



"Watchman, what of the night?"

The watchman said, The morning cometh, and also the night: if ye will enquire, enquire ye: return, come. Isaiah 21:11-12

THE DIVINE PROVISION (Part Three)

Besides truth, God has extended grace to every man. While the grace of God is unmerited favor on His part, we have too often interpreted this grace to be an indulgence which God has granted because of the sin problem. In so thinking we have limited the magnitude of the grace of God through Jesus Christ our Lord. The grace which forms a part of the glory of God which Christ revealed in the flesh produces an "active" soldier in the conflict with the enemy of righteousness. We read:

It is the grace that Christ implants in the soul which creates in man enmity against Satan. Without this converting grace and renewing power, man would continue the captive of Satan, a servant ever ready to do his bidding. But the new principle in the soul creates conflict where hitherto had been peace. The power which Christ imparts, enables man to resist the tyrant and usurper. Whoever is seen to abhor sin instead of loving it, whoever resists and conquers those passions that have held sway within, displays the operation of a principle wholly from above.¹

This "divine energy" - "wholly from above" - which Christ brought with Him is the keeping power by which we can walk in truth and righteousness. Note -

Men need to learn that the blessings of obedience, in their fulness, can be theirs only as they receive the grace of Christ. It is His grace that gives men power to obey the laws of God. It is this that enables him to break the bondage of evil habit. This is the only power that can make him and keep him steadfast in the right path.²

The extension of this grace to the sons of men, was God's direct intervention into the sin problem. Unless this grace should be extended - and received - man would have no barrier against the suggestions of the enemy. God did not create man with this energy, and He did not bestow it until after man sinned. Enmity - the product of grace - "had no natural existence" in the hearts of our first parents. But when God promised - "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed, and her seed" - He pledged Himself "to introduce into the hearts of human beings a new principle, - a hatred of sin, of deception, of pretense, of everything that bears the marks of Satan's guile."³

This enmity - produced by imparted grace - is a part of the very nature of God which Christ brought with Him into human flesh. This we need to understand if we are to overcome as He overcame. Concerning Jesus, we read:

The enmity put between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman was supernatural. With Christ the enmity was in one sense natural; in another sense supernatural, as humanity and divinity were combined. And never was the enmity developed to such a marked degree as when Christ became an inhabitant of this earth. Never before had there been a being upon the earth who hated sin with so perfect a hatred as did Christ. He had seen its deceiving, infatuating power upon holy angels, and all His powers were enlisted against it.⁴

This statement is worth careful analysis. The grace of God being a principle wholly from above produces that which is supernatural - above our nature. In Christ, it was "natural" because He was God, and when He became flesh - the basic glory of the Father was still His - the fulness of grace and truth. But in another sense it was supernatural. The Father bestowed upon His Son the Holy Spirit without measure.⁵ This brings us therefore, to the second part of which Christ has provided - not only the "divine energies" of grace and truth but also "that strength which is impossible for [the fallen sons and daughters of Adam] to gain for themselves."⁶ This "strength" is the Holy Spirit.

Jesus promised His disciples - after Judas left - "I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you forever; even the Spirit of truth."⁷ This Spirit of truth ministers to us the things of Christ,⁸ - those life-giving energies which men need and must receive. One dares not to overlook the fact that the Spirit of Truth is closely associated with the work of presenting, and maintaining truth which is declared to be "stronger and more powerful than anything else in the formation of a character after the likeness of Christ."⁹ The relationship between Jesus - the way, the truth, and the life - and the Holy Spirit - as the Spirit of truth - in the implementation of the truth in the life of the believer needs to be carefully studied.

Concerning the work of the Holy Spirit, we are told:

The Comforter is called "the Spirit of truth". His work is to define and maintain the truth. He first dwells in the heart as the Spirit of truth, and thus He becomes the Comforter. There is comfort and peace in the truth, but no real peace or comfort can be found in falsehood. It is through false theories and traditions that Satan gains his power over the mind. By directing men to false standards, he misshapes the character. Through the Scriptures the Holy Spirit speaks to the mind, and impresses truth upon the heart. Thus He exposes error, and expels it from the soul. It is by the Spirit of truth, working through the Word of God, that Christ subdues His chosen people to Himself.¹⁰

In the same book, we also read:

Christ rejoiced that He could do more for His followers than they could ask or think. He spoke with assurance, knowing that an almighty decree had been given before the world was made. He knew that truth, armed with the omnipotence of the Holy Spirit, would conquer in the contest with evil; and that the blood-stained banner would wave triumphantly over His followers.¹¹

Consider - "an almighty decree had been given" - that by the sacrifice and intercession of Jesus Christ, truth armed with the omnipotence of the Holy Spirit would conquer in the contest with evil. What then are we doing when we compromise the truth committed to our trust for the sake of human unity? Is this not doing despite unto the Spirit of grace?¹² Why is it that we cannot get our priorities straight, and let Truth have first place over every earthly consideration? Is it because we have come to see things so nearly as the world see things that we cannot receive the Spirit of Truth - for the world "seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him".¹³

We must not forget that "by the power of the Holy Spirit the moral image of God is to be perfected in the character. We are to be wholly transformed into the likeness of Christ."¹⁴ The very attributes of God are developed in man by the Holy Spirit.¹⁵ This will be done in all who do not interpose a perverse will.¹⁶ Because of this crucial action which involves the human response, we shall begin noting in the next thought paper - "The Exercise of the Will."

¹Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 506

²Ellen G. White, The Ministry of Healing, p. 115

³Ellen G. White, Special Testimonies, Series B, No. 2, p. 6

⁴Ellen G. White, Selected Messages, bk i, p. 254

⁵John 3:34

⁶White, op. cit., p. 279 See "The Divine Provision (Part One)"

⁷John 14:16-17

⁸John 16:14-15

⁹Ellen G. White, In Heavenly Places, p. 140.

¹⁰Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages, p. 671

¹¹Ibid., p. 679

¹²Hebrews 10:29

¹³John 14:17

¹⁴Ellen G. White, Testimonies to Ministers, p. 506

¹⁵Ellen G. White, Christ's Object Lessons, p. 414

¹⁶Ellen G. White, Thoughts from the Mount of Blessings, p. 116 (76)

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THE THIRD ANGEL'S MESSAGE

In the midst of the on-going controversy resulting from the proclamation of Righteousness by Faith at the 1888 General Conference Session, the servant of the Lord revealed that she had been questioned regarding the Third Angel's Message. She wrote:

Several have written to me, inquiring if the message of justification by faith is the third angel's message, and I have answered, "It is the third angel's message in verity." (Review & Herald, April 1, 1890)

John the Revelator records the third angel's message as follows:

And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any

man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God which is poured out without mixture into the cup of His indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb. (Rev. 14: 9-10)

On the surface these two statements of what constitutes the third angel's message appear contradictory. But what constitutes the worship of the "beast"? Interestingly, the identification of the "beast" is prefaced with - "Here is wisdom." Then follows - "Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man." (Rev. 13:18) The worship of the beast is the worship of a man. True, the specifications of prophecy are met in a specific religious organization - the Papacy. But the principle is ever present. Whenever and wherever, I place man, and the dictates of man in the place that God alone should occupy in my heart and soul - I am worshiping the beast - a man. The very first commandment is clear and concise - "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me." (Ex. 20:3)

Now what is justification by faith? It is the recognition by an individual of his total and absolute inability to make an atonement for himself, and thus a recognition of his total and complete dependence upon God's provision in Jesus Christ. To preach, therefore, justification by faith in truth leads to a full realization of victory over the beast - man - and his image - all that man seeks to build into a religious system that would dominate the conscience of his fellow man.

A full message of righteousness by faith cannot be proclaimed when the message is limited to one of these facets of the third angel's message to the exclusion of the other. To proclaim the history of 1888 and its aftermath without opening before the people the fact that their continued dependence on men - yes, even their religious leaders, makes the presentation only a theory. We have been told:

Now it [is] Satan's determined purpose to eclipse the view of Jesus, and lead men to look to man, and to trust to man, and be educated to expect help from man. For years the church has been looking to man, and expecting much from man, but not looking to Jesus, in whom our hopes of eternal life are centered. Therefore God gave to His servants [Jones & Waggoner] a testimony that presented truth as it is in Jesus, which is the third angel's message, in clear, distinct lines. (Testimonies to Ministers, p. 93)

To put it very plain - we have not yet been able to come face to face with the fact that continued dependence on human machinery - human organization - is keeping us from that true preparation that must be made if we are going to be numbered among the victorious remnant in the final phase of the great controversy. We are still doing what the church was doing in 1894, for we read:

Spiritual things have not been discerned. Appearance and machinery have been exalted as of power, while virtues of true goodness, noble piety, and heart-holiness, have been made a secondary consideration. That which should have been made first has been made last and of least importance. (R & H, Feb. 27, 1894)

If in 1894, "appearance and machinery" were in evidence, how much more so in 1977. Just pick-up and read any union paper for the North American Division. We need to have our eyes annointed so that we can see that the appearance of prosperity within the borders of the church serves only as a facade covering an ecclesiastical philosophy which requires allegiance and loyalty to human leadership akin to papalism. Such a program leaves the church destitute of the grace of God. We read:

Those who have not a daily experience in the things of God will not move wisely. They may have a legal religion, a form of godliness, there may be an appearance of light in the church; all the machinery - much of it human invention - may appear to be working well, and yet the church may be as destitute of the grace of God as were the hills of Gilboa of dew and rain. (R & H, Jan. 31, 1893)

God does not plan that anarchy be substituted for organization, but He designs that a certain specific form of government be instituted. We read:

Christ designs that heaven's order, heaven's plans of government, heaven's divine harmony, shall be represented in His church on earth. Thus in His people He is glorified. Through them the Sun of Righteousness will shine in undimmed luster to the world. (DA, p. 680)

In other words, the very opposite of human organization and machinery is to be realized by His people on earth. The order, plans of government, and the harmony of heaven are to be a part of the experience of the saints in preparation for their translation. This can come only when we experience justification by faith, for in that experience everyone finds the highest place to which he can attain - the foot of the Cross - and there he sees in each so bowed, his brother. There will be no orders of clergy, no hierarchy, no first minister - but a simple recognition of the fact that all are brethren. There will be only One head - even Jesus Christ, and only One earthly captain - even the Holy Spirit of God. (See DA, p. 352)

And herein lies our problem - yes the basic problem that we face even in 1977. In a duly sworn affidavit, the president of the General Conference declares:

I am Robert H. Pierson, an ordained minister of the gospel, and president of the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventists, which is the Seventh-day Adventist Church. (US Dist. Court, Northern Dist. of CA. #CIV. No. 74-2025 CBR, Exhibit #51, p. 1)

In the same affidavit, he proclaims himself as the church's "first minister for the time being." (p. 5)

In a brief filed on behalf of the Church's hierarchy, it is proclaimed:

It is true that for a period in it history, the Seventh-day Adventist Church had an aversion to Roman Catholicism and especially to the papal form of church government - an aversion shared by virtually all Protestant denominations. While, however, Adventist doctrine continues to teach that church government by one man is contrary to the Word of God, it is not good Seventh-day Adventism to express. . .an aversion

to Roman Catholicism as such. (Ibid., Exhibit #84, p. 30)

And why is it no longer "good Seventh-day Adventism to express. . . an aversion to Roman Catholicism as such"? Because the past teaching of the Church in regard to Roman Catholicism "has now been consigned to the historical trash heap so far as the Seventh-day Adventist Church is concerned." (Ibid., p. 4, lines 28-29) With this attitude and belief it is really impossible to teach justification by faith for we have now denied outright the third angel's message, in doctrine as well as in practice.

Catholicism teaches the adoration of Mary as the mother of God, and places her as the hope of their salvation. (de Ligouri, The Glories of Mary, 2nd Ed., p. 8) Is there really any difference in basic reality from this teaching, and the teaching that the Church - the human organization - is our mother, and urging the members of the Church to place their hope in that organization as the basis of their salvation? To say that the Church - as defined in Pierson's legal affidavit - is going through, and that to be saved one must stay with it, is saying nothing less than the Catholic Church says about Mary and their definition of the Church.

Need I go further - but sometimes we are so blinded in our Laodicean state, we cannot see that the mere proclaiming of the theory of righteousness by faith, and leaving the members still sitting in the pews clinging to them as if when the Lord comes, He plans to take the pew and install it in the amphitheater of heaven, is to give to the hungry souls a false and deceptive hope. We need to proclaim the third angel's message - yes, every part of it:- the sole dependence upon the Saviour Jesus Christ, and placing Him as the Lord of our lives instead of a man.

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"VISIONS OF GOD"

The vision given to Ezekiel as recorded in his book - chapters eight through eleven, presents a continuous unfolding of the purposes of God in regard to Jerusalem, and the reason for these actions on the part of God. It is significant that the servant of the Lord tells us that this symbolism involving the ancient city of Jerusalem meets another fulfillment today in regard to the Church. (3T:267) And her words are - "Mark this point with care."

The focus of the Spirit of Prophecy is on chapter nine, which is the heart of this vision - called by the prophet, "Visions of God." (Eze. 8:3) We do well to consider some of the vital terminology used in commenting on this vision. Sister White refers to this vision as descriptive of "the last work" involving "the closing work for the church." (3T:266) Then in another reference, after quoting from this vision, she comments - "Jesus is about to leave the mercy-seat of the heavenly sanctuary." (5T:207-208) To those, therefore, who believe that we have reached that time, just prior to the close of probation, an understanding of the "Visions of God" is a must.

To meet this need, the Foundation has prepared a Study Guide of these chapters to be used with the Cassette Tape A-08, Side #2. The study is entitled, "Visions of God." (Some who have ordered this tape in the past may have received a Study Guide, others may not have. If you did not, write and we will send you one.) Side #1 of this tape is a sermon - "Out of Egypt Have I Called my Son" - based on material researched by A. T. Jones, and parallels in thought and objective the message of God through Ezekiel.

COMMENTS ON EZEKIEL'S WRITINGS

"The angel with the writer's ink horn is to place a mark upon the foreheads of all who are separated from sin and sinners, and the destroying angel follows this angel." Letter 12, 1886

"A rebellion exists. Lucifer revolted from his allegiance and makes war on the divine government. Christ is appointed to put down the rebellion. He makes this world His battlefield. He stands at the head of human family. He clothes His divinity with humanity and He passes over the ground where Adam fell and endures all the assaults of Satan's temptations, but He does not yield in a single instance.

"The salvation of a world is at stake. He resisted the archdeceiver. In behalf of man He must conquer as a man, and in the very same manner man must conquer by 'It is written.'" Letter 156, 1897

"By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned: . . . thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries by the multitude of thine iniquities, by the iniquities of thy traffick.' [Eze. 28: 16, 18] In this place 'traffick' is the emblem of corrupt administration. It denotes the bringing of self-seeking into spiritual offices." Ibid.

"When we see God dishonored, we ought not to remain quiet, but we should do and say all that we can to lead others to see that the God of heaven is not to be thought of as a common man, but as the Infinite One, the One worthy of man's highest reverence. Let us present God's Word in its purity, and lift up the voice in warning against everything that would dishonor our heavenly Father." (Ms. 165, 1902)

Monthly Convocation - August 6, 1977 - Sabbath School, 9:30 a.m. - Lesson Study will be on "The Sabbath." Worship at 11:00 a.m. - Sermon Title - "Divine Solicitude" (Daniel 4) The afternoon study will concern - Daniel 8 & 9, Part One. All are welcome.

A Need - a full time Gardener for the campus. If interested please send your resume, and questions to Adventist Laymen's Foundation, P. O. Box 178, Lamar, Ark., 72846.

"WATCHMAN, WHAT OF THE NIGHT?"

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