

# RIGHTEOUSNESS BY FAITH AND THE CLEANSING OF THE SANCTUARY

ROOTS OF SIN CAN NEVER BE CLEANSED FROM  
HUMAN HEARTS UNTIL SPRINGS OF MOTIVATION ARE  
PURIFIED

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Principle of self-centered motivation is Satan's unique invention. Isa. 14:12-14. (The highest form of self-seeking motivation is desire for reward in heaven, or immortality. All non-Christian religions built upon this foundation).

Christ came to demonstrate a new motivation—*agape*-love, which is completely self-emptying, “even the death of the cross.” The same mind is to be in us. Phil. 2:5-8.

Genuine New Testament faith is a heart-appreciation of this heavenly, unworldly motivation of *agape*-love. Eph. 3:14-19; In. 3:16. Paul goes on to explain that failure to appreciate this new kind of motivation leaves us immature “children.” Eph. 4:11-14.

A true Bride is no longer a child, nor does she marry for money or for any self-seeking motivation. Marries because she appreciates her husband, responds genuinely to his love. Paul sees the Church as Bride of Christ. Eph. 5:22-32. (Compare Rev. 19:5-9. Babylon is “the great whore” whose spiritual motivation is purely self-centered, and knows no appreciation of *agape*-love. Doctrine of natural immortality makes true motivation impossible).

Genuine righteousness by faith in time of cleansing of sanctuary is a “truth in love [*agape*]” that makes it possible for people to “grow up into . . . Christ” as a true Bride relates to her husband (“head”). Eph. 4:13-16; 5:22, 23; 2:4-9; 3:8-12.

A concern for honor and glory of Christ, rather than for their own personal security, motivates God's people in the “hour of God's judgment” or vindication. To “fear” Him is to reverence or appreciate His true character of love. Rev. 14:6, 7.

Moses and Paul are examples of individuals who grew up to appreciate true *agape*-love, the self-emptying motivation. Ex. 32:31, 32; Rom. 9:1-3.

When a people or church grow up to appreciate the same motivation of concern for God's “glory,” the “harvest” will be “ripe” and Christ will come immediately. Mk. 4:26-29; Rev. 14:14, 15.

Laodicea does not realize that her basic spiritual motivation is self centered, childish, poverty stricken, shameful. Rev. 3:14-17.

In His being sent “in the likeness of sinful flesh” Christ was tempted to surrender to same self-centered motivation, yet He “overcame.” Laodicea too will “overcome” in 5:30; 6:38; Heb. 4:15; Rev. 3:21.

## WHY THIS SUBJECT IS SO IMPORTANT

The cleansing of the sanctuary in relation to justification by faith can hardly be overemphasized. We must have a clear understanding of this truth in order to endure unto the end:

“The subject of the sanctuary and investigative judgment should be clearly understood by the people of God. All need a knowledge for

themselves of the position and work of their great High Priest. Otherwise it will be impossible for them to exercise the faith which is essential at this time or to occupy the position which God designs them to fill. . . .

“The sanctuary in heaven is the very center of Christ’s work in behalf of men [justification by faith]. . . . It opens to view the plan of redemption, bringing us down to the very close of time and revealing the triumphant issue of the contest between righteousness and sin.” *The Great Controversy*, p. 488.

Further, this great sanctuary truth in relation to justification by faith is the foundation of the Seventh-day Adventist message:

“The correct understanding of the ministration in the heavenly sanctuary is the foundation of our faith.” *Evangelism*, p. 221.

“God’s people are now to have their eyes fixed on the heavenly sanctuary, where the final ministration of our great High Priest in the work of the judgment is going forward,—where He is interceding for His people.” *Ibid.*, p. 223.

“In the future, deception of every kind is to arise, and we want solid ground for our feet. . . . The enemy will bring in false theories, such as the doctrine that there is no sanctuary. This is one of the points on which there will be a departing from the faith. . . .

“Satan is striving continually to bring in fanciful suppositions in regard to the sanctuary, degrading the wonderful representations of God and the ministry of Christ for our salvation into something

that suits the carnal mind. He removes its presiding power from the hearts of believers and supplies its place with fantastic theories invented to make void the truths of the atonement, and destroy our confidence in the doctrines which we have held sacred since the third angel’s message was first given. Thus he would rob us of our faith in the very message that has made us a separate people, and has given character and power to our work.” *Ibid.*, pp. 224, 225, emphasis added.

Ellen White recognized that the 1888 message of Christ’s righteousness restored the “presiding power” of the sanctuary message to the “hearts of the believers.” She saw that the joining of the Adventist truth of the cleansing of the sanctuary with a more complete view of justification by faith was like the confluence of two rivers that had flowed separately but now joined to produce a tide that could bear the ship safely to port. She saw in the 1888 message the glorious means of divine grace provided to make a people ready for the coming of the Lord. She recognized that “union with Christ” meant union with Him in His closing work of atonement. She saw the clear distinction from His work in the first apartment, where the “door” was now “shut.” (See *Early Writings*, pp. 55, 56, 260, 261). In her enthusiastic support of the 1888 message she said:

“We are in the day of atonement, and we are to work in harmony with Christ’s work of cleansing the sanctuary from the sins of the people. Let no man who desires to be found with the wedding garment on, resist our Lord in His office work. As He is, so

will His followers be in this world. We must now set before the people the work which by faith we see our great High Priest accomplishing in the heavenly sanctuary." *Review and Herald*, January 21, 1890.

"Christ is in the heavenly sanctuary, and He is there to make an atonement for His people. . . . He is cleansing the sanctuary from the sins of the people. What is our work?—It is our work to be in harmony with the work of Christ. By faith we are to work with Him, to be in union with Him. . . . A people is to be prepared for the great day of God." *Ibid.*, January 28, 1890.

"Christ is cleansing the temple in heaven from the sins of the people, and we must work in harmony with Him upon the earth, cleansing the soul temple from its moral defilement." *Ibid.*, February 11, 1890.

"The people have not entered into the holy place [most holy], where Jesus has gone to make an atonement for His children. We need the Holy Spirit in order to understand the truths for this time; but there is spiritual drought in the churches." *Ibid.*, February 25, 1890.

"Light is flashing from the throne of God, and what is this for?—It is that a people may be prepared to stand in the day of God." *Ibid.*, March 4, 1890.

"If our brethren were all laborers together with God, they would not doubt but that the message He has sent to us during these last two years is from heaven. . . . Suppose that you blot out the testimony that has been going during these last two years proclaiming the righteousness of Christ, who can you point to as bringing out special light for the people?" *Ibid.*, March 18, 1890.

The 1888 message made the cleansing of the sanctuary to be a practical subject. This is how the two great rivers, the sanctuary truth and justification by faith, joined together. The message not only called for holy living; it also provided the means. The cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary is a work that includes the people and extends to them. It provides for the perfection of their character in Christ on the one hand; and on the other hand in the final destruction of sin and sinners and the cleansing of the universe from all taint of sin. This is the "finishing of the mystery of Gospel." It is Christ fully formed in each believer. The sanctuary itself cannot be cleansed so long as God's people continue to pour into it a constant stream of sinning. The stream will be stopped at its source in the hearts and lives of God's people. The ministry of Christ in the Most Holy Apartment does make "the comers thereunto perfect" and does perfect "forever them that are sanctified."

"For eighteen centuries this work of ministration continued in the first apartment of the [heavenly] sanctuary. The blood of Christ, pleaded in behalf of penitent sinners, secured their pardon and acceptance with the Father; yet their sins still remained upon the books of record. As in the typical service there was a work of atonement at the close of the year, so before Christ's work for the redemption of men is completed there is a work of atonement for the removal of sin from the sanctuary. . . .

"As the typical cleansing of the earthly was accomplished by the removal of the sins by which .

. . [the earthly sanctuary] had been polluted, so the actual cleansing of the heavenly is to be accomplished by the removal, or blotting out, of the sins which are there recorded." *The Great Controversy*, pp. 421, 422.

"Those who are living upon the earth when the intercession of Christ shall cease in the sanctuary above are to stand in the sight of a holy God without a mediator. Their robes must be spotless, their characters must be purified from sin by the blood of sprinkling. . . . While the sins of penitent believers are being removed from the sanctuary, there is to be a special work of purification, of putting away of sin, among God's people upon earth. This work is more clearly presented in the message of Revelation 14." *Ibid.*, p. 425.

True forgiveness that is not rejected by the forgiven sinner is continued by a further experience of repentance. Thus the High Priest is able to blot out the sins that have been forgiven. "Forgiveness has a broader meaning than many suppose. . . . God's forgiveness is not merely a judicial act by which He sets us free from condemnation. It is not only forgiveness for sin, but reclaiming from sin. It is the outflow of redeeming love that transforms the heart." *Mount of Blessing*, p. 114.

This does not mean the "eradication of the sinful nature." It is not the heresy of "perfectionism." "Perfectionism" is the false doctrine of the eradication of man's sinful nature at any time before the glorification at the coming of Christ. Christ "took upon His sinless nature our sinful nature" (*Medical Ministry*, p. 181), yet was "without sin." So those

who are sealed will still have a sinful nature, yet will "not retain one sinful propensity" (*SDA Bible Commentary*, Vol. 7, p. 943). "Perfectionism" is also the false doctrine that it is impossible for anyone, including Christ, to overcome sin so long as he has man's sinful nature.

There is a difference in principle between the forgiveness of sin in the daily service of the sanctuary and the blotting out of sin in the Day of Atonement. Rain is rain, whether it falls in the early or latter season. Both the forgiveness and the blotting out of sin are by the blood of Jesus spilled at Calvary.

But the typical service of the sanctuary clearly taught that forgiveness can be rejected by the forgiven sinner and the sin reactivated in the life. And sin may lie much deeper than we have known, so that temptations of greater intensity can cause us to fall. An example is the mark of the beast. There must therefore come at last a "sealing," from which there will never be a turning away. This is the same as the blotting out of sins, or a preparation for the coming of Jesus.

No child of God will ever claim such a sealing or blotting out. The closer he comes to Christ the more unworthy he will feel himself to be. But nonetheless, the great High Priest will accomplish the work He sets out to do for all who do not resist Him in His office work. W. W. Prescott understood this glorious work:

"There is a difference between the forgiveness of sins and the blotting out of sins. There is a difference between the gospel being preached for

the forgiveness of sins and the gospel being preached for the blotting out of sin. Always, and today, there is abundant provision for the forgiveness of sins. In our generation comes the provision for the blotting out of sin. And the blotting out of sin is what will prepare the way for the coming of the Lord; and the blotting out of sin is the ministry of our High Priest in the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary; and it makes a difference to the people of God today in their ministry, in their message, and in their experience, whether they recognize . . . or experience the fact of the change. . . . That should be distinctly brought out in the third angel's message; and with that, of course, will come the dearest revelation of the gospel ministry for this time, . . . thus preparing the way of the Lord." *General Conference Bulletin*, 1903, pp. 53, 54.

The popular churches have no understanding of these special truths: "I saw that as the Jews crucified Jesus, so the nominal churches had crucified these [three angels'] messages, and therefore they had no knowledge of the way into the most holy Apartment]. Like the Jews, who offered their useless sacrifices [after Christ was crucified], they offer up their useless prayers to the apartment which Jesus has left; and Satan, pleased with the deception, assumes a religious character, and leads the minds of these professed Christians to himself, working with his power, his signs and lying wonders, to fasten in his snare . . . He also comes as an angel of light and spreads his influence over the land by means of false reformations. The

churches are elated, end consider that God is working marvelously for them when it is a work of another spirit." *Early Writings*, p. 261.

Who is this "another spirit"? Obviously, a counterfeit "holy spirit" that will deceive multitudes. The mark of the beast will not be a crude, obvious deception. It will include counterfeit justification by faith. Preparation for the coming of Christ must include therefore learning to know Him so intimately that deception will be impossible. This suggests the intimacy of marriage and love that makes such relationship possible.

The blessed fruits of the cleansing of the sanctuary include freedom from the oppressive fear and slavery of devotion to self-centered motivation. This is what produces lukewarmness. This paralyzes the world church in her time of greatest opportunity. "It is not fear of punishment, or the hope of everlasting reward, that leads the disciples of Christ to follow Him. They behold the Saviour's matchless love, revealed throughout His pilgrimage on the earth, from the manger of Bethlehem to Calvary's cross, and the sight of Him attracts, it softens and subdues the soul. Love awakens in the heart of the beholders. They hear His voice and follow Him." *Desire of Ages*, p. 480.

Is there anything we can do to hasten the coming of the Lord? "When the fruit is brought forth, immediately He putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come." Mk. 4:29. "Christ is waiting with longing desire for the manifestation of Himself in His church. When the character of Christ shall be perfectly reproduced in His people, then He will

come to claim them as His own. It is the privilege of every Christian not only to look for but to hasten the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 69.

Never can God's people equal the Pattern. Christ's act of righteousness [which led] to acquittal and life for all men is beyond duplication for all eternity (see Rom. 5:18). But God's redeemed will learn to appreciate it. A community of ransomed sinners will stand by the side of Christ with the kind of appreciation and love that a Bride feels for her husband. This is the eschatological sense of "perfection." The sinner is made obedient and is reconciled fully.

A worthless scrap of broken mirror can be cleaned and polished to reflect the brightness of the sun. In fact, it can dazzle one's eyes. But it would be ridiculous to think of it as being equivalent to the sun! The Bride of Christ is said to be "bright as the sun," and thus "dazzling." (See Song of Solomon 6:10, Septuagint translation). But it is always only reflected light, its origin in Christ.

One hundred and forty-four thousand scraps of worthless broken mirror can be polished until each reflects a unique facet of Christ's beautiful character. They will be one precious gem in which "He shall see the fruit of the travail of His soul, and [shall] be satisfied" (Isaiah 53:11).

From Genesis to Revelation, the Bible constitutes one thrilling love story, with the tragic plot developing in the first three chapters, and the grand climax of resolution coming in the last four chapters. The victory was won in Christ's

incarnation, and all that His people have to do is to have faith in that tremendous accomplishment of their Lord.

True "Christian perfection" is the development of that faith to the place where the "child" grows up to become the Bride of Christ. "Some few of every generation" have overcome by conquering self and reflecting a facet of Christ's character (*Review and Herald*, March 3, 1874). Enoch and Elijah are examples. But those "few" never met the full force of temptation as God's people must meet it in the last days. In a special sense they will "drink of the cup" that Christ drank of and "be baptized with the baptism" He was baptized with (Matthew 20:20-23).

Has God withheld His grace so that no former generation should be "ready" for the marriage of the Lamb? No more than it could be said that something is "withheld" from a child that she should not be "ready" to be a bride. The ministry of the High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary is to accomplish for God's people what has never been accomplished through all the thousands of years of history. The High Priest "will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, that they present right offerings to the Lord" (Malachi 3:2, 3, RSV). These will be offerings free from self-centered concern which is the foundation of sin. A true Bride marries her husband because she loves him not because she wants his money.

This glorious work will be the final demonstration of genuine justification by faith. It will be a work full and complete, based entirely on the merits of Christ.

Nothing in the vast universe is so joyous to receive than God's forgiveness. King David let himself be lured into horrible sin—adultery-murder. For a year or more he was able to repress the painful guilt, stomp on it, and keep it covered up. And he bluffed and smiled his way through his royal appointments of state; but when the guilt finally caught up with him when he was alone, his devastation of soul was horrendous. Not even a new Lexus or speedboat could have made him happy.

When God's forgiveness came, he wrote: "Happy are those whose sins are forgiven, whose wrongs are pardoned. Happy is the man . . . who is free from all deceit. . . . I was worn out from crying all day long. Day and night You punished me, Lord; my strength was completely drained, as moisture is dried up by the summer heat" (Ps. 32:1-4, GNB).

Forgiveness is great, but there is another dimension involved: the blotting out of sins. It is simultaneous with God's giving (and the church's receiving) the latter rain, which prepares them for the final issues of earth's history: "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord" (Acts 3:19). When He forgives us He takes the sin away and dumps it in the depths of the ocean where no one can retrieve it—not even Himself. It's His objective act for us. But WE can dig it up again like Judas Iscariot did (he had been baptized and ordained and even had worked miracles). We can "crucify Christ afresh" (Heb. 6:6). The "blotting out of sins" is plural, subjective; it concerns the sanctuary itself.

It's the meaning of Daniel 8:14, "Then shall the sanctuary be cleansed." The forgiveness of our sins sets us free; the blotting out of sins sets God free. The accumulated burden of the sins of God's people is guilt He has taken upon Himself in the great controversy with Satan. It's for us a deep work of heart-cleansing that is done on the Day of Atonement. When sin is totally eradicated from the hearts of His people, the gospel is demonstrated to be at last effective, "the power of God unto salvation." Christ's sacrifice is fully rewarded. God is relieved of the burden He has carried all this long while.

The entire Book of Hebrews is concerned with this truth of "the blotting out of sins." Forgiveness has gone on for 6000 years. The sins confessed, forsaken, and repented of, have been sunk in the depths of the ocean deeper down than the Titanic. But you and I can do something that even God cannot do; we can retrieve them again, He has promised never to bring them up again. "Your sins and your iniquities will I remember no more," He promises, and what He cannot do is break His promise (Heb. 8:12).

But we humans are clever. "We" have devised a way whereby "we" can send sophisticated equipment down to the Titanic and "we" can recover artifacts that God intended should never come up again. If we choose to rebel against our Savior, we can bring back those sins that He has forgiven and forgotten. There must be a final end—that "blotting out" that Peter mentioned in Acts 3:19.

The Book of Hebrews explains something that our Savior is doing just now. It's never been done before—preparing a people for His personal, literal second coming. They are the special “we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord [when] . . . the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and . . . the dead in Christ shall rise first” (1 Thess. 4:14-17). Those “we which are alive and remain” will say “yes!” to Jesus when He performs that “blotting out of sins.” That seems to be when Hebrews 9:28 comes into focus: “Unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation.” The “without sin” means the sins have been blotted out, not merely pardoned. “The High Priest will do what He promised if we choose not to “resist Him in His office work.” That is the theme of the Book of Hebrews. As High Priest HE cleanses His sanctuary. We cooperate with Him. We LET Him do it. We stop fighting His Holy Spirit.

The New Covenant replacing the Old is a tectonic shift in the thinking of God's people. It's a deeper experience of justification by faith as cataclysmic as seeing Jesus as their High Priest was to the Jewish Christians of Paul's day (see Heb. 8:8-13).