law for righteousness. Turn to Acts and listen to the sermon that was preached by the apostles. Acts thirteen. I’ll show why “thirteen” is not an unlucky

number. It is a lucky number sometimes if you have the gospel. This is a sermon preached by Paul concerning the resurrection of Christ which was part of the gospel of good news. Look at verse thirty-seven:

But He whom God raised again saw no corruption.

Who is this verse talking about? Christ. Did sin put Christ in the grave? Yes. Our sins put Christ there. Did our sins keep Him there? No. He conquered, folks. Now look at verses thirty-eight and thirty-nine:

Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins. And by him all that believe are justified from all things [all sins, not just your past sins], from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses.

The law of Moses could not justify you. Did Jesus Christ justify you? Yes. So we come to Jesus

Christ in the new covenant. Go back to Heb. 12:24:

And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.

What is he talking about here? Did Abel offer a good sacrifice or a bad one? There is one problem. He offered the blood of the lamb. Could the lamb take away his sin? No. He was offering this sacrifice as an acceptance of the promise because of the blood of Christ. In the New Testament period, when we come to God through Christ, we are not bringing the blood of the lamb but the blood of Christ. Does the sprinkling of the blood of Christ clear our evil conscience? Yes. Verse twenty-five continues by saying:

See that you refuse not Him that speaketh [please don't refuse the promise that God gave]. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from Him that speaketh from heaven.

Through whom did God give the law? Moses. Through whom did God give the promise? Christ. Now He's in heaven. What did Paul mean by "who speaketh from heaven"? What did God speak when Jesus was baptized? The voice from heaven, what did He say? "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." What was He pleased about? That He was obedient even unto death. He was pleased because Jesus fulfilled the will of the Father. What was the will of the Father? "God sent His Son not to condemn us but to save us." In John seventeen, Jesus prays. In verse four, He says, "Father, I have finished the work that You have given Me to do." What was the work that God gave Him to do? To fulfil the promise of our salvation. Verse twenty-six continues:

Whose voice then shook the earth: but now He hath promised saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven.

When is God going to shake the earth and the heaven? At the second coming of Christ. There will

be two groups then. Please turn to Rev. 6:13. I want you to look at the first group:

And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places.

This is a much greater shaking than took place on Mount Sinai. Look at what the people do as given in verse fifteen:

And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman (slave), and every free man.

It didn’t matter whether you belonged to the middle class or to the slave class, or to the rich class. And what did these people do? In verse sixteen:

And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb:

Will the trembling and the fear be worse at the second coming of Christ? But to whom? Those who refused the heavenly voice. “This is My Son.” And the question that is asked in verse seventeen:

For the great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?

Will there be anyone who will be able to stand? Who? The righteous whose faith has been sealed. And chapter seven deals with that. This chapter is answering the question of chapter six verse seventeen. Never read chapter seven without the question posed here. Notice what chapter seven is saying. God is saying “Please hold the winds of strife until His servants are sealed.”

And folks, God is preparing you for that. So when He puts you through the grill, remember that He is preparing you for the time of trouble. So

please don’t say, “God doesn’t love me.” He’s preparing you. He wants to seal you. He wants a people whose faith is unshakeable. That’s the question Jesus asks in Luke 18:8: “When the Son of Man comes, shall He find faith on the earth?” Chapter seven tells us, “Yes.” Going back to Hebrews twelve and reading the last verse we are told:

For our God is a consuming fire.

Look at verse twenty-eight:

Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear:

What does it mean to have “godly fear?” Is it the same as being scared? What does it mean? Prov. 8:13:

The fear of the Lord is to hate evil.

Why? It was evil that put Christ on the cross. You see the legalist hates punishment. The Christian doesn't hate punishment because he is free from it. What does he hate? He hates sin. Why? Because it was our sins that put Christ on the cross. Turn to Ex. 24:17:

And the sight of the glory of the Lord was like devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel.

This is the basis of the text in Heb.12:29:

For our God is a consuming fire.

So to fear God does not mean to be scared of Him. The Jews had misunderstood the fear of God. They were scared of God. When the scribes copied the Bible do you know what they did when they came to the name of God? They would not use the common pen. They had a special pen that they would pick up only for the name of God. And when, in the ninth century A.D., the Hebrew Bible was changed from the old Hebrew, which had no

vowels, to the new Hebrew with vowels which is spoken today, the Jews were scared to write His name, so they only wrote the vowels.

When Jesus came and prayed, the disciples were a bit shocked at the way Jesus prayed to His Father. So one day the disciples said, “Jesus, we are surprised the way you talk to God. Can you teach us to pray?” Please notice how Jesus introduced His prayer, “Our Father.” The word “Father” did not mean someone who is mistreating you or abusing you but somebody who loves you and is concerned about you. “Our Father which art in heaven.” That was a new concept to the disciples. You mean that we can call God “Father”? Yes, you can call Him, “Abba,” which means “Dear Father.” Isn’t it wonderful to live under the new covenant? Look at Ex. 24:17:

And the sight of the glory of the Lord was like devouring fire on the top of the mountain in the eyes of the children of Israel.

They did not see God as a loving Father

because they came out of paganism. And paganism looks at God as somebody who is angry, ready to curse you and put fire on you. So the pagans offered sacrifices to appease an angry God. All pagan sacrifices had that purpose. Did Christ die to appease an angry God? No. God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not putting their trespasses on them but on His Son. So please remember that when Christ offered a sacrifice, it was not to appease an angry God. That's paganism. But God was in Christ. He loved us. He so loved the world that He gave us His Son that we should not perish.

So when you come to God, please don't come with fear so that every time you make a mistake you think of God as Someone with a fork pushing you into the fire. If you have that mentality about God you will never be able to stand in the time of trouble. That's what the whole book of Hebrews is saying, "Please don't get discouraged. Don't give up your Christianity. Don't go back to Judaism. It can't save you. That's the old covenant. Come to Mount Zion and there on Mount Zion you have a

Saviour, the Mediator of the new covenant."

Hebrews twelve is ending with this wonderful thing. Now chapter thirteen deals with how the Christian should live while he is waiting for the coming of Christ, "The Intended Life." Should they sit down and do nothing? This next chapter is talking about what Christians should do while they are waiting for the second coming. And it's an important lesson for us.

Can you see how Paul is giving us a wonderful concept of Christianity under the New Covenant? He is saying that we are no longer living in fear. Christianity is not a religion of do's and don'ts, otherwise you will be punished. Please don't tell your children, "You better do this otherwise Jesus won't love you and take you to heaven." That's the Old Covenant. Please remember that our kids need to get a picture of God, especially in these days when many fathers abuse their children. They need to get a picture of a Father that is different from what some fathers are presenting in life today. They need to see a father as a loving God Who has

one concern, to save them, and to look after them, and to help them in the time of need.

So this is why we need to understand that we are living under the New Covenant and we must raise our children to see that. They need to see that God cares and that should be the major emphasis. You know, when my son first came to Walla Walla [Washington], we were in Idaho. On one of his stays home, my wife asked him a question, “Are you going to church?” A typical mother’s concern. And I will not forget what he said, “You know Dad, they don’t feed us. There’s a lot of philosophy there. I take a book and read.”

My wife said, “I’m glad you still go to church.”

And he made a statement, “I only go to church because I know it would hurt you if I didn’t.” If he had his own way: ”Why should I go there?” He said, “A lot of the kids don’t go to church.” It’s a tragedy. It’s a tragedy that some of our kids don’t want to go to church. But you see, we must present God as one Who loves them.

Do you remember what Joseph said when he was tempted by Potiphar's wife? He didn't say, "I'll be lost if I yield." He said, "How can I do this and sin against my God." Not against the law, but against "My God."

And this is the attitude which we must implant in our kids. They must realize that God is infinitely concerned about them, so that they hate to sin, not because they will be lost, but because sin was very expensive for God. It cost Him the life of His Son. He gave us something that He could never replace, His only begotten Son. He emptied heaven for us. How can we treat that gift lightly?

Let me put it this way. What He's saying is: "Nobody forced me to die. I was voluntarily willing to die." There's another statement to support this, "The Good Shepherd lays down His life for His sheep." You have stories about dogs, who will lay down their lives for their master. Jesus was the Good Shepherd. Now, there is a difference between a shepherd who is hired for

pay, and when a wolf comes, what does he do? He runs. Look at the story of Esther. Mordecai said, “Please go to the king and request redemption for the Jews.”

She said, “If I go there they will kill me because there is a law.” You remember, she didn’t want to die.

And Mordecai sent a message back to her, and said, “Look, Esther, you have to die in any case. They’ll find out eventually that you are a Jew. But could it be that God had placed you there in the palace for such a time as this?”

And then she made that wonderful statement, “I will go. If I perish, I perish.” She surrendered to death. “I am willing to die for the cause of God.” And did God use her? Did He change the whole situation? Yes. And so folks, as the German Theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who died under Hitler, said, “When God calls you to be a disciple of His, He calls you to die.” Are you willing to die for Christ? Are you willing to go to that extent

because of His love? Jesus was willing to die for you that you may have life. Are you willing to give your life for the Brethren, says 2 Corinthians 5:15:

The love of Christ must constrain us because One died for all. And we which live must be willing to lay down our lives for Him.

That, folks, is the manifestation of the Gospel. And that comes only through God's love. The law can never produce such things. You go to a Communist country, where I lived five years under Marxism, and they do solve a lot of problems. For example, in Ethiopia, they didn't have public toilets. They had no toilets in the homes. They went out in the bush. Men, women, on the streets. When the Marxist government took over, they said the first thing they would do is solve this problem. They built public toilets all over Addis Abbaba. Nobody went. Nobody used it. They weren't used to it. They solved the problem. They didn't plead with them. They said, "Anyone who is found messing the streets will be shot without questions." Everybody went.

And one Russian said, “Look, we have solved a problem that you could not.”

But how did they solve that problem? By force. They produce sharing by force. They produce everything by compulsion. God doesn’t use force, folks; He is love. There are two powerful drives in human life: love and fear. Kids can be taught to do their homework by fear. That’s the way I was raised. Boy, when we did not do our math homework, our math teacher would put a pencil like this on us, and then he would whack us. And he would whack us for the number of sums that we did not do. For every one he gave us one whack. And so, because I was scared, I would do my homework.

Chapter 28

The Intended Life

Hebrews 13:1-24

The question that Paul is answering is how should Christians live while they are waiting for the second coming of Christ? How should they live? Before we go to chapter thirteen I would like to explain a very important truth. All the practical advice that Paul gives in Hebrews or Romans or all the advice you find in the New Testament is based on certain principles. The application of these principles is what we call practice.

One of the speakers we had at workers' meeting was Dick Winn. He brought this same thing out except he didn't use the same words. He called this essence [theology or theory] and he called this form [practice]. Basically, he was simply giving us a fundamental principle. There are certain differences between the two. You need to know those differences. Otherwise you will end

up with problems. I would like to give you some differences between these two and then I will give you three of the main principles that the New Testament comes up with in terms of Christian living.

1. Principles are eternal. They never change. The practice is changeable, because the practice has to do with the time and the culture. For example, some of the advice that Paul dealt with was food offered to idols. We don't have that problem today.

2. Principles are universal. They apply to all men, all the time, to all cultures. Take the truth of righteousness by faith. I had an officer of the church once come to me. He said "You should not be preaching righteousness by faith to the Africans."

I said, "Why?"

He said, "Well, Africans live in the Old Testament time. They need the law. It is only

Americans that need that." He had forgotten that the fundamental principle of God's grace is righteousness by faith whether it is America or if it is Russia. Different cultures have different practices. One of the principles of the New Testament is that modern Christians should be modest in their clothing. That is a fundamental principle. But the question is, "What is the definition of modesty?" In America it is one thing and in Africa it is a different one. In Africa, and we've had endless problems over this, only prostitutes wear slacks. So when missionaries come from this country we tell them, "Please don't wear slacks."

They say, "Why, what's wrong with it?"

It may be perfectly O.K. in America but it isn't in Africa. It is not modest for a lady to wear slacks there. In the cities where the western culture has affected the African you will find Christian ladies, including those in our church wearing trousers, but they will wear a dress over it. That's O.K. today. Notice that the principle is the same. Should

Americans be modest? Yes. Should Africans be modest in their dress? Yes.

What is the definition of modesty? There are some parts of Africa where men wear nothing. In America this would be terrible. When I was in Andrews University we had Dr. Oustervaldt. In New Guinea he did the same thing. He went and dressed just like them. I couldn't do it because I was a victim of my culture. They did not feel embarrassed. They did not feel immodest. It is their way of living. In some parts of Kenya the women go topless, nothing. On the streets, everywhere. Nobody stares at them. It is just a part of their culture. Principles are universal but practice has to do with culture. These are the two main concepts of principles.

I want to give you the three main principles. As you read Hebrews thirteen you will notice that Paul will deal with this.

1. A Christian is not of this world even though he is living in this world.

This is a fundamental principle. Turn to John seventeen. Here is Jesus praying to His Father. Look at verse fifteen:

I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of this world but that Thou shouldst keep them from the evil.

Look also at Matt.5:13-16. Jesus in describing the Christian in the world says two things about the Christian: (1) You are the salt of the earth and (2) the light of the world. So we have a function in the world but we don't belong to the world. Go to John 15:19:

If you were of the world, the world would love its own but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world therefore the world hates you.

In other words, "You no longer belong to the

world even though you are living in it." Once you have discovered this, all through the New Testament you will find it in Paul's writings. Romans 12:2:

Be not conformed to this world but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.

Or take Gal. 6:14:

I glory in nothing else but the cross of Christ by which I am crucified unto the world and the world is crucified unto me.

Or James 1:27:

True religion is visiting the widows and keeping oneself unspotted from the world.

The reason I am emphasizing this is because we are facing a problem today. The pioneers of this country were godly men. They founded this country upon many Christian principles. The morals, the practices of this country were based on

Christian standards. But today, and this is accepted by almost all theologians, we are living in a, quoting them, “post-Christian era.” Which means that no longer can we look at our culture and call it Christian. We are living in an age of new morality. “I do my own thing.” No longer is the Bible the standard. So this principle of “We are not of the world” is extremely important for us today in America.

It takes only a few years for us Seventh-day Adventists to catch up with the world. We are following the world in all our practices almost. The only difference is that they are ahead of us by a few years. Today someone showed me an ad for a “Seventh-day Adventist bowling league.” Twenty years ago it would be anathema. But today we are publicly announcing our bowling league. Is it because we have forgotten or we are not aware that we are living in a post-Christian era? Please don’t look at the culture around you any more as Christian.

2. The second principle is that the church is the body of Christ.

This concept is based on the concept of solidarity. How should this affect our practice? Turn to 1 Cor. 12:25:

There should be no schism in the body.

What does the word schism mean? No split, no division, no disunity. Is it possible for us to have different views of certain areas of theology and still be united? Yes. We need to respect each other but there should be no schism in the body but that the members should have the same care one for another. Why?

If you were running and you hit a stone and hurt your foot, maybe you were barefooted. We had a marathon up there in camp and I had forgotten my tennis shoes so I ran barefooted. I discovered that my feet were no longer tough like they were in Africa. I used to play soccer barefooted when I was a kid. They were hurting.

After I finished I had to sit down and my hands went and rubbed those feet. If my hands said, “Look, feet, you are dirty, I’m not going to touch you.” That would be a schism. But the hands realized that the feet are part of the body and so they had to take care of them. Look at verse twenty-six:

And whether one member suffers, all the members suffer with him.

We don’t ostracize that one member. We suffer with each other. If one member is honored, do all the members become jealous? We do not get jealous because one member is honored. We take that as a privilege as if it is ours. We actually practice it in our own homes. If your daughter or son graduates with flying colors, how do you parents feel? Very proud and happy because that child is part of the parents.

Now you have the same thing in the church. In the family, it’s a blood tie. In the church, it is a spiritual tie. It is the gospel that has made us one.

That’s the second principle: the church is the body of Christ. Therefore we have to live as a family. We must not divide the church. The moment we divide the church for what we may call good reasons it is a contradiction of the gospel. We have to be one.

What did Jesus say? The wheat and the tares will grow together until the harvest. Who does the separating? I learned some tremendous lessons in the mission field — especially in Uganda and Ethiopia. They have opened my eyes to something that I could hardly imagine. The members that we thought were the weakest, the ones that we thought would give in the earliest or the quickest, the members who we thought would turn their backs to the church the quickest were the ones who stood for Christ in the crisis under Idi Amin and in Ethiopia in the marxist revolution. The ones we thought would be the first to defend the church were the ones that were in high positions but they were the ones who became the enemies of the church.

So I said to myself, “Never will I judge by outward appearance.” You never know the heart of another individual. I was shocked at some of the folks that I thought were liberal and worldly but when the crisis came they stood up for Christ and were even willing to die. And the ones that were holy and always in church, always on the platform, always active, were not always there in times of crisis. We cannot judge. We do not know what is in the heart.

The third principle is a very important one and is an extension of the second one.

3. Because the church is the body of Christ we must never do anything that will be a stumbling block to our fellow Christians.

That is very strong in Paul’s writings. One of the arguments was “Should we eat food offered to idols?” Some Christians said, “Well, its perfectly O.K. because we don’t worship idols.” Other Christians said, “If you eat food offered to idols you are condoning idol worship.” So there was a

big argument.

What does Paul do? He said, “Let every man be persuaded in his own mind, because we live unto God. But if in eating food offered to idols you offend your brother then you refrain.” He said, “I am all things to all men that I may win some.”

I was sent to conduct a lay-workers meeting in the high lands of Ethiopia, 9,600 feet above sea level. Even on the equator it gets cold at that altitude. In fact, in 1968 I took a group of students who were always bragging that they were stronger than I was to climb Mount Kilimanjaro. I took eleven of them up there and only two of them made it and I had to help them, that is, one of the girls. The mountain is 19,400 feet high. From 16,000 ft. to 19,000 there was nothing but snow. It was awfully cold.

We did not have a beautiful church like this with central heating. Just poles and a grass roof. Everybody was shivering. So when I came there in the evening, I was cold, too. I said to the

translator, who was a student that I knew, “Why don’t we make a hot drink before we go into the meeting so that everyone at least is warm?”

He whispered to me, “Pastor, these people here believe that even striking a match once on the Sabbath is sin.”

They would not have any hot drink. I had a guest room. All I had to do was turn the heat on. I was shivering and they were shivering but I said to myself, “If I make a hot drink against their convictions, we will have trouble. They would not even listen to me. So I said, “O.K. I will go without a hot drink.”

Paul one day was with Timothy and the Jews would not listen to him because Timothy was uncircumcised. What did he do? “Come, bring me the knife, I will do it.”

We have to be all things to all men so that we may win some. So we need to know this, especially if we go to the mission field. Please try

to learn the culture of the people. Don't impose your western culture, because you can bring on endless headaches in the mission field. The fact that you wear western clothes does not make you a Christian. We must do nothing that will hurt our brothers.

I realize we are living in a very complex world. Where do we draw the line? Let God guide you. I had a lady who was studying with me in Nampa [Idaho, U.S.A.]. She could not see any reason why she should remove her jewelry. She called for Bible reasons. And, really, if you are honest with the Bible, you cannot. I gave her two statements. 1. We are living in the day of atonement which was very solemn. 2. I gave her the principle. I said, "Look sister, let us say that I baptize you with your earrings on do you know what my church members would do? Can you imagine? Would it bring division in the church? They would report me to the conference (I said this would happen). For their sake, remove them because we are one body. This issue is not whether it is right or wrong. Each one must live for the other."

With this in mind, let's go to Hebrews thirteen. The first six verses of this chapter are dealing with Christian living in the world. How should Christians live in the world? He begins by brotherly love. Now this term, "brotherly love," is based on the middle eastern mind and the concept of solidarity. You see, in America, a brother means the same father and same mother. In the Middle East, if you are of the same clan, you are brothers. They call it the extended family. The human race is a solidarity. In other words, every human being is a being that God has purchased with His precious blood. We should look at human beings as God's special property and we should have brotherly love toward all. In verse two we are admonished:

Be not forgetful to entertain strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

One also has to be cautious. Sometimes strangers can be rascals and there are other passages where Paul says be careful that you don't

spoil people. In Africa, one man came who was sixty years old. He said to me, “I have no father and no mother.”

My father had died so I said to him, “I have no father also.”

Paul said to the Thessalonians, “He who does not work does not eat.” In other words, people will sometimes take advantage of your love and your kindness. You need to look at both sides. What Paul is saying is, “Don’t be afraid to open your hearts to people who genuinely need help.” In verse three Paul says:

Remember them that are in bonds,

Now the word “bonds” means those who are in prison. The prison ministry is part of the mission of the Christian church.

as bound with them;

What does he mean there? He means identify

yourself with those prisoners. That may be hard. That's why when we go the penitentiary we must never look down on the prisoner because, "There go I except for the grace of God." Given the same circumstances and the right environment and the right up-bringing, I may do the same thing as those fellows did. Do not help prisoners by patronizing, but help them by identifying ourselves with them. Continuing with verse three:

And them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body.

In other words, if my leg is hurt, how much of the body is affected? All. When a Christian is hurt or somebody else is hurt, please identify yourself as if it was you. All this is based on the concept of "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." That is another principle that is put in terms of practice.

Verse four has to do with marriage and I think we need to apply this especially today where the new morality has really brought chaos in our country:

Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.

Now the word “judge” here means God will allow them to suffer the consequences of their sins. God will remove His protection and I believe that one of the reasons why this world is scourged with AIDS is that God has simply said, “Go ahead, let me show you what happens when you live outside of my principles.” Verse five says:

Let your conversation be without covetousness;

The word “conversation” here means life style. Paul says:

Be content with such things as ye have for He has said I will never leave you nor forsake you.

In other words, please don’t try to keep up with the Joneses. Learn to be content. Look at Phil. 4:11:

Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.

And then he says:

I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me.

Please notice that he could not do it himself. “I can do all things through Christ Who strengtheneth me.” In other words, we need to be content in Christ. The Bible doesn’t condemn you for being rich, but learn to be content. That’s a fundamental principle, a practice that we need to apply in our Christian living.

Let’s go back to Heb.13:6, which is the last verse dealing with our living in this world. How should we, as Christians, live in this world?

So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper [or the Lord is my supplier].

I have learned to be content because God supplies me with all my needs. Look at Matt.6:24:

No man can serve two masters.

Now who are the two masters here? You can't serve self and God. Remember the formula of the gospel, "Not I, but Christ." This is what Christ is applying in this text. Verse twenty-five continues:

Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what you shall eat, or what you shall drink; nor yet for your body what you shall put on.

Don't worry about yourself. What should be your priority? Verse thirty-three:

But seek you first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

In other words, God will take care of your personal needs. Now sometimes He will let you go pretty low. He will test you. How much are you willing to give up? All your property? I'll tell you that, in the last days, you will be tested not only with your property, your belongings, or your bank account, but with your own life. Are you willing to die? That's the level we must reach.

Go back to Hebrews thirteen. From verse seven onwards he applies the principle of the church being the body, with each individual having a function. He stops at a very important area.

Remember them which have the rule over you [consider them who are above you in the church], who spoke unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation [life style].

In other words, here is a very important principle, especially for officers of the church. The spirituality of the church will never rise as a whole

above the level of its officers. So it is important that those who have responsibilities in the church should be spiritual so that they may help the members to rise up. Now they may be individuals who will grow above the leaders but, as a church, the spiritual level of the church is never higher than the level of its officers, pastors, Sabbath School teachers, etc. So we must remember that Paul is saying here that the officers of the church are an example.

But who is the greatest example? Verse eight points to Jesus Christ. The changeless Christ.

He is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

This is important, because there is a teaching in the Christian church today to which we have been exposed, although not in detail, but we have been exposed. There is a theologian by the name of Cobert. He teaches something called the six stages of development. When we reach the sixth stage, he said we do not need the law. The law is only for those who are immature. But when you are mature

you don’t need the law (he says).

Folks, the principles that I gave you are eternal and universal. We may have to change the practice, depending on the time and the culture, but please remember that the principles come from Jesus Christ. They are changeless as Christ is. Verse nine says:

Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines.

Let us look at this in the light of what Paul is doing in this whole epistle. Don’t forget the background. Paul is writing to Jewish Christians who were in danger of giving up Christ. Now there are three ways that the devil will destroy your faith:

1. By persecution. What should we do when we are persecuted? Should we submit to the persecutor or should we hold on?

2. The devil can destroy your faith by dangling in front of you the trinkets of this world. Materialism is a very powerful drive to get you out of Christ.

3. Perverting the truth of the gospel. This is what Paul is discussing in Heb.13:9. Remember, the Judiaizers tried this on the Galatians. Did they accept a perverted gospel? Yes.

As Paul said to the Corinthians, “After my departure, if somebody comes to you and teaches another gospel and another Christ, you will easily accept him.” Any teaching, no matter how spiritual it looks or how religious, if it turns your eyes from Christ to self is perverting the gospel. I am saying this because there are many who are sincerely trying to turn our eyes on our performance.

Who produces the performance in the Christian? Christ does it through the Holy Spirit. What is our part? Our part is to abide in Him and to live on the platform of “Not I, but Christ.” If you keep looking all the time at your experience you

are turning your eyes from Christ, Who is the source of your righteousness, to yourself. The devil is very clever to deceive you into thinking you are doing fine.

Remember the Pharisee who prayed in the temple, “I thank God that I am not like that sinner in the back.” What do I do? “I fast twice a week.” The Jewish law required this only once a week but he was going the second mile. He was better than the others. You will find the same thing. You will notice that people whose eyes are turned to themselves are always criticizing others who have not attained to that level. They bring a split in the church. We must keep our eyes on Jesus Christ. In verse nine, in the second half, he brings this up in a very nice way:

For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace [truth] ...

Or as Sister White puts it, “We need to be settled into the truth.” We need to become unshakeable in the truth.

...not with meats [by the way, the word “meats” here does not mean flesh, it means food], which have not profited them that have been occupied therein.

What was he referring to by “meats”? If you eat food offered to idols, you are not a good Christian. Turn to Romans. This is a text that is often used by Christians and they pervert the facts. Rom.14:1:

Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations.

Verse two says,

For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs [vegetables].

In other words, those who were eating vegetables only are weak. Is he talking about the health reform teaching? No. What was the issue in those days? The Christians in Paul’s days, the Greeks especially, the Gentiles, believed that the

soul was immortal and therefore it is good, but it is imprisoned in the body. Therefore, you have to deprive the body of good things so that the soul may be strong. And, of course, if you wanted to deprive the body of good things, eat only grapefruit. That was their mentality. It was asceticism. In other words, you punish the body.

Now this is a form of self-righteousness. So there were Christians who were saying that we must not eat desserts, we must not eat chocolate any more. We must only eat vegetables and fruits. But today in America we have some wonderful vegetables and fruits. It is hard for you to understand, but in those days vegetables were not abundant in variety. It's like in Africa, we had the same thing, cabbage, year in and year out. It is quite tough, not like what we have here, like chewing straw. I used to get tired of it when I went to workers meetings. I ate with the Africans. We ate it for breakfast, lunch, and supper. Sometimes we had beans with it and the beans were full of weevils. I don't know which was better.

What Paul is saying here in verse nine is that those who are not established in the truth will look to themselves. Their concern is for themselves. Paul says, “Whatever we eat or drink we should do it unto God.” Please notice the motivation. Not that we think one is better than the other but because we live unto the Lord. So we need to know that, folks, because the moment you live for yourself you begin judging others. In other words, let each one be persuaded.

Now look at verses ten through twelve. Sometimes the animals that were sacrificed were brought to the altar.

For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp. Wherefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate [He was crucified outside the walls of Jerusalem].

Verse thirteen:

Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.

Now crucifixion brought disgrace. If He was crucified within the camp, He would bring disgrace to the Jews. So they crucified Him outside the city so that the Jews could say, “We are not defiled.” But God used that to show that He died for all people, not only for the Jews. But now Paul is using another approach, but the same truth. He says, “When you become a Christian you will be despised by the worldly people. You will be mocked. You will be ridiculed. What should you do? Should you be willing to suffer? Was Christ willing to suffer shame? Why? For the joy that was set before Him. What was the joy? It was to see us in heaven. So we must be willing to suffer for His sake.” Verse fifteen:

By him, therefore, let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.

This is true worship.

Another truth that was brought out in our workers" meeting has some things of which we need to be aware. I am trying to do it through the preaching of the Word. When you first come to Christ, you normally worship Him for one of two reasons: either out of fear of punishment or desire for reward. In fact, Sister [Ellen G.] White says in Evangelism, when you go to the world and preach the gospel, "Tell them that there is a heaven to gain and a hell to shun." Why does God do that? Because Christ comes down to the level where you and I are. We are egocentric. So God gives us incentives that appeal to the human heart. The incentive is that if you accept Me you will escape punishment and you will have a mansion.

But the tragedy is that if you remain in that frame of understanding, you have not grown as a Christian. All the disciples, not just Judas, accepted Christ for selfish reasons. Look at the arguments, "Who of them would be greatest?" In Matt. nineteen, when the young man refused to give up his goods and follow Christ, Peter said,

“But we have forsaken all, what is our reward?” What will we get out of it? Did Christ rebuke Peter? No. Christ met him on the level where he then was.

So please remember that people who are brought into the church through evangelistic efforts mainly accept Christ from either fear of punishment or a desire for reward. I know that, in my case and my wife’s case, we both joined this church out of fear. We were scared of the investigative judgment. We were Sunday-keepers so we joined the commandment-keeping people of God to escape eternal extermination. If I remained there, I would not be standing here today. We need to get out of that nitch of understanding.

Dick Winn brought out a second thought, meaningful to him, because he was born in an Adventist home. I think he is a third-generation Adventist. He said, “Many Adventists do the things that Jesus requires out of conformity. They were raised as Adventists and they simply conform. Their heart is not in what they do; they

are doing it for sake of [conformity].”