

November 2008

GLAD TIDINGS

"I will make you fishers of men"

Spreading
the *Good News*
in Russia



Five Americans visit the Yaroslavl
Seventh-day Adventist Church

FORGIVENESS—

GR **A**MAZING
ACE

PULLOUT SERMON

Galatians Bible Studies

THE MEANING OF THE CROSS

... these and more inside

2009 National Conference Registration
(See back cover)

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The purpose of this newsletter is to share the good news of Jesus Christ as the foundation of effective personal and public evangelism to the world, to encourage the use of and share more effective methods and resources.

This is a publication of:

Glad Tidings Publishers
8784 Valley View Drive
Berrien Springs, MI 49103

Contact Information:

Office: (866) 954-4523

Fax: (269) 473-5851

E-mail: info@gtpublishers.org

Web site: www.gtpublishers.org

*Glad Tidings Publishers is an affiliate of the
1888 Message Study Committee*

Evangelism Vice President: Todd Guthrie
Evangelism editorial board:

Gerald L. Finneman, Robert Hunsaker,
Lloyd Knecht, R. J. Gravell,
Gail Gravell

Comments

from our readers

Dear Friends in Christ:

Hello and greetings to all of you in the blessed name of our loving Savior, Yahshua Ben Yahweh. I'm sorry it has taken me so long to write and thank you for your kindness in sending me the books by A. T. Jones and E. J. Waggoner as well as the Bible study guides. All of these have truly been a great blessing and have enriched my understanding and knowledge of the Scriptures and the Spirit of prophecy. ...

Please keep me in prayer that I will not become discouraged nor disheartened by those the enemy will influence to ignore and disregard this urgent message.

I would like to know if there is a possibility that you could please send me a copy of the Ellen G. White 1888 Materials, four volume set. I would really like to get a much better and clearer understanding of the vital importance of the 1888 message. ... To be honest, if I had the money and could afford it I would love to have copies of all of Waggoner's and Jones' writings that you have, but I don't. [I appreciate any material you provide.]

May all of you have a very blessed week and a joyful Sabbath ...

—*In Messiah's love, Dougel*

Dear Glad Tidings:

Thank you for your committed contribution to the 1888 message and Jesus' soon return. We appreciate the fine material and rich blessings we receive. God bless your ministry.

—*Bob and Sharon*

Dear brother or sister in Christ:

I have written you on a previous occasion, requesting material on the message of righteousness by faith. You mercifully sent to me your monthly Glad Tidings publication and the book, Glad Tidings: Galatians Made Clear, by E. J. Waggoner. I've read each of these and found some very interesting and illuminating concepts ... principles that I've only begun to comprehend and which promise [to have positive effect] on my present ignorance of the gospel. Already, many ... doubts and contradictions (due to doctrines of my upbringing) have been resolved. I praise [God] for the divine light He has shed upon my heart and path through the materials you sent me. ... Again, I express my gratitude for your Christian service in ministering to my great need. I fully believe your labor of love in co-working with God will be abundantly rewarded to the eternal praise and glory of the Majesty of heaven.

—*Jonathan*

Dear Glad Tidings:

... I'm currently the librarian for the SDA mission here at Chillicothe [Correctional Institute]. We received your rich gift of literature. Oh, how wonderful it was to receive it: ninety-five Bible studies, twenty-five Daily Good News, volumes one and two, twenty-five Christ in the Psalms, and the mini books which we passed out this past Sabbath. God is truly good to us that He would support you in your efforts to spread His Gospel. We are thankful that you were able to assist us in spreading the Gospel—even in prison.

Five brothers are starting the Bible studies that you sent. All praise goes to God on high! ... We are hoping they will begin to see the value of God's Word [compared] to what the world offers and totally dedicate their lives to Christ. Nothing is more important than our personal relationship with our Creator. We thank you again for your assistance and look forward to hearing from you, our brothers and sisters in Christ. May God bless you continually.

—Alex (Ohio)

Dear Pastor:

Thank you for your free gift of assorted books. God bless you!

The work has started with prison ministry. Kaparu Mission, [which is] run by Catholics, has invited us (SDAs) to conduct Bible studies, prayer meeting, etc.

Last, but not least, we are asking for a copy of the International Bible Encyclopedia and a Bible dictionary. Also, any other little booklets to give to the Catholics and Sunday-keepers are all necessary, including sermon compacts.

May God bless you abundantly as you toil to spread His word. Thanking you in advance.

—Faithfully yours, Kenny (Kabwe, Zambia)

Dear Glad Tidings Evangelism:

Greetings in the full love and Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

As a fellow worker for Christ, I must say your study guide, From Jesus With Love, is a wonderful study and in my experience, a fantastic witnessing tool. Which brings me to a need I'm attempting to fill.

Do you have other study guides?—For two reasons:

A more advanced study that can help challenge and encourage our new believers and those who have already been baptized into our Adventist church and still need help developing good study habits.

An easier, smaller study geared toward those completely unfamiliar with the word of God.

I am one of the workers here at Chillicothe Correctional Institute (CCI), and have been looking for more witnessing tools. Personally, I believe any method that gets someone into the word on a regular basis is the greatest witness. And, of course, I am extremely impressed with your writers of this [Bible] study. Please send my gratitude and applause to that group or person. ...

In the last month with the help of your study and the Holy Spirit we've won four new souls. Praise our God and Lord Jesus Christ! Thank you, my brothers and sisters in

Christ. Keep doing what you are doing. You are continually in my prayers. I hope to hear from you soon.

—Your brother in Christ, Joseph

Dear Committee Members:

Prayerfully, you and your families are in good health. God continues to bless us through the ministry He has entrusted to you. We are so grateful to God for His wonderful gift of salvation that we have in His precious Son Jesus! [We] hope this small donation will be geometrically multiplied by God to aid in the preaching and teaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

... Please give all the thanks and praise to God, not to us. After all, this is His money, not ours. ... Thank you so much for allowing God to use you as an instrument to do His will. May you continue to surrender self to Christ that He may keep using you to spread His Gospel.

—God bless you!

Editor's notes:

Prisoners often write us with requests for specific books and material. We do our best to provide all of the literature they ask for free of charge. Often, we get requests similar to Dougal's, for books that have little or no mark-up or for books we do not carry. Perhaps you, the reader, wish to participate in our growing prison ministry. If you would like to make a donation for the purpose of reaching our prisons with the message of righteousness by faith, thus making it easier to ship literature to these brothers and sisters, contact us today:

Info@gtpublishers.org or call: 1-866-954-GLAD.
Mention "Prison Ministry" (4523)

*We receive MANY letters of request for literature from Zambia, Kenya, and other countries in Africa. These requests come from people who are too poor to send any form of monetary compensation. Most have no ability to make copies, or download files from the Internet. **Surface shipping of materials is no longer available to us. We must ship via Airmail or Priority mail.** Doing so has become a financial disaster for small ministries attempting to share the gospel with the world.*

Contact us today to become an overseas shipping partner with a monthly donation of \$200 or more.

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HOW WE KNOW WHEN JESUS WILL RETURN

MOST EVERYONE WOULD LIKE to know when Jesus will return! And many would like to know when probation for everyone living will have closed before Jesus returns.

Jesus has already told us. But we also know that Satan will do all he can to confuse us. In fact, we are told that he will be furious with God's faithful when they get serious about these questions: Note Revelation 12:17: "The dragon [Satan] was wrath [furious] with the woman [the church] and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ."

But John the Revelator has much to say about our responsibilities in these days of Satan's fury. Revelation 7 opens with these words, "I saw four angels standing at four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth, that no wind might blow on earth or sea or against any tree. Then I saw another angel ascend from the rising of the sun, with the seal of the living God, and he called with a loud voice to the four angels who have been given power to harm earth and sea, saying, 'Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God upon their foreheads.'" Rev. 7:1-3.

What on earth could John be describing? Why is God holding back the Seven Last Plagues? Why is He telling angels to "Hold, hold back the north wind of nuclear destruction. Hold back the south wind of last-day terror and destruction!" Why? God's people are not ready! "Hold back the east wind of satanic fury—until God's people are ready to carry out their last assignment. Hold the west wind

of human madness!" Why? God's people have not caught on yet as to where last-day battles are really to be fought!

"Hold the winds until God's people are ready to be sealed; hold the winds until His people are ready for His stamp of approval; hold the winds until His people are ready for God to use them in His final warning to earth's last generation."

One of these days, God's waiting loyalists will have caught on as to what the final battle is really like. In the 14th chapter of Revelation, John picks up this theme again and highlights why God holds the winds of the Seven Last Plagues until the sealing is finished. Here John describes those who are sealed in chapter 7—"those who had his name and His Father's name on their foreheads" for "in their mouth was found no guile, for they are without fault before the throne of God."

What will identify God's loyalists in these last days? Will they be Sabbath-keeping, tithe-paying health reformers? Yes and No! After all, Sabbath-keeping, health reforming tithe-payers once crucified God! John goes at it in a different way—He says that God's people will have the Father's name written in their foreheads. They will be sealed with His approval.

Many products can't be sold without a seal of approval—the seal that tells the world that the product has passed all the tests—such as the yellow Underwriter's Seal on the bottom of electrical appliances or in the imprint in the plastic casing.

What's the importance of a seal? Every gasoline pump has one, as well as every elevator. No seal—no ser-

vice! What's the value of a signature? Ask any art collector, or clock collector, ask any world-class violinist as he checks his Stradivarius. Why do people buy Tiger Wood golf clubs or Venus Williams tennis rackets? Or look for Pierre Cardin ties and Tommy Hilfiger sweaters or Gucci shoes? Or when looking for a reliable washing machine, Consumer Reports say Kenmore, or a lawn mower, they say, Craftsman or Toro?

For most products, the name means everything. It means that the product carries the endorsement of someone who cares about quality, someone who can be trusted. O. J. Simpson used to make many millions from endorsements, but not anymore.

Remember those TV ads for Hanes clothing? Can't you see that determined female inspector on the assembly line, with all of her formidable charm, looking over each item, and saying: "*The quality goes in before the name goes on!*"

Down here in these days of the held winds, that is what God is telling the universe when He writes His name in the foreheads of His faithful. "Listen to them, He is saying, "You can trust them and what they say. I am proud to give them my seal of approval. *The quality goes in before the name goes on!*"

What could be more wonderful than to have our Heavenly Father write His name across your forehead! Is this a group you want to be a part of, or what? With that signature, God is saying, "Here are people who have let my Holy Spirit do His work in them—people who indeed are telling the truth about Me! I am not embar-

*When we are resurrected from the grave
(and everyone will one day be resurrected), we will come up
with the same disposition and habits that we had when we died.*

rassed by how they represent Me and they have my seal of approval.”

Later in Revelation 22, John describes the redeemed on the other side: “They shall see His face, and His Name shall be on their foreheads.” Some future!

We call this process of having God’s signature on our lives, the “sealing work.” This is what all heaven is focusing on today. And that is why Jesus still waits. And that is why probation still lingers. And this is where the real last-day battle will be fought. Satan knows it, God knows it. But do we?

Let’s look further at what is meant by the sealing work. After all, it is the one event that is delaying the return of Jesus. And when the sealing is complete, probation will close!

What is this seal that makes Satan so angry? Listen to this wisdom: “Just as soon as the people of God are sealed in their foreheads—it is not any seal or mark that can be seen, but a settling into the truth, both intellectually and spiritually, so they cannot be moved—just as soon as God’s people are sealed and ready for the shaking, it will come.” *Last Day Events*, p. 219.

What does it mean to be settled into the truth? First, they know what the final issue is that separates those who “keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus” from those who “marveled and followed the beast.” (Rev. 13:3). The final issue will distinguish the biblical Sabbath from the papal Sunday.

They have “settled into the truth, both intellectually and spiritually.” This truly is the work of faith, joining the head with the heart. They have studied out the reasons for their commitment to God’s call for loyal Christians and they have experienced the validating assurances of the Holy Spirit in their lives. The intellectual

grasp of truth has reached its transforming purpose—men and women have developed characters that will vindicate God’s wisdom as He waits for the purpose of the gospel to be fully developed in the lives of men and women.

Why can God be sure that He can seal these people? He knows these men and women will not disappoint Him! Why is He so sure? Because they are “so settled into the truth—they *cannot* be moved.”

Whatever Satan throws at them, they cannot be moved! We can think of some who were so settled into the truth that they could not be moved—Enoch, Elijah, Elisha, Daniel, John, Paul, Peter—and many more through the centuries. That is the promise that hovers over everyone listening to my voice.

Jesus stood face-to-face with Satan and overcame him—He was settled into the truth and could not be moved. That is the promise that Jesus holds up for all of us in these last days.

I am sure that all of us have habits of the past that no longer are habits today. I am not thinking only of alcohol or drug or smoking addictions. I am thinking of social habits that are probably worse than those addictions—such as lying and cheating, or jealousy and envy that have hurt others, of laziness that upsets spouses. And you can make your own lists of what you once were. The point of the sealing is that anything that does not reflect the character of Jesus *must* be worked out of the life by the power of the Holy Spirit—or the whole universe will see that you can easily be moved with these temptations.

This settling into the truth is not something that can be done after one dies or after the close of probation. When we are resurrected from the grave (and everyone will one day be

resurrected), we will come up with the same disposition and habits that we had when we died. No replays, no mulligans!

The Seal of God is not a trivial or peripheral subject. It is not a subject for theologians only. For instance, many life-long Sabbath keepers will receive the Mark of the Beast and not God’s seal! We are talking about something far more important than which day we worship on! We are talking about those who have settled into the truth so that no hardship, no Satanic arrow; no threat of death can move them. That is why Ellen White wrote unambiguously that the Seal “will be placed upon those only who bear a likeness to Christ in character.” *Last Day Events*, p. 221.

Probation closes when the last honest seekers of truth come to this place when they are settled into the measure of truth they know. And for this moment, all heaven and unfallen worlds are waiting.

Why is this so important in the finishing of the Great Controversy? Because now God and angels and unfallen worlds know who can be trusted with eternal life. They know that the sealed ones are those who never again rebel against the will of God. Their habit patterns, their neuro pathways, are so settled into truth they never would be moved throughout eternity to say “No” to God!

No wonder those who see God have His name written in their forehead—“*His quality goes in before His name goes on.*” Those heads are so settled forever to think and do God’s way. They have lived through the experiment of what happens to this planet when men and women do things Satan’s way. Never again! Never again will anyone from Planet Earth say “No” to God! ☞

Glad Tidings at ASI

THE ANNUAL CONVENTION OF ADVENTIST-LAYMEN'S SERVICES AND INDUSTRIES (ASI) was held in Tampa, Florida August 6-9 of this year. ASI members gathered from around the world to learn new ways of sharing Christ in the marketplace. Experiences were highlighted as laypersons voiced the many ways God has used their businesses and services to reach the lost for Jesus. The many organizations, businesses, and ministries offered information, products, and samples of their wares and/or services dedicated to the purpose of reaching the world for Christ. *Glad Tidings Publishers* participated with a booth in the exhibition hall, sharing free books and tracts with thousands of attendees and other participants.

Below are photos of booths whose ministries share with us the joy of the "righteousness by faith" message.

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PEACEFUL WATERS
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If you have the opportunity to attend next year's convention in Phoenix, Arizona, August 5-8, 2009, you will find it an enriching experience. Days and evenings are packed with spirit filled sermons, music, testimonies, reports, and mission stories that will encourage you to share your love for Jesus with others. You will realize how far the Holy Spirit is reaching, all around the world, to teach, heal, and save the lost. He is using all those who are willing to be used. May we all do our part to hasten the Lord's return!

To learn more about ASI, visit: www.asiministries.org ☺

If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. James 1:5, 6.

GOD'S AMAZING LOVE



IF YOU WILL BECOME A LEARNER IN THE SCHOOL OF CHRIST, submit your will to Him, and come under His discipline, you will be able to walk in His ways; and by living in constant connection with Jesus, you will be a channel of light to others. You and I . . . need to feel our entire dependence upon God, for His grace and His guidance. God wants you to come into sympathy and harmony with His plans. Submission to the authority of Christ, which forms an essential qualification in His disciples, is not only opposed to the pride which feels hurt when advised and counseled, but those who have it will choose to be subject one to another. . . .

Fatal deceptions are upon souls. They have a settled confidence. They think they are Christians simply because they assent to the truth; and so completely does this delusion enclose and encase the heart, that the arrows of the Lord do not find access to it, and the deep, searching truths, which clearly portray this very delusion, are listened to without effect, with not a thought of their application to themselves. Oh! seek preparation of heart at the throne of grace, that when you feel your incompetence, you may have clear views of the power and dignity of Christ, and can grasp the promises by faith, and can have a living connection with God. . . .

“God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). Oh, what love! what amazing love! And yet how few appreciate it! How few are partakers of the divine nature! Having undertaken the amazing work of redemption, He resolved that He would not give up the plan, but that He would spare nothing, however costly; withhold nothing, however dear, which was essential to the consummation of His design of bestowing on man gift upon gift, until He had opened to Him all the treasures of heaven.

The saving grace of God upon us, the increased conception of His greatness, justice, mercy, and love, will not fill our hearts to no purpose. This knowledge of God, which Jesus came from heaven to impart, must not be trifled with. The love of God cannot remain in our possession unless it is expressed. 🐦

—Excerpted from *Letter 48*, Dec. 13, 1888, to David H. Lamson, a conference evangelist and administrator, as printed in *The Upward Look*, 1982, p. 361.

Spreading the *Good News* in Russia



Five Americans visit the Yaroslavl
Seventh-day Adventist Church

FIVE PEOPLE, FOUR LOCATIONS, SEVERAL INTERPRETERS, A COUNTRY AT WAR, AND AN EARTHQUAKE. NOW THAT'S A RECIPE FOR AN INTRIGUING TRIP ABROAD!

After a mad scramble to get approved visas, Jerry and Shirley Finneman, their daughter, Kim, Fred Bischoff, and Brian Schwartz traveled to Yaroslavl, Russia in August 2008 to share the *Good News* with the precious souls in that part of our world. Jerry, Fred, and Brian held meetings with the adults in the upstairs of the local church while Shirley and Kim held children's meetings downstairs.

It was heartening to realize that righteousness by faith is not a new phenomenon in Russia. Attending the meetings was a retired pastor who has been studying the topic for decades, and has a large manuscript on the events and message of 1888 that he plans to publish. He openly called himself a peacemaker, and appeared to have a true elder's heart for bringing people to value one another and the message. A great number of people traveled three and four days by train to attend the meetings. Hungry for the truth, they willingly slept on colorful mats on the floor of the church.

A local camera crew was in place upon arrival, complete with cameras and up-to-date recording equipment. The recordings of the meetings in audio and video were eagerly received at the conclusion of the meetings, and are already making their way throughout Russia.

Shirley presented the sanctuary message to the children using a vari-

ety of techniques and crafts designed to pique their interest and leave a lasting impression in their minds of the grace and love of Jesus. The parents who assisted were very happy to observe the lessons and obtain ideas for future classes with their little ones. All discovered that music *truly* is a universal language! Even though the American guests did not understand the words, they were able to recognize some songs by their tunes and also by the enthusiastic hand motions of the children. The little ones learned a song in English which they sang during the church service on Sabbath, along with another song that they sang in Russian.

It was obvious that Ivan Galagaev, the host, and his assistant/translator, Nina Sichanina had worked hard to make the meetings a benefit to speakers and attendees alike. He possesses a genuine desire to work with the church, and shared his commitment to begin a health and training center at the meetings' end.

Delicious, simple Russian food was prepared each day by a hard-working group of ladies in the church kitchen, itself an example of accomplishing much with little. Boxes and crates of fresh, late summer produce were evident in the area around the dining room, reminding all those present that people in every land are dependent upon and blessed by God's provisions directly from the ground. Watermelon, grapes, and plums were among the fresh fruit. Various salads, hearty bread with spreads, and traditional Russian soups kept the meals

exciting and interesting.

With sewing help from friends at the Battle Creek Tabernacle church, Shirley and Kim presented small potpourri pillow gifts to the women in attendance. Each colorful pillow had the following quote from Ellen White's pen stamped in the Russian language on the back: "The white robes of purity will be fragrant with perfume from the garden of the Lord." *The Mount of Blessing*, page 135. The gifts were to remind the women of the beautiful fragrance of Jesus.

Upon leaving Yaroslavl, Fred and Brian returned home and Jerry was invited to travel with Ivan G. and an interpreter, Ivan Yeliseyev, to two other locations quite a distance away—*five hours and five time zones by plane!* While Jerry was on his "interior trip," Shirley and Kim remained in Moscow and taught the children's Sabbath School class the second Sabbath of the trip.

The journey was worthwhile in providing the opportunity to share various aspects of the righteousness by faith message that has blessed many others worldwide. The prospect of meeting and making new friends, with the ongoing potential of rapid communication via e-mail and the internet, will, with God's blessing, have a harvest of good that God alone can see. ☺

—Fred Bischoff, Shirley Finneman,
and Kim Finneman-Latham



Ivan Y., Diana, Nina, Slava, Jerry



Children break for lunch



This lady rejoices over the *Good News*



Crafts



Fred, Brian, Jerry, Ivan G.



Ladies show their potpourri pillows

Galatians 2:17

“But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid.” Galatians 2:17.

HAVING ABANDONED ALL LAW *as a means of justification*, have we abandoned all law *altogether*?—God forbid. For while seeking to be justified by Christ, it is possible that we might be found sinners. And what is a sinner?—“*Whosoever committeth sin* transgresseth also *the law: for sin is THE TRANSGRESSION OF THE LAW.*” 1 John 3:4.

And what law is it, the transgression of which is sin?—“I had not known sin, *but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.*” Rom. 7:7. That word

That is *the law* by which is the knowledge of sin. That is “THE LAW,” the transgression of which is “*sin*.” And that is the law, and the only law, by which, while seeking “to be justified by Christ,” we *could* be “found sinners.” And as this word in Galatians recognizes the possibility that, while seeking to be justified by Christ, we might be found sinners; and as there is no knowledge of sin without the law of Ten Commandments, this is therefore conclusive evidence that, while it is true that all law must be abandoned *as a means of justification*, all law is *not* abandoned *altogether*. It is conclusive evidence that THAT LAW by which is the knowledge of sin, the law of Ten Commandments is NOT abandoned *as the means of the KNOWLEDGE OF SIN*.

That law, the law of Ten Commandments, while it, with all other law, *must* never be used *as a means of justification* is NOT abandoned altogether; because *that* would make *Christ* THE MINISTER OF SIN. And against any such suggestion as that the Lord plunges his emphatic “God forbid.” Thus the Lord has set his everlasting “God forbid” against all idea that the law of Ten Commandments is abolished or in any sense “loosed down” or done away.

The Lord Jesus did not come into the world to minister to sin, but altogether to save from sin. Sin is the transgression of the law of Ten Commandments; and as the Lord Jesus came to save men from sin, in the nature of the case he came to save men from the transgression of that law. By that law is the knowledge of sin; and as Jesus came to save men from sin, his mission would be completely nullified and altogether vain if the law were taken away: for to take away the law would take away the knowledge of sin

BIBLE STUDY 1

then—“Thou shalt not covet”—belongs in a law: it is a part of a law. It is not simply the *commandment*, but THE LAW, that says, “Thou shalt not covet.” It is not, I had not known sin but by *the commandment*; it is not, I had known lust except the *commandment* had said, Thou shalt not covet. But it *is*, “I had not known sin, but by THE LAW.” It *is*, “I had not known lust, except THE LAW had said, Thou shalt not covet.”

Now *that law* which says, “Thou shalt not covet,” says also, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt have no other gods before me, Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain. It is the Ten Commandment law: It is the law of God, which he spake from heaven, and wrote *twice* with his own hand on tables of stone, and which he writes with his own Spirit on the tables of the heart of the believer in Jesus.

See Galatians 2:17, p. 12

Galatians 2:18-19

“For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.” Galatians 2:18, 19

WHAT IS IT THAT IS REFERRED TO in the words, “If I build again the things which I destroyed”? There are at least two special thoughts involved in the words.

The one great idea of those who had turned back the Galatian Christians was justification by LAW. Whereas the truth of the gospel, which Paul had preached to the Galatians, and which even “an angel from heaven” could not contradict is justification by FAITH.

Paul has already shown, in verses 15, 16, that even they who were Jews by nature, and so had all the laws that the Lord had given, had believed on Christ in order that they might be justified by *faith* and not by works of *law*: and this for the accepted reason that by works of law no flesh can be justified.

This was the utter abandonment and destruction of all idea of justification by *law*. And having abandoned all idea of justification by *law*, in order, by believing in Jesus, to be justified by the *faith* of Christ, *now*, being justified by *faith*, shall I set up again the idea and the hope of being justified by *law*? Having abandoned the idea of justification by *law*, in order to find justification by *faith*, having *found* justification by *faith*, shall I again adopt the idea of justification by *law*?—God forbid; for when, to be justified by faith, I must abandon all idea of justification by *law*, if I now adopt again the idea of justification by *law*, I must abandon all idea of justification by *faith*. But when I abandon justification by faith, I make myself a transgressor; for “whatsoever is not of faith is sin.” Therefore, if I build again the structure of justification by *law*, which I destroyed by justification by *faith*, I make myself a transgressor; because by the law is the knowledge of sin.

That which I destroyed by abandoning all idea of justification by law, and adopting justification only by the faith of Christ, is “the old man,” “the body of sin.” And to build again that which I destroyed is only to bring back from the dead that old man, is only to make alive the body of sin, *and that* can only make me a transgressor.

Justification by the faith of Christ means in *itself* the total abandonment of all sins committed, the remission of all “sins that are past,” and also the *destruction of the body of sin*, so that “*henceforth* we should not serve sin.” Therefore while seeking to be justified by faith, we must not be found sinners. For if I build again the body of sin which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. And in again adopting the idea of justification by law, I *do* build again, in *works*, what I destroyed by faith; because all seeking of justification by *law* is seeking justification by *our own works*, and our own works are simply works of *the flesh*,

BIBLE STUDY 2

which are all sin; for “the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envying, murders, drunkenness, revelings, and such like.”

And in building again the structure of justification by *law*, which I abandoned in order to be justified by *faith*, I make myself a transgressor; because “for I through the law am *dead to the*

See **Galatians 2:18-19**, p. 12

Galatians 2:17

and the very means of the knowledge of sin; and this in itself would make it impossible to save men from sin. And to make the coming of the Lord Jesus create a condition of things in which it would be impossible to save men from sin, would be nothing else than to make Jesus the minister of sin. It would make Christ confirm sin upon the world forever; and that is precisely what would satisfy Satan forever. And why should not God cry out against it forever, "God forbid"? And to this everlasting "God forbid," who that would not play directly into the hands of Satan can ever say anything but Amen?

Therefore "if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners," transgressors of the law of Ten Commandments, does Christ sanction that?—"God forbid." Does he justify men in order that they may be free to transgress the law?—"God forbid." Does he save men from sin in order that they may continue in sin?—"God forbid." Do we believe in Jesus in order that we may continue to be sinners?—"God forbid." Do we "seek to be justified [made righteous] by Christ" in order that we may continue to sin?—"God forbid." And let all the people forever say Amen.

Let it be borne in mind and upon the heart forever by every soul, that justification (being made righteous) by faith of Jesus Christ, means, in itself, in every sentiment of it, the total abandonment of sins, and the destruction of the body of sin in order that henceforth we should not serve sin. Otherwise I build again in works what I destroyed by faith: and "if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a *transgressor*." Faith will never justify sin. The two are eternal opposites; for "*whatsoever is NOT of faith is sin*." And in Christ Jesus nothing avails but faith, which worketh by love that keeps the commandments of God. ✨

—*Review and Herald*, October 10, 1899.

Galatians 2:18-19

law, that I might live unto God." Since abandoning the idea of justification by *law* and adopting justification by *faith* caused me to become *dead to the law* and *alive unto God*, then adopting again the idea of justification by *law*, which, in itself, is the abandonment of justification by *faith*, would cause me to become *alive to the law* and *dead unto God*. But to be dead unto God is nothing but to be dead *in trespasses and in sins*. And as to be dead unto God is to be dead in trespasses and in sins, and to be dead unto God is to be alive to the law, then to be alive to the law is only to be a transgressor.

Therefore, my brethren, justification by faith forever, without any works of any law of any kind whatever,—this is the only ground of hope of salvation. ✨

—*Review and Herald*, October 17, 1899.

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AMAZING GRACE

*The following is the transcript of a sermon as presented by Ivor Myers,
pastor of Templeton Hills Seventh-day Adventist church
located in Templeton Hills, California.*

Happy Sabbath.

I want to tell those of you who were not here last night the same thing that I shared with those who were here. I love you. I love you. As Christians, God does something special for us and I suggest that special thing is that we can say with ease, “I love you,” even though we may not know one another. Amen? Amen.

I’m not going to give you the title of today’s sermon yet—I want to forewarn you that this morning’s message is going to challenge you like nothing you’ve ever been challenged with before! I know that sounds like a bold statement and I’m not saying it because of my ability to speak. I’m talking about how the Word of God will challenge everything you have [ever] held dear as Christians. So, as I pray this morning, I ask you to really pray in your hearts because I am trembling as I give this message. I pray that God will give me the ability to share with you what He has shared with me so you understand the gravity of what I am going to be speaking about today.

I ask that you bow your heads with me as I kneel and pray.

Heavenly Father,

We come before You this morning pleading that our hearts will be emptied. And I ask that You would hide me behind the cross and that Your glory will be seen today. Please, Lord, let the words be Yours and not mine. Guard every word that comes out of my mouth, Lord. If there is something wrong that I am about to say, stop the words. Lord, I pray for the congregation, Your sons and daughters, that their hearts will be totally stirred and that conviction and conversion will take place today in a way like never before. We pray this in Jesus’ name, Amen.

I want to ask you a couple of questions. How many of you know what the second death is? Raise your hand. Do you know what the second death is? Raise your hand nice and high so I can see. Okay. Now, for those of you who don’t know what the second death is, the second death is total separation from God. It is being blotted out of existence forever. It is being destroyed in the lake of fire. Now, how many of you know what the second death is? Okay, good. I just instructed you. Amen.

Now, out of those of you who raised your hands, how many of you are willing to go and experience the second death?

I want you to open your Bibles to Revelation 18:1. The Bible says, “And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power: and the earth was lightened with his glory.” As Seventh-day Adventists, we understand this verse to be a reference to what the Bible called the latter rain—that time in the future, and maybe even now, when God will pour out special power upon His people for the purpose of lightening or enlightening the entire world with the glory of God. How many of you are looking forward to this time? Amen. How many of you want this like nothing you’ve ever wanted before? Amen. Because we want to go home. Amen? This world is getting crazier by the day and we really want to get out of here. Just a couple of days ago we were at a pastoral retreat at Leoni Meadows, in central California. [It was] Martin Luther King Day. While driving to the retreat, we came to a little place called Grizzly Flats, about five to ten minutes from Leoni Meadows. One of our black pastors was driving with his wife and two daughters in their Yukon. They came to a four-way stop sign, just before they began to head up into the moun-

tains. As they were admiring the beauty, they heard a big bang and thought they had hit something. The pastor turned around to see the window in front of his daughter begin to crack. And then they noticed a small hole in the window. *Someone was attempting to kill a pastor who was headed to Leoni Meadows to serve and praise God and worship God.* A sniper made the attempt to shoot this pastor, but praise God, the bullet missed his daughter by three inches. Now, you have to understand, this is in the mountains with trees all around—the *last* place you would think something like that would happen. A store was at the four-way stop sign. People came out and said, “That is a hate crime! This is the third time this has happened.” Every [victim] had been black. This world is getting crazier as the days go by. I want to go home. How about you?

And so, we are told here that this outpouring of God’s spirit is going to be something special. It’s going to mobilize the church to do something that the church is unable to do now. In fact, we are told that this *outpouring* adds power to something called the Three Angels’ Messages. Now that’s a sad indication that though we have the Three Angels’ Messages, we lack power. Though we have the truth, there is something lacking in our church. And therefore, we cannot go forth with that power to enlighten the world. We are going to talk about this, this morning. We are going to discover just what the *outpouring* is.

I want you to turn with me to Zechariah 12 because we want to find out what it is that God is getting ready to, or desires to, pour out upon His church. Zechariah 12:10: “And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit ...” Pause right there. What spirit is he talking about? He’s talking about the *Holy Spirit*. This verse is a reference to the outpouring of the Latter Rain. Now, I want you to notice how Zechariah describes it: “I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications...” So, you mean to tell me that this final outpouring that God is going to give His church is an outpouring of grace? Is it grace that actually adds power to the Three Angels’ Messages? What is it saying?

You know, when we mention that word “grace,” we get a whole bunch of fuzzy pictures of what grace might be—thousands of different descriptions. I want you to notice something here. From the Spirit of Prophecy, *Acts of the Apostles*, page 55. Listen to how Ellen White equates “grace” with the outpouring of the Latter Rain: “But near the close of earth’s harvest, a special bestowal of spiritual grace is promised to prepare the church for the coming of the Son of man.” Do you see that? That outpouring is likened unto what? Grace.

Here’s another one. From the book, *Faith I Live By*: “We must seek His favors with the whole heart if the showers of *grace* are to come on us.” They are called showers of what? Grace.

Testimonies to Ministers, page 508: “Let us, with contrite hearts, pray most earnestly that now, in the time of the latter rain, the showers of *grace* may fall upon us.” What God’s church needs is grace.

Bible Commentary, vol. 7, page 984: “We must not wait for the latter rain. It is coming upon all who will recognize and appropriate the dew and showers of *grace* that fall upon us. ... The whole earth is to be filled with the glory of God.” In other words, the whole earth is to be filled with the *grace* of God.

And hence, the title of my message this morning:

AMAZING GRACE

Now, when something is amazing, what does that mean? It’s not normal. And I have a fear that we, including myself, have had a picture of grace as something cheap. God wants to show us this morning that grace is *not* cheap—it is *amazing*. We are going to see just how *amazing* grace is this morning, and when we do, we will also see why it is not very present in our churches right now.

We will also see why, when we have this—not just grace—but *amazing* grace, that it is then that the work will be finished with great rapidity. So, what is grace? In the book, *Mind, Character and Personality*, page 294, Ellen White says, “God might have sent His Son into the world to condemn the world. But *amazing* grace! Christ came to save, not to destroy.” (*Emphasis supplied here and throughout*). Do you hear that? There’s her description of *amazing* grace. God could have sent His Son into the world to destroy it, but *amazing* grace. Christ came to save, not to destroy. Grace is the way that Jesus saves. Are you following me? Grace is the way that Jesus saves.

Now, listen. I beg of you. Don’t lose me. Don’t think this is just another nice sermon about grace. Don’t lose me, because if you lose me now, you are going to be in trouble later. Okay? Follow me, please—even if it seems boring. Just trust me. There is something coming that will perhaps leave all of you here today trembling.

Grace is the way that Jesus saves. Romans 3:24: “Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” We are told in this verse that it is grace that justifies us. It is grace that saves us. Grace is God’s way of saving, so God is going to pour out a saving power upon His church. “I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem,

the spirit of grace and of supplications.”

Counsels to Teachers, page 532, tells us: “The message of the renewing power of God’s grace will be carried to every country and clime, until the truth shall belt the world.” So what is it that you and I are to take to the world? God’s grace. But we cannot take God’s grace to the world if we ourselves do not understand and experience what that grace is. You can’t give what you don’t have. God is waiting for His people to realize something so He can then pour out the Spirit upon them in order for the Three Angels’ Messages to go with power. And when people in the world hear it and see the demonstration of grace in you and me, they will have no doubt in their mind that this is the truth.

II Corinthians 8:9 presents to us a picture of this grace: “For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ...” We are about to read here what the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is. “... that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that you through his poverty might be rich.” You see, the grace of God is best demonstrated and best seen where? At the cross. That’s where He ultimately became poor for us. That’s where He saved us. That’s where He demonstrated His love for us.

Let me read another statement to you from *Review and Herald*, October 6, 1896.

“When the latter rain is poured out, the church will be clothed with power for its work; but the church as a whole will never receive this until its members shall put away from among them envy, evil-surmising, and evil-speaking. Those who cherish these sins know not the blessed experience of love; they are not awake to the fact that the Lord is testing and proving their love for him ...” I’m going to pause right here. Where did Jesus extend His love for us? At the cross. And if we truly understand this love, then we truly understand grace. And now, what we are about to read is something mind-blowing because God, through the Spirit of Prophecy says this: “... they are not awake to the fact that the Lord is testing and proving their love for him *by the attitude they assume toward one another.*” Oh, ouch! *The attitude we have towards one another demonstrates whether we have truly understood what grace means.* Grace is the work of Jesus’ saving. Jesus came not to destroy but to save. Many of us are seeking to destroy one another. You didn’t catch that? Oh. *And if we are seeking to destroy one another, to tear down one another, we do not understand nor have we experienced the work of grace.*

God is waiting for His church to experience grace, to desire grace, so that when they go forth to the world, they will be a united church. They will be a church that loves one another. If we do not yet love one another, we haven’t yet experienced grace.

How many of you love one another? Of course, you know you have to raise your hand; otherwise, it would be

like, “Well, what are you doing here?” Right? I’m going to ask that question again a little later and I want to see the response.

So, what is grace? Grace is defined as a favorable act. What was that favorable act? John 3:16 tells us: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son...” You see, it’s at the cross where Jesus *forgave us. Amen? That is what the grace was. He loved us so much that He forgave us. So grace is really the act of forgiving and loving.* That’s what grace is. So we are saved because Jesus forgave us and He loved us. That’s what grace is.

A special outpouring, then, of forgiveness and love is supposed to come upon the church. Did you catch that? That’s what the outpouring is. It’s a special spirit that comes into me, that comes into you, that moves us to forgive one another and to forget about all the junk and all the stuff—you know what so-and-so did to me last year? You don’t understand, I’m not praying with that brother—not until he apologizes. And until then I will pray for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit *myself*, but not with *him*.

We begin to see why God cannot yet pour out His Spirit. In order for us to have this Spirit, we don’t just *get* the Spirit; we’ve got to *learn* the Spirit from Jesus Christ because Christ is our example.

Now, listen to this ... the same way in which Christ forgave is the same way in which you and I must learn to forgive. Now here’s where the challenge begins. How did Christ forgive? Oh Lord, help me. I love you.

Isaiah 53:3: “He was despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows...” Now, why was Christ a man of sorrows? Was He walking around depressed all the time? Was he walking around saying, “Oh, woe is me. I’m just such a man of sorrows”? No. Why was He a man of sorrows? He was worried about *us*. Whew! He was not sorry for Himself; He was sorry for *us*. He was so sorry for us that He is described as a *man of sorrows*. Can you imagine if *you* were described as a man of sorrows? See, I don’t know if you caught that. You know, many of us are not worried about each other. I have enough of a time worrying about *myself*. I don’t have time to worry about *you*. But the Bible says that Jesus was a man of sorrows. Now, if we are to be like Jesus, should we not have the same amount of sorrow that Jesus had? Should we not have the same amount of passion, emotion, care, of whatever words you want to use that Jesus had for the lost and the dying? Listen, He was a *man of sorrows* “and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him...” In other words, we’re saying, “What’s the matter with Him? Why is He acting like that?—Not realizing that He was acting like that over *us*. Now listen to verses 4 and 5: “Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our

iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; ...” How did Jesus forgive us? He took our sin upon Himself. Jesus was so identified with us that even though the sin wasn’t His, He *acted* like it was His. I hope you are meditating right now. The sins were *not* His but He took them as His own. He loved us so much that He acted as though—when *we* sinned, it was *He* who sinned. So now when we find Him up on the cross—in fact, before we even go there, you might remember a gentleman by the name of Moses. You might remember that there was an incident in Israel when Israel was rebelling against God. The people built a golden calf and then Moses, after the punishments had been administered, said to the remaining people, “Listen, I’m going to go up to the Mount of God and make an atonement for you.” Remember that? Moses went up the mount and began to pray to God and said, “Father, don’t blot out Israel. Don’t destroy them. I know what they have done, but listen, I just got an idea. Why don’t You act like it was *my* sin and blot *me* out.” *Amazing* grace, that Moses’ love for Israel was so strong—that his love for his rebellious, hard headed people who didn’t want to listen to him was so strong, that he said, “Let me take their sin upon me. Let’s act like *I’m* the one that did it.”

Now, can you imagine that kind of grace in this church? Imagine when someone does something wrong against you that you say, “Okay. This is serious. This sin can get this person lost. Father, *I’ll* take the loss. If they’re going to be destroyed, don’t let it be on my account. I don’t have a problem. I know that he just cursed me out, but let’s pretend it didn’t happen. *I’ll* take the loss. Because, if he’s going to go to the fire, I don’t want—” You know, some of us say, “God, make sure he gets his extra fifteen minutes. Don’t forget.” See, that’s what most of us would do. Make sure he gets his extra time. But no, *amazing* grace says, “Listen, *I’ll* take the loss.” The reason why Jesus could pray on the cross, “Father, forgive them,” is because *He* had taken their sins upon himself. You see, forgiveness is the *willingness* to take the sin of the person who wronged you [upon yourself]—to take his sin and take the loss. That’s what forgiveness is. We don’t know what forgiveness is. We have not known what forgiveness is. That’s amazing. The person that wronged you—to be willing to take *that* person’s sin! Now listen, God didn’t say, “All right Moses, I’m going to blot you out.” He didn’t do that. That’s not how God works. Do you understand what I’m saying? But Moses, in his *willingness* to pray that prayer revealed the spirit and character of Christ. Listen, Moses was not bluffing. *Amazing* grace.

That’s why Jesus said, “If you do not forgive others as I have forgiven you, you will not be forgiven.” Could it be that God is calling us to a deeper level of grace? I think we have cheap grace right now. Cheap grace is, “I’ll forgive you if you are worth it.” You know what I mean

by that, right? Bow down, say you are sorry 490 times, and then I will forgive you. That’s *cheap* grace. That’s not *amazing* grace. That’s what we have. Instead, beloved, I believe we are at the place where we often—how many of you like justice? We like justice, right? And nobody wants to be wrong. So you know what we do in our Christian piety. We demand justice. [We say,] ‘*that* is wrong. *You* are wrong, and until you repent and apologize, I’m going to make you pay.’ How do I make you pay? By simply not talking to you ... I’m going to leave the church—that’s how I’m going to make you guys pay ... I’m going to leave the church. I’ll show you. We demand justice. Let me tell you something. Do you know that when you demand justice, you are setting yourself up for destruction? When you demand justice, God has to be fair all the way across and give *you* justice. Some of us say, “I will not ... until that person—no, justice! That person must pay. And when you hold to that principle, God has to hold *you* to the same standard. When He holds you to the same standard, believe me, beloved, you will not pass through the gates of heaven based upon *your* right and wrong. You will not be able to say, “Look at my record, God. Go ahead, judge me by justice.” No matter what you’ve done, you will say, “Mercy, Lord, please,” because you will know that your record is a record of filthy rags no matter how much good you’ve done. Even the best of them—Enoch—did not enter into heaven because of justice. Even though he was perfect, he entered heaven because of mercy. So, if we extend mercy, we get mercy. God is the only one that can demand justice without it being a suicidal statement because God is just. It’s not a two-edged sword against Him.

Look with me at Luke 6:37: “Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: ...” In other words, don’t demand justice ... “Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, ...” Now that condemnation might be a just condemnation, isn’t that right? There’s a difference between right and wrong. When someone does something wrong, we don’t excuse it. It is wrong. Yet God says, don’t condemn or else you *also* will be judged by the same standard. But then He says, “forgive, and ye shall be forgiven.”

Just image that person sinning against you and you going to God in prayer as though it were *your own* sin, confessing on behalf of the one who has wronged you. That’s what Jesus did. He spoke as the representative of mankind saying, “Father, forgive them.” He took their sin away so that when God looked at them, He would see a pure human race if they were willing, that is, to accept the forgiveness of Christ. So if I want to see my brother saved, I will say, “Lord, I don’t want you to see that one. I’ll take them off, because, you know what? Sin demands a loss.” You realize that. When someone does something against you, sin is saying, “You’re going to take the loss.” When someone takes a family member, when someone is

killed, when someone robs you, you suffer a loss and in return you say, "I demand justice. That person must pay." You know, governments are set up to do their work. God has set up government. A person must suffer the loss for his sins—that's the principle of things. But Jesus said, "I want *you*, the one wronged, to say in your heart, "Father, don't hold this sin against him." That's what grace is. That's what *amazing* grace is. Sin demands that the person suffers the loss. Forgiveness says *I'll* take the loss and still love them.

I want you to notice with me, Matthew 5:43-48: "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: ... For if you love them which love you, what reward have ye?" That's cheap grace. "Do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? Do not even the publicans so? But be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." Do you want to know what perfection is? Perfection is the willingness to take another's fault upon yourself though you are innocent. So God said, be innocent. I want you to—son, you can be the child of your Father in heaven—I want you to do like *He* did. I want you to do like Jesus did. Forgive even when they don't ask for it. Love even when they don't ask for it. Be willing to take the loss. And many of us are demanding justice. How many of you are not talking to somebody because you are waiting for justice to be done? Don't raise your hands. See, we don't understand grace. Our message is weak because while we have the truth, while we have the Three Angels' Messages, I don't like you and you don't like me. Do you understand what I'm saying? So how could our message really have any effect in the world, though it is true, if we don't even love one another? Greater love hath no man than this that he lay down his life for his friends. Who are his friends? He loves us so much that while we were His enemies, He said, "Oh, those are My friends."

When Stephen prayed, "Father, lay not this sin to their account," as they were stoning him, he was manifesting the grace of God. When someone steps on our shoe, we say, "Father, I'm glad there's a judgment. I am glad that there are books in heaven that will record that this brother just stepped on my shoes that I just bought. Make sure he pays, Father." Stephen said, "Lay not this sin to their account." That is *amazing* grace.

When Paul said, "love your neighbor as yourself," he was saying to take [your neighbor's] sin as though it were your own and pray as though you were the one that committed that sin. Pray for him in *that* way.

Galatians 6:1-2. Notice [this] very quickly with me.

This is powerful, beloved. Listen to this. Galatians 6:1-2: "Brethren, If a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." What is the fulfillment of the law of Christ? Love your neighbor as yourself. When he says to bear one another's burden, what does that mean? Put it all together. Greater love hath no man than he lay his life down for his friends. If you love your neighbor as much as you love yourself, you fulfill the law. You bear one another's burdens. Do you know what bear one another's burdens means? The word *burden* is actually the word *weight*. The book of Hebrews tells us to lay aside the weight that does so easily beset us. It means to bear our brother's sins. Now, beloved, listen. We don't become sin-bearers. That's not what I'm saying. What I *am* saying is that when I take the responsibility for my brother's salvation so much so that it becomes personally identified with me, I am now living the life of Christ. The sins were not His, but He treated them like they were. That is *amazing* grace.

The Bible tells us that we should rejoice when we experience the sufferings of Christ. Did you know that? Why did Christ suffer? Oh, I thought suffering was, "I can't pay my bills. I'm suffering." "Look at this, Lord. I'm suffering. Great. Isn't that wonderful?" No, beloved. Christ suffered, not on His *own* account, but He suffered because of *our* sin. So when we are told to be partakers of the sufferings of Christ, what He's trying to tell us is that [He] wants [us] to have the same spirit of Christ so that when our brother sins, we won't rejoice, but rather, suffer as though we are the one that did it. *Amazing* grace.

There is an exhilarating feeling, beloved, when you begin to pray for your enemies in that way. As amazing as that is, that's not really the amazing part of *amazing* grace. Are you ready for the amazing part about *amazing* grace? I don't know if you're ready.

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

How did Jesus love us? What was the evidence of His love? What was the demonstration of His love? The cross. Jesus died for us. Amen? And *we* ought to be willing to do what? Die for one another. Is that a challenge? It is, isn't it? How many of you will be willing to take a bullet for somebody? Whew, look at that. Now, I am going to honestly ask a question and you go ahead and raise your hand—remember, we're in church, so if you're not willing, don't raise your hand. If you can think of at least one person you'd be willing to take a bullet for, raise your hand. Two people? Five people? Ten people? A hundred people? Wow. Are there more than 100 people in here? Do you realize that we are to look at our neighbors, at

least every one in this room, and say, "Brother, I don't know you, but I would be willing to take a bullet for you."? *Amazing grace.*

We're just not there yet. Do you understand what I'm saying? God's people must get to the place where they experience and are willing to do exactly what Jesus did. The reason the Spirit of God cannot be poured out so that our message goes forth with power is because we are not even *willing* to die for one another. And that's not the amazing part.

That was just the set up. Here's the amazing part. Jesus was not demonstrating His love for us by dying on the cross. He was demonstrating His love for us by showing that He was *willing* to suffer the second death. "Three times has He uttered that prayer. Three times has humanity shrunk from the last, crowning sacrifice. But now the history of the human race comes up before the world's Redeemer. He sees that the transgressors of the law, if left to themselves, must perish. He sees the helplessness of man. He sees the power of sin. The woes and lamentations of a doomed world rise before Him. He beholds its impending fate, and His decision is made. He will save man at any cost to Himself." (*Desire of Ages*, page 690:3). What did that *any cost* include? The second death. I don't know if you understand. *Desire of Ages*, page 753 says, "Satan with his fierce temptations wrung the heart of Jesus. The Savior could not see through the portals of the tomb. Hope did not present to Him His coming forth from the grave a conqueror, or tell Him of the Father's acceptance of the sacrifice. He feared that sin was so offensive to God that Their separation was to be eternal." And He still went ahead with it. ***That is amazing grace.*** Jesus was willing to suffer the second death—eternal separation above that—not only for humanity, but also for His enemies. Not only was He *willing* to do it, but He was willing to do it with no certainty that His enemies would respond.

Love one another as I have loved you." I do not know if, at this point, you will say, "I'm not going there with you, pastor." I totally understand. If you are not willing to die the first death, you may think, how dare you put upon me the proposition that we must be willing to be blotted out of existence altogether for that brother who took the life of my child? Is this amazing?

Jesus calls us to love one another as He has loved us. This is what grace is. This is that manifestation that is to grip the church so that we love each other so much that we would be willing to forsake heaven itself so someone else might be saved. Ouch. Do you know what that begins to do in the heart of a person—when you begin to look at an individual and say, "Brother, I am willing, if need be, to suffer the second death so that you will have a place in heaven?" Now, do you think God would honor a prayer like that? Seriously, do you think He'd say, "Okay,

you asked to be lost. I know you are doing well, but I'm going to have you lost today"? Do you think He's going to do that? No. God is not going to do that. What happens, beloved, is just as when Moses prayed, "Blot me out." Do you know what Moses prayed for? Second death. You don't get it. Moses not only said, "*kill me.*" He said, "Blot me out." The reference was to the book. I am willing to suffer the second death so that Israel, my brothers and sisters, will be saved. God did not honor the prayer. He said, "No, no, no. Whosoever sins—I will destroy him." But nonetheless, Moses was exhibiting the very characteristics of Jesus Christ. And now we are told that we must love one another just like that. Do you realize that [for] many of us, the goal of our hope is heaven? That is wrong. You didn't hear me. My hope, the goal, is to go to heaven. Beloved, Ellen White tells us *Jesus did not count heaven a place to be.* You didn't catch that. He didn't count heaven a place to be while we were lost. Jesus' goal was not heaven, otherwise when the second death faced Him, He would have said, "You mean I run the possibility of losing the thing I'm working for? No. Sorry, humanity. I'm going on back to heaven." Jesus was *willing to give up heaven itself* for the salvation of one person. Our goal, beloved, is not [to be] heaven so much as it is to be like Jesus, even if we are never to get heaven. I know it's quiet [there]. But do you realize that heaven will be populated with people who were *willing* to give it up to fulfill the mission of Jesus?

You know the phrase, "the first shall be last?" It's backwards. It's reversed. Let me tell you something. When you begin to look at every individual in this church and say, "Father, give me the grace that I would be willing to be blotted out for the salvation of this person," how do you begin to treat that person? You see, all of a sudden you have invested yourself in that person. And now you know that whatever you invest yourself in becomes of greater value to you than if it was somebody else's [investment]. See, that's why we are always talking about the worth of a soul. Who can know the worth? Jesus died for that brother. Yes, Jesus died for him, but I'm not going to forgive him, you say. When you look at a brother and consciously say, "I'm willing to suffer the second death for you," you realize it is impossible to hate him.

How many of you hate somebody? Don't raise your hands. The Bible says, "let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." Jesus was willing to suffer the second death. *We* must be willing to suffer the second death for the sake of the gospel. So now you begin to see those faces come out.

Can I tell you of an experience? I have a family member who was abused by a group of men. She was twelve years old last year. For the longest while I had been thanking the Lord for the judgment. I had been thanking the Lord that there is a place prepared for the wicked

to go to. I don't know these men because it happened in another country, but when the Lord began to speak [of] this to me, beloved, I began to pray and say, "Lord, make me willing to die for the stranger, not just the first death, but the second death, that they might be saved. Let me realize that my goal is not heaven—*my goal is to be like Jesus.*" And beloved, the Lord began to bring these faces into my mind as I was praying. And you know what began to happen? I am not one who cries easily, but I started crying because I saw these faces that I had so much hate for—not knowing who they were—and the Lord began to give me that likeness of Him to say, "Yes, Lord, I would be willing to die the second death for this person." Let me tell you, only then can you truly understand the love of Jesus. Only then does it become your own when you are willing to invest your eternity in another soul. Only then can you rightly understand the estimation of a soul and now suddenly everybody you look at becomes like gold because of your personal willingness to be like Jesus.

What is our problem? Fear of death. Remember our opening verse? Hebrews 2:14-15: "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." How did Jesus destroy him? Through death. Jesus was willing to die not just the first, but the second death also. Why are you afraid of death? Because you don't understand the perfect love of Jesus. Because perfect love casts out fear. So now, while I am no longer fearful of the second death, I can say, "Yeah, I'm willing to die," because that was Jesus' attitude. So if I am not fearful of the second death, I'm sure not going to be afraid to knock on somebody's door to tell them about Jesus. I'm sure not going to be afraid to preach the gospel, to go and tell people about the love of Jesus. Why? Because I'm already willing to suffer the second death. So, what if you punch me? What's a punch compared to the second death? You see, when God's people live by this, what I call the second death principle, where they are saying, just like Jesus, "I'm willing to go to the second death to see you saved," all of a sudden we are no longer under the bondage of fear. Now we are free to go forth in the power of the Three Angels' Messages with nothing to stop us because we are a people who would be willing to die for each other and to die for those who will be trying to persecute us out there in the world, not just the first death, but also the second death.

I never thought that God would ask, *Are you willing?* Are you willing to die, to forsake heaven just like Jesus was willing? We put that off on Him. Jesus was willing to die the second death for us. Isn't that great? I wonder why we can't love one another like Jesus loved us? This was the cup that Jesus drank, and the Spirit of Prophecy

tells us that God's last day people will be presented with that same cup. Satan will approach God over these last day Jobs. "Do they fear you for nought? They only serve you because of the expected reward of heaven, and the desire to escape from hell!" To silence this accusation, that God's people are reward of heaven or fear of hell motivated, God will remove His presence as he did with Jesus at the cross. For a time they will feel that separation, and then Satan will tempt them, "You are lost, you may as well receive the mark." Speaking of this time, Ellen White writes, "Soon after they had commenced their earnest cry, the angels, in sympathy, desired to go to their deliverance. But a tall, commanding angel suffered them not. He said: 'The will of God is not yet fulfilled. They must drink of the cup. They must be baptized with the baptism.'" *Christian Experiences and Teachings of Ellen White*, p. 178. Baptism is a type of death. The people of God will look the second death in the face and will say like Job, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: but I will maintain mine own ways before him." Job 13:15. This will prove that their highest motivation was love for Christ.

I want to make a simple appeal this morning. You see, when *amazing* grace becomes a reality in this church, it is then that the message will go forth with power. Can you imagine a church full of people willing to give up their place in heaven for the person sitting next to them or for someone they just met? Can you imagine a love that strong? Song of Solomon said love is as strong as death. And now we understand that Jesus' love was as strong as the second death. See, beloved, there's a level of hurt, a level of death, a level of second death. And our love often stops at the level of hurt. If you hurt me, that's it. Love is over. You have proven yourself unworthy of my love. Some of us will go to the level of death for one or two people. My son, my daughter, my husband, my wife, my mother, my father, but that's it. Well, I'll be willing to die for *them*, so if *they* hurt me, that's fine. I'm willing to die for *them*. Jesus said your love cannot be on the first level or the second level. It must be on the third level. And when your love gets to that third level, if someone hurts you, you say, "Hmm, that was just hurt. Do you think I'm angry at you?" See beloved, Jesus couldn't hate those for whom he was willing to die the second death. That's why He prayed, "Father, forgive them." That's why He called them His friends, because things were different through His eyes. Don't you want to see people like He did and still does? When you are willing to die, there is nothing anyone can do to you that will destroy your love for him or her—even if you don't agree on doctrinal issues, you will still love him or her. Oh, that is a dream for the church! I may believe you are wrong, but I still love you. I may be wrong, but you still love me. Beloved, it is when we love one another that the world knows we are His disciples.

I want to make an appeal. Do you want to stand today?

Do you want to come down and say, "I don't have that love Lord. Have mercy. I *need* that love, Father. I don't know how that love can be possible but that's what I need. I need to be willing to see my place vacant in heaven ... I'm still going to worship God. Though he slay me, yet will I trust Him. Even if I never get to the kingdom of heaven, I'm going to love Him and serve Him with everything so that heaven is not my reward. *Jesus is.*" Say, "Father, I need that love." Would you come down? If it gets too packed and you want to stand, this is not a general appeal to stand. If you say [in your heart], I don't want to give up my place for *anything* or *anyone*, then, this appeal is not for you. I'm talking to those of you who want to say, "Lord, give me that kind of love we have learned about today." Can you imagine if God's whole church had this love? Yes, I know it won't be possible. There will be wheat and there will be tares, but beloved, when we have *this* love for one another, we will not do the things we are now doing. If a person entices us to sin, we will look at that person and say, "Man, I'm willing to die the second death for you. I'm not going to get you in trouble by indulging in that thing you're tempting me to do." Every soul will become precious in our sight. *Oh to be willing to die the second death for my enemy.* Then I have loved as Jesus loves.

Do you all see why I tremble at giving this message? How dare I walk into a church of Christians and ask them to be willing to give up heaven? What in the world? And yet, in so doing, the Bible says, He who seeks his life will lose it. And he who loses his life for my sake will find it.

Heavenly Father, the foolishness of the gospel! I don't

understand, Lord, how my life has changed so much this past week since you gave me this revelation. It is unexplainable. Father, I didn't know we could change so quickly, so rapidly; that we could see people in such a different light so quickly. Father, I know there is so much for us to learn and so much for *me* to learn, but Lord I pray that you would give us the same love that you have. Oh, Lord, this is the kind of love that will turn this church and this world upside down and make the devil as angry as he can be. Father, right now I want to pray that You would put into each of our mind's eye the face of our worst enemy and then, Father, I want to pray that you would empower us to say with all earnestness and truth that we would be willing to suffer the second death [for another] so that person might have a chance to experience eternal life. Grant us amazing grace is our prayer in Jesus' name, Amen.

Ivor Myers is Speaker/Director of Power of the Lamb Ministries and pastor of the Templeton Hills Seventh-day Adventist church in Templeton, California. Ivor was introduced to the Seventh-day Adventist message while recording the first of an eight album Hip-Hop contract with EMI Records. He gave it all up knowing that he could not serve two masters. Ivor and his wife, Atonte, host the 3ABN program Battles of Faith, and spear-headed Operation Global Rain, a prayer movement that seeks to unite the people of God in praying for the spirit of repentance and the outpouring of the latter rain. He has also authored the books, The Christian Art of War, and Escape From the Black Hole. Contact information: www.powerofthelamb.com

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The Meaning Of the Cross

How the Boy Jesus Discovered the Cross

THE TRUTH OF THE CROSS IS beautifully illustrated in the experience of Jesus when He came to earth. Although He was fully man, “in all points tempted like as we are,” yet His heart was without sin, and therefore pure. It thus remained—wonder of wonders!—the reservoir of love (*agape*). In that respect He differed from all other human beings who have been born into the world. He alone knew no sin, no *surrender* to egoism in any form, although the temptation to self-indulgence was as real for Him as for us.

Yet we cannot suppose that any conscious memory of His pre-existence remained with Him in His earthly childhood. As a babe in His mother’s arms in the stable at Bethlehem, He had no conscious intelligence beyond that of other human babies at birth. He could not acknowledge the adoration of the shepherds or the wise men from the East. As a child in Nazareth, did He entertain Joseph and Mary with tales of the glories of heaven which He knew in His pre-existence there? Like a fortunate child who has been to the “big city,” did He tell his playmates in the rustic mountain village of His exploits as the Commander of the heavenly angels?

No; as a child, Jesus learned wisdom as we must learn. “The Child grew” and “increased in wisdom and stature.” Luke 2:40, 52. The wonder of Christ is the wonder of His birth, God in human flesh, subject to the laws of

mental and physical growth as we are all subject to them, yet “without sin.” Certainly He was not born with any miraculous memory of His divine pre-existence. All these divine advantages He laid aside.

The Importance of The Age of Twelve

By the time a child reaches that age, very deep thoughts can course through his/her mind. Patterns of choice are being formed that determine the whole of afterlife.

Jesus was twelve when He first visited the national festival of His people known as the Passover. For the first time He looked upon the famed temple and watched the white-robed priests lay a bleeding sacrificial victim upon the altar. Alert and reverently inquisitive, His young mind sought the meaning of the strange symbolism of this offering of an innocent lamb. No one could tell Him what it meant, not even the priests themselves. The latter mouthed phrases and performed rituals the meaning of which they could not grasp. For four thousand years God’s servants had offered the blood of beasts as an atonement for sin. To the Youth’s inquiring “Why?” no one could give an answer, nor could anyone explain the mystery of blood sacrifice. Is it possible, wondered Jesus, for the “blood of bulls and goats” to take away sin?

A Prayer Offered in Heaven Is Offered Again on Earth

Even as a child, Jesus must walk alone. He turned away from the idle chatter and frivolous play of His companions. Not even His earthly parents could help Him. Silent and alone, He pondered the sight of shed blood that had impressed Him so deeply. Paul tells us what happened in His mind as He came to realize that the blood of goats, calves, or lambs, could never atone for human sin. Not only in heaven before He came, but also as a youth on His knees, He gained an insight and formed the same heart commitment He had made in heaven:

“For this reason, when Christ was about to come into the world, He said to God: ‘You do not want sacrifices and offerings, but You have prepared a body for Me. You are not pleased with animals burned whole on the altar or with sacrifices to take away sins. Then I said, “Here I am, to *do Your* will, O God.’” Hebrews 10:5-7, TEV.

It was as if He prayed: Father, You have no need of all these rivers of beasts’ blood! You have no delight in them because they cannot avail to wash away sin from even one human heart. But you have made Me what I am—I have a body that I can give! I have blood that I can shed. Here I am, Father—let *Me* be the Lamb of God! I will die for the sins of the world. *My* blood will be the atonement! I will be that “suffering servant” of Isaiah on whom the Lord has laid the iniquity of all. Let *Me* be wounded for man’s

transgressions, bruised for his iniquities, that with *My* stripes he may be healed. Lo, *I* come—to do Your will, O God!

Paul adds that Jesus took away the Old Testament typical offerings, and established instead the antitypical offering of Himself:

“So God does away with all the old sacrifices and puts the sacrifice of Christ in their place. Because Jesus Christ did what God wanted Him to do, we are all purified from sin by the offering that He made of His own body once and for all.” Hebrews 10:9, 10, TEV.

A Boy’s Love (Agape) Becomes Profound

No memory of His pre-existence could interpret for Jesus the solemn meaning of that mysterious Pass-over service. He could not recall the fateful agreement with the eternal Father before the world was, when “the counsel of peace” was “between Them both” (Zechariah 6:13), and the Son gave Himself to be the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. His own pure mind, undefiled with sin, gradually discerned the import of what He saw.

It dawned upon Him that these lambs and sacrifices “cannot make him who performed the service perfect in regard to the conscience” (Hebrews 9:9), and that “the law having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approached perfect.” Hebrews 10:1.

This is all a *type*, He reasoned. Someone innocent, sinless, holy, and undefiled, must die as a Lamb of God if lost human hearts will ever be reached! The whole vain round of types and shadows must be dramatically brought to an end in the offering up of some divine sacrifice.

This was a conclusion that the wise men and priests of Israel in the course of millenniums had not discerned. But now, seeing for the first time what others had witnessed countless times “not discerning the Lord’s body,” this Boy of twelve

understands. Through His youthful soul there surges the unresisted power of a mighty resolve. These poor souls, looking vainly to human efforts for salvation, must not be left mercilessly to what will prove at last only hopeless despair. *He will sacrifice Himself.* The Boy of twelve “saw it, and it displeased Him that there was no justice. He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor; therefore His own arm brought salvation for Him; and His own righteousness, it sustained Him.” Isaiah 59:15, 16. “Christ ... through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God.” Hebrews 9:14.

Behold the amazing work of love! He tabernacles in human flesh, a Boy of tender years, with the mysterious past all unknown to Him except by faith in the Written Word. He makes the same decision which as Commander of the heavenly hosts He made in the councils of heaven. *He chooses to go to the cross.*

The Only Way Our “Life” Can Be Saved

When the love of God (*agape*) is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit given to us, we choose the way of the cross as readily as the Son of God chose it in the heavenly council ages ago, and again as a Boy of twelve in the Jerusalem temple. In each instance, whether in the heart of the Son of God or in the heart of a believing sinner, the results lead to resurrection—which is as much a part of the principle as is the cross. There is Good News: “He who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal.” John 12:25.

There are two crosses: the cross of Christ, and the cross for you and me on which we die with Christ as did the penitent thief.

There was a third cross at Calvary, but there was no redemption for the impenitent thief who died on it. He was caught in a suffering and death to which he never surrendered. Rebellious, he cursed his fate and God unto the bitter end, *and perished.*

Shall we rebel against the principle of the cross and follow him to



eternal darkness?

Bearing our cross is made easy through seeing that other cross on which our divine Example died. “My yoke is easy,” the crucified One tells us. Through understanding His cross, we can discern our own and find strength to bear it gladly.

*When I survey the wondrous cross
On which the Prince of glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.
Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a tribute far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my life, my soul, my all.*

—Isaac Watts



—*In Search of the Cross*, pp. 37-41.

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FORGIVENESS—

Cleansing the Books or Healing the Heart?

SEVERAL YEARS AGO, BECAUSE FORGIVENESS WAS becoming such a relevant, popular topic and an area of sociological research, Christianity Today chose this topic for its featured, cover article. Often we think of the topic of forgiveness merely in religious contexts, but increasingly forgiveness has become a vital topic in the political, social, and secular world.

Look at the many areas of the world where genocide and ethnic cleansing have taken place. Observe how, formerly, the solution was revenge and retribution, whereas now, many cultures and governments are looking for non-violent solutions.

For example, in South Africa, after apartheid ended, rather than merely locking up or executing the perpetrators, the government decided to implement “Truth and Reconciliation” commissions. In these forums, the organizers and perpetrators of apartheid were allowed to publicly confess their crimes. In return, their victims and the victims’ families/friends were allowed to publicly express the pain and suffering they had experienced. At this point the wrong doer was publicly forgiven.

This was all done to avoid further bloodshed and revenge that all observed was an endless cycle which ultimately destroys *both* parties involved.

We see the lack of this approach and understanding at the root of continuing challenges in Iraq, the broader Middle East, the former Yugoslavia, and various places in Africa such as Rwanda and the Sudan. The list seems endless.

Over and over in the Bible, God’s forgiveness toward us is given as a model or template for our forgiveness of others.

Be gentle with one another, sensitive. Forgive one another as quickly and thoroughly as God in Christ forgave you. Eph.4:32. (The Message)

Notice how Paul equates the quality and attitude of forgiveness that we are to have with others, with the quality and attitude of forgiveness that God has *already*

revealed toward us in Jesus Christ. At times, we feel in our hearts that Jesus is the more forgiving member of the Godhead, while the Father is the more withdrawn—the less likely or less willing member of the Godhead when it comes to forgiveness. But in this verse Paul clearly states that God is *just as forgiving* as Jesus, and that God is actually the *initiator* of forgiveness as manifested in what He accomplished through His Son Jesus. Jesus told us in Jn.14 that if we’ve seen Him, we’ve seen God the Father. They’re the same when it comes to forgiveness as well as everything else.

Put up with each other, and forgive anyone who does you wrong, just as Christ has forgiven you. Col.3:13. (NLT & NIRV)

The key to which empowers us to forgive others is a heart-felt appreciation for how much God has forgiven us. As we begin to appreciate that forgiveness we receive, we are enabled to extend forgiveness and benevolence toward those who have wronged *us*.

Over and over again Scripture tells us that our responses to God are reactions to His initiative and overtures toward us. *We* don’t start the process, *or* finish it.

This is real love. It is not that we loved God, but that he loved us (first) and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins. 1 Jn.4:10. (NLT)

Our love is responsive. *God’s* love reveals Him as the initiator and is proactive.

Freely you have received, freely give. Matt.10:8. (NIV)

As we receive, we are empowered to give. God gave before we ever gave. He is always ahead of us in giving, loving, and forgiving.

Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. 1 Jn.4:11. (KJV)

Here, the beloved apostle John tells us that the power we may have to love or forgive others is relevant to our understanding and appreciation of God's own love and forgiveness toward *us* before we ever loved Him or asked Him to forgive us.

It is so vital to remember that God's forgiveness is not a *change* in God's attitude or thoughts or feelings toward us. The verses we just read reiterate how it is the initiative of love and forgiveness and pursuit on God's part toward us, which results in our response of love, repentance, and confession toward Him.

Forgiveness does not begin in the heart of God when we confess and repent. Forgiveness *already exists* in God's heart *before* we ever make any movement in His direction. When we acknowledge our failures through confession and a genuine desire for change, it is then that we can appreciate and sense the love and forgiveness from God toward us *that was always there long before we*

God wants to actually *take the sin away*.

We must remember that when we say God is "taking sin away", it means God wants to change our minds and hearts. Sin resides in our minds, in our brains. Sin lives in our thought patterns and emotional make-up. It is not some abstract object that God can just take away in some magical sense, but it is a psychological entity for which God wants to give us spiritual therapy.

That's why one of the best modern paraphrases for the Biblical term "high priest" is "Divine Psychiatrist". We have all been "messed up" to one degree or another by sin, and that "messing up" starts in our mental/emotional psyche.

... the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint.
Is.1:5. (NKJV)

Isaiah is telling us that sin has caused us to be, in a

... when we are unable to forgive others, there is as much,

were ever aware of it.

Forgiveness is not merely a bookkeeping activity that God undertakes in heaven when we confess. So often we portray, pictorially, the idea that with forgiveness we say we're sorry, and then God takes a giant heavenly eraser and removes the record of our sin from the heavenly recording system.

God's goal for you and me is not clean books in heaven, but clean *hearts* here on earth. Forgiveness is not so much about changing things in heaven, but changing things *here*. The change is not first in God's heart, or His personal "books", but in *our* hearts and minds, which he then can justly record in His public book of record for all to see.

This is why to see forgiveness as God beginning a process of healing, is so much closer to reality than any picture of leather-bound heavenly books and erasers. Jesus shed His blood, not to make God willing to forgive us or enable Him to forgive us, *but to make us willing and able to receive* the forgiveness and the healing that the cross revealed was *always* in God's heart, and thus justify God's fairness in exercising His forgiveness and cleansing power.

If we confess our sins to God, he can always be trusted to forgive us and take our sins away. 1Jn.1:9. (CEV)

Notice that John doesn't want us to have any concern or fear whatsoever about the forgiveness in God's heart for us. We can be 100% sure that God will relate to us with forgiveness and mercy even when we don't deserve it. John goes on to say that above and beyond God's loving and forgiving attitude toward us, God wants to actually *heal* us from the sin itself and from its consequences.

sense, sick in the head and sick in the heart. We have been intellectually and emotionally damaged by sin. By what we've done to ourselves, what others have done to us, and the guilt from what we've done. All of this has led to psychological and emotional damage.

God wants to give us rest and healing and restoration from all this damage. Listen to what Jesus offers us as treatment for the damage that Satan has done to us through sin:

Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly. Matt.11:28-30. (The Message)

If that doesn't sound attractive then I don't know what does. It's almost as if God is offering us an extended trip to a beautiful spa—except it's a spa for the soul and mind.

Another way to think about forgiveness as healing instead of bookkeeping is to suppose you're an alcoholic. While it would be good news that you are forgiven, wouldn't you also want to know that you are *freed* from the alcoholism? If you're struggling with some other sin like lust or laziness, is it really good news to have someone tell you that you're forgiven, but you'll still be weak and struggle with lust and laziness? There would be no freedom or victory in your future from those things. That would be terrible news.

We have a God who is not only the epitome of forgiveness, but also follows along with healing and restoration.

Let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily hinders our progress. And let us run with endurance the race that God has set before us. Heb.12:1. (NLT)

One thing important to remember about forgiveness is that when we are unable to forgive others, there is as much, or more, damage to us as there is to the offender. Even when we have been wronged—to harbor enmity, revenge, animosity, and hatred for another, sadly, works like a cancer or infection within us, often doing more damage than the original wrong that we may have suffered. That is why it is so important to have the right understanding of God’s forgiveness. It is only then that we are enabled to change into His likeness—by beholding the forgiveness *He* had for us, long before we ever deserved it. Look at God’s attitude toward us before we responded to Him, in Rom. 5:6-10:

donated all of the child’s organs for transplantation into Israeli patients in need. The article also pointed out that in the recent past, Israeli families have donated organs of their fallen family members to Palestinian patients who needed transplants as well. I wish stories similar to this were in America’s headlines and on the Arab television stations. I believe if we more frequently saw forgiveness in action similar to these stories, we would change the way we treat each other.

The Palestinian and Israeli families stated that they had based their decisions on the hope that the organ donations would be a gesture and symbol of good will between their two peoples. And this, in turn would lead to peace, order, and friendship among them. *What an awesome goal!*

One of the places that we so often have trouble forgiving seventy times seven times is in our families. Many marriages spend much of their time in frustra-

or more, damage to us as there is to the offender.

Christ died for us at a time when we were helpless and sinful. And God showed how much he loved us by having Christ die for us, even though we were sinful. Even when we were God’s enemies, he made peace with us, because his Son died for us. Yet something even greater than friendship is ours. Now that we are at peace with God, we will be saved by his Son’s life. (CEV)

Notice how it says that when *we were relating to God as our enemy*, when we were *helpless and sinful—that is when God took the initiative*, and as the Divine Physician, made a “house call” to our planet to save and heal and restore us.

So if *God* took the initiative with us, when we were relating to Him as our enemy, shouldn’t that lead *us* to take the initiative with others, even when they are relating to us with enmity and hostility? Forgiveness is truly a high calling, but one in which God Himself has led the way. He will accompany us onward, hand in hand, as we relate to others in the way He has related to us.

David learned this same principle. In Psalm 73, David tells us that resentment lead to foolishness in his own experience:

When my thoughts were bitter and my feelings were hurt, I was as stupid as an animal. Ps. 73:21-22. (NCV paraphrase)

It’s true. Bitterness and cherished hurt feelings often lead us to act like animals. Just look at the Middle East and you can see the results of bitterness and anger. I was encouraged recently when I read the story about a Palestinian family whose twelve-year-old son was accidentally killed in a military skirmish. The parents

tion, resentment and anger because of an inability or refusal to forgive. When a problem needs to be discussed, each party usually looks to the other to take the initiative. Husbands ought to take the initiative in making their marriages successful. If there is a problem, let us, as “head of the household”, take the initiative in establishing and maintaining harmony in our homes by forgiving first, even if we think we’re in the right—even if *we are right!*

Husbands, be considerate as you live with your wives, treat them with respect, and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers. 1Pet.3:7 (NIV)

The apostle Peter encourages us as husbands to be “considerate, respectful, and gracious.” Notice, Peter links how we treat our wives with the effectiveness of our prayers. If we are not happy with the results of our prayer life, perhaps we should consider treating our wives more considerately, more respectfully, and more graciously.

It’s just as important to understand what forgiveness is *not*. Please do not think that your love and forgiveness toward another makes you their doormat, or leads you to “co-dependency” with them. These things that forgiveness is NOT apply to *us* as well as to God.

Forgiveness is *not* FORGETTING. Deep hurts are not removed from one’s awareness or memory banks just by relating and treating the offender with love and forgiveness. The pain and heartache are still there and must be dealt with over time.

Forgiveness is *not* CONDONING. Forgiveness does not excuse bad and hurtful behavior nor should it encourage

them to continue. Just as with a child who has wronged us, we assure them of our forgiveness, yet encourage and expect them to make better decisions in the future.

Forgiveness is *not* DISMISSING. Forgiveness involves taking the offense seriously and not passing it off as inconsequential or insignificant.

Forgiveness is *not* PARDONING. Pardon releases the offender from the consequences of their actions. Unfortunately, many times, the consequences of one's actions are already set in motion and cannot be easily turned back. I know we've all wished we could catch some of the words after they've left our mouths. While we're forgiven for what we've said, those words and actions still have their natural effects and results.

Remember, forgiveness is a personal action that releases the one offended from the offense. Don't deny the feelings of hurt, anger, or shame that you may feel when you've been wronged. Acknowledge these feelings and commit, with the grace of God, to do something about them. Notice how honest and open David was with his feelings in the Psalms. God already knows how we really feel in our hearts, and He still loves us. So, for your own benefit, tell God how you actually feel, not how you *think* He wants you to feel. He won't love you any less.

Remember the paradox of forgiveness. As you let go and forgive the offender, you are experiencing release, healing and restoration—whether the offender accepts, appreciates or is aware of your forgiveness.

Finally, remember that God loves you whether you are the victim or the offender. He has extended His forgiveness to you in order that full mental and emotional healing will be yours. Absolutely nothing will ever change His love for you. 🕊

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THE GIFT OF GOD'S GRACE

THE PURPOSE OF THIS ARTICLE is to share some thoughts concerning the grace of God. Under consideration is its promise from eternity, why it is needed, why it is not needed by certain ones, but strange as it may seem, Christ needed it while on earth. We will also take note that the world was restored to favor with God by His marvelous grace, and that there is an atmosphere of grace surrounding mankind as real as the oxygen we inhale moment by moment.

Grace Given to Us in Christ Before Time Began

God in His great mercy promised grace to us and gave it to us in Christ before the beginning of time. "God, who has saved us and called us with a holy calling ... according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began" (1 Tim 1:9). This would have been included in the everlasting covenant between the Father and the Son in Their determinate counsel when Christ was "foreordained before the foundation of the world" for the purpose of redeeming us with His blood (1 Pet 1:18-20; Acts 2:23; 4:28).

Grace is Not Needed For Sinless Beings

There is no evidence that unfallen angels nor pre-fall Adam and Eve needed grace. Grace was a hidden attribute of God's nature until sin entered the human race. Then it was revealed. The grace given in Christ in eternity was sent to take man by the

hand as soon as he sinned. If this had not happened mankind would have eternally perished.

By disobeying the commands of God, man fell under the condemnation of his law. This fall called for the grace of God to appear in behalf of sinners. We should never have learned the meaning of this word "grace" had we not fallen. God loves the sinless angels, who do his service, and are obedient to all his commands; but he does not give them grace. These heavenly beings know naught of grace; they have never needed it; for they have never sinned. Grace is an attribute of God shown to undeserving human beings.¹

Grace Needed For Post-Fall Mankind

Grace is the unmerited favor of God toward all men and is displayed in His care for them. This care includes restraint. No man is as evil as he is capable of because of God's grace. The Holy Spirit, apart from renewing the heart, exercises an influence on man so that sin is restrained and order is maintained in social life, and in the promotion of civil righteousness. It is through God's grace that He sends sunshine and rain, gives food and drink, shelter and clothing. God imparts these to all men indiscriminately.

God gives sunshine and rainfall to the atheistic farmer enabling him to harvest his crop just as He does for the Christian farmer (Matt. 5:45). Paul revealed to unbelievers at Lystra

that God had given them "rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness" (Acts 14:17). In Psalm 145:8-9 the psalmist states: "The Lord is gracious and merciful; slow to anger and great in lovingkindness. The Lord is good to all, and His mercies are over all His works."

God's mercy and grace are exhibited especially in the withholding of judgment. There is evidence of grace in the fact that God does not immediately condemn man. This fact enables man to be led to repentance by "God's goodness" which is exercised toward every individual (Rom 2:4).

It is because of God's grace that sin is restrained. It is seen in relationships between people. An example of this is observed with Laban who cheated Jacob. God restrained Laban from hurting him (Gen. 31:7). God does this with Satan, also, as is seen in the limitation God placed on Satan when He allowed him specific access to Job, beyond which would not be permitted (Job 1:12; 2:6). In Genesis 6:3 we read of God's grace when He said, "My Spirit shall not strive with man forever." Here is an inference that God's Spirit does restrain man's sinful behavior within the limits God sets. The Holy Spirit working through Isaiah and other prophets restrained sin (Isa 1:16-20). And human government must not be overlooked. In Romans 13:1-4 Paul wrote that governments are ordained and established by God as a restraint to evil men who cannot control themselves.

There is more to grace than restraint. And further, it is much more abundant than merely in the physical

and temporal realms. Because He is gracious, God has done something spiritually for all mankind. 1 Tim. 4:10 refers to Christ as “the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe.” While this verse does not teach universalism, it does reveal God’s universal spiritual blessing for everyone. Since Christ is the God-Man, it follows that His death had infinite value which surrounds mankind with God’s favor just as surely as earth’s atmosphere encircles this planet. Christ is truly the Savior of all men. God’s grace extends to every human inasmuch as the death of Christ was for every person (Heb. 2:9).

The World Was Restored To God’s Favor

2 Cor. 5:19 states that “God was in Christ ... not imputing their trespasses to them” but instead He was “reconciling and restoring the world to favor with Himself.”² The following statement agrees with this thought:

[Christ] took in his grasp the world over which Satan claimed to preside, and restored the human race to favor with God. And at this glorious completion of his work, songs of triumph echoed and re-echoed through the unfallen worlds. Angel and archangel, cherubim and seraphim, joined in the chorus of victory. All who choose to breathe this life-giving atmosphere will live and grow up to the stature of men and women in Christ Jesus.³

Grace Convicts of Sin

God’s grace is seen also in convicting man of sin. While it is not effective in everyone, the convicting work of the Holy Spirit is revealed in John 16:8–11. He “will convict the world concerning sin, and righteousness, and judgment” (v.8). The word “convict” is a legal term that means “to cross-examine for the purpose of convincing or refuting an opponent (the word being specially used of legal proceedings).”⁴

This decisive judgment and punitive authority is based on indisput-

able truth set before those who are judged in such a way that they see and acknowledge it is God’s mercy and justice. Those who reject truth seeing it through the eye of conscience do so at their own peril.

Grace is necessary because of sin. Wherever sin abounds, in that very place God’s grace does much more abound (Rom. 5:20). In Eph. 2:1 Paul states the condition of that person who is in an unsaved and, thus, a lost condition: “And you were dead in your trespasses and sins.”⁵ Since the unbeliever is dead, he cannot make the initial step toward, nor respond to, God. God must and does make the first move. He initiates. Always. Hence, God through His grace calls to life the ones who are dead in trespasses and sin.

Christ’s Need of Grace

John wrote that in the incarnation Jesus was “full of grace” (John 1:14). This means of the inside, in His inmost heart and soul and character He was filled with grace. Luke adds that “the grace of God was upon Him” (Luke 2:40) as well as the filling of grace of which John wrote. Luke also penned these words concerning Christ in His youth: “Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor (grace) with God and men” (Luke 2:52). It was grace that kept Him from sinning. It was grace that enabled Jesus to teach. It was by grace that He led people into His own saving grace (Isa. 50:4–9). In Isa. 49:8–9 we read of God’s promise to “preserve” Jesus, His Servant for Salvation. Similar language is found in Isa. 42:6–7 where it is written that God would “keep” Him.

The following is comfort par excellence for those who are consecrated to God and who realize that Jesus sought and received “fresh supplies of needed grace”:

To the consecrated worker there is wonderful consolation in the knowledge that even Christ during His life on earth sought His Father daily for fresh supplies of needed grace; and from this communion with God He went forth

to strengthen and bless others. Behold the Son of God bowed in prayer to His Father! Though He is the Son of God, He strengthens His faith by prayer, and by communion with heaven gathers to Himself power to resist evil and to minister to the needs of men. As the Elder Brother of our race He knows the necessities of those who, compassed with infirmity and living in a world of sin and temptation, still desire to serve Him. He knows that the messengers whom He sees fit to send are weak, erring men; but to all who give themselves wholly to His service He promises divine aid. His own example is an assurance that earnest, persevering supplication to God in faith—faith that leads to entire dependence upon God, and unreserved consecration to His work—will avail to bring to men the Holy Spirit’s aid in the battle against sin.⁶

Again, “His soul and His lips were anointed with grace.”⁷

The fact that super-abounding grace was given to Jesus, as our Redeemer, is assurance to us that God will continue to surround us with His grace. More than this. He will impart His grace to us enabling us to resist and to overcome sin. And He will give us the very words to speak to those who are weary and heavy laden with the burden of sin.

Grace Especially for the Believer

All who respond to God’s grace become believers. That grace then becomes a power in the life of those who accept Christ as Savior. This power causes spiritual growth. Grace changes the heart and makes a person willing to yield obedience to the will of God. “All who choose to breathe this life-giving atmosphere [of grace] will live and grow up to the stature of men and women in Christ Jesus.”⁸

In Summary and Conclusion

The following brief summary about God's grace, as covered in this article, is to help give a preliminary understanding concerning it:

- Grace is not given to sinless beings. They do not need it.
- Grace is needed because of sin.
- Christ needed grace to keep Himself from sinning and for blessing mankind.
- Although grace is given to everyone to surround, to bless and to protect them, it is placed within the believer only. The result of this placement is observed in 1 Cor. 1:24-30.
- God's grace cooperates with man's will. God never forces His will upon anyone.
- Grace involves the drawing power of God (John 6:44). No one could or would come to God unless he is first drawn and enabled to do so by the grace of God.
- The work of the Holy Spirit is involved with grace. Before a person responds to God's work of grace, the Holy Spirit must first convict him or her of the sin of unbelief and, positively, of

Christ's righteousness. The Holy Spirit is the One who, by grace, makes effective personal faith justification within the believer (Titus 3:5-7).

- Grace must also involve the word of God. Faith comes by hearing the gospel of grace (Rom. 10:17). Faith must have content and knowledge of truth to be believed. Grace in the life is not given apart from biblical truth. God's word of truth is living and full of His power. God's word is applied to the heart of the believer by the Holy Spirit (Heb. 4:12).
- The application of imparted grace is to individual believers, not to groups, nor to the church as a whole. Only the ones who hear, listen and respond to God's invitation will come and receive grace (Rev. 22:16).
- Grace enables the believer to endure hardship. Its power is always sufficient (2 Cor. 12:9).
- Grace! grace! marvelous grace! The gift from eternity. While the application of grace takes place in time, its plan was divinely calculated in that eternal counsel of the Godhead, in the everlasting covenant, and determined there to overcome every obstacle.

Final Thought

The growth of every Christian is from within, not from without. It is only as the Spirit of Christ dwells in the heart by faith that we can grow in grace and the knowledge of Christ. Only through the grace daily drawn from Jesus can the heart be kept. There can be no safety in extolling self; we must hide self in Jesus. Christ abiding within, is the life of the soul. And we are to receive Christ through his word. It is the truth that sanctifies the soul. We should study the Scriptures, even upon our knees, with earnestness and sincerity. The love of Jesus in the heart will create a love for the searching of his word.⁹ ✨

¹ *Review and Herald*, September 15, 1896.

² *The Amplified Bible*.

³ *Youth Instructor*, April 16, 1903.

⁴ Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), p. 697.

⁵ The word "were" in the original language is a present participle (a better translation would be "being") that stresses their state of existence. They are in a state of being dead in sin.

⁶ *Acts of the Apostles*, p. 56.

⁷ *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 139).

⁸ *Youth Instructor*, April 16, 1903.

⁹ *Review and Herald*, February 16, 1892.

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