

Study for the Month of September, 2008

Biblical Perfection

Part IV

By Nathaniel Fajardo

Perfection through Christ's Merits Alone

The following quote is one of the clearest explanations of what Matthew 5:48 means and how it is to be accomplished—as far as I am concerned (all emphasis mine):

“Christ presents before us the highest perfection of Christian character, which throughout our lifetime we should aim to reach. . . . Concerning this perfection Paul writes: ‘Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after. . . I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.’ Phil. 3; 12-15, KJV. . .

“How can we reach the perfection specified by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ—our Great Teacher? Can we meet His requirement and attain to so lofty a standard? We can, else Christ would not have enjoined us to do so. He is our righteousness. *In His humanity He has gone before us and wrought out for us perfection of character.* We are to have the faith in Him that works by love and purifies the soul [Gal. 5:6; 1 John 3:3]. *Perfection of character is based upon that which Christ is to us. If we have constant dependence on the merits of our Savior, and walk in His footsteps, we shall be like Him, pure and undefiled.*

“Our Savior does not require impossibilities of any soul. He expects nothing of His disciples that He is not willing to give them grace and strength to perform. He would not call upon them to be perfect if He had not at His command every perfection of grace to bestow on the ones upon whom He would confer so high and holy a privilege. He has assured us that He is more willing to give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him than parents are to give good gifts to their children. [See Luke 11: 5-13].

“Our work is to *strive to attain in our sphere of action* the perfection that Christ in His life on earth attained in every phase of character. He is our example. In all things we are to strive to honor God in character. In falling day by day so far short of the divine requirements, we are endangering our soul's salvation. We need to understand and appreciate the privilege with which Christ invests us, and to show our determination to reach the *highest* standard. We are to be *wholly dependent on the power* [of the Holy Spirit] that He has promised to give us.” – *Youth's Instructor*, Dec. 16, 1877/ TMK 130.

Who Will Fail Biblical Perfection?

This is a fearful yet absolutely necessary question every one, particularly those who profess to be a follower of Christ must periodically ask himself,—before it is asked of him by God in his judgment! There are many reasons why a “loving” Christian will fail Biblical perfection, which perfection of course is only possible if the conquering *agape* love of Christ is truly abiding in the heart.

There are three distinct kinds of love and yet many confuse one for the other. What the majority love to mouth as “Christian love” is actually either “*eros*” or “*philos*.” The former is the root word for erotic and erogenous and is sensual love that is the most popular one because it is the most corrupted one, and certainly the most fleeting. Unnumbered abominations and crimes and whose list has nearly reached unto the heavens have been committed in its pursuit. “*Philos*,” on the other hand, is the root word for philanthropy, Philadelphia, etc., and refers to love for family, friends, neighbors, but does not include morals or principles. It is only *agape* that answers to God’s unconditional divine love presented in John 3:16 —one that loves the sinner “even yet while he was in his sins,” but hates his sins unconditionally as well with perfect hatred.

Q. What are the major reasons why one will fail Biblical perfection?

Indulging in Unsanctified Appetites and Passions

Persons giving rein to, or who indulge appetite cannot attain perfection. Now appetite here is synonymous with desire and lust—particularly when they are of the inordinate, unlawful kind; food and drink are just part, not all of them. Satan tempted our first parents not only on appetite for food but a desire for *self-exaltation*—“you will be *like Gods*, knowing both good and evil.”

“Eating, drinking, and dressing all have a direct bearing upon our spiritual advancement.”

“Many articles of food eaten freely by the heathen about them were forbidden to the Israelites. It was no arbitrary distinction that was made. The things prohibited were unwholesome. And the fact they were pronounced unclean taught the lesson that the use of injurious foods is defiling. That which corrupts the body tends to corrupt the soul. It unfits the user for communion with God, unfits him for the high and holy service.”

“The Spirit of God cannot come to our help, and assist us in perfecting Christian characters, while we are indulging our appetites to the injury of health, and while the pride of life controls.”

“All who are partakers of the divine nature will ‘escape the corruption that is in the world through lust (desire). *It is impossible for those who indulge appetite to attain to Christian perfection.*”

“This is true sanctification. It is not merely a theory, and emotion, or a form of words, but a living, active principle; entering into the everyday life. It requires that our habits of eating, drinking, and dressing be such as to secure the preservation of physical, mental, and moral health, that we may present to the Lord our bodies,—not an offering *corrupted by wrong habits*, but a ‘living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto the Lord.’”—*Counsels on Diet and Foods*, pp. 22, 57; 4T 567

Vacillating persons will not succeed in attaining perfection

The apostle says: "My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that *the testing of your faith produces patience*. But let patience have its *perfect work*, that you may be *perfect and complete, lacking nothing*. If anyone of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like the wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways." James 1: 2-8, NKJV.

If we doubt that we can attain character perfection even while we ask for the power, strength, wisdom, and grace to do so, we are like the waves of the tossed about by the winds. This double-mindedness and instability are the real reasons why we do not receive what we are praying for from God, and will never attain that perfection that will qualify is for eternal life. Moreover, practicing and cherishing impure thoughts places immortality beyond our reach.

"The young who desire immortality must stop where they are and not allow an impure thought or act. *Impure thoughts lead into impure actions*. If Christ be the theme of contemplation, the thoughts will be widely separated from every subject which will lead to impure acts. The mind will be strengthened by dwelling upon elevating subjects. *If trained to run in the channel of purity and holiness*, it will become healthy and vigorous. If trained to dwell on spiritual themes, it will naturally take that turn. But this attraction of the thoughts to heavenly things cannot be gained without the exercise of faith in God and an earnest, humble reliance upon Him for that strength and grace which will be sufficient for every emergency.

"Purity of life and character molded after the divine Pattern are not obtained without earnest effort and fixed principles. *A vacillating person will not succeed in attaining Christian perfection*. Such will be weighed in the balances and found wanting. Like a roaring lion, Satan is seeking for his prey. He tries his wiles upon every unsuspecting youth [and older people as well]; there is safety only in Christ. It is through His grace alone that Satan can only be successfully repulsed. Satan tells the young that there is time enough yet, that they may indulge in sin and vice this once and never again; but that one indulgence will poison their whole life. Do not once venture on forbidden ground. In this perilous day of evil, when allurements to vice and corruption are on every hand, let the earnest, heartfelt cry of the young be raised to heaven: 'How can a young man cleanse his way?' And may his ears be open and his heart inclined to obey the instruction given in the answer: 'By taking heed thereto according to Your Word.'" Ps. 119:9. The only safety of the youth in this age of pollution is to make God their trust. Without divine help they will be unable to control human passions and appetites. In Christ is the very help needed, but how few will come to Him for that help."-*Testimonies*, vol. 2, pp. 408-9.

Unfaithfulness in little things

"God's work is perfect as a whole because it is perfect in every part, however minute. He fashions the tiny spear of grass with as much care as He would exercise in making a

world. If we desire to be perfect, even as our Father in heaven is perfect, we must be faithful in doing little things. That which is doing worth at all is worth doing well. Whatever your work may be, do it faithfully. Speak the truth in regards to the smallest matters. Each day do loving deeds and speak cheerful words. Scatter smiles along the pathway of life. As you work in this way, God will place His approval upon you, and Christ will one day say to you, 'Well done, thou good and faithful servant.'

"At the day of judgment, those who have been faithful in their every day life, who have been quick to see their work and do it, not thinking of praise or profit, will hear the words, 'Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.' [Matt. 25:34]. *Christ does not commend them for the eloquent orations they have made, the intellectual power they have displayed, or the liberal donations they have given. It is for doing little things which are generally overlooked that they are rewarded. [And what are some of these "little things"?. 'I was hungry and you gave me food.' He says, 'Inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of My brethren, you have done it unto Me.'*" – *Messages to Young People*, p. 145.

Self-love is blind to the perfection God requires

"Human beings belong to one great family,—the family of God. The Creator designed that they should respect and love one another, ever manifesting a pure, unselfish interest in one another's welfare. But Satan's aim has been to lead men to self first; and yielding themselves to his control, they have developed a selfishness that has filled the world with misery and strife, setting human beings at variance with one another.

"*Selfishness is the essence of depravity*, and because human beings have yielded to its power, the opposite of allegiance to God is seen in the world today. *Nations, families, and individuals are filled with the desire to make self a center*. Man longs to rule over his fellowmen. Separating himself in his egotism from God and his fellow beings, he follows his unrestrained inclinations. He acts as if the good of others depended on their subjection to his supremacy.

"Selfishness has brought discord into the church, filling it with unholy ambition. . . *Selfishness destroys Christlikeness, filling man with self-love. It leads to continual departure from righteousness*. Christ says, 'Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.' *But self-love is blind to the perfection which God requires.*" – *Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 24.

Those who Neglect to Study God's word

(See GC chapter "Scriptures A Safeguard;" cf. Proverbs 1 and 2 Tim. 3: 1-17).

"*No man, woman, or youth can attain to Christian perfection and neglect the study of the word of God*. By carefully and closely searching His word we shall obey the injunction of Christ, 'Search the Scriptures; for in them you think you have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me.' This search enables the student to observe clearly the divine Model, for they [the Scriptures] testify of Christ. The Pattern must be inspected often and closely in order to imitate it. As one becomes acquainted with the history of the Redeemer, he discovers in himself defects of character; his unlikeness to

Christ is so great that he sees that he cannot be a follower without a very great change in his life. *Still he studies, with a desire to be like his great Exemplar; he catches the looks, the spirit, of his beloved Master; by beholding he becomes changed.* 'Looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith' [Heb. 12:2].” – *Counsels on Sabbath School Work*, p. 17.

GC 598-599: “The truth and the glory of God are inseparable; it is impossible for us, with the Bible within our reach, to honor God by erroneous opinions. Many claim that it matters not what one believes, if his life is only right. But the life is molded by the faith. If light and truth is within our reach, and we neglect to improve the privilege of hearing and seeing it, we virtually reject it; we are choosing darkness rather than light.

“There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.’ Prov. 16:25. Ignorance is no excuse for error or sin, when there is every opportunity to know the will of God. A man is traveling and comes to a place where there are several roads and a guideboard indicating where each one leads. If he disregards the guideboard, and takes whichever road seems to him to be right, he may be ever so sincere, but will in all probability find himself on the wrong road.

“God has given us His word that we may be acquainted with its teachings and know for ourselves what He requires of us. When the lawyer came to Jesus with the inquiry, ‘What shall I do to inherit eternal life?’ The Savior referred him to the Scriptures saying, ‘What is written in the law? How readest thou?’ Ignorance will not excuse the young or old, or release them from the punishment due for the transgression of God’s law; because there is in their hands a faithful presentation of that law and of its principles and claims. It is not enough to have good intentions; it is not enough to do what a man thinks is right. His soul’ salvation is at stake, and he should search the Scriptures for himself. However strong may be his convictions, however confident he may be that the minister knows what is truth, this is not his foundation. He has a chart pointing out every waymark on the heavenward journey, and he ought not to guess at anything. *It is the first and highest duty of every rational being to learn from the Scriptures what is truth, and then to walk in the light and encourage others to follow his example. We should day by day study the Bible diligently, weighing every thought and comparing scripture with scripture. With divine help we are to form our opinions for ourselves as we are to answer for ourselves before God. . . .*

“We should *exert all the powers of the mind* in the study of the Scriptures and should task the understanding to comprehend, as far as mortals can, the deep things of God; yet we must not forget that the docility and submission of a child is the true spirit of the learner. Scriptural difficulties can *never* be mastered by the same methods that are employed in grappling with philosophical problems. We should not engage in the study of the Bible with that self-reliance with which so many enter the domains of science, but with a prayerful dependence upon God and a sincere desire to learn His will. We must come with a humble and teachable spirit to obtain knowledge from the great I AM. Otherwise, evil angels will so blind our minds and harden our hearts that we shall not be impressed with the truth.” – *Great Controversy*, pp. 598-9.

Like Sanctification, the work of Perfection is a Life-long Work

“Paul describes the work of God’s ambassadors as that by which every man shall be presented *perfect* in Christ Jesus. Those who embrace the truth of heavenly origin

should be refined, ennobled, sanctified through it. It will require much painstaking effort to reach God's standard of true manhood. The irregular stones hewed from the quarry must be chiseled, their rough sides must be polished. This is an age famous for surface work, for easy methods, from boasted holiness aside from the standard of character that God has erected. All short routes, all cut off tracks, all teaching which fail to exalt the law of God as the standard of religious character, is spurious. *Perfection of character is a lifelong work, unattainable by those who are not willing to strive for it in God's appointed way, by slow and toilsome steps.* We cannot afford to make any mistake in this matter, but we want day by day to be growing up into Christ, our living Head." – *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 500.

Who and How Will Christian Perfection Be Attained?

Christ has promised power for moral and spiritual perfection

"The power of a higher, purer, nobler life is our great need. The world has too much of out thought, and the kingdom of heaven too little. In his efforts to reach God's ideal for him, the Christian is to despair of nothing. *Moral and spiritual perfection through the grace and power of Christ, is promised to all.* Jesus is the source of power, the fountain of life. He brings us to His word, and from the tree of life presents to us leaves for the healing of sin-sick souls. He leads us to the throne of God, and puts into our mouth a prayer through which we are brought into close contact with Himself. In our behalf He sets into operation the *all-powerful agencies of heaven.* At every step we touch His living power.

"*God fixes no limit to the advancement of those who desire to be 'filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.'* [Col. 1:9]. Through prayer, through watchfulness, through growth in knowledge and understanding, they are to be strengthened with all might according to His glorious power.' Thus they are prepared to work for others. It is the Savior's purpose that *human beings, purified and sanctified*, shall be His helping hand. For this great privilege let us give thanks to Him who 'hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light: who hath delivered us from the power of darkness and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son.' [Col. 1: 12, 13]."- *Acts of the Apostles*, p. 478.

Infinite fund of Christ's obedience available to all

"Christ has pledged Himself to be our Substitute and Surety, and He neglects no one. *There is an inexhaustible fund of perfect obedience accruing from His obedience.* In heaven His merits, His self-denial and self-sacrifice, are treasured as incense to be offered up with the prayers of His people. As the sinner's sincere, humble prayers ascend to the throne of God, Christ mingles them with *the merits of His own life of perfect obedience.* Our prayers are made fragrant by this incense. Christ has pledged Himself to intercede in our behalf, and the Father always hears His Son.

"*This is the mystery of godliness.* That Christ should take human nature, and by a life of humiliation elevate man in the scale of moral worth with God: that He should carry His adopted nature to the throne of God, and there present His children to the Father, to have conferred upon them an honor exceeding that conferred upon angels,---

this is the marvel of the universe, the mystery into which angels desire to look. [Col. 1:26]. This is love that melts the sinner's heart." – *Sons & Daughters*, p. 22.

Christian life may have perfection at every stage of development

"The *germination* of a seed represents the *beginning* of spiritual life, and the *development* of the plant is a beautiful figure of *Christian growth*. As in nature, so in grace; there can be no life without growth. The plant must either grow or die. As its growth is silent and imperceptible, but continuous, so is the development of the Christian life. *At every stage of development our life may be perfect*; yet if God's purpose for us is fulfilled, there will be *continual advancement*. *Sanctification is the work of a lifetime*. As our opportunities multiply, our experience will enlarge, and our knowledge will increase. . .

"The plant grows by receiving that which God has provided to sustain its life. It sends down its roots into the earth. It drinks in the sunshine, the dew, and the rain. It receives the life-giving properties from the air. So the Christian is to grow by co-operating with the divine agencies. Feeling our helplessness, we are to improve all the opportunities granted us to gain a fuller experience. As the plant takes root in the soil, so we are to take deep root in Christ. As the plant receives the sunshine, the dew, and the rain, we are to open our hearts to the holy Spirit. The work is to be done 'not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts.'" Zech. 4:6,"- *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 65.

The Plan of Redemption is to Restore

"*The ideal of Christian character is Christlikeness. As the Son of man was perfect in His life, so His followers are to be perfect in their life.* Jesus was in all things made like unto His brethren. He became flesh, even as we are. He was hungry and thirsty and weary. He was sustained by food and refreshed by sleep. He shared the lot of man; yet He was the blameless Son of God. He was God in the flesh. His character is to be ours. The Lord says of those who believe in Him, 'I will dwell *in* them, and walk *in* them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.'" 2 Cor. 6:16.

"*Christ is the ladder that Jacob saw, the base resting on the earth, and the topmost round reaching the gate of heaven, to the very threshold of glory.* If that ladder had failed a single step of reaching the earth, we should have been lost. But Christ reaches us where we are. He took our nature and overcame, that we through taking His nature might overcome. Made 'in the likeness of sinful flesh' (Rom. 8:3), He lived a sinless life. Now by His divinity He lays hold upon the throne of Heaven, while by His humanity He reaches us. He bids us by faith in Him to attain to the glory of the character of God. Therefore, *we are to be perfect, even as our father in Heaven is perfect.*"- *Desire of Ages*, pp. 311, 312.

How to Reach

"The conduct of Christians is like that of their Lord. He erected the standard, and it is left for us to say whether or not we will rally around it. Our Lord and Savior laid aside His dominion, His riches and glory, and sought after us, *that He might save us from the misery and make us like Himself*. He humbled Himself and took our nature that we might be able to learn of Him, and imitating His life of benevolence and self-denial,

follow Him step-by-step to Heaven. *You cannot equal the copy; but you can resemble it, and according to your ability, do likewise.* “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with *all* thy heart, and with *all* thy soul, and with *all* thy strength, and with *all* thy mind; and thy neighbor as *thyself*.” - *Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 170.

Christ became flesh that He might make us like Himself and set the standard of that perfection. But since His human nature was the only sinless one, it makes sense that we can never equal the His perfection, but we can resemble it, and according to our ability and sphere, to do likewise. Here, as in all of God’s requirements, it is loving Him with all that we are that makes all thing possible for He unites His omnipotent divinity with our impotent humanity that renders our will omnipotent to do His will. Once more, it is not His standard of perfection that is the problem—it is whether we accept it as attainable as He said it was, and desiring it and turning to His inexhaustible fund of perfect obedience accruing from His obedience as the Son of man. As in Christ’s example, it is not, and never will be easy. It is a daily struggle, a battle, a march—towards character perfection.

They Must Climb the Ladder of Christian Perfection

“The body is not kept under by many professed Sabbath-keepers. Some have embraced the Sabbath whose minds have ever been depraved. And when they embraced the truth they did not feel the necessity of turning square about and changing their whole course of action. They have been for years following the inclinations of an unregenerate heart, and have been swayed by the corrupt passions of their carnal natures, which had defaced the image of God in them and defiled everything they have touched; therefore, their entire future life would be all too short, at the longest, to climb Peter’s ladder of Christian perfection, preparatory to entering into the kingdom of God. But there are not many who feel that they cannot be saved by a profession of the truth, unless they become sanctified through the truth in answer to the prayer of our divine Lord to His Father: ‘Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth.’ John 17:17.

“Men and women who profess to be disciples of Christ and keep all the commandments of God will have to feel in their daily lives the true spirit of agonizing to enter in at the strait gate. The agonizing ones are the only ones who will urge their passage through the strait gate and narrow way that will lead to life eternal, to fullness of joy and pleasures forevermore. Those who merely seek to enter in will never be able. The entire Christian life of many will be spent in no greater effort than that of seeking, and their only reward will be to find it an utter impossibility for them to enter in at that strait gate.” -Testimonies, vol. 2, p. 479.

As we continue this study on how to achieve Biblical perfection, there is a group of people, a church in fact, that God has given the highest privilege, incentives, and motivation above all people, churches, denominations, and nations on earth—through special revelation on this awesome subject—these are the Seventh-day Adventists. On them has been shining the most wonderful as well as the most fearful revelation—that of the sanctuary message in connection with the 2300 days, the commandments of God, the faith of Jesus as given in the three angels’ messages of Revelation 14. At the heart of this messages is, what to me and many others, is the most awesome and fearful truth of the pre-advent or Investigative Judgment.

If all who profess to be Seventh-day Adventists took this truth to heart, *how quickly the work of perfection will take place in their lives*, and how quickly the latter rain will

come and the final loud cry of Revelation 18 go forth and lighten up the whole world with the knowledge of God's glory—His character and His law—and the end come! Why and how? they would order lives in harmony with the final work of Jesus as our High Priest that has been going forward since 1844. I will close out this study for this month, to be continued next month, by quoting pertinent passages that I hope and pray you and I will review, or if you haven't even read this before—to fall on your knees and ask for the guidance and conviction of the Holy Spirit as you individually read these passages in connection with Eccl. 12: 13, 14.

I know you have *The Great Controversy*, and are thoroughly familiar with this topic. One of the reasons why I am printing out these passages is to have its message ingrained in my memory so that the perfecting thoughts of these great truths will fill my mind. Also, by typing out these words it reinforces the retention of the specific details that will help me explain this wonderful truth to others, thus helping more be better prepared to receive the latter rain, the seal of the living God, the close of individual probation at death, and the general close of probation, the time of trouble, and only then, Christ's second coming! I hope you do the same thing. To wit [emphasis and numbering mine]:

“At the time appointed for the judgment—the close of the 2300 days, in 1844—began the work of investigation and blotting out of sins. All who have ever taken upon themselves the name of Christ [meaning, not only Seventh-day Adventists] must pass its searching scrutiny. Both the living and the dead are to be judged ‘out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.’

“Sins that have not been repented of and forsaken will not be pardoned and blotted out of the books of record, but will stand to witness against the sinner in the day of God. He may have committed his evil deeds in the light of day or in the darkness of night; but they were open and manifest before Him with whom we have to do. Angels of God witnessed each sin and registered it in the unerring records. Sin may be concealed, denied, covered up from father, mother, wife, children, and associates; no one but the guilty actors may cherish the least suspicion of the wrong; but it is laid bare before the intelligences of Heaven. The darkness of the darkest night, the secrecy of all deceptive arts, is not sufficient to veil one thought from the knowledge of the Eternal. God has an exact record of every unjust account and every unfair dealing. He is not deceived by appearance of piety. He makes no mistakes in His estimation of character. Men may be deceived by those who are corrupt in heart, but God pierces all disguises and reads the inner life.

“How solemn is the thought! Day after day, passing into eternity, bears its burden of records for the books of heaven. Words once spoken, deeds once done, can never be recalled. Angels have registered both the good and evil. The mightiest conqueror upon the earth cannot call back the record of even a single day. Our acts, our words, even our secret motives, all have their weight in deciding our destiny for weal or woe. Though they may be forgotten by us, they will bear their testimony to justify or condemn.

“As the features of the countenance are reproduced with unerring accuracy on the polished plate of the artist [or by the high-tech cameras of today], so the character is faithfully delineated in the books above. Yet how little solicitude is felt concerning that record which is to meet the gaze of the heavenly beings. Could the veil which separates the visible from the invisible world be swept back, and the children of men behold an angel recording every word and deed, which they must meet again in the judgment, how many words that are daily uttered would remain unspoken, how many deeds would remain undone.

“In the judgment the use made of every talent will be scrutinized. [1] How have we employed the capital lent us of Heaven? Will the Lord at His coming receive His own with usury [interest]? [2] Have we improved the powers entrusted us, in hand and heart and brain, to the glory of God and the blessing of the world? [3] How have we used our time, our pen, our voice, our money, our influence? [4] What have we done for Christ, in the person of the poor, the afflicted, or the orphan, or the widow? [5] God has made the us the depositaries of His holy word; what have we done with the light and truth given us to make men wise unto salvation? No value is attached to a mere profession of faith in Christ; only the love which is shown by works is counted genuine. Yet it is love alone which in the sight of Heaven makes any act of value. Whatever is done from love [of God and fellowmen], however small it may appear in the estimation of men, is accepted and rewarded of God [6] The hidden selfishness of men stand revealed in the books of heaven. There is the record of unfulfilled duties to their fellowmen, of forgetfulness of the Savior’s claims. [7] There they will see how often were given to Satan the time, thoughts, and strength that belonged to Christ. Sad is the record which angels bear to heaven. Intelligent beings, professed followers of Christ, are absorbed in acquirement of worldly possessions or the enjoyment of earthly pleasures. Money, time, and strength are sacrificed for display and self-indulgence; but few are the moments devoted to prayer, to the searching of the Scriptures, to humiliation of soul and confession of sin.

“Satan invents unnumbered schemes to occupy our minds, that they may not dwell upon the very work with which we ought to be best acquainted. The arch deceiver hates the great truths that bring to view an atoning sacrifice [for our justification] and an all-powerful Mediator [for our sanctification]. He knows that with him everything depends on his diverting minds from Jesus and His truth.

“Those who would share the benefits of the Savior’s mediation should permit nothing to interfere with their duty to perfect holiness in the fear of God. The precious hours, instead of being given to pleasure, to display, or gain seeking, should be devoted to an earnest, prayerful study of the word of truth. The subject of the sanctuary and the 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.

“Every individual has a soul to save or lose. Each has a case pending before the bar of God. Each must face the great Judge face to face. How important, then, that every mind contemplate often the solemn scene when the judgment shall sit and books shall be opened, when, with Daniel, every individual must stand in his lot, at the end of the days.

The work of preparation is an individual work. We are not saved in groups [particularly, not as a church]. The purity and devotion of one will not offset the want of these qualities in another. Though all nations are to pass in judgment before God, yet He will examine the case of each individual with as close and searching scrutiny as if there were not another being upon the earth. Everyone must be tested and found without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. [Eph. 5: 27].

“Solemn are the scenes connected with the closing work of the atonement. Momentous are the interests involved therein. The judgment is now passing in the sanctuary above. For many years [since Oct. 22, 1844] this work has been in progress. Soon—none know how soon—it will pass to the cases of the living. In the awful presence of God our lives are to come up in review. At this time above all others it behooves every soul to heed the Savior’s admonition [Mark 13:33; Rev. 3: 3 quoted].”- Great Controversy, pp. 486, 488, 490, “Facing Life’s Record” chapter.

To be continued next month, October, 2008, as Part V.