

# THE ABOLITION OF DEATH<sup>1</sup>

By Paul Penno Jr.

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I heard this story about a little girl whose family were planning to move—lots of families are on the move. On an average, families don't stay in one place very long. Well, this little girl kept hearing Mommy and Daddy and all her older brothers and sisters saying, "We're going to move! We're packing up everything, all the furniture, all the toys, all the dishes, and we're moving to another city far away."

The little girl listened to all this and kept wondering every day. Finally one day she asked, "When you all move away, what's going to happen to me all alone?" No one had thought to tell her that when the family moved away, they would take her along too! She was afraid of being left alone.

Everyone is afraid to be left alone. Children hear about people getting sick and dying, or getting killed in accidents, or murdered, and they worry, "What will happen to me if my parents die?" Even grownups worry about being left alone.

When you are tempted to feel forsaken by God, you are being tested and tried (probably everyone has been so tempted at some time). But when you say "I am forsaken by God!" you have sinned because you have denied and contradicted the word of God: "He hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee" (Heb. 13:5).

## MEMORIAL DAY

Many years ago [1868], General John A. Logan of the Grand Army of the Republic, issued a Memorial Day Order, which began a special day to remember everyone who has died in U. S. wars since the War of Independence of 1775.

Boys and girls like to have fun, and it's right that they should have fun. Sometimes they think life is nothing but fun. Mother asks Johnny to rake the leaves on the lawn but he says, "Oh, Mom, that's no fun!" She asks little Mary to help her mop the floor, or do the laundry or the dishes, but Mary says, "Oh, Mom, that's no fun!"

Sometimes teachers want to tear their hair out because the children don't like to study ("if it's no fun, don't do it"); so they devise all sorts of ways to make reading, writing, and arithmetic "fun."

But there are some things, boys and girls, that are simply not fun, and nothing you can do will make them fun. One of them is *war*. Only an evil man could ever think that war is *fun*. It's no fun to be shot in the arm or leg or head or chest in a war, especially on enemy soil, under a foreign sky.

Since the War of Independence began, a half million Americans have died in major wars [now well over a million]. I think it's good for us to think about that on this Memorial Day holiday, instead of thinking only of ball games, picnics, or swimming.

Think of the Revolutionary War of 1775-1789. Brave men died that America might be a free and independent nation. Do you know what that means? You become a real American when you yourself begin to appreciate the freedom and independence your country enjoys.

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<sup>1</sup> Hebrews 2:9-10. Jesus Saves, Jesus Paid It All.

Think of another of the big wars America suffered—the Civil War. A terrible war caused by slavery. Some of the American people thought it was all right to have slaves, and others thought it wrong. Neither side was happy. Finally, the nation broke in two, and the two sides began to fight each other. Hard to imagine, isn't it? Suppose that California declared war against Nevada, and Nevada soldiers came into California, burning our buildings and taking us prisoners, and California soldiers went into Nevada doing the same thing. That would be awful, but that's similar to what happened. The result was that the Nation was united again, so we have what we call the "United" States of America. What difference does it make? Peace and prosperity and freedom for all. We should appreciate what those brave soldiers on both sides did when they died in that terrible war.

Think of the two World Wars. There's usually wrong on both sides in every war, and it's hard for the children to think of anybody as an enemy. America has never wanted to fight, and was reluctant to get into either of those wars. But there came a time when we had to because there was evil threatening the world. And so much suffering came.

But today we can have picnics, we can go on vacation trips without fear, we can go swimming and hiking, can play and work and go to school, all in a free country. Why? Because brave men and women, half a million of them, and many more besides in other countries, died. Just go out on I-80 half-way between Vacaville and Dixon and you will

find the Veterans Memorial Cemetery where 15,000 Californian servicemen are buried. We think of them on Memorial Day. Let's don't forget them. You'll enjoy your life a lot more when you realize what it cost!

But I want you to think of someone else who died that you and I might live. "If I died for all, then were all dead." That's the gospel right there—you believe it or you don't believe it. If you believe it, you realize that if Jesus had not died, you would be in your grave today, dead. But He died for you, and you want to live for Him. Your life doesn't belong to you.

That's the gospel. Do you believe it? Do you say, "No, I want to live my own life—I want to have my own way, I don't see what right Jesus has to claim my life!" Or do you say in your heart, "Thank You, Jesus, for making that sacrifice to save me from the grave. It's so hard for me to give my heart and my whole life to You, but love makes it easy!"

How many times have you heard, "You're going to pay for that"? You may have even heard, "You're going to pay for that in hell." And yet we sing, "Jesus Paid It All, all to Him I owe." Which is it? Do we pay for our sin in hell or has He paid for it on Calvary?

We take a few moments to think of the men and women who died for our country; and above all, as we think of Him who died for us on the cross.

It is a pagan notion that God demands a human blood sacrifice for sin either now or later in hell to pay for sin. This pagan idea has been absorbed into Romanism and further into Protestantism. It is a pagan idea that God *punishes* people for their sins

by consigning them to hell. In other words, they pay for their sins. If this is the case, then Jesus didn't really pay the punishment for the sins of the wicked when He died on the cross.

However true it is that the unbelieving wicked will die in hell, it certainly isn't a payment that they will make to God for their sins. It is a *consequence* of their own unbelief in Christ who has given them His life. They have rejected Jesus the most precious gift of Himself. The only alternative is that they have chosen death over He who is their life.

Back in the day when school boys were punished with a whipping for "acting-up" in class, my father informed me that if I was punished at school I could expect the same when I got home. One day the principal took me out to the woodshed and pulled off his belt and let me have it. I decided not to tell my folks about it. But evidently the principal called my father, and sure enough, when I got home, I received a second punishment for the same "crime". I never felt free from punishment for my bad deed until I paid the price at home. I was in "double jeopardy" both at school and at home!

Is it true that we are in double jeopardy respecting what Christ did for us on the cross? If we don't believe He paid for our sins or the sins of the whole world, then do we pay for them if we don't believe, by going to hell?

This is a radically different idea of what happened on the cross than what we see in the good news. The idea is that the sacrifice of Christ "merely deferred" for humanity the second death that is the wages of sin. In their words: "Under Heaven's plan

to redeem man the punishment or wages of sin—eternal death—was not waived but was deferred. . . . [It] was not annulled, but was merely deferred. . . . delayed."<sup>2</sup> Great consequences follow from this view of the atonement.

In this view, God has put us in double jeopardy. If this is true, every human soul is born into the world with that sentence of eternal death still hanging over his/her head. The fatal sentence has been "merely deferred," or temporarily "delayed." Logic demands that a debt to the law has been "merely deferred" cannot have been paid at the cross.

According to this view, Christ has *offered* to pay the debt of sin on the cross. But if the sinner does not take the initiative in his salvation by faith, the "deferred" punishment will fall on him as if Christ had not died for him, because his debt was never truly paid. In other words, Christ did not really "deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Heb. 2:15).

The consequence of this view is that the sinner's faith and obedience is what initiates the process of atonement. So faith becomes an essential human work in jump-starting one's personal salvation. But the Apostle Paul writes "that by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph. 2:8, 9). It is God's grace from beginning to end by which we are saved. Faith appreciates God's grace. "It is [all] the gift of God." Notice this perceptive remark by a devout Christian lady: "You

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<sup>2</sup> *Foundation*, (April 1994), pp. 9, 12.

may say that you believe in Jesus, when you have an appreciation of the cost of salvation. You may make this claim, when you feel that Jesus died for you on the cruel cross of Calvary.”<sup>3</sup>

By the “not waived but deferred, . . . delayed” punishment doctrine, there is a logical further step—that the death of Jesus was a *conditional sacrifice*. If by His death Christ did not pay the full penalty for the sins of “all men,” the logical conclusion has to be that He died only provisionally, conditionally, tentatively, and the sinner’s punishment was only “deferred,” the divine sacrifice itself being conditional on man’s faith and obedience first.

We’ve all heard stories about criminals who have paid their debt to society by serving out their sentences in prison and then getting out on parole. They were still under the supervision of a parole officer. If the parolee failed to make his appointment with the officer, he could be thrown back into jail. Thus the parolee was under “double jeopardy.”

Brooks Hatley, is paroled after sixty years in prison. He has forgotten what it’s like on the outside and doesn’t know how to conform to societal expectations. He is a bagger in the local market and reports to his parole officer. But had can’t accept that he’s paid his debt to society and been forgiven. He feels under “double jeopardy.” So he pays his debt again by committing suicide.

Is this the way it is with God’s forgiveness? He offers us a pardon, but we must believe and be

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<sup>3</sup> Ellen G. White, “How Do We Stand?” *The Advent Review and Herald* (July 24, 1888).

obedient. Failing the terms of our probation, does God make us pay for our sins by destruction in hell fire?

Many people have that idea about the sacrifice of Christ. All He did was to put us on probation, they say, and our punishment for sin has only been deferred. The sacrifice of Christ only provided physical life for fallen humanity, and only constitutes an offer of salvation, not the actual gift truly given. All of this means that “all men” are born and live under a legal condemnation to eternal death unless and until they repent and obey. Now it is true that we are on probation during this life, but not because our punishment has only been deferred.

One of Ellen White’s favorite illustrations of this truth is President Lincoln’s *Emancipation Proclamation* of 1863. When he signed it, every slave was legally free. But not until the slave heard the good news and believed it was he experientially free. So with Christ’s sacrifice. At the cross “with His own blood He has signed the emancipation papers of the race.”<sup>4</sup>

The sacrifice of Christ did restore the whole race of men to favor with God, and thus justified the world in a legal sense. For God to take the initiative so to love the world that He gave His Son to redeem it, to restore it to favor with God, to save it, does not violate man’s freedom of choice.

“As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.” Christ has truly taken Adam’s place. He is the second Adam of the entire fallen race,

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<sup>4</sup> *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 90.

corporately one, even as Adam was head of the unfallen race.

Grace without a legal basis for it is “cheap grace.” Unless it is unconditional it cannot be grace! Grace is unmerited, unearned, undeserved favor. Justification was “the gift” that grace gave. Fallen man cannot obey unless first he believes the good news of his justification in Christ as already his Saviour.

Nothing was “deferred” or “delayed.” Our punishment was totally inflicted on Christ. His sacrifice fully paid the debt of “every man’s” sin. In that sense, He saved the world. This can be nothing short of a legal justification for “all men,” or as the Bible says, a “verdict of acquittal ... for all men.” Otherwise they could not live even now, but would die the second death immediately.

The sacrifice of Christ gave much more than mere physical life. It lifted from humanity the condemnation of the second death, and gave every spiritual blessing and happiness that humanity has ever known. This deliverance from the fear of eternal death is the “justification unto life” that Christ has given to “all men,” not merely offered to them. Having died every man’s second death, Christ has secured for him the gift of salvation. This means that “all men” are born and live under a legal “verdict of acquittal” “in Christ,” and are drawn by the Holy Spirit unless and until they choose finally to disbelieve and thus be lost. (But God does not force anyone; the sinner can spurn what Christ has already given him.)

In her view, our “accepting Christ” does not activate the heavenly machinery that has previously stood idle. God has already been at work in behalf of every sinner, and faith now responds to that on-going work of grace. Christ “took in His grasp the world, . . . and . . . restored the whole race of men to favor with God.” “He has snatched the race as a brand from the fire.” “Christ made satisfaction for the guilt of the whole world.”<sup>5</sup>

“Faith . . . is belief rooted in the heart.”<sup>6</sup> It is a heart-appreciation of the sacrifice made for “all men” and of the High Priestly ministry in their behalf. “With the heart man believeth unto righteousness,” and such faith “works a radical change of mind and spirit and action” (Romans 10:10; *ibid.*, p. 393).

Justification by faith is more than a legal pronouncement. When Ellen White speaks of “conditions” for obtaining or retaining “justification,” her meaning is clear: *she speaks of justification by faith*. Our personal faith does not force Christ to die for us again; He already did that “once for all.” It was not necessary for each slave to apply individually to President Lincoln for freedom, at which time the President would again sign a legal document for him. The “condition” she speaks of is faith, a heart-response to what Christ has already done for us. Persistent unbelief (which causes disobedience) frustrates the grace already given to “all men.”

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<sup>5</sup> *Selected Messages*, Vol. I, p. 343, 392; *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 169.

<sup>6</sup> *Selected Messages*, Vol. I, p. 391.

Note Ellen White's clear 1889 statement supporting the truth of salvation by only one "condition"—faith, faith understood in its true Biblical sense, "which works by love" (*agape*):

Says one, "you cannot be accepted unless you repent." Well, who leads us to repentance? Who is drawing us? . . .

"Here we look at the cross of Calvary. What has made us look at it? Christ is drawing us. Angels of God are in this world, at work upon human minds, and the man is drawn to the One who uplifts him, and the One who uplifts him draws him to repentance. It is no work of his own; there is nothing that he can do that is of any value at all except to believe."<sup>7</sup>

"The question will come up, How is it? Is it by conditions that we receive salvation? Never by conditions that we come to Christ. And if we come to Christ, then what is the condition? The condition is that *by living faith* we lay hold wholly and entirely upon the merits of the blood of a crucified and risen Saviour. When we do that, then we work the works of righteousness [the fruit of justification by faith: sanctification]. But when God is calling the sinner in our world, and inviting him, there is no condition there; He draws by the invitation of Christ, and it is not, Now you have got to respond in order to come to God. The sinner comes, and as he comes and views Christ elevated upon that cross of Calvary, which God impresses upon his mind, there is a love

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<sup>7</sup> Manuscript 5, 1889; *Manuscript Releases*, Book 6, pp. 7, 8.

beyond anything that is imagined that he has taken hold of. . . .

"Christ is drawing every one that is not past the boundary. He is drawing him to Him today, no matter how great that sinner is, He is drawing him."<sup>8</sup>

When God forgives a sin does He forget it? Or does He dredge it up out of the depths of the sea where He promised He would dump it? "Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea" (Micah. 7:19). God has also said several times, "I am He that blotteth out thy transgressions . . . and will not remember thy sins," and "their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more" (Isa. 43:25; Heb. 8:12).

How much forgiveness was given to you (and me) when Jesus died on His cross? In a story that Jesus told, He explained it so clearly that a child can grasp it.

"A certain king" found that his servant owed "ten thousand talents" (millions/billions of dollars?), obviously an expression intended to mean an impossibly enormous sum. The "servant . . . had not to pay"—he didn't have a dime. So the "lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt." Imagine an electronic transfer of funds; the king's account debited, the servant's, credited. Now think of "all men" being likewise credited—you have a penniless "king." So was Christ "penniless" on His cross—"forsaken" of the Father, bearing the debt of "every

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<sup>8</sup> Manuscript 9, 1890; *ibid.*, p.32.

man's" sin in His soul, "made to be sin for us," "all men." An infinite transfer of credit! (Matt. 18:23-35).

The "servant" promises in old covenant terms "I will pay thee all," and his "lord . . . moved with compassion" treats him with new covenant "much more abounding grace." But the servant then demands "a hundred pence" from his neighbor, thus demonstrating he does not receive the forgiveness, although it was truly given him. The king's account was drained by the debit of what He gave His servants; He had given away all His righteousness, "emptied Himself."

The servant cannot reverse the transaction, for it was "done" (the cry on the cross was, "It is done!"). Then his lord sent him to prison until he paid the original debt (Matt. 18:23-35). He takes the debt back on himself voluntarily, and totally, unnecessarily, must from now on deal with "the tormentors" until he shall "pay all that is due" (which of course, will be never, ever). So in the final judgment, when the lost die the second death, they can never "pay" the debt of sin they owe; they can't. Christ already paid it, even though they have never repented. "By grace" they had been saved, but like Esau with his birthright, they had thrown away what "the king" had given them.

The real issue is: what is the meaning of the cross of Christ? What did Christ accomplish on His cross for every sinner? Christ did pay the full penalty for all our sins. No question about it.

The good news is that Christ's sacrifice on the cross accomplished infinitely more than "merely deferring" the original punishment for sin. "The

punishment or wages of sin—eternal death" was neither "waived," "deferred," nor "delayed," but was inflicted totally on Christ. This is the only foundation on which grace can rest. Grace that does not rest on Christ's complete sacrifice must be "cheap grace." He actually and truly paid the debt of every man's sin, and therefore fully died the second death of "every man." Thus there is no reason for any human soul to die that second death except for his own personal unbelief, his refusal to appreciate what Christ has actually (not provisionally) accomplished for him on the cross (John 3:17-19). This view of the cross may take one's breath away.

The truth of the cross clearly defines the gospel:

"We see Jesus . . . crowned with glory and honor; that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man" (Heb. 2:9). This "death" could not be the first death which the Bible calls a "sleep." It had to be the second, the total "underrated," "undelayed" punishment for our sin.

"Our Saviour Jesus Christ . . . hath *abolished* death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2 Tim. 1:10). Again, this "death" cannot be the first which has obviously not been "abolished." The lake of fire was never intended for human beings, only for the devil and his angels (Matt. 25:41). Another truth follows:

"God . . . gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish" (John 3:16). Thus, His "sacrifice" was not only His incarnation in assuming human nature forever, but a giving-for that involved dying the second-death punishment for every man's sin. This is the

foundation that makes grace possible, the death which the broken law requires.

“Christ *died for our sins*, according to the scriptures” (1 Cor. 15:3). This was the equivalent of the second death, then He made the commitment of all He had, to give Himself to death and hell forever, withholding nothing.<sup>9</sup> This is the measure of His *agape*.

Adam and Eve would have died that second death in Eden if Christ had not given Himself as “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Gen. 2:17; Rev. 13:8).<sup>10</sup> He did it before they could do anything good to deserve it. Adam in the Garden was the entire human race, for we were all “in him.” Thus “in Adam” the entire human race corporately shares his condemnation, but “even so” “in Christ” they share that “verdict of acquittal” which the Lamb achieved as He was “slain from the foundation of the world” (Rom. 5:16, 18, NEB; Rev. 13:8).

Christ “was wounded for our transgressions. . . . The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. . . . For the transgression of my people was he stricken” (Isa. 53:4-12). He was not “stricken” only for that of the righteous, but for that “of us all.”

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<sup>9</sup> DA 752, 753; 2T 200-215.

<sup>10</sup> They would have suffered “instant death” but for the sacrifice of Christ (PP 74). Thus that “sacrifice” legally or judicially justified Adam and Eve. It covered them and permitted them to live without dying the second death. And whatever it did for them, it had also to do for the entire human race which was “in” them. The entire human race is “Adam.”

Therefore, the glorious conclusion follows: if the “iniquity of us all” was laid on Christ; if He “died for our sins;” if He “abolished death” by His sacrifice; if He “was wounded for our transgressions” and was “bruised for our iniquities,” it follows that He paid the “unwaived,” “undeferred,” “undelayed” penalty of every man’s sin. This is the ABC of the plan of salvation. Ellen White seems clear:

“In consequence of limited ideas of the sufferings of Christ, many place a low estimate upon the great work of the atonement. . . . The death of Christ proclaimed the justice of His Father’s law in punishing the transgressor, in that he consented to suffer the penalty of the law himself. . . . [What] ended the life of Christ upon the cross . . . was the crushing weight of the sins of the world. . . . The sin of the world, with all its terribleness, was felt to the utmost by the Son of God. . . . The Redeemer drains the mysterious cup even to its dregs. The separation that sin makes between God and man [the horror of the second death] was fully realized and keenly felt by the innocent, suffering Man of Calvary.”<sup>11</sup>

(Christ died the equivalent of the second death. In other words, He corporately identified Himself with “every man” in that “anguish of the lost,” the indescribable alienation from life or joy or light which Christ “tasted” for “every man.” “The guilt of every descendant of Adam was pressing upon His

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<sup>11</sup> *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 2, pp. 200-215.

heart.”<sup>12</sup> Thus He was “made to be sin for us, who knew no sin” (2 Cor. 5:21).<sup>13</sup>

This verb “made” is not conditional. This is shocking to many Seventh-day Adventists, but it is true that Christ has actually accomplished something for every human being. He has identified Himself intimately with the deepest recess of every person’s secret soul—the ever-present yet buried fear of eternal death. He has lifted that condemnation, making present life and its happiness possible.<sup>14</sup> Thus He “lighteth every man that cometh into the world” (John 1:9).

Christ’s sacrifice explains why there is no need for any human soul to die that second death—except for his unbelief. What will make the anguish of the lost so totally complete will be the full realization at last that He did die for their sin, He did pay their debt! They will see their own second death as totally unnecessary except for their hard-hearted unbelief: “In the day of final judgment, every lost soul will understand the nature of his own rejection of truth. The cross will be presented, and its real bearing will be seen by every mind that has been blinded by transgression. Before the vision of

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<sup>12</sup> *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 752, 753.

<sup>13</sup> This is a unique Adventist truth because most Evangelical churches believe in the natural immortality of the soul, a doctrine which blinds them to the true nature of Christ’s sacrifice on the cross.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Heb. 2:14, 15. The Bible does not teach Universalism. The sinner can despise and reject Christ if he chooses.

Calvary with its mysterious Victim, sinners will stand condemned.”<sup>15</sup>

The cross defines unbelief as far more than a passive neutrality, a sitting on the fence, or a human oversight which we define as “neglect.” The lost will see that their unbelief was active *dis*belief, a deliberate choice to cast contempt upon the sacrificial love of the Son of God.<sup>16</sup> It seems that it is easy to misunderstand the profound nature of unbelief. Many of us seem to see it as merely passive do-nothingness.<sup>17</sup>

Christ’s atonement is infinitely more than we have been ready to understand. Every human being is involved: “Jesus, the world’s Redeemer, stands between Satan and *every soul*. . . . The sins of *everyone* who has lived upon the earth were laid upon Christ, testifying to the fact that no one need be a loser in the conflict with Satan.”<sup>18</sup> What Good News! And how the world hungers to hear it!

This is not to deny that the lost will indeed die the second death. In despising, rejecting, *dis*-believing what Christ did, they “counted the blood of the covenant . . . an unholy thing, and . . . [did] despite unto the Spirit of grace” (Heb. 10:29). This is the true dimension of their unbelief or disbelief.<sup>19</sup> They

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<sup>15</sup> *The Desire of Ages*, p. 58; GC 668. Unbelief is far more than passive neutrality, even as true faith is far more than passive acquiescence.

<sup>16</sup> This is further explicated in GC 543, 668.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. *Remember*, p. 156.

<sup>18</sup> *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* (May 23, 1899).

<sup>19</sup> For Waggoner’s understanding of this truth, see *The Glad Tidings*, pp. 11, 14, 61, 66, 67; *Waggoner on Romans*, pp. 101, 144, 166, 172. For Jones’s, see RH, April 17, 1894.

will suffer the “wages of sin” because by repeated choice they have taken back upon themselves the sin Christ died for, and retrieved the condemnation and punishment which He has already borne for them. God does not put them in “double jeopardy.” If people could only see this truth *now*, what a difference it would make with many! The message of the cross is “the third angel’s message in verity.” The “loud cry” message, “Be ye reconciled to God,” will make this clear to the hungering world that is darkened by a false concept of God’s character.

What is the fundamental error which produces confusion? Some insist that unconditional love is not unconditional pardon, which is very true. But by their “not waived but deferred, . . . delayed” doctrine, they logically take a further step—they want a *conditional sacrifice*. If by His death Christ did not pay the full penalty for the sins of “all men,” the logical conclusion has to be that He died only provisionally, conditionally, tentatively, and the sinner’s punishment was only “deferred,” the divine sacrifice itself being conditional on man’s faith and obedience first—that the sacrifice of Christ is only provisional, is in vain, it does no one any good unless he takes the initiative to believe and obey. But we see the divine sacrifice as unconditional, not provisional, and “finished.” Grace is given to all, totally unmerited. Christ truly, actually, died for “all men.”<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> See *Sabbath School Quarterly*, July 23, September 3, 1988; cf. October 2, 4, 5, 1995. In contrast, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 660 declares that the cross has given “saint or

This fundamental “merely deferred” doctrine naturally colors their understanding of justification by faith. The confusion stems from a subtle idea lurking in the shadows—the popular “limited atonement.” In other words, God’s foresight saw the eventual damnation of the lost and thus He held in abeyance, “deferred, . . . delayed” the punishment for their sin, to inflict it on *them* later.

In contrast, the gospel insists that the punishment which Christ bore was total for “every man”—“that He by the grace of God should taste death for *every man*” (Heb. 2:9). And “every man” has already enjoyed relief from the life-crushing condemnation of the second death. How could those “saints or sinners eat their daily food” and even live, if a conscious “haunting fear of death [held] them in bondage throughout the whole course of their lives”? (Heb. 2:15, Amplified). Christ has lifted it! He has done something for “all men,” and it is far more than “a second probation” or conditional “grace.” Paul says grace has given, not merely offered, a “gift”—justification (Rom. 5:15).

The “merely deferred” doctrine would logically rewrite John 3:16 to make it read: “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son *for those who believe*.” And of course, that would be very true; but it is only a small part of the awe-inspiring truth. He also gave Him fully as much for those who do not believe. This divinely extravagant gift of justifying love was illustrated in Mary Magdalene’s “wasteful” offering of her precious

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sinner” all the temporal good and all the happiness he has ever known, whether or not he believes.

perfume on Jesus' feet—which Judas and the disciples did not appreciate.

When you are tempted to feel forsaken by God, you are being tested and tried (probably everyone has been so tempted at some time). But when you say “I am forsaken by God!” you have sinned because you have denied and contradicted the word of God: “He hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee” (Heb. 13:5). Jesus conquered temptation by quoting Scripture to Satan, “It is written.” You do the same! When you are tempted to feel forsaken by God, quote that precious text, over and over again. And because you have overcome that temptation, you will be able to encourage others who are so tempted. You will actually win souls; for there are many people who need the testimony of someone who has been tempted as they are tempted, but who has won the victory by faith.

You may ask, “But maybe I have committed the unpardonable sin! If so, has God forsaken me?” The unpardonable sin is not God forsaking the sinner, but the sinner forsaking God. He still loves the person who has committed that sin (if he has!), but the sinner has burnt out his antenna and cannot receive the forgiveness “signal” from God. If you can catch even the faintest signal from the Holy Spirit assuring you of God’s faithful love, cherish it; don’t let Satan overwhelm you with discouragement because you know you have sinned. It’s sinners that Christ has come to save. We rob Him of His due if we withhold ourselves from Him. Don’t accept

Satan’s judgment; appeal over his head to the Supreme Court of Heaven—Christ Himself.

I have visited patients in rehab hospitals and nursing homes who take exercises, learning all over again how to walk. They have been in an accident, or had a stroke. They exercise those flabby muscles, and they overcome. So can you “exercise” your faith; choose to believe that promise, “I will never leave thee nor forsake thee!”